# *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles

## Synopsis

*A Gentleman in Moscow* immerses us in another elegantly drawn era with the story of Count Alexander Rostov. When, in 1922, he is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, the count is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin.

Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel’s doors.

Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him a doorway into a much larger world of emotional discovery.

## Discussion questions

1. The Count’s life under house arrest is greatly influenced by his relationship with four women: Nina, Marina, Anna, and Sofia. What is the nature of the Count’s relationship with each of these women? How do those relationships differ from his relationship with the members of the Triumvirate—Andrey and Emile?
2. The majority of *A Gentleman in Moscow* is told in the third person from the Count’s point of view. There is, however, an overarching narrator with a different perspective than the Count’s. Initially, this narrator appears in footnotes, then in the *Addendums*, then in the historical introductions of *1930*, *1938*, and *1946*. How would you characterize this narrator? How does he differ from the Count in terms of his point of view and tone of voice? What is his role in the narrative?
3. In the *1946*chapter, Mishka, Osip, and Richard each share with the Count their perspective on the meaning of the revolutionary era. What are these three perspectives? Are you inclined to agree with one of them; or do you find there is some merit to each?
4. How does the narrative incorporate the passage of time, and does it do so effectively? Thematically speaking, how does the Count’s experience of Time change over the course of the novel and how does it relate to his father’s views as embodied by the twice-tolling clock? What does the novel suggest about the influence of individuals on history and vice versa?
5. Near the novel’s conclusion, what is the significance of the toppled cocktail glass in *Casablanca*?
This is a novel with a somewhat fantastical premise set half a century ago in a country very different from our own. Nonetheless, do you think the book is relevant today? If so, in what way?

*Synopsis/Discussion questions from* [*https://www.amortowles.com/gentleman-moscow-readers-guide/*](https://www.amortowles.com/gentleman-moscow-readers-guide/)