BEFORE YOU READ

About the Selection
Leo Tolstoy is considered one of the most important of all Russian writers. Born in 1828, he was orphaned by the age of nine. *War and Peace*, his longest book, took six years to write. The huge historic novel studies Russian society in the early 1800s. It focuses on the histories of five aristocratic families during Russia's war with Napoleon Bonaparte, leader of France. Tolstoy died in 1910, leaving a will relinquishing all rights to his work.

Reader's Dictionary
- indolent: inactive; lazy
- indifferent: uncaring; uninterested
- rampart: fort or barricade
- conflagration: great fire
- Kremlin: fortress housing the Russian government
- sonorous: booming

Guided Reading
In September 1812, Napoleon's French Army entered the city of Moscow. Before the army's entry, the Russian people had fled after setting the city on fire. The excerpt below describes the experience of Pierre, a Russian soldier taken prisoner by the French, as he walks through the ruins of the city. Read the excerpt, and then answer the questions that follow.

*War and Peace*
by Leo Tolstoy

On the eighth of September a very important officer, judging by the respect shown him by the guards, came into the coach house. This officer, probably someone on the staff, with a list in his hand, called the roll of all the Russians there, designating Pierre as "the man who will not give his name." With an indolent, indifferent glance at the prisoners, he ordered the officer on guard to have them cleaned up and decently dressed before taking them to the Marshal.

An hour later a squad of soldiers appeared and Pierre, with the thirteen others, was taken to the Devichy Field. It was a bright, sunny day after a rain, and the air was exceptionally clear. The smoke did not hang low, as on the day when Pierre had been taken from the guardhouse on the Zubovsky Rampart, but rose in columns into the pure atmosphere. The flames of the conflagration were no longer seen, but columns of smoke rose on every side, and all Moscow, as far as he could see, was one vast, charred ruin. There were devastated areas in every quarter, with only stoves, chimney stacks, or the blackened walls of stone houses left standing.

Pierre gazed at the ruins, unable to recognize districts he had been familiar with. Here and there he saw churches that had remained intact. The Kremlin, which was not destroyed, gleamed white in the distance with its towers and the belfry of Ivan the Great. Close by, the
dome of the Novodevichy Convent glittered brightly, and the sonorous pealing of the bells reminded Pierre that it was Sunday, and the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin. But there seemed to be no one to celebrate this holiday: everywhere were charred ruins, and the few Russians they encountered were ragged, frightened-looking people who attempted to hide at the sight of the French.


✅ Literary Response and Analysis

1. **Sequencing**  What happened when the French Army arrived at Moscow?

2. **Explaining**  Which buildings survived the fire, and why might that be significant?

3. **Contrasting**  How does Pierre’s description of the Russian people he meets contrast with his description of the city buildings?