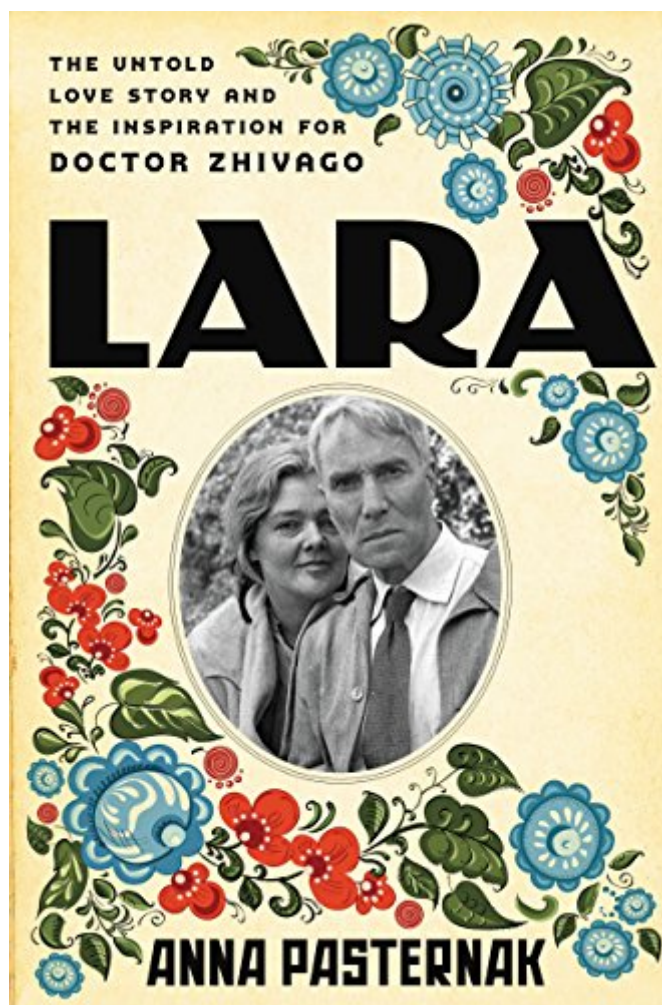


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# Lara: The Untold Love Story And The Inspiration For Doctor Zhivago



## Synopsis

The heartbreaking story of the love affair between *Doctor Zhivago*'s author, Boris Pasternak, and Olga Ivinskaya—the true tragedy behind the timeless classic, and a harrowing look at how the Russian government has treated dissidents. When Stalin came into power in 1924, the Communist government began persecuting dissident writers. Though Stalin spared the life of Boris Pasternak—whose novel-in-progress, *Doctor Zhivago*, was suspected of being anti-Soviet—he persecuted Boris's mistress, typist, and literary muse, Olga Ivinskaya. Boris's affair with Olga devastated the straitlaced Pasternaks, and they were keen to disavow Olga's role in Boris's writing process. Twice Olga was sentenced to work in Siberian labor camps, where she was interrogated about the book Boris was writing, but she refused to betray the man she loved. When Olga was released from the gulags, she assumed that Boris would leave his wife for her but, trapped by his family's expectations and his own weak will, he never did. Drawing on previously neglected family sources and original interviews, Anna Pasternak explores this hidden act of moral compromise by her great-uncle, and restores to history the passionate affair that inspired and animated *Doctor Zhivago*. Devastated that Olga suffered on his behalf and frustrated that he could not match her loyalty to him, Boris instead channeled his thwarted passion for Olga into the love story in *Doctor Zhivago*. Filled with the rich detail of Boris's secret life, Lara unearths a moving love story of courage, loyalty, suffering, drama, and loss, and casts a new light on the legacy of *Doctor Zhivago*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book tells the story about Boris Pasternak's relationship with Olga Invinskaya - the woman that was the model for the character Lara in his book, Dr. Zhivago. It appears that the author, Anna Pasternak (Boris Pasternak was her great uncle) had access to letters and other written material that told of Olga's and Boris's personal relationship and offered wonderful insight into Pasternak's personality. I LOVED the movie, Dr. Zhivago and I've also read the novel so I couldn't wait to read this book. The book, in my opinion, is well written and easy to read. It follows Boris's life chronologically and contains a mixture of narrative, correspondence, insights from his peers and his acquaintances from the literary world, as well as information from relatives. The book is very objective and does not steer toward putting Boris in a great light. It speaks of his faults, weaknesses, his treatment of Olga...yet it also speaks of his great talent as a poet and writer. There are photos in the book - all black and white - that are fascinating to look at. Throughout the entire book, it was obvious that the character of Dr. Zhivago was largely based on Pasternak and, of course, his great love for Lara was based on his relationship with Olga. The character Dr. Zhivago was a mild-mannered poet/doctor who didn't have the cojones to make a real decision regarding whether he should stay with his wife or leave his wife for Lara. That is exactly reflective of Boris Pasternak's personality. Pasternak was a self-centered egoist who thought that the world revolved around him, his wants, his needs.....and everyone else is secondary. After Olga was sent to the gulag for the first time, he had the power to call Stalin and ask him to intervene (Stalin had actually spoke with Pasternak on the phone at one time and they had a conversation about his poetry). But Pasternak was a wimp and, as a result, Olga spent close to 6 years in a gulag. Of course, Olga was a willing participant in his treatment of her so the two of them were perfect for each other. It covers - at length - how he came about to writing Dr. Zhivago and the problems he encountered in trying to get it published in the Soviet Union. This provides fabulous real insights into what it was like to live in the Soviet Union up to the time of Khrushchev. Ultimately, Pasternak had the wisdom to authorize an Italian publisher to publish the novel and that is what caused its ultimate success. If you have read Dr. Zhivago or have seen the movie, you will enjoy reading this backstory about the author and his "Lara" and his life behind the Iron Curtain.

I just finished reading *Lara*, written by Boris Pasternak's niece, Anna Pasternak. *Dr. Zhivago* had a strong effect on me when I first saw it as a soldier at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, during the Christmas break of 1967. It remains one of my favorite films to this day. But there is much that I did not know about *Dr. Zhivago* or its author. This book fills in many of those gaps. In many respects this book is a love story, but a true one. Boris Pasternak was a literary genius but he was also a very flawed man. But what is it to be human if it is not to be flawed? His love for Olga, the true *Lara*, was everlasting in his own way. Yet, the system that he was in, the pressures of the Soviet system, his own personality, his adamancy to do things his way, his fame and the revenge exacted on him make his love for Olga, painful, warming and ill fated, even more so than the film, *Dr. Zhivago*. I never read the book *Dr. Zhivago*: now I must do so!

I found it a fascinating glimpse into life in Russia during the World Wars, Stalin, and Lenin rules.

For years I have read the *New Yorker's* 4 weekly thumbnail reviews, often thought of buying one or the other, never did. But now, for the first time, I actually sent to after reading a brief *New Yorker* encapsulation. Having just finished reading "The Love and Wars of Lina Prokofiev," by Simon Morrison, the shattering story of Sergei Prokofiev's wife, I absolutely had to have Anna Pasternak's "*Lara*." Twice in my life I have sung in symphony-choral performances of Prokofiev's "*Alexander Nevsky*," both times coaching the choruses in Russian pronunciation. But little did I know how Lina Prokofiev spent 8 years in gulags, while her celebrity husband was helplessly unable to do anything on her behalf. Like Boris Pasternak's Olga Ivinskaya, Lina was cruelly interrogated at the dreaded Lubyanka prison in Moscow in 1948, the year before Olga's first arrest. She was incarcerated in Siberian gulags and - again like Olga - after Stalin's death Lina ended up in a Potma labor camp. No mention, but did their paths ever cross? I've now finished "*Lara*" and must say that Anna Pasternak has written a masterwork of research and literary enlightenment, putting us in touch with the real-life archetypes of Yuri and Lara in "*Doctor Zhivago*." I am left with a visceral feeling of devastation of what can happen to artistic genius in an atmosphere of tyrannical domination, where simply corresponding with a friend in a foreign country can lead to arrest and brutal incarceration for such an "act of treason." Devastating, yes, but gripping in every paragraph and chapter, the immense love, devotion, courage, and conflict of Boris and Olga. Kudos to Boris's granddaughter, Anna Pasternak!

After having seen the movie Dr. Zhivago at least twice a year for as long as I can remember, LARA was a must read book. Lara was full of facts from first hand acknowledge for the most part. Absolutely amazing the connections between Pasternak and the other Russian greats of poetry, writing, music etc. It is hard to believe the preserverance that it took for Pasternak to ever get this book published. The sad thing is that Dr, Zhivago is now out of print. (but available). Pasternaks' "Lara"'s love and loyalty to him was amazing. Pasternak had a mind of a genius, in his writing of Dr. Zhivago, but his loyalty was more or less to himself. This is probably one of the most interesting and detailed books giving you a look into the mind set of the Russian government during the war. It is hard to believe that Dr. Zhivago was finally published in the USA, having been translated by the Russian to English by the translators pretty much of his choice in 1958. A amazing book by Anna Pasternak. Beautifully written and oh so informative.

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