

# The Ultimate Study Guide for Leo Tolstoy's 'What Is Art?'



## Study Guide for Leo Tolstoy's What Is Art? by Course Hero

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Leo Tolstoy's seminal essay 'What Is Art?' is a profound exploration of the nature and purpose of art. Written in 1897, the essay challenges conventional notions of artistic value and offers a thought-provoking framework for understanding the role of art in society.

This comprehensive study guide provides an in-depth analysis of Tolstoy's key ideas, themes, and arguments in 'What Is Art?'

## Key Ideas

### Art as a Means of Communication

For Tolstoy, art is primarily a means of communication between individuals. Through art, artists convey their feelings, thoughts, and experiences to others.

### The Importance of Infectiousness

Tolstoy argues that true art is characterized by its ability to evoke a strong emotional response in the audience. This response, which he calls "infectiousness," is essential for art to have a meaningful impact.

## **The Unity of Art and Life**

Tolstoy rejects the idea of art as something separate from real life. He believes that art should reflect and illuminate the human experience, rather than create an artificial world.

## **Themes**

### **Art and Morality**

Tolstoy explores the relationship between art and morality throughout the essay. He argues that art can have a positive or negative influence on human behavior, and that it is the responsibility of artists to create works that promote virtue.

### **The Role of Art in Society**

Tolstoy believes that art plays a vital role in society. He argues that it can inspire, educate, and unite people, making it a powerful force for good.

### **The Nature of Beauty**

Tolstoy challenges the traditional view of beauty as something objective. He argues that beauty is subjective and depends on the individual's perception and experience.

## **Arguments**

### **Tolstoy's Definition of Art**

Tolstoy defines art as "the activity by which a person, having experienced an emotion, intentionally transmits it to others so that they experience that same emotion."

This definition emphasizes the importance of communication, emotional response, and infectiousness.

### **Tolstoy's Critique of Modern Art**

Tolstoy is critical of the state of modern art, which he sees as divorced from real life and lacking in infectiousness.

He argues that much modern art is simply a display of technical skill, rather than a genuine expression of human experience.

### **Tolstoy's Proposal for a New Form of Art**

Tolstoy calls for a new form of art that is accessible to all people, regardless of their social status or education.

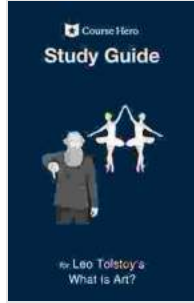
He believes that this type of art will have a profound impact on society, inspiring people to live more virtuous and fulfilling lives.

Leo Tolstoy's 'What Is Art?' is a challenging and thought-provoking essay that explores the fundamental nature of art and its role in society.

Through an analysis of Tolstoy's key ideas, themes, and arguments, this study guide provides a comprehensive understanding of this seminal work.

Whether you are a student of literature, art theory, or philosophy, or simply a curious reader, this guide will enrich your appreciation and understanding

of Tolstoy's timeless masterpiece.



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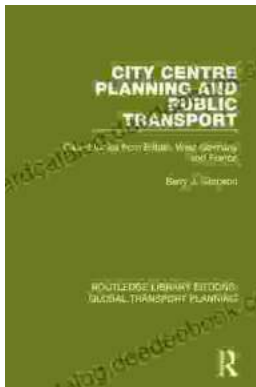
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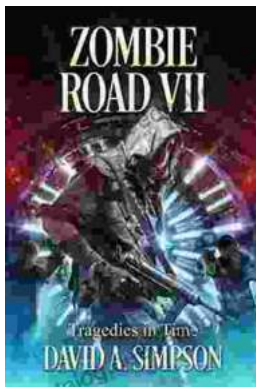
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