

personal english



Character #27

Ivan the Fool

Ivan the Fool (a.k.a. **Ivan the Ninny**) is a stock character of **lucky fool** who appears in Russian folklore and embodies the simpleton blessed with uninterrupted good luck. Ivan is described as a likeable fair-haired and blue-eyed youth. The approximate setting of Ivan The Fool's adventures is the **15th or 16th century Russia**. When he appears in stories, Ivan The Fool is usually described as either a **peasant** or a **young man of poor descent**. He is usually the youngest of **three brothers** who appear to be much smarter than him, yet they end up being unsympathetic and envious of him on account of his good luck. Unlike typical heroes, Ivan's simplicity and lack of guile always turn out to help him whenever in distress. He is typically described as listening more to his heart than to his mind, so he easily forgets offence and tries to help others even at his own expense. His **naivety** and **generosity** cause him fight villains, make friends, win princesses' hearts; ultimately he is rewarded with half a kingdom or such similar **accolades**. The moral of these stories is that **Ivan The Fool actually is no fool at all**: he is merely perceived as such by others because he is surrounded by a **cynical and greedy society**. In effect, in the past the Russian word "**Аыпак**" (**fool**) did not have any negative connotation, and was used to refer to the youngest son in the family. It was only later that it obtained a new meaning, from which the ambiguity arose. Ivan the Fool can therefore be rightfully viewed as one of the sources of inspiration behind **The Idiot by Dostoevsky**.



Click on the Picture for a **VIDEO** on Ivan the Fool