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This fictional camp represents an actual one to which authorities transferred Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1950. That camp was at Ekibastuz, a town in the northeastern region of present-day Kazakhstan, which was part of the Soviet Union until 1991. Here is a description of this camp: It was located in the middle of the arid Kazakh plain, dusty and stifling hot in summer, in winter buffeted by snow, ice, and winds of shocking force for weeks at a time. The camp, with its double rows of barbed wire fencing, perimeter ploughed strip, machine gun coverage of every conceivable area, its use of floodlights the entire night, was emblematic of the Gulag as it has become known to us. It is the model for the camp depicted in Solzhenitsyn's most widely read work, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.In Ekibastuz, more than anywhere, Solzhenitsyn learned firsthand the horrors of living in a "special prison" from which it was not expected that a prisoner would normally be released: the commandant of Ekibastuz even boasted that only three men had gone free under his rule. The daily, brutal labor, the marches to work in rain, or slush, or cold so intense it was like a knife against the skin, the endless searches before you left the camp in the morning, the searches on your return, the waiting in line morning and night for thin gruel, the absence of books, the conscienceless brutality of the criminal prisoners. All of this for 330 days a year (there were three days of rest each month) killed thousands upon thousands of prisoners, or turned the survivors into cowed, zombielike men. Much of the time at Ekibastuz, he was a bricklayer, occasionally even experiencing the exhilaration of hard physical labor performed with comrades he had come to trust and indeed at times to rely on for survival. (Climo, Jacob J., and Maria G. Catell, eds. Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives. Lanham, Md.: Rowman Alta Mira Press, 2002, page 151.) Historical Background......The Soviet Union established the first of its forced-labor camps in 1918. Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), the leader of the Soviet Communist Party from 1922 to 1953, began increasing the number of camps in the late 1920s to (1) incarcerate and punish accused political dissidents, criminals, saboteurs, prisoners of war, and traitors and (2) provide the massive labor force required to improve the Soviet secret police took control of the labor-camp system, which became known as the Gulag is an acronym for Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-Trudovykh Lagery, the English translation of the Russian name for the system in the Cyrillic alphabet. The English translation of the Russian name for the system in the Cyrillic alphabet. The English translation of the name is Chief Administration of the Russian name for the system in the Cyrillic alphabet. .Solzhenitsyn was earning a mathematics degree at Southern Federal University in Rostov-on-Don when World War II broke out. Shortly after he graduated, Germany invaded the military. In the winter of 1941-42, he drove horse-drawn vehicles for the Soviet army then served in an artillery company on the front lines from 1942 until authorities arrested him in 1945. In a short autobiography that he wrote in 1970, Solzhenitsyn explained what happened: I was arrested on the grounds of what the censorship had found during the years 1944-45 in my correspondence with a school friend [N.D. Vitkevich] mainly because of certain disrespectful remarks about Stalin, although we referred to him in disquised terms. As a further basis for the "charge", there were used the drafts of stories and reflections which had been found in my map case. These, however, were not sufficient for a "prosecution", and in July 1945 I was "sentenced" in my absence, in accordance with a procedure then frequently applied, after a resolution by the OSO (the Special Committee of the NKVD), to eight years in a detention camp (at that time this was considered a mild sentence). (Nobelprize.org)......Solzhenitsyn served the first four years of his sentence in various camps and in confinement at research institutes that used his skill in mathematics. In 1950, Soviet authorities transferred him to a labor camp for political prisoners at Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan. There he mined coal, laid bricks, and worked in a foundry. After completing his sentence, the Soviets exiled him to a region in Kazakhstan. There he taught school from 1953 to 1956, when he gained his release. After living and teaching in the Vladimir oblast (province) east of Moscow, he relocated to the city of Ryazan, about 120 miles southeast of Moscow.In 1957 he began writing of his experiences in the Soviet detention system. The result was One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. The Soviet premier at the time was Nikita Krushchev, who was engaged in a campaign to condemn the tyranny of Joseph Stalin. As a result, Solzhenitsyn's novel earned a favorable review from Soviet censors. It was published in 1962 and became a bestseller. Narration and Point of ViewA narrator tells the story in third-person point of view from the perspective of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. The narrator not only sees what Ivan sees but also knows what he is thinking. The narrator is, of course, the voice of the author, Solzhenitsyn, who is presenting a fictionalized account based on his own experiences in a Soviet labor camp. Solzhenitsyn presents most of the narration and dialogue in the simple, everyday language of working-class citizens. Characters Protagonist: Ivan Denisovich Shukhov Antagonists: Soviet Overseers, Prison Life, Certain Other Inmates . Ivan Denisovich Shukhov: Forty-year-old inmate from the village of Temgenovo who is in the eighth year of the a ten-year sentence at a Soviet labor camp in January 1951. He is stone mason of peasant stock, with a wife and two daughters he left behind when he entered military service in 1941 after the Germany army invaded the Soviet union. During fighting, the German cause and then returned to the Soviet army as a spy or perhaps a saboteur. Although innocent of the charges, Soviet authorities forced him to sign a confession under penalty of death, then sentenced him to labor camps. Ivan is practical and resourceful, with a strong will to survive while maintaining his human dignity. He gets along with his fellow inmates and knows how to circumvent rules without provoking overseers. Ivan has a wife and two grown daughters. He had a son who died in his youth. Andrei Prokofyevich Tyurin: Nineteen-year prisoner who leads Gang 104, the work group to which Ivan when the two men were serving part of their sentences at another prison camp. Alyoshka the Baptist: Quiet, saintly inmate who bunks next to Ivan. In his spare moments, he reads the New Testament of the Bible from a notebook that he keeps hidden from overseers. (Books of any kind are forbidden in the camp.) His faith sustains him—so much so that he has no trouble coping with the harsh conditions under which he must live and work. He readily cooperates with other inmates and does what he is told. One-and-a-Half Ivan: Guard who projects fearsomeness but is actually more humane than other guards. The Tartar later relents and assigns Ivan to duty scrubbing floors in a guardhouse. Pavlo: Second in command of Gang 104. Buinovsky: Former captain in the Soviet navy and a recent arrival at the labor camp. Because he is accustomed to giving orders instead of taking them, he has difficulty adjusting to life in prison. On the day recounted in the novel, he is caught wearing a vest over his shirt during the morning check of inmates. Camp rules expressly forbid the wearing of extra clothes as a measure to prevent escape in the brutally cold climate. For his violation of the rules, authorities sentence Buinovsky to ten days in the cellblock, where he will occupy a cold cell, sleep on boards, and receive meager food rations. Lieutenant Volkovoi: Sadistic security officer who sentences Buinovsky to the cellblock. The first syllable of his name, volk, is Russian for wolf. Snub-nose: Warder who takes Buinovsky to the cellblock. Tsesar (or Caesar) Markovich: Former film director from Moscow who was wealthy on the outside. He receives packages of food, some of which he barters for favors or special privileges that help to ease the harshness of his life in prison. Ivan is among those who do favors for him and benefit from his bounty. Pyotr Mikhailich: Like Tsesar, he is from Moscow. He shares with Tsesar a copy of the Evening News he received in the mail. Senka Klevshin: Tall, nearly deaf member of Gang 104. He is a hard worker who gets along well with Ivan and assists him in work at the power station. Klevshin spent time in Buchenwald, the Nazi concentration camp, where he was tortured. Fetyukov: Prisoner who was an office manager on the outside. He begs and scrounges for food and cigarettes, which annoys other inmates. On one occasion, inmates beat him when he tries to take leftovers at mealtime. On another occasion, Captain Buinovsky punches him after Fetyukov shouts at him. Because of his inability to get along well with Ivan. Kolya Vdovushkin: Medical assistant in the infirmary. Dr. Stepan Grigorich: Infirmary to give his reports. Estonians: Two likable members of Gang 104 who always confer with each other before reaching decisions. Ivan borrows tobacco from them and makes sure to pay them back. Kuziomin: Gang leader at Ust-Izhma prison camp, where Ivan spent part of his prison term, who instilled survival techniques in Ivan before Ivan was transferred to his present camp. Gopchik: Sixteen-year-old lad who asks Ivan to show him how to make a spoon from wire. Ivan likes Gopchick, who received an adult's sentence for supplying bread to forest-living Ukrainians who rose up against the Soviets. Prisoner X-123: Elderly inmate who argues with Tsesar about the merits of Ivan the Terrible, a film directed by Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). Tsesar says it is an artistic triumph. X-123 says it is a bad film because it glorifies a tyrant. Shkuropatenko: Prisoner assigned to guard roofing felt to board up windows to keep the frigid wind out of the room in which Gang 104 is working. Der: Prisoner from Moscow who serves as building foreman at the power plant. When he notices the roofing felt on the windows (the material taken by Ivan and Kilgas), he threatens to inform on Gang 104's leader, Tyurin, saying Tyurin will likely end up with another prison term. But Tyurin tells Der that he will die if he breathes a single word about the roofing felt. The other members of the gang close in on Der in support of Tyurin. Der meekly backs down. Chief Work Superintendent at the Power Plant: Overseer who complains to his foremen that prisoners have been spilling cement when pushing it in wheelbarrows. The Latvian prisoner from whom Ivan buys tobacco. Khromoi: Limping orderly who uses a birch staff club to keep order in the line of prisoners waiting for a free table to eat. His name means lame in Russian. Assistant to Khromoi: Orderly who helps Khromoi keep order. Chief of the Mess Hall: Fat man with a pumpkin-shaped head who rules the mess hall. Squealers: Two prisoners whose throats were slit while they were sleeping for informing on fellow prisoners. Innocent "Squealer": Prisoner mistaken for a squealer. He was found dead in bed. Bookkeepers: Prisoner swho work in the office at the power station. The Moldavian: Prisoner from Gang 32 who is late for an evening count because he fell asleep on the job. Second in Command, Gang 32 who is late for an evening count because he fell asleep on the job. 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Second in Command in C Prisoner who beats the Moldavian about the neck and face for being late. Hungarian: Member of Gang 32 who kicks the Moldavian into custody for confinement in the cellblock. Yermolayev: Siberian member of Gang 104 who was sentenced to ten years in labor camps for being captured by Germans. Prisoner U-81: Elderly prisoner from Gang 64 who has spent a long time in prison camps. Whenever one of his ten-year sentences ends, the Soviets tack on another. But the old man holds up remarkably, never giving up and always maintaining his dignity. Prisoner H-920: Man who gets in Ivan's way in the mess hall. Camp Commandant: Overseer who makes the camp rules. He once decreed that no prisoner could walk through the camp alone except to the infirmary or latrine. But the rule died of its own stupidity. As the narrator notes, "Say someone was summoned by the security people—did he have to go in a group of other people? Orthodox Priest in Polomnya: Clergyman who grows rich on the contributions of parishioners and is paying alimony to three former wives while living with another woman. Ivan Denisovich tells Alyoshka the Baptist about the priest's hypocrisy during a discussion about religion. The priest operates the parish at Polomnya, near Ivan's home. . . Plot SummaryBased on Gillon Aitken's Translation of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971) By Michael J. Cummings. © 2009The time is early morning on a day in January 1951. The place is a prison camp in frozen wilderness. At 5 a.m., two hundred prisoners in fifty double-decker bunks in Hut 9 awaken to the banging of a hammer against metal outside. Although forty-year-old Ivan Denisovich Shukhov always rises at the sound, he remains in bed on this morning chores, including taking out barrels of waste from the latrine.This is a special day for Ivan's work group, Gang 104. It had been constructing workshops but is now to begin erecting a barbed-wire fence—a barrier against escape—that will surround a socialist community center scheduled to be built in a frozen, snow-covered field.One of Ivan's bunk mates, Alyoshka the Baptist, is saying his morning prayers. Another bunk mate, a former navy captain named Buinovsky, shouts out that it must be thirty below outside.Ivan decides to linger in bed awhile longer, then report to the infirmary. Ordinarily, failure to get out of bed at the sound of reveille results in punishment, perhaps several days in the cellblock, where prisoners receive meager food rations and sleep on boards. But on this morning the guard who is scheduled to round up the inmates is One-and-a-Half Ivan, a fierce-looking but humane overseer. He would not penalize Ivan Denisovich. However, as luck would have it, a different guard is on duty, one known as the Tartar. He rips off Ivan's blanket and gives him three days in the cellblock for failing to respond to reveille. Everyone else hurries out of the hut to avoid the Tartar's wrath while Ivan puts on his clothes and follows his tormentor into the frigid morning. Inmates are hustling about, their coats buttoned tight against their necks. Ivan and the Tartar go across the camp to the staff hut. There, the Tartar tells Ivan that he has decided not to punish him after all. However, Ivan must scrub the floor of the warders' room, where a stove fire blazes. Ivan thanks the Tartar and promises never again to sleep in.When Ivan goes to a well for water, he hears other inmates gathered around a thermometer say that the temperature is -27.5 Fahrenheit. When he returns, he is thankful that he now has felt boots, called valenki, to wear. During one winter in his eight years of imprisonment, he had to make do with shoes cut from rubber tires.Four warders are in the room discussing food supplies—in particular, how much millet they will have in January. When Ivan deliberately splashes water around their boots, they curse him, then tell him simply to run a damp cloth around the floor and get out. Their reaction was what Ivan wanted and expected. A short while later, he finishes up and goes to the mess hall, still feverish and achy, where Fetyukov—a member of his gang—sits with bowls of gruel and porridge he had saved for Ivan. Withdrawing a spoon from his boot—a spoon he himself had cast from aluminum wire in 1944 while serving part of his sentence at another prison camp, Ust-Izhma—Ivan eats the gruel, now cold, which contains cabbage and fish. Then he goes to work on the porridge, made from grass. It is frozen, but he eats all of it. Afterward, he reports to a medical assistant, Vdovushkin, in the infirmary to explain his illness. After Vdovushkin gives him a thermometer to take his temperature, Ivan sits on a bench and hopes that he is just sick enough to qualify him for a three-week stay in the hospital, where he would have nothing to do but lie on his back. Then he remembers that Stepan Grigorich, a new doctor who recently arrived from another camp, likes the idea of putting patients to work as a form a therapy.Vdovushkin checks the thermometer. Ivan's temperature is only slightly high, not even a hundred, so he returns to his hut. Everyone in his work group is dozing except Pavlo, the second-in-command of Gang 104, and Alyoshka, who is reading the Gospels from a notebook that he hides in the wall. Pavlo gives Ivan his bread ration for the day. Ivan breaks it in half and puts one portion in his coat pocket and the other in his straw mattress.Andrei Prokofyevich Tyurin, the leader of Gang 104, then orders all the members whisper to one another that he is not sick at all but is ratting on someone. The warders often put him on the sick list so that he can provide them information at the infirmary.On the parade ground is one of three inmate artists who paint prisoners' numbers on their hats and coats and do free pictures for the warders. The warders use the numbers—large enough to see at a distance—to identify prisoners who violate rules. If a number begins to fade, a prisoner must get it repainted and gets in line.Afterward, he sees Tsesar, a member of his gang, smoking a cigarette. Hoping Tsesar will offer him a drag, Denisovich goes over and stands next to him. (Denisovich believes it is crude to request a drag.) Meanwhile, Fetyukov comes over and has the gall to actually ask Tsesar for a puff. Tsesar then turns to Denisovich and gives him the rest of the cigarette. Hungry for a tobacco fix, Denisovich smokes the cigarette down to a stub that burns his lips.Warders then begin searching prisoners for concealed weapons such as knives and for evidence (such as extra food or extra clothes) indicating that a prisoner plans to escape. The feared Lieutenant Volkovoi is supervising the search, a routine procedure in the camp. Volkovoi once carried a whip with which he lashed the men, sometimes at random. Now, for whatever reason, he no longer brandishes the whip. All the prisoners must open their coats in the brutal cold. Buinovsky, a new arrival at the camp, is found to be wearing a vest over his shirt—a violation of the rule against extra clothing. When he objects to having to undress in the frigid weather, Volkovoi gives him ten days in the cellblock, a sentence that is to begin in the evening after he completes his work for the day.Escort guards with machine guns then count the men as they go to their jobs outside the camp. Some guards stand by with attack dogs. It turns out that Ivan and the rest of Gang 104 will be working inside the power station, now under construction, instead of outside at the site of the socialist community center. Gang 64 got that thankless job. As Gang 104 marches off to the power station, the members pass a wood-working factory and other buildings—all constructed by prisoners. Out on the steppe, there is no scenery except for snow in every direction.Ivan Denisovich had left his home and his wife on June 23, 1941. When he was at Ust-Izhma, he was allowed to write home once a month. But at this camp, he is permitted to write home once a month. But at this camp, he is together, they will be able to raise themselves from poverty and pay for the education of their children at a technical school. Ivan is not keen on the idea of painting carpets. But if he got back his civil rights after his release, he could see himself making stoves, becoming a joiner, or working with metal.The work detail comes to a halt outside the power station while guards take up positions in six watch towers. The wind is blowing. Ivan's hands are numb. In a few moments, the prisoners march inside. Group leader Tyurin and his second-in-command Pavlo go to the office accompanied by Tsesar. Tsesar receives two packages in every month's mail and uses some of the contents for bribes that make life easier for him. In the power station, he has an easy office job.Ivan and the rest of Gang 104 report to a large room where automobiles are to be repaired. Gang 38 is there making concrete blocks. While waiting for work orders, Ivan sits in a corner nibbling on his bread. One good thing about this room is that it is warm—not to make the men comfortable but to dry concrete during construction. All the men are sitting around: the two Estonians, likable fellows who keep together; Fetyukov, who tells Fetyukov he will get an infection from smoking others' tobacco; Senka Klevshin, who had spent time in Buchenwald; Alyoshka, praying.Kilgas, a Latvian, mentions that it has not snowed in a while. When it does snow, it often is so heavy that inmates have to tie a rope between the mess hall and the hut, then follow it back and forth to avoid getting lost. Prisoners do not work during storms, which can last up to a week, but they have to make up for lost time by working on Sundays.Tyurin comes in and tells gang members Klevshin, Gopchik, and the Estonians to carry a large box to an unfinished section of the power station. There, it will be used to mix mortar. Others receive orders to get tools, sand, water, boards, and coal for the fire. Several are told to clear snow surrounding the power station so trucks can pull in and unload blocks for wall construction. Tyurin selects Ivan and Kilgas, the best workers in the gang, to seal the three windows in the room to help keep heat in. Afterward, they are to lay wall blocks on the second story. Ivan and Kilgas find panels and roofing felt outside to do the job. Tyurin is pleased but now needs Ivan to repair a stovepipe and Kilgas to repair the mortar box, which has fallen apart. Gopchick assists Ivan.If the inmates do high-quality work, they receive extra rations of bread in the evening. That is how the system works.Soon, the windows are covered, the stove is going, and three trucks pull up with blocks for the second-story wall.Time passes swiftly for Ivan when he is working. However, his prison sentence seems to drag. Although he is nearing the end of his sentence—for whatever reason—and sometimes exile him.Ivan's crime was high treason. According to charges brought against him, "he had surrendered to the enemy, intending to betray his country." The Germans then sent him back to the Russians to carry out certain instructions, the charges further maintain. The Soviets had no evidence to support their claims against Ivan. However, they told him that if he did not sign a confession admitting wrongdoing, he would be shot. He signed.After lunch in the mess hall, Ivan finds a piece of hacksaw blade in the snow and puts it in his knee pocket. It might come handy sometime. Back at the power station, he borrows tobacco from one of the Estonians and rolls a cigarette in a scrap of newspaper. He smokes it while the gang leader, Tyurin, tells a story about why the Soviet authorities arrested and imprisoned him. His "crime" was that he was the son of a peasant farmer, or kulak, who opposed the Soviet policy of collective farming. After authorities found out about Tyurin's background, they issued him a dishonorable discharge from the army and later arrested him and sentenced him to a labor camp.After the men set to work laying the blocks, they have a run-in with Der, a building foreman who notices the roofing felt on the windows and tells Tyurin he will get another sentence for stealing it. Ivan is not worried for himself—Tyurin would never snitch on one of his men—but he is worried for Tyurin. But Tyurin stands up to Der, telling him that if he breathes a word about the felt, it will be his last breath. The other men support Tyurin, surrounding Der with blood in their eyes. Tyurin, frightened now, backs down and asks Tyurin what he is to say to the superintendent. Tyurin tells him to say that the felt was already in place when the gang entered the room to begin work.With Ivan are several others slapping on mortar and laying blocks. The gang makes good progress. When the men hear the banging hammer that signals the end of the workday, the men still have a box of mortar left. If they do not use it now, it will harden overnight. In the morning, they will have to smash the box and make a new one. So they hurriedly work on. By and by, they notice that all the other gangs are walking toward the power-station guard room. They then collect their tools, which have to be handed in, and leave—all except Ivan and Senka Klevshin, who continue to lay blocks. Ivan does not want to waste the remaining mortar, so he and Senka work furiously until the last of it is gone, then run off.Luckily, they arrive when the quards are still counting the men. No penalty is assessed against them for being late. However, the quards discover a man missing from Gang 32—a Moldavian. This development means that everyone—no matter his gang—must wait in the bitter cold while a search is conducted. Two men from Gang 32 go off to look for the missing man. It is possible, of course, that the Moldavian has escaped. It is also possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. It is possible that he is hiding in the camp to wait for the missing man. 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He had fallen asleep while doing some plastering. When he arrives, the waiting men curse him. One of his discoverers slugs him, and another man kicks him in the back. The guards then recount all the men.When Gang 104 finally reaches the checkpoint at the camp entrance, they line up to be searched. Ivan's hand automatically goes into his knee pocket to make sure he has not brought back a forbidden item. The piece of hacksaw blade! He had forgotten about it. Ivan plans to use it to repair shoes to make extra bread. Now what should he do? If a guard finds it, he will probably receive time in the cells. He decides to put the blade in one of his mittens. When his turn comes, he opens his coat while holding the mittens in one hand. An elderly guard pats him down, feels the coat, and checks all his pockets. Then, to Ivan's horror, he squeezes one of the mittens—the empty one. Just when the guard is about to examine the other mitten, Ivan prays in desperation, "Oh, Lord, save me! Don't let me be put in the cells." At that moment, a supervisor tells the guards to begin searching the next group. Ivan makes it through.Later he holds a place in line at the parcels office for Tsesar, who is expecting a package of food. Tsesar rewards him by giving him his portion of supper gruel. After deciding to save his bread for the next day, he enjoys his bounty of gruel, which again contains fish and cabbage. He finds a boon: a small potato in Tsesar's bowl.Feeling quite satisfied, he next goes to Hut 7 to buy two mugs of tobacco from the Latvian with two rubles he had earned by making or mending articles of clothing for other prisoners. He then returns to his hut, where Tsesar has opened his package. Ivan has saved Tsesar has opened his package. Ivan has been had b climbing onto his bunk, Ivan hides the hacksaw blade in an opening of a cross beam. Fetyukov comes in just then. He is sobbing. His face is bloodied. He had probably gotten himself beaten up for begging or stealing other people's food. Here is a man who just does not know how to get along in a camp. He will probably die before his sentence is up.Tsesar asks Ivan whether he can borrow his "ten days," a reference to Ivan's small penknife. (He would get ten days in a cell if the guards discovered it.) Ivan takes it from the same cross beam and gives it to Tsesar, who uses it to cut up his sausage. Ivan then pays back the tobacco that he had earlier borrowed from the Estonians.A warder named Snub-nose enters and informs Buinovsky that he must serve ten days in a cell for being caught wearing extra clothing in the morning. Before he leaves, Tsesar gives him a few cigarettes. Gang 104 had built the cellblock that will house Buinovsky. In each cell, there are four walls, no windows, and a stove kept only warm enough to melt ice formations on the walls. Occupants must sleep on boards. They receive a bowl of gruel once every three days, they get water and about 10.5 ounces of bread. After an inmate serves ten days, he usually comes out in poor health.At 9 p.m., Hut 9 assembles outside for the evening check. Among the first to go back inside inside is Ivan, who guards Tsesar's food until the latter returns from the head count. Alvoshka is praying and suggests that Ivan do the same now and then, But Ivan says he never seems to get what he prays for. (Apparently, he has forgotten about what happened during the evening search after his return from the power plant.) Alvoshka replies that Ivan may not be praying often enough or may not be praying for the wrong things. "Ivan Denisovich, you mustn't pray to receive a parcel or an extra portion of gruel," Alyoshka says. "Things which men put high value on are an abomination in the sight of the Lord. You must pray for things of the spirit, that the Lord will drive out all wickedness from our hearts.... ".......Ivan then tells him about a corrupt Russian Orthodox priest in Polomnya, near his home. He grows rich through his parishioners and pays alimony to three women while living with a fourth woman. He then says, "[H]owever much you pray, it's not going to take anything off your sentence. You've got to sit that out, every day from reveille to lights-out."Their discussion continues several more minutes. Then a warder comes in and orders the men out of bed for a recount inside the hut. Before the men assemble, Tsesar gives Ivan some biscuits, a piece of sausage, and two lumps of sugar from a bag of food. Ivan then hides Tsesar's bag for him so that no one takes it during the recount. The men line up on one side of the hut and in a corridor. After the count, Ivan is among the first to get back in bed. When Tsesar comes back, Ivan passes down the bag to him. When Alyoshka returns, Ivan notices how pleasant he is to everyone even though he never profits by his behavior, the narrator says. Ivan gives him a biscuit, then samples the sausage. How good it tastes—real meat.Before going to sleep, Ivan reviews the day, deciding that everything went well for him. It was "almost a happy day," he thinks. . Structure......Solzhenitsyn presents the novel in episodes, one leading into the next, without chapters or section divisions. However, there are scenery shifts and time divisions. The scenes take place inside the camp mess hall, inside the power plant, inside the parcels office, and inside Hut 7. The time divisions are as follows: Part 1: reveille, head counts, searches, breakfast, and work assignments; Part 2: the workday, with a lunch break; and Part 3: cessation of work, head counts, searches, supper, and various activities preceding lights out. ...The mesInhumanity of the Soviet GulagThe of the Soviet Gulag. In Ivan's labor camp, the Gulag system uses men as workhorses in severe weather conditions to help build the Soviet infrastructure and bolster the economy. Yet Soviet overseers provide the men only meager food rations and woefully substandard housing. Cold, hunger, and disease dog the inmates. Rigid restrictions limiting contact with the outside world isolate them from their family and friends. Punishment for minor infractions imperils their well-being. Books are forbidden. Meanwhile, sadistic overseers like Volkovoi sometimes beat the prisoners for no reason at all, and guards rob men of their dignity by addressing them by their numbers—Ivan as S-854, for example, or the Moldavian as K-460. InjusticeIvan carried out his duty as a soldier, fighting the Germans and later escaping after they captured him. But when he rejoined the Soviet army, his superiors accused him of having become a spy for the Germans—a false charge. Although Ivan is a fictional character, he represents many real-life persons including Solzhenitsyn—who suffered years of imprisonment even though they were innocent. Many of them died in prison. SurvivalThe will to survive remains strong in Ivan despite the harsh conditions of everyday life in the prison camp. For example, to earn money or extra food, he performs services for other inmates—everything from keeping a place in a long line to making shoes and slippers with a handmade knife. As a member of Gang 104, he works hard to help the group earn enough points to merit extra bread at the end of the day. Unlike Captain Buinovsky, he avoids provoking warders and guards by protesting maltreatment. Instead, he cleverly finds ways to circumvent them altogether, as he does when assigned to scrub a floor. To maintain his psychological well being, he does not dwell inordinately on the injustice that landed him in prison. In addition, he accepts the fact that exile could follow his release from prison. Through all his trials, he never gives up and avoids indulging in self-pity. Trust vs BetrayalIvan and many other members of Gang 104 trust one another and rely on one another to get by from day to day. Their leader, Tyurin, protects the members of the gang and, as Ivan observes, would never tattle on a member who apparently reports to authorities what he believes are suspicious activities or violations of rules. SurveillanceThe inmates are under almost constant surveillance and scrutiny. They are searched, counted, spied on, and observed from watchtowers. The camp is, in effect, a microcosm for the totalitarian Soviet state under Joseph Stalin. Waiting ..One of the most difficult tasks facing the prisoners is waiting. They wait in terrible cold to be counted or searched. They wait for the day far off when they will be released from prison. God's PresenceThe saintly Alyoshka prays whenever he has a spare moment. The fact that he occupies the same bunk as Ivan—their mattresses are parallel—suggests that God remains close to Ivan even though he lacks Alyoshka's fervidness. Although Ivan tells Alyoshka that he does not pray, he says a desperate prayer at the time of the evening body search, when a quard is on the verge of discovering the piece of hacksaw: "Oh, Lord, save me! Don't let me be put in the cells." A second later, another guard orders an end to the count. Group DynamicsThe Soviets group the inmates in gangs that work and live together. It is a shrewd and productive policy that motivates the members of the gangs to work hard to uphold the reputation of their comrades and to earn extra bread rations. . Climax......When Ivan lines up at the checkpoint upon his return from work at the power plant, he discovers that he had forgotten about the piece of hacksaw blade in his knee pocket. "If they caught him with that bit of blade and decided to classify it as a knife, he could get ten days in the cells," the narrator points out. The climax occurs in the next moment, when Ivan hides the blade in one of his mittens. He is holding the mittens in one hand while an elderly quard pats him down, checks his coat, then squeezed with it. One such squeeze on the other mitten, and he'd be in cells on 300 grams of bread a day and hot food once every three days. He imagined at that moment how enfeebled and hungry he would become and how difficult it would be to get back to his present condition of being neither starved nor properly fed.And the vital prayer surged up within him: "Oh, Lord, save me! Don't let me be put in the cells."All these thoughts passed through him while the warder squeezed the first mitten and reached out his hand to squeeze the one behind it. . . . But at that moment the voice of the warder in charge, anxious to be free as quickly as possible, was heard shouting to the guards:"Come on, bring up the men from the machine factory!" And, instead of taking Shukhov's other mitten, the old warder . . . waved him through. This lucky break is a significant moment in the novel. First, it maintains the morale boost Ivan derived from his hard work at the power station. Second, it keeps intact his contribution to Gang 104's record of accomplishment for the day, a record that earned Ivan and other gang members extra bread. Third, it enhances Ivan's chances for survival by allowing him to keep a tool that can make money for him and satisfy his need to feel useful. Fourth, it gives reason through the prayer he utters: "Oh, Lord save me!"—for Ivan to hope that there is a God who will come to his aid at crucial moments Examples of Symbols Ivan's Spoon: Individuality, personal accomplishment, ownership. Ivan had made the spoon himself from aluminum wire. Because it is one of a kind, it represents his uniqueness as a human being, as well as his ability to fend for himself. It also belongs to him, not the camp or the Communist state. Piece of Hacksaw Blade: Survival. Ivan gives Alyoshka a biscuit he received from Tsesar without expecting anything in return. His Christian charity is a step forward in his religious progress. Hammer: Labor, in particular labor associated with industrialization. The hammer bangs out reveille in the morning, alerting the prisoners that it is time to rise and get ready for work at the power plant or other locales in and around the camp. The national flag of the Soviet Union displayed a picture of a hammer and a sickle, the hammer representing factory and other industrial labor and the sickle representing farm work. Knife: Peaceful use of technology. Ivan does not use his knife as a weapon. He regards it as a useful tool. Camp HQ: The labor camp itself symbolizes the Soviet Union. The camp has overseers who oppress the people within its borders and do not let the people travel beyond those borders. Also, like the country itself, the camp has a variety of ethnic and national groups: Estonians, Ukainians, Russians. The camp has a variety of ethnic and national groups: Estonians, Latvians, Modavians, Ukainians, Russians. The camp has a variety of ethnic and national groups: Estonians, Latvians, Modavians, Ukainians, Russians. and internal conflicts. Among the external conflicts are these: prisoners vs overseers, prisoners vs the unjust Soviet system, prisoners vs the weather. Internal conflicts—those inside a person—include various prisoners vs the weather. Internal conflicts are these: prisoners vs the unjust Soviet system, prisoners vs the weather. Internal conflicts—those inside a person—include various prisoners vs the unjust Soviet system, prisoners vs the weather.In the scene in the office at the power station, Solzhenitsyn obliquely condemns Stalinism when the elderly prisoner, X-123, sharply criticizes film director Sergei Eisenstein for his glorious depiction of the title character in his motion picture Ivan the Terrible. Czar Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584) had instituted government reforms early in his reign. But later his rule became a reign of terror in which he seized land, enslaved peasants, exiled members of his Chosen Council, ordered the murders of the head of the Orthodox church and a prince chosen as a possible successor, and massacred citizens who were acquaintances of his suspected enemies. He even killed his own son after he defended his wife against Ivan's charge that she had dressed immodestly. ...Study Questions and Essay Topics1....Besides Ivan, who is the most admirable? Explain your answers. 2....Interview an inmate of a prison in your area about what a day in his or her life is like. Then write an informative essay entitled ." Before embarking on this assignment, obtain the permission of your parents (if you are under 18), your teacher, and the warden of the prison or his or her representative. 3....Write an essay that compares and contrasts Ivan Denisovich with Fetyukov. 4....Why does Ivan keep the piece of hacksaw blade "One Day in the Life of when he knows that its discovery by guards could land him in the dreaded cellblock? 5....What quality in Ivan does Gopchik bring out? 6....Identify three types of footwear Ivan wore during his imprisonment. 7....Should Fetyukov be pitied or despised? 8....Which poses the greatest threat to Ivan and other prisoners: the climate, the overseers, or the diet? 9....If you had lived in Solzhenitsyn's time, could you have survived a ten-year sentence in a Soviet labor camp? Explain why or why not.

