

# Alexander Pushkin Built the Foundation of Modern Russian Literature

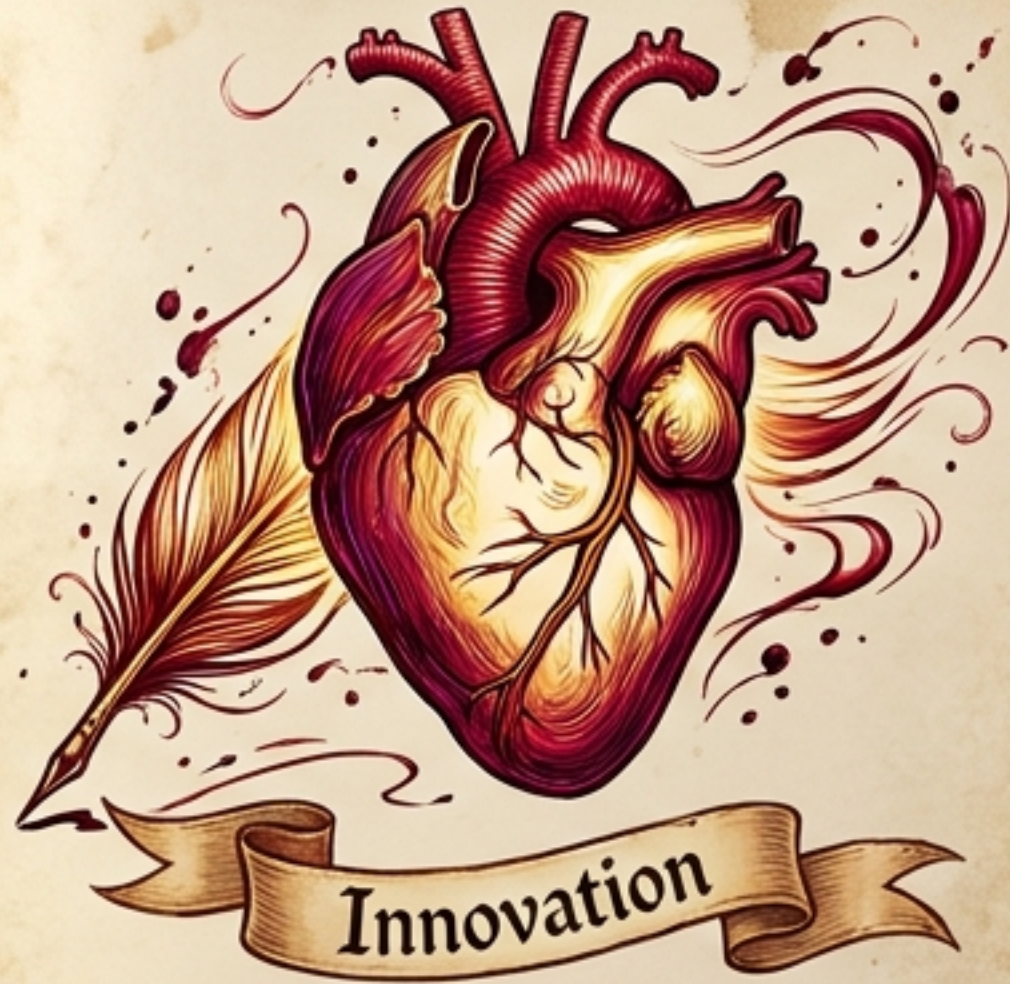
The man, the myth, and the masterpieces that taught a nation how to speak.



## Before Pushkin, Russian Literature Spoke with a Borrowed Voice



Dominated by French neoclassicism and German Romanticism. The language felt stiff, ornate, and trapped in artificiality.



Pushkin broke down the barrier between high poetry and colloquial speech. He gave the language an authentic, plain-spoken emotional voice.

Without Pushkin, there is no Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Chekhov.

# A Noble Insider Who Lived as a Byronic Outsider



**B**orn in 1799 into the Russian elite, receiving a highly privileged aristocratic education.

His great-grandfather, Abram Gannibal, was abducted from Africa (Cameroon) as a child and rose to become a general in Peter the Great's court.

Pushkin was fiercely proud of his African ancestry, writing an uncompleted novel about Gannibal titled *The Moor of Peter the Great*.

This dual identity gave him a unique perspective to critique the society to which he belonged.

# A Life Divided Between High Society and Political Rebellion

## The Rebel

**E**xiled by the Tsar for his Ode to Liberty. Befriended the Decembrist revolutionaries. Fought fiercely against state censorship.

## The Bon Vivant

**A** prominent figure in high society known for his humor, love affairs, and fierce defense of his personal honor.



**The Tragic End:** This volatility led to over 20 duel challenges. In 1837, at just 37 years old, Pushkin was fatally wounded in a duel defending his wife's reputation.

# The Linguistic Alchemy That Created a Modern Voice

**The Folk Idiom:**  
The richness and humor of oral peasant tales.



**Lived Speech:**  
The intimacy and rhythm of everyday conversation.



**Foreign Rules:**  
The stiff, borrowed formulas of European literature.



**The Pushkin Style**

His hallmark was the illusion of simplicity. He used this clear voice to explore the painful choice between **duty** and personal happiness.

# Eugene Onegin Explores the Clash Between Dreams and Reality



**Onegin:** Driven by cynicism and selfish desire.

**Lensky:** Driven by naive, innocent romanticism.

**Tatyana:** Driven by deep morality and loyalty.

Written over eight years in a unique 14-line verse structure, this novel is famously called an encyclopedia of Russian life. It establishes the ultimate victory of moral duty over selfish lust.

# The Bronze Horseman Pits the Individual Against the Empire



**Context:** Based on the catastrophic St. Petersburg river flood of 1824.

**The Conflict:** A poor clerk named Evgenii loses his fiancée in the flood. Driven to **madness**, he curses the statue of Tsar Peter the Great, which magically comes to life to chase him.

**The Theme:** A tragic struggle between the helpless individual, the power of the State, and the unstoppable force of the **elements**.

# Peasant Folklore Elevated into High Literary Art

**The Inspiration:** Pushkin drew upon the oral stories told by his childhood nurse and the servants on his family's estate.

**The Works:** Pieces like *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* and *The Golden Cockerel* feature magical creatures, witches (like Baba Yaga), and brave knights.



**The Genius:** He did not just repeat these tales; he transformed them into brilliant poetry filled with subtle **irony** and political undertones.

# Three Distinct Masterpieces Built on a Single Foundation



	Eugene Onegin	The Bronze Horseman	Fairy Tales
<b>Format:</b>	Verse Novel	Epic Narrative Poem	Poetic Folktales
<b>Core Conflict:</b>	Duty vs. Desire	Man vs. Empire	Magic vs. Human Flaws
<b>Tone:</b>	Melancholic & Realistic	Grand & Tragic	Playful & Ironic

# Pushkin's Influence Rippled Far Beyond the Written Word



**Music:** Inspired timeless operas by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who perfectly captured the psychological depth of Pushkin's characters.



**Ballet:** Adapted into world-renowned choreographies, such as **John Cranko's** deeply emotional ballet version of *Onegin*.



**The Soviet Cult:** In the USSR, he was turned into a massive **state symbol**, with his face heavily branded on matches, **perfumes**, and **crockery**.

# Reviewing the Architect and His Enduring Edifice

## His Life

A proud aristocrat  
with African roots.  
He lived as a  
political rebel and  
died in a tragic duel  
at age 37.

## His Style

He created the modern  
Russian language by  
mixing the elegance  
of classical poetry  
with everyday  
**colloquial** speech.

## His Themes

He wrote in many  
formats to explore the  
clash between the  
individual and society,  
and the choice between  
duty and happiness.

# Test Your Knowledge of Russia's Greatest Poet

1. Pushkin lived a long, peaceful life without any conflict.

(True / False)

2. Eugene Onegin is a novel written entirely in poetry.

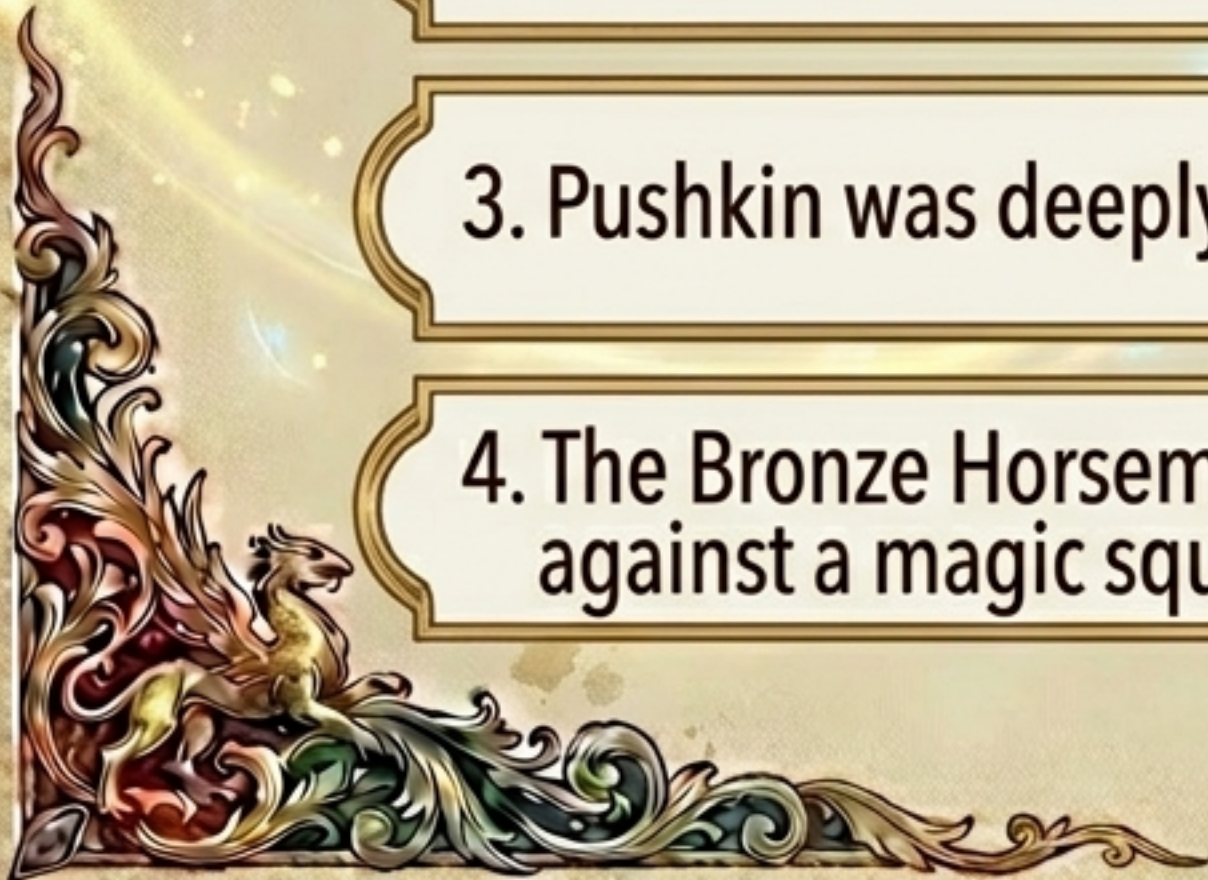
(True / False)

3. Pushkin was deeply ashamed of his African ancestry.

(True / False)

4. The Bronze Horseman tells the story of a man fighting against a magic squirrel.

(True / False)



# Think Deeper About the Architect's Legacy

Question 1: Why is Alexander Pushkin often called the "Architect" or "Father" of modern Russian literature?

Question 2: In *Eugene Onegin*, what is the main moral conflict that Tatyana faces at the end of the story?

# Check Your Understanding of Pushkin's Life and Work

❁ 1. **False** (He died at 37 in a duel).

❁ 2. **True** (It is a verse novel).

❁ 3. **False** (He was very proud of his ancestry).

❁ 4. **False** (It is about a man, a flood, and a statue).



Short Answer 1: He created the modern Russian language by removing **artificiality** and blending **colloquial** speech with classical elegance.

Short Answer 2: She must choose between her selfish **lust** (desire for Onegin) and her strict moral **duty** (loyalty to her husband).

