**The Nose Reading Guide**

**Title**: The Nose

**Author**: Nikolai Gogol

**Setting**: St. Petersburg, Russia, during the early 19th century

**Plot Summary**: In St. Petersburg, a barber named Ivan Jakovlevitch discovers a human nose in a loaf of bread, which belongs to Major Kovaloff, a pompous member of the Municipal Committee. The nose mysteriously detaches itself and takes on a life of its own, masquerading as a state councillor. After a series of absurd and surreal events, the nose is eventually returned to Kovaloff, who is overjoyed to have it back, though the bizarre incident leaves everyone puzzled.

**Major Characters:**

**1. Major Kovaloff:** A pompous and self-important member of the Municipal Committee who wakes up one morning to find his nose missing. He is obsessed with his appearance and social status, and his desperation to retrieve his nose drives the plot of the story.

**2. Ivan Jakovlevitch:** A barber who discovers Major Kovaloff's nose in a loaf of bread. He is described as a drunkard and a cynic, and his discovery sets off the chain of events in the story.

**3. Praskovya Osipovna:** Ivan Jakovlevitch's wife, who is horrified by the discovery of the nose and insists that her husband get rid of it immediately.

**4. The Nose:** The anthropomorphized nose of Major Kovaloff, which takes on a life of its own, masquerading as a state councilor and causing chaos in the city.

**5. Police Inspector**: A character who eventually finds the nose and returns it to Major Kovaloff, bringing a resolution to the bizarre situation.

**Themes:**

* **Identity and Social Status:** The story delves into how much physical appearance and social standing matter, as seen through Major Kovaloff's frantic efforts to get his nose back. His sense of self is so tied to his looks that without his nose, he feels like he's lost his place in society.
* **Absurdity and the Grotesque:** Gogol uses bizarre and grotesque elements to show how irrational and unpredictable life can be. The notion of a nose detaching itself and living independently is both absurd and unsettling, highlighting the surreal nature of the tale.
* **Deception and Reality:** The story blurs the boundaries between what's real and what's illusion, making readers question reality. The nose appearing as a state councilor and the various rumors about its whereabouts add layers of deception and confusion.
* **Critique of Bureaucracy:** By portraying a nose in a government position, Gogol satirizes the inefficiency and absurdity of bureaucratic systems. The story underscores the ridiculousness of social hierarchies and the often arbitrary nature of authority.
* **Human Folly:** The characters' reactions to the bizarre events, especially Major Kovaloff's fixation on his appearance and the public's gullibility, highlight the folly and irrationality of human nature. The story humorously critiques how people can become obsessed with trivial matters.

**Review Questions**: Answering the following questions will increase your comprehension of the short story. Respond to these questions by writing the answers in your notebook. *Some of the questions require you to express an opinion or describe your reaction to events in the short story. In these instances, there is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will vary.* The answers to factual questions are included in this reading guide.

1. Based on Major Kovaloff's reaction to losing his nose, predict what you think he will do next to try to get it back?
2. Analyze the quote, "Never mind my health. Tell me, my friend, why you were standing on the bridge." What does this reveal about the police inspector’s character and his approach to Ivan Jakovlevitch?
3. How would you describe Major Kovaloff’s character based on his actions and concerns throughout the story to someone who has not read the story? What does this tell you about his personality? Do you like the character of Major Kovaloff? Explain your thinking.
4. How does the setting of St. Petersburg contribute to the overall atmosphere of the story? How does it enhance the surreal events that occur? How do you think a different setting would impact the atmosphere of the story?
5. How does the discovery of the nose in the loaf of bread set the stage for the events that follow? What role does this bizarre occurrence play in the story?
6. Gogol is known for his humor. Which part of the story did you find the most amusing and why? How does Gogol use humor to convey his message? Include at least one quote to support your thinking.
7. Gogol used a few literary techniques to convey the absurdity of his story. Choose the technique you think made the biggest impact, include the technique, where in the story you saw it being used, the impact it had, and why you selected it.
8. What does the story suggest about the absurdity and unpredictability of life? Provide examples from the text to support your answer. Do you agree with the story’s suggestion about the absurdity and unpredictability of life? Explain your thinking.
9. What message do you think Gogol was trying to convey through this story? Do you think he was successful in conveying that message? Did the message resonate with you personally? Explain your thinking.

**Answers to Review Questions:**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. This quote shows that the police inspector is straightforward and focused on the situation. He brushes off the small talk about his health, making it clear that he isn't interested in idle chatter or distractions. This direct approach suggests that he is a serious, no-nonsense person who puts his responsibilities first.
3. \*Answers will vary
4. \*Answers will vary
5. The discovery of the nose in the loaf of bread kicks off all the strange events that happen in this story. This weird event sets the tone for the whole story, mixing everyday life with the absurd and letting the reader know that they're stepping into a world where the usual rules don’t apply.
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary