

GOETHE, THE SUFFERINGS OF YOUNG WERTHER -- STUDY IDEAS

What is Werther's basic character in the beginning? Would you call him "romantic?" Does he listen to his heart? unstable? How important is love to him? How does he fall in love? How does love affect him?

The ideal society depicted in the beginning of the novel. What is the social scene? What type of people does Werther admire and like to associate with? What age? What social class?

What does he think of polite, upper class society? Opinion of the aristocratic circles?

What is the image of Charlotte (Lotte) presented by the author? Is she a realistic character? a romantic ideal?

What is the image of nature in Werther? Is it related to God and religion? Is there a change/development in the description of nature from beginning to end? Does nature take on a different character? Does Werther's perception of it change?

Look at the significance of the changing literary ideals in the novel -- from Homer in the first section to the Ossian passage at the end.

Trace the stages of Werther's psychological evolution. What are his main feelings after the middle of the novel? What is its impact on his creativity? Does he become unstable? What to him is the meaning of suicide? What is the significance of the story of the despairing peasant? What does death mean to him at the end of the novel? Is he destroyed or is he saved?

Is Werther's suicide an act of liberation? an admission of defeat? or simply a great moving tragedy? Does the reader end by admiring Werther, feeling sorry for him, or does he inspire impatience?