Bunin’s themes:

**The Decline of the Peasantry and Landed Gentry**

For almost 30 years the Russian peasant was the commanding figure in his fictional gallery.

Explanation: the intimate knowledge of the peasantry derived from the personal background.

A narrowing divide between masters and former serfs.

Bunin never regarded the peasant as specifically a *social* type.

**Why?**

**(1)** Accounting for 80% of the population, the peasantry represented for him the Russian nation. The individual peasant is the quintessential *national* Russian type.

“I must point out that it is not the peasantry in themselves who interest me, but the soul of the Russian people in general.” (Moskovskie Vesti /Moscow News, September 1911).

In “The Village”—the village of Durnovka (meaning: stupid, silly).

His studies of the peasantry is the vehicle of his judgments of Russian history.

His descriptions of the rural life are intended to have a broad national relevance.

The purpose of his novel he identifies as a “genuine, serious study of the Russian people in literature,” a purpose, he alleged, other writer failed to fulfill.

**(2)** The author’s general conception of life.

The view of man as a child of nature. For him, the traditional, primitive life of a peasant is the purest expression of the natural life. For Bunin, as for Tolstoy, the peasant is the supreme embodiment of intuitive wisdom.

Thus, the class boundary is virtually erased, and the traditional antagonism between the landowner and the peasant is replaced by a harmonious relationship based on common experience and a profound psychological affinity that is attributed to their common proximity to nature. His major belief: man is at his best when living in conformity with the laws of nature.