The Lady with the Pet Dog Study Guide

The Lady with the Pet Dog by Anton Chekhov

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" was published in 1899, during Chekhov's two-year stay at the seaside health resort at Yalta, where he had been sent because of his tuberculosis. Though he found Yalta painfully boring, he produced many of his finest stories during that time, including "Gooseberries," "The Darling," "On Official Business," and "The Lady with the Pet Dog," his most famous story. Well received by audiences when it was published, the reputation of this tale of adultery and discovery of true love has only grown over time. Many critics believe that Chekhov drew upon Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina,* an epic novel with an adulterous heroine, by painting a similarly complex moral and emotional portrait in only a few pages. Chekhov was able to speak volumes in a few words by his selection of gestures or details. Unlike Chekhov's contemporaries—most notably Tolstoy and Dostoevsky—who were preoccupied with sweeping historical, philosophical, and religious themes, Chekhov was interested in the smallest moments of human interest. While Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were driven by profound moral convictions, Chekhov was noted for his cool objectivity. He was reluctant to moralize, adhering to his own conviction that it is less important to moralize over a horse thief or an adulterer than it is to understand them. In "The Lady with the Pet Dog," Chekhov neither romanticizes nor condemns the illicit love affair between Gurov and Anna. He simply presents it, but with such clarity and perception that the reader recognizes the profundity of what the characters experience and is entirely persuaded by their reality.

Author Biography

Born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia, Chekhov, the third of six children, was the grandson of a serf who bought his freedom. His father owned a small grocery business which went bankrupt, leaving the family impoverished. Chekhov managed to earn a scholarship to study medicine at the University of Moscow, and by 1884 he went into practice. By this time Chekhov had published humorous sketches in magazines in order to support his family. He supported his mother and sisters for many years, turning out sketches and stories with astonishing speed while also practicing medicine.

Famous for the profound influence of his plays on the course of modern drama, Chekhov perhaps exerted an even greater influence on the modern short story. While he is known for his sympathy for and insight into the human condition, his stories ultimately exhibited dispassionate emotional balance, rigorous stylistic control, and a rational, ironic, and sometimes cynical attitude toward human relationships and aspirations. It is Chekhov's cool, detached artfulness that distinguished his work from the confessional style of Dostoevsky, the moral fervor of Tolstoy, and the absurdist fantasies of Gogol.

Critics note that Chekhov wrote "The Lady with the Pet Dog"—the story of a middle-aged man's belated discovery of true love—shortly before he himself married actress Olga Knipper in 1901. Their love was bittersweet, as he did not expect to live long. Some critics point out that just as Gurov felt bored and disgusted by the triviality of Moscow society in the absence of Anna, Chekhov felt miserable among high society at a health resort in Yalta (where he composed the story while seeking a tuberculosis cure) because he was separated from Olga. Like Gurov, Chekhov loved the company of women and seemed to share a special sympathy with them but simultaneously remained somewhat detached.

Chekhov was influenced by Tolstoy's ideas on ascetic morality and nonresistance to evil. He especially became more actively concerned about human suffering after visiting and caring for patients at a penal colony on the island of Sakhalin. In one of his most famous stories, "Ward Six," Chekhov depicts a doctor's inner journey from philosophical detachment to deep human sympathy, which resembles Gurov's journey from a thoughtless and cynical lady's man to a deeply sympathetic lover in "The Lady with the Pet Dog."

Chekhov's first major work as a dramatist, *The Seagull,* was produced in 1896 by the Moscow Art Theater. Although the first performance of this unprecedentedly realistic and "uneventful" play caused the outraged audience to riot, it was soon appreciated as a new and profound kind of theater and was followed by *Uncle Vanya, The Cherry Orchard,* and *The Three Sisters.* Chekhov died from tuberculosis in 1904 in a Black Forest health spa.

Plot Summary

Parts I and II

Dmitry Gurov is vacationing at a seaside spa in Yalta without his family. He is less than forty years old, but was married young and already has a twelve-year-old daughter and two sons. He finds his wife to be somewhat harsh and not particularly intelligent. Although Gurov is generally at ease among women, he is somewhat dismissive of the sex in general, referring to them as the "inferior race," though he could not live a day without them. A new visitor to Yalta catches his eye—a young lady who walks her white pomeranian. He imagines a dalliance with her but is determined to keep it light and frivolous.

Gurov meets the young lady one evening by playing with her dog. He learns that her name is Anna Sergeyevna and that she is married but not travelling with her husband. Anna and Gurov take a walk by the sea, and later in his hotel room he remembers her softness, timidity, and beauty. She is very different from his wife, yet there is something pathetic about her, he thinks.

A week passes and they go together one sultry evening to greet the steamer. After the dock empties, they go back to Anna's room and make love. Afterwards, Anna weeps, fearing that Gurov will no longer respect her. She bemoans the way she has deceived herself, not only in Yalta but throughout her married life. Her husband, a minor official in a small city, is a "flunkey," she cries, and her life a disappointment. As she weeps, Gurov, bored and a little annoyed, munches on a slice of watermelon. He does not see why they should make a tragedy out of their dalliance. They go out at sunrise to the beach at Oreanda, sit on a bench, and watch the sea. Gurov is moved by the scene, thinking about how everything in the world is beautiful when reflected upon—everything except what people do when they forget the lofty aims of existence and their own human worth.

They spend the rest of their time at Yalta together, taking midnight trips to waterfalls or Oreanda, and are always impressed by the scenery.

When it is time to go home, Gurov feels remorseful. He does not think that Anna was happy with him. He had been warm but also ironical, keeping things light and treating her with the arrogance of a happy male almost twice her age. She had called him kind and high-minded, and he feels that he has deceived her. He now believes the affair to be over.

Part III

Back in Moscow, Gurov exults in the winter scenery which reminds him of his youth, and enjoys the distractions of Muscovite society. He cannot, however, get Anna out of his mind, and begins to find himself disgusted with frivolous and repetitive conversation in

clubs and restaurants with scenes of drunkenness and gluttony. One night he tries to tell an acquaintance about Anna, but the man only wants to talk about the fish they just ate.

Obsessed with constant thoughts of Anna, Gurov is now determined to find her. He tells his wife he must go to St. Petersburg but instead goes off to Anna's provincial city. He frequently watches her house, catching only the sight of her pomeranian, let out for a walk by the maid. He paces his provincial hotel room, wondering what he is doing in Anna's city, and then goes that night to the local opera, where he sees Anna and her "flunkey" husband. Anna is horrified by the sight of him and tries to flee, but he pursues her into a dark and remote corridor. Anna tells Gurov that she misses him and promises to visit him in Moscow.

Part IV

Back in Moscow, Gurov walks his daughter to school through the snow. He cannot stop thinking about Anna as they are talking, for he is on his way to a rendezvous. They have been seeing each other regularly in Moscow every two or three months. When he arrives at her hotel room she is pale and unhappy from waiting for him. Their situation is growing unbearable: They love each other like husband and wife, and he feels a profound compassion for her. Despite his intention that he and Anna would have a frivolous affair, he finds that he has fallen in love for the first time in his life. He catches sight of himself in the mirror and sees himself as a middle-aged man whose hair is starting to turn gray. He thinks that he has lost his looks, and that Anna, too, will soon begin to fade and wither. Normally logical and rational when Anna is sad, Gurov now only wants to be sincere and tender with her. He tells her that they will one day find some way to live openly, and when she asks him how, he clutches her head, speaking of how he believes that although a rough time is coming up for them, one day in the not too distant future they would be together.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Dmitri Dmitritch Gurov has been on vacation at Yalta, the seaside vacation town, for a fortnight when he hears of a new arrival. The young, fair-haired woman of medium height wears a *béret* and has a white Pomeranian dog with her. She is often alone, and the other vacationers refer to her as "the lady with the dog."

Gurov rationalizes that if she is here alone, without her husband, then he should make her acquaintance. Dmitri Gurov is under forty, but he already has three children: a twelve-year-old daughter and two school-age boys. He also has a wife whom he despises, describing her as "unintelligent, narrow, inelegant, was afraid of her, and did not like to be at home." He is often unfaithful to her and almost always speaks ill of women in general, referring to them as "the lower race."

However, while Gurov does not enjoy his wife's company and dislikes women in general, he finds that he cannot go for more than two days without the society of "the lower race." He does not enjoy the company of men. He feels free and easy with women, and understands how to attract them and bend them to his will.

Gurov has the uncanny ability to forget all his bad experiences with women, when he has shrugged them off and they have turned hysterical on him. Every time he meets a new woman, he is ready for his next amusing encounter.

The lady with the dog is no exception. One evening, she takes the table next to him as he dines in the gardens. Gurov beckons to the dog, which comes closer and growls at him. "He doesn't bite," the lady says, blushing. They enjoy an amusing, lighthearted conversation and walk together after dinner. She learns that he works in a bank and has two houses in Moscow. He learns that she has been married for two years, and that her husband may be joining her shortly. Her name is Anna Sergeyevna.

In his hotel room that night, he ponders her youth, her slender neck and her lovely grey eyes. He is certain that they will meet the next day. He concludes, as he falls asleep, that "there's something pathetic about her, anyway."

Chapter 1 Analysis

Dmitri Gurov is a contradiction. He despises women and speaks of their inferiority at every opportunity. However, he is also most comfortable in their company, feeling uncommunicative and cold in the company of men. He can only truly be free in the company of women, where he feels superior.

How does this reflect on him, the author pointedly asks? The obvious answer is that he is insecure and only able to think of the right thing to say when he is not challenged in any way..

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

A week has passed since Gurov and the lady with the dog have become acquainted. One evening, they go to the *groyne* together, the harbor, to watch the evening steamer come in. They watch the new arrivals disembark, and as the crowd begins to disperse, he puts his arms around her and kisses her passionately. They disengage, breathless, and walk quickly toward her hotel. When they reach her hotel room, Gurov looks at her and begins to remember the women he has had in the past. There are some that are good-natured and cheerful lovers, and some like his wife who are hysterical and without passion in their love.

Anna is different from these women. She is still extremely young and inexperienced. As a result, she agonizes over her fall from her role as dutiful, faithful wife to "the woman who was a sinner."

Her first words after they have made love are, "It's wrong. You will be the first to despise me now." Rather than answer her, Gurov cuts himself a slice from the watermelon on the table and begins to eat it slowly. They sit in silence for at least half an hour, Gurov eating watermelon, and Anna looking extremely unhappy.

Finally, Gurov breaks the torturous silence. "How could I despise you? You don't know what you are saying." "God forgive me," Anna replies, her eyes filling with tears. "You seem to feel you need to be forgiven," Gurov replies. "Forgiven?" she says wonderingly. "No. I am a bad, low woman; I despise myself and don't attempt to justify myself. It's not my husband but myself I have deceived. And not only just now; I have been deceiving myself for a long time. My husband may be a good, honest man, but he is a flunkey! I don't know what he does there, what his work is, but I know he is a flunkey! I was twenty when I was married to him. I have been tormented by curiosity; I wanted something better. 'There must be a different sort of life,' I said to myself. I wanted to live! To live, to live! . . . I was fired by curiosity . . . you don't understand it, but, I swear to God, I could not control myself; something happened to me: I could not be restrained. I told my husband I was ill, and came here. . . . And here I have been walking about as though I were dazed, like a mad creature; . . . and now I have become a vulgar, contemptible woman whom any one may despise."

Gurov is bored by her outburst, but he tries his best to comfort her. After a while, she does feel comforted, and soon they are both laughing again. They leave and drive to Oreanda in a cab. There, they sit and look at the sea, each with their own private thoughts. As dawn breaks, they decide that it is time to return to Yalta.

After that, Gurov and Anna meet each day at noon, eat lunch and dinner, take long walks and admire the majesty of the sea together. Anna begins to complain that she sleeps badly and is troubled by jealousy and by her suspicion that he does not respect

her sufficiently. He kisses her passionately in broad daylight, daring anyone who knows them to see them, and tells her that she is beautiful and fascinating.

The lovers expect Anna's husband to come any day, but only a letter arrives. It details his health problems and his desire that his wife come home as soon as possible. Anna Sergeyevna leaves immediately. Gurov goes with her to the train station, and she leaves his life as abruptly as she entered it. He muses that, like the others, only a memory remains of this episode. He is uncharacteristically melancholy and slightly remorseful. He knows she had not been happy with him. She recognized the irony in his affection for her, and all of the good traits she had believed in were different from his real character. He had unintentionally deceived her. He decides it is time to go north, and soon he is home in Moscow.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The Lady with the Dog is, at heart, a dark tale about a dark world inhabited by lecherous chauvinists and naïve youths. It is a tale of regret, tortured love and deceit. However, there are moments of light. The night Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna spend together at Oreanda watching the sea on the seat by the church is one of those moments. It is a night with a stillness so profound that it is reminiscent of a time when there was no town of Oreanda and suggests that there will be a time when there is nothing again. "And in this constancy, in this complete indifference to the life and death of each of us, there lies hid, perhaps, a pledge of our eternal salvation, of the unceasing movement of life upon earth, of unceasing progress towards perfection. Sitting beside a young woman who in the dawn seemed so lovely, soothed and spellbound in these magical surroundings -- the sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky -- Gurov thought how in reality everything is beautiful in this world when one reflects: everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget our human dignity and the higher aims of our existence."

These few moments of happiness echo the snatched moments of happiness that Gurov and Anna have throughout the story. It is even reminiscent of his method of courtship, which features brief, passionate kisses snatched when nobody is looking amidst a world of "idle, well-dressed, well-fed people."

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Gurov returns to Moscow and again embraces his elite Moscow existence. He reads the right newspapers, entertains the right people and goes to the right places and parties. He is certain that the image of Anna Sergeyevna will be gone within a month, relegated to a little-used part of his memory with his other lady friends. Surprisingly, Anna's touching smile has only grown more vivid in his mind's eye after a month. She is with him everywhere, and her image becomes clearer and more lovely than it had been the day after they had separated.

Gurov is tormented with the need to confide these new feelings in someone. One evening, after supper at the doctors' club with a friend, he remarks suddenly, "If only you knew what a fascinating woman I made the acquaintance of in Yalta!" The friend says nothing. He gets into his sledge and is driving away when he turns around and shouts, "Dmitri Dmitritch! You were right this evening: the sturgeon was a bit too strong!"

Gurov is appalled at his friend's mundane comment in the light of the mounting passion that grows daily in his heart. He sees the triviality, repetition and boredom of his life. He feels as though he is in a madhouse or a prison and does not sleep all night. He is tired of work and his family, and he has no desire to go anywhere or do anything. During the December holidays, he prepares to take a journey. He tells his wife that he is going to do something in the interests of a young friend, and he sets off.

Gurov reaches the town in the morning and checks into a shoddy, uncomfortable hotel. He asks the hotel porter for the address of the Von Diderits. When he reaches the house, he doesn't know what to do. He recognizes the possibility that the husband might be home and doesn't want to enter unannounced. He decides to pace the street to see if Anna Sergeyevna comes out. After a while, the door opens and the small white Pomeranian emerges. Gurov's heart begins to pound, but the dog is followed by the maid. Gurov becomes angry at the hopelessness of the situation and goes home to bed, irritated.

After sleeping all afternoon, Gurov leaves for dinner and sees a poster for "The Geisha," which is to debut that very night. Thinking that Anna will probably attend such an event, Gurov goes to the theater early and watches as people pour in the entrance. Anna arrives, and Gurov's heart contracts.

A tall, stooping young man with side-whiskers enters and sits beside Anna. It is her husband, and although he is a flunkey, Gurov feels a rush of bitter feeling course through his body. The flunkey goes to the lobby during the first interval, and Anna stays in her stall. Gurov gathers his courage and goes to her. "Good evening," he says to her, in a trembling voice. She looks up and her face turns pale. She looks as if she has seen a ghost and is struggling not to faint.

Gurov follows as Anna gets up to go to the door. They walk through the throngs of people until they get to a deserted stairwell. She seems to be in shock when she turns to him. She is unable to listen to him and says how unhappy she has been since they parted. She has thought of nothing but him. She questions him repeatedly why he has come, as if in a trance. Gurov is suddenly seized with an irresistible desire to kiss her and does so. She is horrified and pushes him away. She begs him to go, but she promises to see him in Moscow.

Chapter 3 Analysis

When Gurov sees Anna for the first time since they parted, he understands clearly "that for him there was in the whole world no creature so near, so precious, and so important to him; she, this little woman, in no way remarkable, lost in the provincial crowd, with a vulgar lorgnette in her hand, filled his whole life now, was his sorrow and his joy, the one happiness that he now desired for himself, and to the sounds of the inferior orchestra, of the wretched provincial violins, he thought how lovely she was."

He recognizes her faults, and recognizes that she is not the most beautiful woman, nor the most intelligent woman, nor the richest woman, nor even the most interesting woman that he has ever been with. However, he sees something special in her that others do not see. In the same way, she had seen something unique in him through his pretenses, grey hair and flaws.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Anna begins to visit Gurov in Moscow. She tells her husband that she goes to consult a doctor about an internal complaint. Her husband believes her and does not believe her. It does not matter much to Anna.

One day, Gurov takes his daughter to school on his way to see Anna. It occurs to him the he has two lives. One is open, seen and known, and the other is secret. He realizes that he does everything deceitfully in his unconcealed "true" life to conceal the truth that his secret life is the real him.

Gurov reaches Anna's hotel, and when she lets him in she is crying. He sits down in an armchair to wait out her emotional outburst. He rings for tea as she cries bitterly from "the miserable consciousness that their life was so hard for them." He begs her to stop, realizing perhaps for the first time that this love of theirs would not soon be over. He tries to comfort her, and then sees himself in the mirror behind her. He sees how grey his hair is and how much plainer he has become in the past couple of years. He wonders why Anna loves him so much. He feels a profound compassion, possibly the first true feelings of love for a woman he has ever had. He tenderly encourages her to stop crying and assures her that they will think of a plan.

They talk all night, and though they don't find a solution, they both feel that a solution can be found. Once they found it, "a new and splendid life would begin; and it was clear to both of them that they had still a long, long road before them, and that the most complicated and difficult part of it was only just beginning."

Chapter 4 Analysis

It is an example of the author's irony that neither Gurov nor Anna actually lie to their respective spouses when they give their excuses to see each other. Anna tells her flunkey husband that she must go to Moscow to consult a doctor for an internal complaint, . This internal complaint is obviously a thinly disguised case of lovesickness. Gurov's ambiguous "to do something in the interests of a young friend" points to Anna, and to his arrogance. He is thinking of his renewed affair with Anna as being in her "interests."

Perhaps this deception is new for Anna, but Gurov's character, while not an outright liar, certainly conceals the truth. He even admits this to himself. "He always seemed to women different from what he was, and they loved in him not himself, but the man created by their imagination, whom they had been eagerly seeking all their lives; and afterwards, when they noticed their mistake, they loved him all the same."

Gurov finds true love only when he is old and grey-haired. He has no way to conceal his age nor his vices, nor the desire to do so. At the end of the story, he begins to feel his age and mortality, but he also realizes that he is experiencing pure love for somebody else for the first time. He feels a love that is compassionate and real, and he realizes that, contrary to what his appearance tells him, he still has a long road before him that he will hopefully travel with the love of his life.

Characters

Dmitry Dmitrich Gurov

While staying at a seaside resort, Gurov engages himself in an adulterous affair that changes his life. He is under forty, married, and has children. His parents "found a wife for him" when he was only in his second year of college, but he feels that she is unintelligent and severe. When he tries to hint that he is in love with another, she tells him that the part of a lover "doesn't suit him." Although Gurov attracts women easily, he regards them as "the inferior race," but "couldn't live a day without them." When he meets Anna, he wants only a casual dalliance. He knows from "really bitter experience" that love affairs always become complex and painful, but he tries this time to believe that an affair between he and Anna can be simply a charming diversion. During the affair, Gurov remains somewhat aloof, as evidenced by his munching on watermelon as Anna weeps. But back in Moscow, he cannot forget her. He is disgusted by Moscow society and goes to Anna's city to find her. It is unlike Gurov to behave in such an impulsive, romantic way, but he realizes that he has finally found true love. He resolves to live openly with Anna, though this means sacrificing everything. He has come a long way from being a casual seducer.

Anna Sergeyevna

Anna Sergeyevna is a young woman of twenty, unhappily married to a minor small-town official whom she refers to as a "flunkey." She is timid and soft spoken and feels remorse as soon as she and Gurov have made love. She says that it is not her husband she has deceived but herself, for she persuaded herself that she loved her husband when she did not, and she married too young because she was driven by a passionate curiosity and a desire "to live." Anna loves Gurov, and recognizes good qualities in him which he fails to see himself, but the affair makes her unhappy because she feels guilty and knows that their love is impossible. When Gurov comes to visit her in her small town, she is horrified, and instead visits him in Moscow, waiting miserably in her hotel room for long stretches at a time. She is often miserable and feels hopelessly trapped by her situation.

Themes

Morals and the Meaning of Life

Although Gurov lightly enters into an adulterous love affair with Anna that soon turns painful and complicated, it would be misleading to say that the main theme of "The Lady with the Pet Dog" is one of moral corruption or sin. In fact, it is through this adulterous affair that Gurov discovers his humanity and even his moral center. Gurov has always taken women for granted and has treated them without compassion or respect. During the course of his affair with Anna, however, he becomes more and more concerned about the consequences of his actions. Chekhov's treatment of morality is complex; he is not conventionally moralistic, yet his story suggests a strong personal morality. Gurov and Anna truly love each other, and their bad marriages are unfortunate aspects of their lives. Little sympathy or consideration is offered to the respective spouses of the adulterous couple. Anna grieves as soon as they have made love, but more because she is worried about what Gurov will think of her than because she feels that she has betrayed her husband: "It is not my husband I have deceived," she believes, "but myself." Gurov errs in thinking that their affair is unimportant, but this is not so much a moral error as an underestimation of his own moral character. He learns that he is not the cynical lover that he thought he was and suffers terribly for having placed Anna in an unhappy situation.

If Chekhov posits moral values here, they are such values as honesty, seriousness, and true love. Deception more than infidelity causes Anna and Gurov to suffer, and at the end of the story they know that they must make painful and difficult decisions which will allow them to live together openly and honestly. After he becomes involved with Anna, Gurov discovers that "everything that was of interest and importance to him, everything that was essential to him, everything about which he felt sincerely and did not deceive himself . . . was going on concealed from others; while all that was false . . . went on in the open." Gurov learns that he cannot tolerate living a lie and that it was wrong to engage in a superficial relationship with Anna. Similarly, Gurov has learned a moral lesson regarding his attitude towards women in general. He has always belittled women, regarding them as the "inferior race," but throughout the story gains a certain respect for Anna, and regards her as a friend.

True love appears to be the highest good in "The Lady with the Pet Dog." Anna and Gurov must extricate themselves from false marriages and together create a genuine one, as they already love each other "like man and wife, like tender friends." Once Gurov has discovered true love, he finds himself intolerant of the Moscow social life, a life "clipped and wingless, an absurd mess." This allusion to the possibility of a more meaningful, dignified, and fulfilled life refers back to his revelation when he sat with Anna watching the sea at Oreanda and was struck by the beauty of "everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget the higher aims of life and our own human dignity." The "higher aims" are not spelled out, but if the story is an indication,

they lie in the pursuit of love, truth, and beauty. In this case, truth and beauty appear to reside in nature.

Nature and Its Meaning

Gurov and Anna are united by their appreciation of natural beauty, and beauty which brings out the best in both of them. After they first make love, there is a somewhat painful scene in Anna's hotel room in which she frets about her bad marriage while Gurov, callous and impatient, munches on watermelon. They later go to the beach to watch the sun rise, and Gurov is "soothed and spellbound" by nature's beauty. Listening to the timeless surf, he contemplates the scenery as a moral, even mystical reverie that reminds him of the "higher aims of life." This is the most lyrical, intense, and deeply felt moment in their early love affair. The fact that they are looking at the sea rather than at each other binds their deep love for each other into the timeless natural order of things. The Greek philosopher Plato believed that beautiful things were a physical manifestation of spiritual "eternal forms," of God, and Gurov thinks that the constancy of the surf is perhaps "a pledge of our eternal salvation."

In "The Lady with the Pet Dog" that which is false, difficult, and painful is described in the context of human civilization, and that which is beautiful and true is described in the context of nature. The most terrible and painful moment of the story occurs in a second-rate opera house, a theater of man-made illusions. Moreover, Gurov and Anna often find themselves confined in depressing, impersonal hotel rooms. Gurov tries to speak of love at his men's club, but his companion is more interested in his dinner. Anna lives in a house that faces a long gray fence studded with nails. Gurov is only happy away from Anna when admiring trees or snow. Civilization is a prison for them, but nature is a place of refuge and spiritual significance.

Style

Style

Point of View

The narrative style used by Chekhov in "The Lady with the Pet Dog" is third person, somewhat cool and detached like the character of Gurov himself. In this story, however, the third-person point of view is not entirely omniscient (in which one knows everything and can go anywhere) because the reader never directly perceives the thoughts of Anna Sergeyevna. It is a limited third person, through which the reader can understand Gurov's thoughts and feelings, and it is through Gurov's thoughts and perceptions that we learn about Anna. In the very first sentence, for example, the third-person narrative is subtly limited to Gurov's point of view: "A new person, it was said, had appeared on the esplanade. . . ." An omniscient narrator knows everything, and would simply know there was a new person; he would not need to hear about it. It is Gurov, then, who hears things said about a new female arrival. Moreover, the title of the story itself advertises Gurov's point of view, for an omniscient narrator would know the lady's name. All that Gurov knows at first is that there is a lady with a pet dog. Chekhov explores at length Gurov's shifting thoughts and feelings about Anna. Interestingly, Gurov never thinks about how his family will be affected by his infidelity; his thoughts are only of Anna. To the extent that the story has a "rising action" and a "climax," these are largely internal, as Gurov goes from viewing himself as a casual seducer of a "lady with a pet dog" whose name he does not know to the true and responsible lover of Anna Sergeyevna, whose name means more to him than any words in the language.

At the very end of the story, the third-person point of view becomes fully omniscient as Chekhov reads the thoughts of both his lovers at once: it "was clear to both of them that the end was still far off. . . ." By breaking the rule and entering Anna's head as well as Gurov's, he underscores their love by having them now, at last, thinking with one mind and feeling with one heart.

Setting

Chekhov sets the scene in this story with great economy, yet certain unforgettable settings powerfully enhance a given mood or effect. Little is known about Yalta save for the sultry heat, the wind, which makes people restless, and the effect of various lights, including moonlight and dawn, upon the sea. These details create an erotic and dreamy atmosphere in which the reader may understand that Anna and Gurov would have difficulty thinking clearly. There is also a timeless, eternal quality to the sleepy landscape, marked by the rhythm of the sea and the clouds which sit motionless on mountain peaks.

Another memorable setting is the town where Anna lives. Chekhov gives the reader a feeling for the whole town when he describes the best room at the hotel in which Gurov

stayed: "the floor was covered with gray army cloth, and on the table there was an inkstand, gray with dust and topped by a figure on horseback, its hat raised in its hand and its head broken off." Not only does this description convey the depressed and provincial nature of the place, and suggest how Anna must feel trapped here and thirsty for romance, but the headless figure with the raised hat can be seen as a symbol of Gurov himself, who has come to town to be the heroic lover but has little in the way of youthful heroism to offer. The fence studded with nails across from Anna's house increases the sense of her being confined and unhappy, though the reader has yet to see her. Finally, the noisy local musical theater is a suitably second-rate and depressing place for Gurov and Anna to confront the unhappiness of their circumstances. Chekhov selects details of setting to convey a particular mood and illuminate the emotional lives of his characters.

Historical Context

Marital Infidelity

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" was published in 1899 and heralded the moral dilemmas of the coming century. Marital infidelity was not exactly new in literature at the time. In fact, it was the central subject of three of the greatest novels of the latter half of the nineteenth century—Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter,* Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Marriages were often arranged at this time, and people married very young and often for social or economic advancement. Consequently many marriages were unhappy, and divorce was not usually an option. Love affairs, then, were something of a preoccupation among the upper classes though they occurred far less frequently than literature, and the gossip of the time, led one to believe. Chekhov himself complained that the seaside resort of Yalta had a greatly exaggerated reputation for immorality, but in "The Lady with the Pet Dog" he did nothing to discourage Yalta's reputation.

In any case, adultery was very much on the minds of the literate class, particularly women who lacked the economic power and freedom to keep men as men kept mistresses and could not resort, as men did, to the houses of prostitution which were common in major cities. The fiction of the popular French author Guy De Maupassant is filled with blithe love affairs, and it was a common complication in French theatrical farces. The darker side of infidelity was depicted in countless "women's novels" of the time, a genre in which a woman must often struggle against a predatory male to preserve her virtue.

Though talk of love affairs was increasingly commonplace, it was disastrous for a woman to be caught in an act of infidelity. She would lose her reputation, her social standing, the custody of her children (as in the case of Anna Karenina), and she could find herself cast out of society, even by her own parents. If her husband divorced her, he could leave her penniless, with little hope of finding respectable employment. Such cold facts of women's lives led such literary characters as Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary, for example, to take their own lives when their adultery was discovered. This may even have reflected the attitudes toward unfaithful women of Flaubert and Tolstoy themselves (though the degree to which these authors "punish" their adulterous heroines is greatly debated; Flaubert himself said, "I am Madame Bovary"). The punishments meted out to men who engaged in such affairs were not comparable, which is perhaps one reason why Gurov is more concerned about Anna's plight than his own and why it is better for them to meet in Moscow, where Gurov is known but Anna is not. Better he be caught than she.

In "The Lady with the Pet Dog" the characters do not consider suicide. Gurov and Anna hope to someday be together, which reflects the lessening severity of the public attitude towards marital infidelity, but they are not terribly hopeful, either. The story ends on a powerfully uncertain note: it seems that the solution which will permit them "a glorious

life" will be found in "a little while." At the same time, however, they both know "the end was still far off," and the most "complicated and difficult" phase of their life is just beginning.

A Climate of Uncertainty

The uncertain note upon which the story ends is fitting, for it reflects the uncertainty that was prevalent in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Acceptable morality was changing, religious beliefs were weakening, and the very legal and social fabric of the society was unraveling, as the serfs were granted more freedom and the Tsar, an absolute ruler, was surrendering more power to the people. The entire political structure was filled with liberal reforms and reactionary countermeasures. Artists like Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky were uncertain of what path the country should take. All of them were compassionate towards the suffering endured by the poor, and to varying degrees, were hostile towards the Tsar and to the current system of land ownership. All were suspicious, however, of the Bolshevik revolutionaries who would eventually overthrow the government and institute a Communist regime in 1918. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy had fervent, even mystical religious beliefs which made them dislike the atheism of the revolutionaries. Chekhov was much more concerned with social injustice and had no patience for the Russian church or other national institutions. Chekhov's characters, particularly in his plays, are unable to think or act decisively. Gurov and Anna, at the end of "The Lady with the Pet Dog" are hopeful, but they are gripped with uncertainty.

Health Resorts

Perhaps due to the spiritual malaise, and the social and moral uncertainty experienced by Europe's middle and upper classes, many people were sent to "health resorts" or "spas" around the end of the nineteenth century to cure their mysterious ailments. Lassitude or depression was often interpreted as an early sign of tuberculosis, a very real disease that gradually killed a large number of people during that period, including Chekhov himself. These health spas were generally located in dry regions, high in the mountains or along the sea shore. Gurov and Anna were at the seaside resort town of Yalta, perhaps for health reasons. Although these are never specified, it would be one way to explain why they are able to vacation without their families. Perhaps they were suffering from some kind of "neurasthenic disorder" (a popular term at the time for what were perhaps a variety of physical and mental ailments today classified as "chronic fatigue syndrome," "depression," "nerves," or in extreme cases a "nervous breakdown"), or perhaps they feigned ill health in order to remove themselves from their unhappy family situations, as people sometimes did at the time. The widespread concern about tuberculosis made such an excuse persuasive. Other great novels and stories have been set in health resorts, most famously Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. The distinction in such places between the truly sick and those merely relaxing was, like so many things at that time, uncertain.

Critical Overview

A century after "The Lady with the Pet Dog" was published in 1899, the short story's critical reputation has not diminished, a testament to the fact that this story was both of its time and ahead of its time, influencing much of the short fiction that has been written in the twentieth century. Vladimir Nabokov, one of the greatest novelists of our time, author of the groundbreaking *Lolita*, asserts that in "The Lady with the Pet Dog" "all the traditional rules of story telling have been broken. There is no problem, no regular climax, no point at the end. And it is one of the greatest stories ever written."

In the Soviet era, Russian critics focused on the fact that Gurov and Anna are representatives of the common people, not aristocrats like Anna's namesake in *Anna Karenina* and her lover, Count Vronsky. Gurov and Anna, these critics note, seek to liberate themselves from the petty materialism and oppressive marital arrangements of their time, seeking a higher spiritual good and learning to respect each other as equals. Western critic Virginia Llewellyn Smith, however, argues that although Gurov and Anna are "changed for the better" through the discovery of true love, they are changed "not in relation to society, but in relation to their own inner lives. Gurov is shaken out of his romantic dreaming by a sudden recognition of the grossness of others in his stratum of society: but he does not give up his job or abandon his social life."

Critics in the west have also focused on the comparison with Anna Karenina. Thomas Winner notes that "While both are stories of an Anna who, unhappily married to a prosaic bureaucrat, finds a lover, Chekhov's Anna does not think of suicide. Rather, her love affair brings her contentment and some happiness." Winner distinguishes both Chekhov's attitudes and Chekhov's style from Tolstoy's when he writes that Chekhov's development of the adultery theme "without dramatic collision and tragic endings, is a typical avowal of independence from traditional treatments. Stylistic and structural devices also reveal Chekhov's antipathy to conventional forms."

Critics also often note the parallels between Gurov's situation and Chekhov's own life. Chekhov was the same age as his protagonist, and, like Gurov, had just fallen in love for the first time, marrying actress Olga Knipper. Before that time, Llewellyn Smith notes that Chekhov, like Gurov, "enjoyed the company of women and had many female friends and admirers: but he failed, or was unwilling, to involve himself deeply or lastingly with them." Chekhov recognized that when he finally fell in love it was too late, Llewellyn Smith suggests. He was dying of tuberculosis and had to confine himself much of the time to a Yalta sanitarium, while Olga Knipper pursued her acting career in Moscow. "The history of Gurov's relationships with women is a transmutation of Chekhov's history," Llewellyn Smith claims, "and the essential point of the fiction was reality for him: true love had come too late, and complete happiness—poetry and communication and companionship—was impossible." Winner disagrees with this gloomy assessment, believing that in "Lady with the Pet Dog" romantic love is "presented more hopefully than it is in other of Chekhov's stories." Despite the solemn tone and sober ending of the story, Winner points to the "lyrical" subtext, and observes that "The alternation between cynicism, sincerity, and lyricism becomes almost

rhythmical." Time and again, Gurov's impulse towards cynicism is followed by a moment of honesty with himself, and this by a lyrical swell, as when Gurov is cynical about Anna's weeping after they first make love, then becomes serious, and then, at the Oreanna seaside, has a lyrical epiphany. Again contrasting "Lady with the Pet Dog" with Anna Karenina, in which the "fallen" heroine eventually throws herself under the wheels of a train, Winner concludes "Rather than tragedy, the final note is of pathos. Muted and transient happiness is the fate which, as the concluding passage suggests, awaits Chekhov's lovers."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Huber has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Fiction Writing and currently teaches at the New York University School of Continuing Education. In the following essay, he provides an overview of the chief criticisms of "The Lady with the Pet Dog," focusing particularly on Chekhov's "casual" approach in writing the story.

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" is regarded as one of the greatest of all short stories, but it is not an easy story to "interpret," because Chekhov's chief aim in writing the story is to be as natural as possible and to respect people and things for what they are, rather than turning them into symbols and forcing them to convey a certain idea or message. Chekhov is reluctant to put himself above his characters and manipulate them. Perhaps the most famous criticism of the story comes from Vladimir Nabokov, the Russian emigre who taught literature at Cornell University and wrote the classic American novel *Lolita.* In discussing Chekhov's story he points out that "all the traditional rules of story telling have been broken . . . there is no problem, no regular climax, no point at the end. And it is one of the greatest stories ever written." One might wonder how such an uneventful and inconclusive story could be considered "great." It appears that Nabokov believes that its greatness lies in its trueness to the beauty and sadness of life. If one is looking for the kind of "entertainment" which helps one escape life, one will not find it in Chekhov, for he invites his readers to perceive and feel the beauty and pity of the world as it is. Nabokov states that for Chekhov "the lofty and the base . . . the slice of watermelon and the violet sea, and the hands of the town-governor" are all "essential" elements of that beauty. If one is looking for a satisfying moral or a final resolution, Chekhov will not provide one, for "there is no special moral to be drawn and no special message to be received," Nabokov contends that "the story does not really end, for as long as people are alive, there is no possible and definite conclusion to their troubles or hopes or dreams."

Nabokov also admires the economy and conciseness of Chekhov's descriptions and characterizations, which are "attained by a careful selection and careful distribution of minute but striking features, with perfect contempt for the sustained description, repetition, and strong emphasis of ordinary authors. In this or that description one detail is chosen to illumine the whole setting." This not only permits Chekhov to say more with less, but it also keeps the focus on the world within the story rather than on the pyrotechnics of the writer. By not overwhelming the reader with elaborate descriptions or philosophizing, Chekhov makes his art appear casual.

Nabokov certainly exaggerates his claims that there is no "problem" or "climax" to Chekhov's story. Gurov is the protagonist; he is the only character who appears in every scene. The story is presented largely from his point of view, and it is his internal crisis, as we shall see, that indeed constitutes the climax of the story. And Gurov has a problem, though he does not recognize it until late in the story. At the beginning, he is a mildly bored philanderer on holiday, looking for a good time. He meets Anna and seduces her, and when she weeps over having been unfaithful to her husband, he is bored and annoyed. He bids farewell to Anna with a mild sense of regret, sorry that the

affair did not make her happy, but his mood brightens when he returns to the bustle of Moscow. As the winter deepens, however, Gurov finds that Anna is constantly on his mind. He wants to speak to others of his feelings for her, but nobody will listen. This eventually leads him to a great feeling of disgust towards the "savage manners," the "gluttony," the "continual talk always about the same thing" that defines his existence in Moscow society. "Futile pursuits and conversations always about the same topics take up the better part of one's time, the better part of one's strength, and in the end there is left a life clipped and wingless, an absurd mess, and there is no escaping or getting away from it—just as though one were in a madhouse or a prison." Gurov is so "indignant" after this moment of personal crisis that he cannot sleep and finds that he is "fed up" with his job and his children. He has no desire to do anything. This dramatic moment is often considered the climax of the story, though what exactly it signifies is debated by critics.

Soviet critics have suggested that Gurov's profound moment of alienation merely signifies his "moral regeneration." Through the discovery of true love, they contend, Gurov has come to alienate himself from the amoral, gluttonous, frivolous life of his class. From this point forward he cares more about another human being, Anna, and less about his own sensual gratification, the pleasures of Mos-cow society, and the institution of bourgeois marriage.

These Soviet critics further note that Gurov and Anna are "ordinary" people of the middle class, not members of the nobility like the adulterers in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.* Gurov is, indeed, something of an "everyman," with a typical family life and a dull and vaguely defined job, and Anna is merely "the lady with a pet dog." Nobody in Yalta knows her name; she is the wife of a minor bureaucrat from a faraway provincial town. That these two ordinary, unheroic people experience a moral awakening was significant to Soviet critics. They further claimed that this story serves as a commentary against the bourgeois institution of marriage. In a sense it was, for the marriages in his fiction are almost never happy, and people frequently seem to have married young and for the wrong reasons. But Chekhov does not present an alternative way of life and expresses little optimism about how humans might live if the obstacles to pursuing their desires were removed. His characters often have trouble understanding their desires in the first place.

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" is more optimistic than most of Chekhov's tales, for the couple is truly in love, and know what they want. Only social constraints keep them from being happy. Virginia Llewelyn Smith, however, focuses on the theme of love in Chekhov's fiction and rejects the idea that the story should be read as a social critique. She notes that while Gurov is "shaken out of his romantic dreaming by a sudden recognition of the grossness of others in his stratum of society," he "does not give up his job or abandon his social life. Instead, he leads a double existence . . . it is this life Chekhov is interested in, not in Gurov as a representative of his class." She further observes that while Gurov and Anna are alone among their fellow men and women, this "does not point a moral: but it is where the pathos in their initial situation lies. We are not impressed by their moral superiority, but moved by their loneliness." Love, Smith concludes, is the solution to this loneliness.

Smith, like other critics, notes the similarity of Gurov's position to that of Chekhov himself. Like Gurov, Chekhov fell in love for the first time in his life when he was almost forty (he was thirty-nine and soon to be married when he wrote this story). He knew that he was ill and doubted that he would have long to enjoy his love, and so the faith in love expressed in "The Lady with the Pet Dog" and the air of pathos and sadness provoked by the discovery of love are both perhaps rooted in Chekhov's own experience. Smith suggests that throughout his career Chekhov was torn between a romantic and a cynical view of love, contrasting the unhappy marriages and love affairs he witnessed with a romantic sense of what love could be. Gurov is also a romantic who enters every affair with high hopes only to be bitterly disappointed. When Gurov finally finds true love, he abandons his romantic dream of a love which can be simple and easy, and in the end struggles to keep true love alive in the real world.

Chekhov's attitude towards women is arguably reflected in this story. Gurov dislikes his wife, an outspoken woman who considers herself an intellectual, and he dislikes some of the sexually aggressive women whom he has been with in the past. Rather, he prefers Anna, who is soft and childlike, weepy and vulnerable, even a bit "pathetic." Feminist critics might argue that Chekhov, or at least his protagonist Gurov, was threatened by strong women and preferred a woman he could dominate. There are other ways to read the sexual politics of the story. Chekhov himself describes Gurov as a man who believes women an "inferior breed" but who cannot "live a day without them." By the end of the story, however, Gurov considers Anna his only "true friend." Her weakness and pathos may be, to some extent, symptoms of her boredom and depression. Just before Gurov speaks to Anna for the first time, he looks her over and decides that "her expression, her gait, her dress, and the way she did her hair told him that she was . . . married, that she was in Yalta for the first time and alone, and that she was bored." Gurov jokes in their first exchange that people claim to be bored in Yalta as if they come from some exotic place, when in fact they come from dull and dusty provincial towns. This wry joke seduces Anna but is of greater significance than it appears, for we learn that young Anna is indeed bored and unhappy both at and away from home. Gurov is drawn to her "pathetic" qualities not only because they make her easy prey but also because these qualities in Anna reflect an aspect of Gurov that he is slow to recognize. Gurov, like Anna, is bored and unhappy in his marriage and is "eager for life." Moreover, he is not at home in the world, even before they meet. He seems to have no friends at Yalta and does not miss anybody back home. Gurov and Anna are both alone, lacking in other deep attachments, and perhaps Gurov feels sympathy for Anna in her sadness because he feels sad himself. When Gurov decides that he is disgusted with his life, perhaps he is discovering a loneliness and alienation which has bothered him for a long time but which he was unable to recognize until there was something meaningful in his life with which to contrast these feelings. That source of contrast was Anna and his unexpected love for her.

Source: Erik Huber, "An Overview of 'The Lady with the Pet Dog'," in *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

Creasman is an Assistant Professor of English at West Virginia Wesleyan College. In the following excerpt, he claims that understanding Gurov's intense display of emotion in "The Lady with the Pet Dog" [which he refers to as "The Lady with the Dog"], *is not only crucial for understanding his motivations, but is helpful for the reader to gain a better understanding of the structure of Chekhov's short fiction in general.*

In 1921, Conrad Aiken [in *Collected Criticism*, 1968] made the following assessment of Anton Chekhov's work: "This, after all, is Chekhov's genius—he was a master of mood." Indeed Aiken's statement is a good starting point for a discussion of the structure of Chekhov's short fiction. Many of Chekhov's short stories—the later ones in particular—are structured around the main character's moments of strong emotion, a feature of the author's short fiction that has never been fully explored, even in discussions of individual stories. For example, much of the criticism of "The Lady with the Dog" one of Chekhov's most revered short stories, has focused on its parallels with his real life love for Olga Knipper, the influence of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, the story's similarities with Chekhov's later plays, and its exemplification of the author's realism and modernity, which have greatly influenced twentieth-century short fiction. In tracing the story's biographical and literary influences and its relation to other literature, though, Chekhov critics have generally ignored an important feature of "The Lady with the Dog"—namely, the significance of Gurov's two flights of emotion, the first with Anna at Oreanda, the second outside the Medical Club at Moscow. These two moments of intense feeling are crucial to understanding Gurov's motivations and illustrate the importance of this kind of emotional flight to the structure of Chekhov's short fiction.

In the first of his two flights of emotion, Gurov contemplates the transcendence of love as he sits quietly on a bench with Anna at Oreanda:

Not a leaf stirred, the grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow roar of the sea came up to them, speaking of peace, of the eternal sleep lying in wait for us all. The sea had roared like this before there was any Yalta or Oreanda, it was roaring now, and it would go on roaring, just as indifferently and hollowly, when we had passed away. And it may be that in this continuity, this utter indifference to life and death, lies the secret of our ultimate salvation, of the stream of life on our planet, and of its never-ceasing movement toward perfection.

Side by side with a young woman, who looked so exquisite in the early light, soothed and enchanted by the sight of all this magical beauty—sea, mountains, clouds and the vast expanse of the sky—Gurov told himself that, when you came to think of it, everything in the world is beautiful really, everything but our own thoughts and actions, when we lose sight of the higher aims of life, and of our dignity as human beings.

This passage reveals one of the strengths of Chekhov's writing, his superb handling of the theme of transcendence through love. In *Anton Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog* [1973], Virginia Llewellyn Smith discusses the importance of this theme: "In Chekhov's

later work, this ideal of love was to become increasingly associated with the concept of something above and beyond the transient, or more precisely, with a quasi-philosophical speculative interest, and a quasi-mystical faith in the future of mankind." Another critic, Beverly Hahn, makes a similar point [in *Chekhov: A Study of the Major Stories and Plays*, 1977], finding in some of Chekhov's work a "mysterious transcendence . . . of the great moral and philosophical issues of existence." Finding the eternal in a particular moment, Chekhov's characters can turn away mortality and meaninglessness, if only briefly, by turning to each other. However, it is important to remember that at this point in the story, Gurov clearly has not fallen in love with Anna. At first it is not Anna in particular whom he desires, but rather a pretty woman in general, and the reader is told that Gurov, who refers to women as "the lower race," actually "could not have existed a single day" without them. Indeed, Gurov enjoys Anna's company at Yalta but is at first surprised, then bored and annoyed with her sense of having sinned. And when Anna must leave Yalta and return to her husband, Gurov does not seem greatly to regret that the affair has apparently ended: "And he told himself that this had been just one more of the many adventures in his life, and that it, too, was over, leaving nothing but a memory...." However, when he returns home, he cannot seem to forget the lady with the dog.

Gurov's second flight of emotion results from his sudden awareness of the grossness and banality of life in Moscow, and the way it pales in comparison to the time he spent with Anna in Yalta. When Gurov starts to tell one of his companions at the Medical Club about her, his friend interrupts him with a comment about dinner, "the sturgeon was just a *leetle* off." At this moment, all of Gurov's pent-up frustrations with his life in Moscow find release in the quintessential Chekhovian flight:

These words, in themselves so commonplace, for some reason infuriated Gurov, seemed to him humiliating, gross. What savage manners, what people! What wasted evenings, what tedious, empty days! Frantic card-playing, gluttony, drunkenness, perpetual talk always about the same thing. The greater part of one's time and energy went on business that was no use to anyone, and on discussing the same thing over and over again, and there was nothing to show for all of it but a stunted, earth-bound existence and a round of trivialities, and there was nowhere to escape to, you might as well be in a madhouse or a convict settlement.

In some ways, this passage represents the climax of the story, for after Gurov resolves to go to Anna's town, the remainder of the story, in which the characters are forced to keep up appearances by not telling anyone about the affair, has an aura of inevitability about it. In addition to this structural importance, this intense burst of emotion is also very important to an understanding of Gurov's motivations for renewing the affair and thus raises an interesting question: is his decision to find Anna motivated more by love for her or by his desire to escape the tedium of life in Moscow? Certainly the Gurov in the first two sections of the story does not seem like the kind of man who is capable of falling in love with Anna. He becomes bored and uncomfortable, rather than concerned or sensitive, when she gets upset. Does Gurov truly love Anna, or is she simply the natural person for him to turn to in his time of depression?

In his excellent "Chekhov and the Modern Short Story" [in *A Chekhov Companion*, 1985], Charles E. May argues that the question is unanswerable:

It is never clear in the story whether Gurov truly loves Anna Sergeyevna or whether it is only the romantic fantasy that he wishes to maintain. What makes the story so subtle and complex is that Chekhov presents the romance in such a limited and objective way that we realize that there is no way to determine whether it is love or romance, for there is no way to distinguish between them.

May's otherwise good interpretation is slightly off the mark on this point. While it is true that throughout most of the story it is difficult—because of the objectivity to which May alludes—to determine whether Gurov loves Anna, the reader is directly told just before the conclusion of the story that the two main characters do indeed love each other and that Gurov has "fallen in love properly, thoroughly, for the first time in his life." It is crucial to recognize that the Gurov at the end of the story is not the same as the one at the beginning, and the difference is not merely that he now needs love, but that he has clearly found the woman he loves. Certainly, Gurov does not love less simply because he feels a need for love in his life; in fact, it is precisely this yearning that causes his love for Anna to awaken and grow. And again the key to understanding Gurov's motivations for leaving Moscow and going to Anna is his flights of emotion in which he recognizes the essential truth of the story: his love for Anna is far more noble than his banal, socially acceptable life in Moscow.

Still, at the end of the story, the couple's problem—how to keep their love for each other alive while hiding the relationship from society—remains unresolved. Moreover, neither character seems to have the courage to reveal the truth of their love to anyone else, and therefore, the characters find themselves in a kind of limbo:

And it seemed to them that they were within an inch of arriving at a decision, and that then a new, beautiful life would begin. And they both realized that the end was still far, far away, and that the hardest, the most complicated part was only just beginning.

Gurov and Anna find themselves in a desperate situation, but as Beverly Hahn suggests, "desperation is not the dominant note of the story, nor is its outcome really tragic, because the hardship of Anna's and Gurov's love cannot be separated from the *fact* of that love and from the fact that it brings each a degree of fulfilment not known before."

With its elegant language, complex main characters, and realistic detail, "The Lady with the Dog" is indeed a masterful story of many moods and, therefore, an illustration of the validity of Conrad Aiken's judgment that Chekhov is a master of mood. Gurov's two intense moments of emotion are important to the structure of the story and demonstrate an important feature of the author's style, for similar Chekhovian flights can be found in many of his other stories, especially his later ones, such as "About Love," "A Visit to Friends," "The Bishop," and "The Betrothed," just to name a few. These flights of emotion are as important in Chekhov's stories as epiphanies are in Joyce's and

therefore merit further exploration by those interested in the study of Chekhov's short fiction.

Source: Boyd Creasman, "Gurov's Flights of Emotion in Chekhov's 'The Lady with the Dog'," in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring, 1990 pp. 257-60.

Critical Essay #3

Smith is affiliated with Stanford University. In the following excerpt, she closely examines several aspects of "The Lady with the Pet Dog" [which she refers to as "The Lady with the Dog,"], *maintaining that the story, which is intimately bound with "so many threads of Chekhov's thought and experience," is very useful in learning about Chekhov's attitude towards women and love.*

It will by now be apparent that Anna Sergeevna, the lady with the dog, can be considered symbolic of the ideal love that Chekhov could envisage but not embrace—that remained, so to speak, behind a pane of glass, as in Heifitz's film. But the significance of the whole story is much greater than that comprised in Anna Sergeevna alone.

No other single work of Chekhov's fiction constitutes a more meaningful comment on Chekhov's attitude to women and to love than does 'The Lady with the Dog'. So many threads of Checkhov's thought and experience appear to have been woven together into this succinct story that it may be regarded as something in the nature of a summary of the entire topic.

Gurov, the hero of the story, may at first appear no more closely identifiable with Chekhov himself than are many other sympathetic male characters in Chekhov's fiction: he has a post in a bank and is a married man with three children. It is because he has this wife and family that his love-affair with Anna Sergeevna leads him into an *impasse*. And the affair itself, involving Gurov's desperate trip to Anna's home town, has no obvious feature in common with anything we know of Chekhov's amorous liaisons.

And yet Chekhov's own attitudes and experience have clearly shaped Gurov's character and fate. The reader is told that Gurov 'was not yet forty': Chekhov was thirty-nine when he wrote 'The Lady with the Dog'. Gurov 'was married young' (*ego zhenili rano*): there is a faint implication in the phrase that an element of coercion played some part in his taking this step—a step which Chekhov, when he was young, managed to avoid. As in general with early marriages in Chekhov's fiction, Gurov's has not proved a success. His wife seems 'much older than he' and imagines herself to be an intellectual: familiar danger-signals. She is summed-up in three words: 'stiff, pompous, dignified' (*pryamaya, vazhnaya, solidnaya*) which epitomize a type of woman (and man) that Chekhov heartily disliked.

Gurov's wife treats sex as something more complicated than it is, and spoils it for him; and it is also spoilt for him by those mistresses of whom he soon tires: beautiful, cold women with a 'predatory' expression who are determined to snatch what they can from life. 'When Gurov grew cold to them, their beauty aroused hatred in him and the lace on their linen reminded him of scales'. It would seem that exactly some such sentiment inspired Chekhov when he depicted Ariadna, Nyuta, and the other anti-heroines.

Gurov has had, however, liaisons that were, for him, enjoyable—and these we note, were brief: as was Chekhov's liaison with Yavorskaya and indeed, so far as we know, all the sexual relationships that he had before he met Olga Knipper.

'Frequent experience and indeed bitter experience had long since taught [Gurov] that every liaison which to begin with makes such a pleasant change inevitably evolves into a real and extremely complex problem, and the situation eventually becomes a burden'. That his friendships with, for instance, Lika and Avilova should evolve into a situation of this kind seems to have been exactly what Chekhov himself feared: he backed out of these friendships as soon as there appeared to be a danger of close involvement.

Gurov cannot do without the company of women, and yet he describes them as an 'inferior breed': his experience of intimacy with women is limited to casual affairs and an unsatisfactory marriage. Chekhov also enjoyed the company of women and had many female friends and admirers: but he failed, or was unwilling, to involve himself deeply or lastingly with them. That in his work he should suggest that women are an inferior breed can be to some extent explained by the limited knowledge of women his self-contained attitude brought him—and perhaps, to some extent, by a sense of guilt concerning his inability to feel involved.

Gurov's behaviour to Anna Sergeevna at the beginning of their love-affair is characterized by an absence of emotional involvement, just such as appears in Chekhov's attitude towards certain women. There is a scene in 'The Lady with the Pet Dog' where, after they have been to bed together, Gurov eats a water-melon while Anna Sergeevna weeps over her corruption. It is not difficult to imagine Chekhov doing something similarly prosaic—weeding his garden, perhaps—while Lika poured out her emotional troubles to him.

Gurov's egocentricity is dispelled, however, by the potent influence of love, because Anna Sergeevna turns out to be the ideal type of woman: pitiable, defenceless, childlike, capable of offering Gurov an unquestioning love. Love is seen to operate as a force for good: under its influence Gurov feels revulsion for the philistinism of his normal life and associates. Soviet interpreters have made much of the theme of regeneration, of the idea implicit in the story that 'a profound love experienced by ordinary people has become an enormous moral force'. In fact, although some idea of this sort is certainly implicit in the story, Chekhov is surely attempting above all to evoke what love meant to his protagonists as they themselves saw their situation. Chekhov originally wrote in the conclusion of 'The Lady with the Dog' that the love of Gurov and Anna Sergeevna had 'made them both better'. He altered this subsequently to 'changed them both for the better'; but still dissatisfied, finally he altered this once more to 'had changed them both', and thus avoided any overt suggestion of pointing a moral.

The point is that we are not seeing the lovers changed in relation to society, but in relation to their own inner lives. Gurov is shaken out of his romantic dreaming by a sudden recognition of the grossness of others in his stratum of society: but he does not give up his job or abandon his social life. Instead, he leads a double existence, and

imagines that every man's 'real, most interesting life' goes on in secret. It is this life that Chekhov is interested in, not in Gurov as a representative of his class or his time.

That Gurov and Anna Sergeevna are alone amongst their fellow-men does not point a moral: but it is where the pathos of their initial situation lies. We are not impressed by their moral superiority, but moved by their loneliness. Love is the answer to this loneliness, and there is no need to bring morality into it. Chekhov, where love was concerned, wrote from the heart not the head.

Chekhov wrote 'The Lady with the Dog' in Yalta in the autumn of 1899, not long after he and Olga were there together (although they were not, as yet, lovers) and had made the trip back to Moscow together. In the Kokkoz valley, it will be remembered, they apparently agreed to marry: and so by then, we may presume, Chekhov knew what it was to love.

How do Gurov and Anna Sergeevna love one another? Not unnaturally, Chekhov describes the affair from the man's point of view. As one might expect, Gurov's love for Anna Sergeevna has its romantic side. It is associated with the beauty of nature for it is helped into existence by the view of the sea at Oreanda. When, back in Moscow, Gurov thinks of Anna, he poeticizes her: the whole affair becomes the subject of a daydream, and ultimately an obsession. So, perhaps, did Chekhov's thoughts dwell on Olga Knipper when she was in Moscow and he recalled their time in Yalta and journey through an area of great natural beauty.

Olga Knipper, however, was no dream. And Anna Sergeevna is not seen solely in terms of 'poetry', even by Gurov. Forced to seek Anna out in her home town, from this point Gurov is back in reality. At the theatre he—and the reader—see her as a 'small woman who was in no way remarkable, with a cheap-looking lorgnette in her hand'. But this does not detract from her appeal for him (and it enhances her appeal for the reader). The romantic heroine has become a creature of flesh and blood, and Gurov still loves her: 'she . . . now filled his whole life, she was his joy and his grief, the sole happiness that he now desired; and to the sound of the bad orchestra, the wretched philistine violins, he mused on how fine she was. He mused and dreamed dreams.'

Gurov dreams—but dreaming is not enough for him. He has tasted happiness: the affair in Yalta was happy, in spite of Anna's sense of guilt. His love there developed from when, after Anna's self-recrimination and his irritation, they suddenly laughed together. This laugh denotes the beginning of communication: the tension relaxes and they behave normally, and find enjoyment in each other's company as well as in 'love'. Love, in fact, has come down to earth. Sex, communication, and simple companionship all play their part in it, in addition to 'poetry'.

And there the problem lies: the love-affair being rooted in reality, Anna and Gurov have to face the world's problems. Gurov, unlike Laevsky and Laptev, has found romantic love: but he also wants the companionship that Laevsky and Laptev had, and because he and Anna Sergeevna are already married, he cannot have it.

The situation, indeed the entire plot of 'The Lady with the Dog', is obvious, even banal, and its merit as a work of art lies in the artistry with which Chekhov has preserved in the story a balance between the poetic and the prosaic, and in the careful characterization, dependent upon the use of half-tones. Soviet critics have a valid point when they regard Gurov as a sort of Everyman; 'The Lady with the Dog' is an essentially simple exposition of a commonplace theme. Unlike in 'The Duel' and 'Three Years', in 'The Lady with the Dog' Chekhov has made no attempt to investigate the problems of love: the conclusion of 'The Lady with the Dog' is left really and truly open: there is no suggestion, nor have we any inkling, of what the future may bring:

'And it seemed that in a very little while an answer would be found, and a new and beautiful life would begin. And to both it was evident that the end was far, far away, and that the hardest, most complicated part was only just beginning.'

There can be no doubt but that the policy of expounding questions without presuming to answer them—that policy which Chekhov had declared to be the writer's task—suited his style best. A full appreciation of Chekhov's work requires of the reader a certain degree of involvement, a response intellectual, or, as in the case of his love-stories, emotional, that Chekhov invites rather than commandeers. Ultimately, all depends on how Chekhov is read; but much depends on his striking the delicate balance between sentimentality and flatness.

All must surely agree that the right balance has been achieved in the final scene of 'The Lady with the Dog', which is as direct an appeal to the heart as can be found in Chekhov's fiction:

His hair was already beginning to turn grey. And it struck him as strange that he had aged so in the last few years, and lost his good looks. Her shoulders, on which he had lain his hands, were warm and shook slightly. He felt a pang of compassion for this life that was still warm and beautiful, but which would probably soon begin to fade and wither, like his own life. Why did she love him so? He had always appeared to women as something which he was not, and they had loved in him not him himself, but a creature of their own imagination, which they had sought again and again in their own lives; and then, when they perceived their mistake, they loved him all the same. And not one of them had been happy with him. Time passed, he would strike up an acquaintance, have an affair, and part but never once had he loved; he had had everything he might wish for, only not love.

And only now, when his hair had gone grey, he had fallen in love properly, genuinely—for the first time in his life.

This passage, read in the light of what we know of the author, gains a new dimension of pathos. The history of Gurov's relationships with women is a transmutation of Chekhov's history, and the essential point of the fiction was reality for him: true love had come too late, and complete happiness—poetry and communication and companionship—was impossible.

Chekhov wrote that Gurov and Anna Sergeevna 'loved one another . . . as husband and wife'. But how are we to explain the incongruity of this bland phrase 'as husband and wife' in the context of Chekhov's entire *œuvre*, in which the love of husband and wife is thwarted and cheapened—virtually never, in fact, seen to exist? Gurov and Anna are, after all, husband and wife, and he does not love his wife, nor she her husband. The irony here, whether conscious or unconscious, finds its origin in Chekhov's apparently unshakable belief that an ideal love somewhere, somehow could exit.

It seems then cruel indeed that he should see fate cheat him of the chance of such love. His happiness was incomplete; and it is difficult not to regard Chekhov's situation as tragic. And yet one question remains. Could Chekhov, so happy as he stood on the threshold of love, ever have crossed that threshold, even in more fortunate circumstances? Could he have lived with love instead of dreaming about it? There is of course no evidence to suggest that his feelings for Olga Knipper would have altered with the passage of time, had she stayed constantly by his side. But evidence there is that, to the last, love as Chekhov conceived it retained its distant, intangible quality....

This sketch of a plot shows clearly that, where love was the issue, a dissociation from facts and retreat into a dream world was for Chekhov a continuing process: that the romantic heroine could only be such in apotheosis. In the real world she provokes complications—but her shade is mysterious, beautiful, and fascinating.

And thus before we regard Chekhov's life as tragic, there is an important factor to bear in mind: the possibility that Chekhov, never to experience the reality of a normal marriage, was perhaps by this very misfortune preserved from a disillusionment in his ideal of love which might have proved more bitter than any irony of density. Thus the very significance—the supreme significance—which love as an ideal had for Chekhov provides us with an alternative view of his fate. It is not a tragedy: there is no victim. And Chekhov, whose dislike of self-dramatization was one of his most attractive qualities, would surely have preferred this latter view.

Source: Virginia Llewellyn Smith, "The Lady with the Dog," in *Anton Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog,* Oxford University Press, London, 1973, pp. 212-19.

Media Adaptations

"The Lady with the Pet Dog" was adapted as the film *The Lady with the Dog* by director Yosif Heifitz, starring Iya Savvina, Alexei Batalov, Ala Chostakova, and N. Alisova. 1959; distributed by White Star, Facets Multimedia, Inc., and Ingram International Films.

Topics for Further Study

Research the legal consequences of and cultural attitudes toward infidelity in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Also research the divorce laws and the cultural attitudes regarding divorce after the Revolution in the twentieth century. Compare your findings and relate them to the story.

Read "The Dead" by James Joyce, a story possibly influenced by "The Lady with the Pet Dog," and compare Gabriel Conroy's inner journey with Gurov's. How do the stories differ in terms of style and theme?

Research the subject of health resorts or spas at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States and abroad. What medical purpose did they serve? What social purpose?

Chekhov is famous for his "humanity" and "empathy," but in this story, nobody seems to care much about the feelings of the other members of Gurov's family or about Anna's husband. Do you agree with that statement? If so, how do you account for this omission?

Compare & Contrast

1900s: Extra-marital affairs and divorce are social taboos, often resulting in the social ostracization of offending parties.

1990s: Over half of all marriages are believed to result in divorce.

1900s: Russian government is ruled by a monar chy, resulting in vast inequalities in the distribution of wealth and resources.

1990s: After over 70 years of Communist rule, Russia institutes a free-market, capitalist economy. Economic difficulties continue.

What Do I Read Next?

"The Dead," James Joyce's classic short story published in 1914. This story concerns a middle-aged man who discovers a secret about his wife's past which leads him to reflect on love and mortality. Set at a lively but haunted Christmas party in Dublin, Ireland, Joyce's story ends with a scene that contains striking similarities to the final scene in "The Lady with the Pet Dog."

"Learning from Chekhov," by Francine Prose, in *The Pushcart Prizes,* Vol. 13, (1990). This down to earth and amusing novelist and short story writer reflects on a semester of teaching writing students important rules only to see them broken again and again in the stories of Chekhov, which she is reading each night on the bus home. Provides very accessible insights into Chekhov's artistry.

Anna Karenina, by Leo Tolstoy. One of Russia's best known novelists, this is the novel on which some critics say Chekhov based "The Lady with the Pet Dog."

"The Name Day Party," by Anton Chekhov. Also known as "The Birthday Party" or "The Party." One of Chekhov's greatest works, this story of profound marital discontent is told from a woman's point of view.

Uncle Vanya, by Chekhov. This play features, among others, a bored wife at a country estate and a restless rural doctor who hopes to seduce her. They do not act on their impulse as do the characters in "The Lady with the Pet Dog," but their situation still leads to painful complexity.

Where I'm Calling From by Raymond Carver, published in 1989. This modern American short story writer of spare, humane, "minimalist" fiction was greatly influenced by Chekhov. This collection concludes with the story "Errand," about Chekhov's death. Carver himself died shortly after this work was published.

Further Reading

"Anton Chekhov," in *Short Story Criticism,* Vol. 2, edited by Sheila Fitzgerald, Gale, 1989, pp. 124-160; Vol. 28, edited by Anna J. Sheets, Gale, 1998, pp. 48-72.

"Anton Chekhov," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 31, edited by Paula Kepos and Dennis Poupard, Gale, 1989, pp. 71-103; Vol. 55, edited by Marie Lazzari, Gale, 1995, pp. 28-80.

"Anton Chekhov," in *World Literary Criticism,* Vol. 2, edited by James P. Draper, Gale, 1992, pp. 704-720.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's“For Students” Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on “classic” novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name “Jean Louise Finch” would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname “Scout Finch.”
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood's “The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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