

A Marriage Proposal



A play by Anton Chekhov

About the writer

- Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904) was a Russian dramatist and short story writer. He was born at Rostov-a town described by him as 'dirty and dull with deserted streets and a lazy population'.
- During the mid-1880s, Chekhov practiced as a physician and began to publish serious works of fiction. Chekhov also wrote works for the theatre during this period. His earliest plays were short farces; however, he soon developed his signature style, which was a unique mix of comedy and tragedy. Plays such as *Ivanov* (1887) and *The Wood Demon* (1889) told stories about educated men of the upper classes coping with debt, disease and inevitable disappointment in life. Of his full length plays *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters* and *Uncle Vanya* are world acclaimed.



Plot and theme of the play

- A Marriage Proposal is a one-act play. It is a delightful comedy bordering on a farce. The plot revolves around a young landowner who proposes the daughter of his neighbour. All the characters are willing to arrange the marriage but the proposal remains unmade.
- The play is based on the theme of human greed and vanity, and the way in which it blinds human beings to their best interests.



The endless arguments on meadows and dogs

- Ivan Vassiliyitch Lomov is thirty-five years old landowner and his neighbour Stepan Stepanovitch Tschubukov has an unmarried daughter Natalia. She is twenty-five at the time of the play's setting. This fact suggests that Lomov's motivation is not romantic, but practical. Underscoring this idea is Lomov's reluctance to say anything in this romantic vein to Natalia; instead, he speaks of the meadows, suggesting that the possession of land is foremost in his mind. Lomov speaks at length of property, thus indicating that marriage is symbolic of economic considerations, reinforcing the theme of marriage as contract for economic security. From the possession of meadows they shift their argument to dogs due to which the proposal remains unmade.



And the arguments cont...

- The main character, Ivan Vassiliyitch Lomov, is prone to anxiety, stubbornness, and nervousness. As a result of these flaws he becomes a nervous wreck when he tries to propose marriage.
- Stepan Stepanovitch Tschubukov owns land next to Ivan. A man in his early seventies, he gladly grants permission to Ivan, but soon calls off the engagement once an argument over property ensues.
- Natalya Stepanovna is the female character in this play. She is a good housekeeper, hard working, jovial and welcoming, yet stubborn, proud and possessive, just like her male counterparts. She dominates Lomov in arguments and Tschubukov arranges their marriage ignoring the fact that such arguments will increase after marriage.

