A Month in the Country Study Guide

A Month in the Country by Ivan Turgenev

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

A Month in the Country was written during the 1840s and completed in 1850 when Turgenev was thirty-two. Prior to this play, Turgenev had also written poetry and short stories. His literary reputation was established in 1843 with the publication of *Parasha,* a romantic story written in verse. Despite Turgenev's past successes, *A Month in the Country* was not permitted to be staged by the censor when it was first published. As a result, the disheartened Turgenev, who already did not think highly of his plays, gave up writing for the theater. Instead, he turned his talents toward novel writing, and by the end of the 1850s, society and the government were prepared to receive his next literary offerings.

Tsar Alexander II had come to power and in the midst of a political climate still fraught with division, Turgenev's novels managed to appeal to people with diverse political perspectives. His works became the most widely read and often the most hotly debated. *A Month in the Country* was a gateway to this fame and is often attributed with developing Turgenev's craft as a writer. The play was first staged in Moscow in 1872 and is often likened to Honore de Balzac's *The Stepdaughter. A Month in the Country*'s first showing was not received very well; however, after a famous actress performed it in 1879, the play became a success. It is still widely performed today and because of its timeless themes of youth, freedom, and love, it is likely to continue attracting admirers well into the next century.

Author Biography

Ivan Turgenev was born to Sergey Nikolaevich Turgenev and Varvara Petrovna Lutovinova on October 20, 1818, in the town of Orel, located 200 miles South of Moscow. His father, who was from the minor gentry, was a colonel in the calvary, and his mother was a wealthy landowner with a reputation for being arbitrarily cruel, particularly to her approximately 5,000 serfs. Turgenev's childhood was spent with his two brothers, one of whom died in adolescence, on the family's country estate at Spasskoe. His family left the country for Moscow when Turgenev was nine, and in 1833, at the age of fifteen, he entered Moscow University to study what was then called the philological faculty literature.

In 1834 Turgenev transferred to the University of St. Petersburg in order to share lodging accommodations with his father and eldest brother. During his collegiate years, Turgenev developed a strong affinity for western culture, and in 1838 he enrolled at the University of Berlin where he studied philosophy. Turgenev's stay in Germany fostered his growing distaste for serfdom and after his time there, he became a lifelong proponent of westernization. In 1841, he returned to Russia; however, through his remaining years, Turgenev spent a good portion of his time in the West. In 1842, he completed his Master's degree and had an illegitimate daughter with whom he was never close.

In the next year, Turgenev met the one woman with whom he would form an emotional bond Pauline Viardot, a renowned opera singer. Until his death in 1883, Turgenev was a devoted friend and some say a besotted admirer of Pauline. Over the years that followed their meeting, Turgenev lived as near to Pauline and her husband Louis Viardot as possible. As he rose to prominence as a writer, Turgenev became acquainted with many notable artists and thinkers of the period, including Feodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Gustav Flaubert, Emile Zola, Alexander Pushkin, Guy de Mauppasant, George Sand, Henry James, and Nikolai Gogol. In fact, after writing Gogol's obituary, Turgenev was imprisoned for one month and placed under house arrest at Spasskoe for close to two years. Not popular with the government, but often celebrated by his public, Turgenev succumbed to cancer in Paris in 1883. Pauline was by his side. He is buried in St. Petersburg in the Volkovo cemetery.

Plot Summary

Act I

Rakitin and Natalya are reading a book while Anna, Liza, and Schaaf play a game of hearts at a nearby card table. Natalya and Rakitin do more talking than reading and the flirtatious tension between the two is obvious. Natalya is bored with Rakitin always agreeing with her, and she expresses her displeasure. Rakitin continues to act as her "obedient servant" despite her protestations. Natalya and Rakitin's bantering is intermittently interrupted by exclamations from the card players about Schaaf s skill at Hearts. Natalya and Rakitin's conversation turns a bit personal, and Natalya parallels their talks with making lace, which is done in stuffy rooms. Anna beats Schaaf at cards, and Kolya enters with Beliayev.

Kolya enthusiastically tells everyone how much he likes his new tutor. Natalya asks Rakitin what he thinks of the new tutor, and Rakitin notices that she is quite taken with him. Matvey enters to introduce Shpigelski, who greets everyone and goes on to tell a story about a woman who falls in love with two men. His story prompts Natalya to wonder out loud why someone can not love two people at the same time. She retracts her question by then stating that perhaps to love two people is really to love neither. As Natalya accompanies the exiting Anna and Liza to the door, Shpigelski and Rakitin confer about Natalya's curious mood. After Natalya's return, Shpigelski tells Natalya about his friend's interest in marrying Vera. Vera and Kolya enter and again exalt Beliayev.

Natalya and Rakitin continue talking and Beliayev and Islayev enter. Islayev and Beliayev discuss Islayev's dam project. Before exiting to accompany Islayev and Rakitin, Beliayev is summoned by Natalya to stay briefly. Natalya tells Beliayev of the life she hopes of for her son, and how she would like his life to differ from her own upbringing. Matvey announces dinner after Vera and Beliayev share a secret giggle with Natalya observing their playfulness.

Act II

Schaaf and Katya share a flirting exchange before they are interrupted by Natalya and Rakitin's entrance. Katya hides and Schaaf joins Natalya and Rakitin. Katya remains picking berries and is happened upon by Vera and Beliayev, who busy themselves fixing a kite. Vera and Beliayev discuss friends, poetry, and Natalya until she arrives with Rakitin and they exit. Natalya notices that they run off. After discussing Natalya's disposition, Bolshintsov, and youth, Natalya and Rakitin part. Rakitin reflects on his loyalty and devotion to Natalya and wonders why she is unhappy.

Beliayev enters and the two discuss Beliayev's laziness, his plan to make fireworks for Natalya's birthday, and his ability to translate French texts despite the fact that he does

not speak the language. Rakitin lectures him about the importance of studying and tells him that Natalya finds him quite charming. Natalya reenters and is cheered by Beliayev, which Rakitin notices. Shpigelski returns with Bolshintsov. After being left alone, Shpigelski and an obviously nervous Bolshintsov discuss the possibility of a match between he and Vera. Shpigelski tries to comfort Bolshintsov with words of confidence and advice. The scene ends with everyone heading to the meadow to watch Kolya fly a kite.

Act III

Shpigelski admits to Rakitin that he has agreed to play matchmaker for Bolshintsov in return for a team of horses and urges Rakitin to find out if Bolshintsov can continue calling on Vera. In his next conversation with Natalya, which is mixed with much innuendo about her feelings for Beliayev, Rakitin tries to find out what she plans to do about Vera. She claims not to have made a decision, so Rakitin sends for Vera. While she talks with Vera about Bolshintsov, Natalya probes her about her feelings for Beliayev. Obviously shaken, Natalya concludes that Vera and Beliayev are in love and sends the girl away. Privately, Natalya questions her jealousy of Vera and decides that although she is in love with him, Beliayev must leave.

Rakitin reappears and confirms for Natalya that she is indeed in love with Beliayev and that it would be best if he and Beliayev both left. Natalya weeps on Rakitin's shoulder at the same time that Islayev and his mother enter. Natalya rushes out and following her, Rakitin tells Natalya's perplexed husband and mother-in-law that he will explain everything later. Together again, Natalya and Rakitin agree that Natalya must talk with Beliayev immediately. Beliayev enters and after Natalya questions him about Vera, whose love he is surprised to learn of, he decides that he must leave. His decision upsets Natalya and while he wavers on if he should leave or not, she decides that she should think about it before a decision is made. Alone again, Natalya questions her motivations and intentions and finally concludes that the tutor must go.

Act IV

Liza and Shpigelski seek refuge from the rain in the same place where Katya is waiting to summon Beliayev for Vera. Katya hides and overhears the couple's conversation about Natalya's state of mind and their relationship. Shpigelski discusses some interesting merits for marrying, like the fact that he is aging and his "cooks always turn out to be thieves." He continues by proposing marriage and revealing a private persona that differs from his public facade. The two exit and as Beliayev walks by, Katya calls to him. While she summons Vera, Beliayev reflects on how unbelievable the whole situation has become. Embarrassed, Vera enters and tells Beliayev how sorry she is that he is leaving. She tells him that she never told Natalya that she was in love with him and that it is actually Natalya who is in love with him.

Natalya surprises the two as she enters, and Vera confronts her about being in love with Beliayev. Regretting her behavior, Vera flees, leaving Natalya and Beliayev alone. Natalya admits her love and in the midst of a seemingly mutual confession and their ensuing conversation about his staying or going, Rakitin enters. Natalya dismisses her previous conversation with Rakitin about Beliayev as childishness, and when the two run into Islayev, she takes his hand and exits followed by Rakitin and Shpigelski.

ActV

Islayev and his mother discuss the scene they happened upon between Natalya and Rakitin. Anna is suspicious and Islayev consoles her. Islayev calls for Rakitin, who, after admitting his love for Natalya, tells Islayev that he is leaving. After some discussion, Islayev says that maybe he should leave for just a few days. Rakitin runs into Beliayev and tells him why he is leaving. He continues to lecture Beliayev about the importance of a woman's honor and asks if Beliayev would do the same if he were Rakitin. Their conversation is interrupted by Natalya and Vera. Rakitin tells them his plan and seems jealous about Natalya's compliments to Beliayev.

After the men depart, Natalya apologizes to Vera, who receives the information quite bitterly and is obviously upset by the thought that Beliayev loves Natalya. Coming upon Vera alone, Shpigelski is happy to learn that Vera will marry Bolshintsov after all. After Shpigelski departs, Beliayev enters to tell Vera that he is leaving because he is unhappy with the problems he has caused. Vera confides her marriage plans and agrees to give Natalya his goodbye note. After giving Natalya the note, Vera tells her that she is leaving. They are interrupted by Islayev and then Rakitin. The men discuss Natalya's apparent illness and Islayev attributes it to her learning that Rakitin is leaving. Rakitin says his good-byes. Kolya, Anna, Liza, and Schaaf enter and ask what is wrong with Natalya. In the process of the inquiry, Islayev learns of Beliayev's departure and is perplexed by everyone's sudden departures. One by one, everyone exits the stage. In the end, only Anna and Liza remain. To her shock, Anna learns that Liza too has plans to leave.

Act 1, Part 1

Act 1, Part 1 Summary

This Russian play is a tragi-comedy that tells the story of a woman's relationships with three men: her inattentive husband, an adoring family friend and her son's young tutor, with whom she has become infatuated. As the woman and the men in her life confront their feelings and each other, the play explores themes relating to the role of honesty in relationships and the desperate things that desire to be loved makes people do.

The first act takes place in the drawing room. Anna, Lizaveta and Schaaf play cards as Natalya embroiders and Rakitin reads to her. Lizaveta and Anna complain about how Schaaf always wins, and Natalya complains about how her husband spends too much time working. When Rakitin agrees, she complains about how boring it is that he always agrees with her. She starts to talk about what she wants from him, but she doesn't complete her thought and tells him to resume reading.

Anna asks where Kolya is. Natalya says he's out with the new tutor and explains to Rakitin that while he was away a new tutor has been hired. She describes him as young, on leave from school from the summer and as merry and spirited but awkward. She then tells him to continue reading, but before he can get very far, she asks where Vera is, telling Rakitin to put the book away and saying that it's clear she can't concentrate. They talk about how a newlywed couple of their acquaintance is already bored with each other, with Rakitin referring to how boredom cannot be concealed in the same way as other feelings. Natalya asks whether that's true of all feelings. Rakitin replies that he thinks it is and adds that Natalya must know what it's like to be with someone whom one loves but who is boring. Natalya complains about how Rakitin talks as though he's making lace - delicately and carefully, but trapped in a stuffy room and not moving from his seat. Rakitin suggests that she's angry with him, but she says she's not.

The card game ends, with the players arguing about who had the most hearts. At the same time, Rakitin says that Natalya looks different, and Natalya says he knows her so well that he should be able to guess what the change is. Before he can respond, Kolya runs in, followed by Beliayev, who watches from the doorway as Kolya shows off his new bow and arrows and talks excitedly about all the physical things like climbing trees that Beliayev is going to teach him to do. He says how much he cares for Beliayev and then runs back out with him to feed the horses.

The card players start a new game, as Natalya asks Rakitin what he thinks of Beliayev. Rakitin says he didn't pay too much attention to him, since he was concentrating on what she asked him to do (that is, guess why she's changed). Natalya smiles and suggests that between them they can finish Beliayev's education. When Rakitin suggests that Beliayev would be flattered by her attention, she says they can't know

how he feels. He's different from other people, and just because she and Rakitin study themselves so intently, it doesn't mean they know or understand other people.

Act 1, Part 1 Analysis

This play is, at its core, an examination of love - how it develops, how it frightens and excites, how feeling it leads to saying and doing things that otherwise might not be said or done and perhaps most importantly, how and why it's sought. At this point in the play, however, there are no overt declarations of love, other than Kolya's childlike expression of affection for Beliayev. There is no active seekings of love, and there are no dramas emerging from inappropriate expressions of it. Natalya and Rakitin merely flirt with each other, while the card players make repeated comments on the games being played with hearts, the universal symbol for love and feeling. They argue over who's winning and who's losing and why, over who has the most hearts and who has the least and over who is a fair or unfair player. Their controversies simultaneously foreshadow and symbolize the flirty, manipulative love games played by several of the characters, particularly Natalya.

The context of Natalya's games and the reason they're played is explored with great subtlety in this scene. As is the case in many Russian plays, references to feeling and motivation tend to be understated and hinted at, rather than proclaimed outright. In this play, one example of this might be the reference to Natalya's husband's work habits, which hints at why she pursues flirtations and intimacies with first Rakitin and then Beliayev. Her husband is too busy for her, and therefore she finds comfort and fulfillment in the attentions of other men. Another hint about why Natalya plays the games she does might be found in the conversation about the boredom of the newlyweds.

While it's clear that Natalya is not a newlywed (since she's got an active young son), the implication of what she says is that like the newlyweds, she too is bored, and not just with her husband. The nature of her boredom is perhaps illustrated by her comments about lace containing images that create a vivid sense of a stultifying entrapment, which it seems Natalya herself is experiencing. Finally, her comments on how bored she is with the lack of variety in her relationship with Rakitin indicate another reason for her growing interest in Beliayev. The primary reason is her initial attraction to him, also hinted at in this scene. This attraction is perhaps behind the change in her sensed by Rakitin. Again, however, what exactly the change is and what has triggered it is never fully explained, only implied.

Natalya's comments about how studying oneself don't enable one to understand other people are ironic, given that throughout the play she does not really understand herself, let alone other people. This general lack of understanding is, in most cases, the reason most of the play's conflicts and tensions come into being.

Act 1, Part 2

Act 1, Part 2 Summary

Shpigelsky comes in and greets everyone. Conversation reveals that he's the local doctor. He thinks Natalya is physically well but emotionally uneasy, and Shpigelsky thinks she just doesn't laugh or walk enough. Natalya asks him to tell her a funny story. He speaks at length about a neighbor with a wealthy daughter whose equally wealthy aunt left a will in the daughter's favor. Several suitors for the daughter's hand in marriage turned up, and she liked one in particular. She was won over by the manipulations of another man, a dashing young officer in the military, and when he proposed marriage, she became extremely upset and cried all the time because she loved both men and couldn't choose between them. After he talks about how upset and frustrated the father is, Natalya comments that it's possible to love two people at the same time and that it's also possible that caring for two people means that one doesn't really love either. Shpigelsky glances at Rakitin and says that he sees what she means.

As Natalya says that Shpigelsky still hasn't made her laugh, the card game breaks up. Anna and Lizaveta go out, with Natalya walking them to the door. Shpigelsky asks Rakitin whether he knows why Natalya's upset. Rakitin says he doesn't know. As Natalya comes back in, Shpigelsky goes to her and tells her a friend of his has asked him to talk to her about the possibility of his marrying Vera, her ward. Natalya says she's just a child.

Vera and Kolya come in, looking for glue for a kite they're making with Beliayev. Schaaf says that Kolya hasn't had his German lesson yet, and Natalya asks Vera what she's been doing all day. She explains that she's been with Beliayev and Kolya, and Natalya reacts angrily, telling Kolya that he's played enough for the day and has to go have his German lesson. Schaaf takes Kolya out. Rakitin follows. As Shpigelsky listens, Natalya gets Vera to talk about all the games she's been playing, and when she's finished Natalya comments to Shpigelsky that Vera really is just a child. Shpigelsky agrees, but he says Vera's youth is no barrier. As Vera comments on how much fun she has with Beliayev, Natalya asks how old she is. Before she answers, Rakitin comes back in, and Shpigelsky suddenly remembers that he's come to take a look at the ill coachman and goes out. Natalya speaks to Vera in French, telling her to get changed for dinner.

After Vera's gone out, Natalya asks Rakitin why he's looking at her the way he is, and he explains that he's happy. She then tells him to open the window, saying how much she enjoys the wind and talking about how it seems to have been waiting to come in. It has completely taken possession of the room, and there's no turning it out. He compliments her on how lovely she is, and she tells him how good a friend she is. She is glad that her friendship is so open and natural and uninhibited. They talk further, but Rakitin soon tells her to stop, saying he's afraid that if she talks about it too much his happiness will vanish. She says he is good to her and that she desires no other happiness. As he's talking about how he's willing to do whatever she asks him to, her

husband's voice is heard. Natalya says she can't see him and runs out. Rakitin asks whether what's just happened is the beginning of something or the end.

Act 1, Part 2 Analysis

Natalya's situation of loving two men, neither of whom is her husband, is developed on two different metaphoric levels in this scene. The first appears in Shpigelsky's story about the young woman with two suitors, which in the manner of the card game in Part 1 simultaneously symbolizes and foreshadows the predicament in which Natalya finds herself. Later in the play, her situation becomes more obvious, but the second metaphor in this section indicates that even though it's never actually discussed, the situation already exists. That metaphor can be found in Natalya's references to opening a window to the wind, which symbolizes the way she's opening her heart to the rush of feeling she's experiencing as the result of Beliayev entering her life.

Shpigelsky's story about the girl with two suitors functions on a second level, again as both foreshadowing and symbolization of the situation faced by Vera, courted by one suitor but in love with another. The end of the story, in which the young woman ends up in tears and unable to decide, foreshadows the emotional pain in which both Natalya and Vera, caught in similar situations, find themselves. Interestingly, however, the play ends differently from the story, with both Natalya and Vera making firm, if painful, choices about which man and which relationship to follow through with. Meanwhile, the eventual rivalry for the affections of Beliayev that arises between Vera and Natalya is foreshadowed in Natalya's (again very subtle) response to Vera's comments about how much fun she has with him.

One final piece of foreshadowing in this section is found in Rakitin's final lines, in which he wonders whether what just passed between him and Natalya is a beginning or an end. It is perhaps possible for us to understand, at this point, that it's both. It is a beginning for Natalya and Beliayev and an end for Rakitin. Later in the play, of course, it becomes clear that several important relationships have actually ended.

Act 1, Part 3

Act 1, Part 3 Summary

Arkady comes in, and he and Rakitin greet each other. Arkady then complains at length about the work he's doing on the estate. He says he's hardworking and practical. He used to dream of being another kind of man but realized his mistake, and he is now living the life he believes he's meant to live. He wonders where Beliayev is, saying he asked him to check on the progress of construction on some new barns. Beliayev comes in, reporting to Arkady that work on the barns is ahead of schedule. Natalya enters also, and Arkady greets her distractedly. Then, Arkady invites them all to look at a new piece of machinery before dinner. Rakitin agrees to go, but Natalya says she'll stay behind.

Arkady and Rakitin go out. Beliayev is about to follow, but Natalya asks him to stay, saying she wants to get to know him. At first Beliayev seems uncomfortable, but as she asks questions about his family and about Kolya, he seems to become more relaxed. Natalya talks about her hope for providing a happy childhood for Kolya, referring to her unhappiness when she was a girl and saying she doesn't want Kolya to have the same kind of memories. She talks about how some aspects of her personality, such as coldness and distance, may still linger, but she says that she's trying to change. This leads Beliayev to talk about how he grew up in relative freedom, saying that nobody really bothered to raise him. Natalya changes the subject, asking whether it was he that she heard singing in the garden. When he says it was, she compliments him on how well he sings. She says that he'll have to sing for her again sometime and offers her hand in friendship. Beliayev, unsure of what to do with her hand, kisses it.

Shpigelsky comes in. Natalya and Beliayev both get up, embarrassed. Shpigelsky talks about how the ill coachman is actually well. Vera comes running in, shouting for Beliayev and stopping when she sees Natalya. She then says that Kolya wants to get back to work on the kite. Natalya speaks in French to Vera, telling her to enter rooms without shouting. Then, in English, Natalya says that it's time for dinner. As she fixes her hair, Vera and Beliayev whisper to each other. Natalya asks what they're talking about, and Vera explains they're just discussing how the nurse fell off the swing. Natalya doesn't let Vera finish her story, demanding that Shpigelsky talk to her. Before they can talk further, a Servant announces that dinner is ready. Vera and Beliayev go out, followed by the Servant. Before they go, Natalya tells Shpigelsky she's prepared to re-consider her position on the proposal from Shpigelsky's friend.

Act 1, Part 3 Analysis

The first part of this section vividly illustrates why Natalya is bored with her husband. Arkady is portrayed as somewhat insensitive, focused on his farm, his work and his equipment. He pays little or no attention to his wife, and therefore she's grateful for the

attention she gets from Rakitin and determined to develop a relationship with Beliayev. This determination, in turn, is illustrated by their conversation, mostly one-sided on Natalya's part, as she reminisces about her childhood. This comes across as a clear attempt to both manipulate him into feeling sympathy for her and opening up about himself.

At this point, the question arises as to why Natalya does what she does, manipulating Beliayev in this scene and throughout the play into a relationship. The argument could be made that she is not necessarily manipulative by nature and that she's not trying to control Beliayev for the sake of control. Instead, she's lonely and desperate for loving attention. This would mean that her vulnerability in their conversation, while unquestionably manipulation, is also a genuine expression of vulnerability and desperation for human connection, a possibility reinforced by the glimpses of her relationship with Arkady. Another hint of her desperation occurs at the end of the scene, when Natalya seems resentful of the playful intimacy and whispering between Vera and Beliayev, and this is developed further when she tells Shpigelsky she's going to reconsider his proposition. When she says this, the audience understands her to be thinking in terms of getting Vera out of the way so that she (Natalya) can have Beliayev to herself. This aspect to her manipulations continues throughout the play, climaxing in the confrontation between Vera and Natalya in Act 4, Part 1, in which Vera seems to realize exactly what Natalya's been doing.

The reverse argument, that Natalya is just plain selfish, could also be made. She clearly knows what she wants, and she is just as clearly prepared to do whatever it takes to get it in spite of being confused about whether it's actually the right thing to do. This may be one of those questions that can be answered only by actors and a director in a rehearsal situation. How is the audience intended to perceive Natalya, as self-centered and cruel or as lonely and vulnerable? The true answer might be both - that loneliness and vulnerability makes her self-centered and manipulative. This idea is born out by action later in the play, in which Natalya's conscience about what she's done clearly troubles her.

If Natalya is at heart a good person driven to extreme actions and reactions by extreme vulnerability and loneliness, then her situation might be seen as embodying the play's theme, that desperation for love leads to desperate actions. This theme is embodied a second time later in the play when Vera, desperate after learning that Beliayev doesn't love her, agrees to the proposal brought forward by Shpigelsky. It's embodied a third time when Shpigelsky and Lizaveta both take somewhat desperate action as they come to an agreement about the kind of love at the core of the marriage they plan to enter into, and a fourth time in the first part of the next act.

Act 2, Part 1

Act 2, Part 1 Summary

Act 2 is set in the garden. Matvey, a servant, tries to convince Katya, another servant, that she should marry him. When Katya says she wants to wait, Matvey tells her that there's no reason to wait. He says that there will be no one more considerate of her than he, that he's not a drinker and that he has a good relationship with the master and mistress. When Katya continues to hesitate, Matvey says that she never treated him this way before. She tells him that Schaaf is coming, and he goes out, saying he'll talk to her again. Schaaf appears, and after some small talk about how Katya is going to pick raspberries and Schaaf is going fishing, he proclaims his love. She tells him he should be ashamed of himself, says Natalya's coming and runs away. Natalya comes in, arm in arm with Rakitin. Natalya asks Schaaf whether he's going fishing and then whether he's seen Beliayev. When he says he hasn't, Natalya says she and Rakitin will watch him as he fishes. All three go out. Katya reappears, picking raspberries and singing to herself a song about a young girl in love.

Beliayev and Vera come in. Beliayev joins in Katya's song, has a couple of raspberries and sits on a bench with Vera so they can put the tail on the kite. Katya says he can have all her berries, but Beliayev says he only wants a few. As Beliayev works, Vera moves the kite out of the way. At first she says she wants to be able to see him, but then she says she wants to make sure she sees how to attach the tail. Beliayev tells Katya to sing again, and she does. Meanwhile, Vera and Beliayev talk about his life in Moscow as a student. He has many friends, but she feels she doesn't. Beliayev is her friend, and their mothers are both dead. It's said that orphans quickly make friends with one another. As they finish the kite, Beliayev wonders how many days he's been at the house. Vera tells him exactly.

Katya offers them more raspberries and then goes off. After talking briefly about how she heard Lizaveta speak highly of Beliayev the other day and how beautiful the weather is, Vera sighs and explains that she feels strange, referring how she suddenly burst into tears on the stairs the day before. Beliayev says it's just because she's growing up and adds that he noticed her eyes had been red. Vera seems flattered that he noticed, and as the conversation continues, she seems to be finding romantic meanings in almost everything Beliayev says. Suddenly, she sees Natalya coming, and Beliayev suggests they go in to find Kolya. As they go, Katya comes in and again hides in the raspberry bushes as Natalya and Rakitin come in.

Act 2, Part 1 Analysis

At the beginning of this section, Katya's rejection of the love offered by Matvey simultaneously parallels and foreshadows Natalya's eventual rejection of Rakitin. The interesting thing here is that they both clearly hope to receive love from Beliayev. The

audience has already seen how Natalya feels about him, but Katya's parallel feelings are revealed through her song and through her reactions to Beliayev and Vera, particularly her suggestion that Beliayev take all her raspberries.

Another parallel to Natalya's actions and situation appears in the conversation between Vera and Beliayev, in which Vera, in a similar way to Natalya in Act 1, Part 3, tries to get him to reveal more of himself. Her reasons for doing so are, in all likelihood, the same as Natalya's - to manipulate him into falling in love with her. There is the sense, however, that Vera's efforts are less calculated than Natalya's. She hasn't yet realized that Natalya is a rival, and therefore her intention is not to shut Natalya out of the picture, as Natalya intends to eliminate Vera. It seems clear, rather, that Vera does what she does just to get Beliayev to reveal himself and therefore possibly love her.

In the middle of all this is Schaaf's declaration for love of Katya, which functions mainly to add comedy to the scene and, on a secondary level, to illustrate how even comic outsiders can experience feelings of loneliness, tenderness and passion.

Act 2, Part 2

Act 2, Part 2 Summary

Natalya sees Vera and Beliayev go, commenting that it looks as though they are running away and saying that Vera is too young to be spending time with young men. Rakitin asks how old she is, and Natalya says she's seventeen. She repeats the number as though it has some significance and then asks whether Shpigelsky has left. Rakitin says he has, and Natalya comments on how amusing he can be. Rakitin talks about how she didn't seem as though she was in a mood to be amused, and then Natalya says she may be in a bit of a mood but that she's always prepared to laugh. She adds that she had something particular to talk with Shpigelsky about, but when Rakitin asks what it was, she tells him to mind his own business, saying she needs to have some secrets. They argue over whether Rakitin has the right to know things and to make observations about her, with Rakitin finally commenting that Natalya's been irritable, perplexed and very tired. He adds that he isn't asking for an explanation but is just saying he's worried. Natalya demands that he change the subject.

After Rakitin tries to make small talk about their plans for the rest of the day, Natalya demands he tell her about Bolshintsov, the man Shpigelsky said was interested in Vera. Rakitin describes him negatively but says he's harmless, but when he asks why Natalya's interested in him, she doesn't answer. He speaks poetically about a nearby oak tree, describing it as strong and mature and comparing it favorably with a nearby birch tree, which he describes as young and underdeveloped, but still lovely. Natalya tells him that she noticed the difference between the two trees a long time ago, and she says he's got a beautiful way of expressing himself. She adds, though, that she thinks nature is too earthy and realistic to be described in such elevated, unrealistic language. Rakitin takes her to mean that she thinks nature is healthy while he is sickly, but Natalya declares that both she and Rakitin are sickly and old. She then refers to the two young people who were just sitting on the same bench they're sitting on right now, in other words, Beliayev and Vera. Rakitin talks about the difference between being young in body and young in spirit, and Natalya thinks he's saying Beliayev and Vera are foolish. Rakitin thinks she's saying that he's not clever, and Natalya says that's not what she means at all.

Katya emerges from the bushes, and after a brief conversation with Natalya about how Katya's cheeks are as red as the raspberries she's been picking, she runs off. Natalya starts to go in, saying she needs to check on Vera and adding that the conversation is upsetting her. She shakes hands with Rakitin, saying they're still friends, and goes into the house. Left alone, Rakitin speaks in soliloquy about how confused he is by Natalya's behavior, wondering whether she's growing tired of him. He realizes how attracted she is to Beliayev, and he talks himself into believing that soon she'll be over Beliayev and will return her attention to him. He observes that it's often been his role in life, and love, to sit and wait patiently for the future. He sees Beliayev coming and resolves to talk with him to find out what he's really like.

Act 2, Part 2 Analysis

The key element of this scene is the breakdown of affection and communication between Rakitin and Natalya. They start their conversation amicably enough, but by its end they, and the audience, realize that Natalya is no longer getting what she apparently always gotten from him in the past - good, stimulating conversation and unconditional, unquestioning devotion. It also becomes clear that she's far more interested in pursuing a relationship with Beliayev, an aspect to her character indicated not only by her increasing displeasure with Rakitin but also by suggestions that she's following through on her plans to marry Vera off to Bolshintsov. This is indicated when she asks Rakitin about him, and by her reference to wanting to talk to Shpigelsky.

There's an interesting symbol in this conversation, found in Rakitin's reference to the two trees. The oak represents Natalya and the birch represents Vera - maturity and strength on the one hand, and fresh youthful beauty on the other. Natalya's reaction to his poeticism, meanwhile, is the clearest manifestation so far of her increasing disillusionment with him and her jealousy of Vera. The audience also sees at this point how insecure she is about her age, an insecurity that doesn't seem to prevent her from going even further with her plans to get Beliayev for herself.

The term "soliloquy," used here to describe Rakitin talking to himself, is generally used to describe a scene in which an actor speaks his thoughts aloud. The difference between a soliloquy and a monologue is that generally, a monologue is spoken to another character. A soliloquy generally takes place when a character is alone onstage, and it is often used to reveal a character's inner turmoil, define a thought or emotional process or to make a decision. All three aspects to soliloquies are utilized here, as Rakitin's soliloquy reveals his thoughts, shows how he's processing his feelings and, to a lesser degree, portrays him talking through his situation and deciding that he has two courses of action. These are to wait for Natalya's intentions and true feelings to become clear and to develop a relationship of his own with Beliayev, which he proceeds to do in the following section.

Act 2, Part 3

Act 2, Part 3 Summary

Rakitin and Beliayev make small talk about the weather, life in the country, sport shooting, reading, talking with ladies, where to get gunpowder to make fireworks, magazines and poetry. Beliayev says that most poetry is sentimental and unreal. After complimenting him on his common sense, Rakitin asks whether he knows French. Beliayev says he's too lazy to learn it, but Rakitin tells him that instead of thinking of himself as lazy, he should think of himself as impulsive and free from constraint. Rakitin observes that several people, including Natalya, find those characteristics attractive. Beliayev says that he doesn't feel free at all around Natalya and that he can't understand why Rakitin is talking to him the way he is. He suddenly hears a bird in the garden and runs out to get a gun to shoot it.

Natalya comes in just as Beliayev is going, hears what he plans to do and tells him to leave the bird alone. He speaks to her formally, and she says he has no need to speak to her that way. She tells him that she and Rakitin will teach him how to behave properly. After Beliayev says how grateful he is, Natalya asks where he put the kite. When he tells her that he took it indoors because he thought she didn't like it, Natalya suggests they go get Kolya and Vera and go fly it. She offers her arm, and Beliayev takes it. She teases him about how awkward he is, and they go out. After they've gone, Rakitin talks in soliloquy about how her face changes when she's with Beliayev. He realizes he's jealous and prays to be spared from it. As he's going in, Shpigelsky and Bolshintsov appear, and Shpigelsky explains that they ran into each other on the road as he was leaving and Bolshintsov was arriving. He also says they didn't come in the front door because Bolshintsov suddenly decided he wanted to pick mushrooms in the garden. Rakitin goes inside to tell Natalya they've arrived.

Bolshintsov asks why Shpigelsky said what he said about the mushrooms, and Shpigelsky says that that's a better explanation for not coming in the front door than the real one, that Bolshintsov was suddenly overcome by fear. He then says something we understand him to have said several times before, that Natalya supports the idea of Vera marrying Bolshintsov and that she wants Bolshintsov to persuade Vera that the marriage will make her happy. Bolshintsov says again that he's nervous, adding that he's had little experience with women and asking for suggestions about having a conversation. Shpigelsky at first says that he'll offer no advice, but Bolshintsov says he'll give him three horses if he does. This leads Shpigelsky to indicate that Bolshintsov's physical appearance isn't his strong point and that he is old, but then Shpigelsky says Bolshintsov's got something that compensates for both those failings - wealth. He tells Bolshintsov what to say, mentioning that the simpler he expresses himself, the better. Bolshintsov sees Natalya and the others coming and starts to flee, but Shpigelsky makes him stay.

Natalya, Vera, Beliayev, Kolya, Rakitin and Lizaveta all come in with the kite. Natalya greets Shpigelsky and Bolshintsov. As they make small talk about how nice it is to see each other, Kolya becomes impatient, finally demanding that they go fly the kite. Natalya leads everyone off, with Shpigelsky saying to Rakitin that there's something they need to discuss. Rakitin laughs, saying he finds it amusing to be at the rear of the little parade. Shpigelsky comments that sometimes those at the rear can end up in front.

Act 2, Part 3 Analysis

The first thing to note about this section is the development of the subplot between Vera and Bolshintsov, which is important for a couple of reasons. The first is the way it reveals the character of Shpigelsky. He seems to be lying about what Natalya said and accepts payment (the horses) for his help, so he seems to have little or no real regard for love or genuine affection. As such, he is an effective contrast to the other characters, particularly to Natalya and to Vera who view their own feelings of love as an overwhelming passion as opposed to a business transaction. In his lying, however, Shpigelsky is also a parallel character to Natalya, who doesn't lie in so many words but is just as much of a manipulator.

There's also another way in which he's a parallel character to Natalya, as his attitude towards Vera combines with the fact that he and Natalya are pursuing the same goal to suggest that Natalya feels the same way about Vera as he does, that she is a commodity. In Shpigelsky's case, Vera is a commodity to be profited upon, while in Natalya's case, she's a commodity to be unloaded so that she can pursue her goal of a relationship with Beliayev. Either way, the audience gets the sense from this scene that both Natalya and Shpigelsky view Vera and her feelings as expendable, an illustration of the play's theme that desperation for love makes people do desperate things. Ultimately, if neither Shpigelsky nor Natalya were desperate for the match with Bolshintsov to take place, for their own reasons, they wouldn't act the way they do.

One other aspect to Shpigelsky's character in this scene is the way it colors the later scene in which he protests his love for Lizaveta. In that later scene, the audience will see again how love, for him, is reduced to a commodity, and we'll also see again how his fairly casual relationship with the truth can manipulate someone more innocent in the same way as Bolshintsov is manipulated here.

The second thing to note about this scene is the way that Rakitin realizes his status in terms of the relationship between Beliayev and Natalya - that he is definitely low man on her totem pole. This position is symbolized by the way he ends up at the end of the procession with the kite at the end of the act, a position which is suggested to be a strong one by, ironically enough, Shpigelsky. In other words, Rakitin can, in these last moments, feel a degree of restoration in his hopes for intimacy with Natalya, hopes that have clearly been dashed by his growing awareness of how she feels about Beliayev.

Rakitin's feelings are directly related to the third key point of this scene, which is the symbolic value of the kite. In the conversation between Natalya and Rakitin in the

previous scene, she has indirectly revealed the depths of her feelings for Beliayev. As a result of this and of Rakitin's comments on those feelings in this scene, the audience comes to understand that the kite represents those feelings - specifically, of Natalya's love. Like the kite, they've come into existence as the result of Beliayev, and like the kite, they have been hidden away. Also like the kite, they are about to be given the opportunity to be released and to soar. The full value of the symbol is revealed in the second act, as we see that, in the way a kite's flight is limited because of its connection to the ground through a string, Natalya's love is equally limited because of Beliayev's connection to his sense of morality and integrity.

Act 3, Part 1

Act 3, Part 1 Summary

This act is again set in the drawing room. Rakitin and Shpigelsky come in from outside, with Shpigelsky complaining that on the one hand, Bolshintsov is pestering him to find out about Natalya's position on the marriage while on the other, Natalya and Vera are ignoring him. When Rakitin says Bolshintsov is a fool, Shpigelsky protests that even foolish men have the right to marry. In trying to help Bolshintsov, he claims he's just being a good friend, but under pressure he admits that he's been offered three horses in exchange for that help. Further conversation reveals that Shpigelsky wants Rakitin to help him convince Natalya to allow the relationship between Bolshintsov and Vera to go ahead. The audience understands this to be the "something" that Shpigelsky wanted to discuss with Rakitin at the end of Act 2. Shpigelsky sees Natalya coming in, and Rakitin agrees to do what he can. Shpigelsky runs out, and Natalya comes in.

When Natalya sees Rakitin, she almost goes out again, saying she thought he was in the garden. She then asks what Shpigelsky wanted, talking about how much she dislikes him. Rakitin tells her he was talking about Bolshintsov, whom Natalya refers to as stupid. Rakitin says she didn't feel that way before, but Natalya says, "yesterday is not today." Rakitin says that for him both days are the same, and we understand him to mean that his feelings for Natalya don't change, no matter how she treats him. She tells him that there's no one she relies on more than him and no one that she loves the way she loves him. After talking about how it's impossible to control the future, she decides to tell Rakitin the truth and admits that she's attracted to Beliayev. He tells her he already knows, saying he figured it out from her behavior.

As he starts to leave, Natalya tells him to stay, saying it's only Beliayev's youth and joy that attracts her and referring to how miserable her own youth was. She asks for Rakitin's help in dealing with her feelings and the situation. When he seems reluctant, she tries to pressure him into saying what's wrong. He changes the subject, saying Shpigelsky is expecting an answer from her about Bolshintsov. Natalya suggests he's angry with her, but Rakitin says he's sorry for her. She then accuses him of being jealous, but he says he's no right to be. She then says she hasn't said anything to Vera about Bolshintsov. When Rakitin offers to fetch her, Natalya suggests that if he truly feels sorry for her he should show it. Rakitin asks coldly whether he should fetch Vera, and Natalya tells him to go. After Rakitin's gone, Natalya speaks in a brief soliloquy about how awful things are. She realizes that in all her upset she hasn't thought once about her husband and resolves to set everything to rights.

Act 3, Part 1 Analysis

The action of this act is built around the struggles Natalya faces as she encounters the consequences of her behavior in the first two acts, specifically, her reactions to Beliayev

and her opening the door to negotiations for Vera's marriage to Bolshintsov. Essentially, this section and this act demonstrate the results of her thoughtlessness, her indulgence of her sudden passion for Beliayev without consideration for the people around her. It is worth noting that people's reactions to her come as a surprise. She clearly expects everyone to see things her way, understanding her and supporting her completely, and she has no concept that anyone, including Rakitin in this section and Vera in the following section, might be deeply hurt or upset. She gives a degree of superficial lip service to their concerns, but she is ultimately far more concerned with getting what she wants.

The argument could be made here, as it could before, that she's simply selfish and insensitive. This point of view is supported by her brief soliloquy at the end of this section, in which she seems surprised that she hasn't even considered her husband. There is also the possibility, however, that she's simply blinded by the intensity of her loneliness and the parallel intensity of her attraction to Beliayev. As previously discussed in the analysis of Act 1, Part 3, the answer to this question might be that she's both. Her loneliness makes her selfish. Ultimately, however, her actions in response to both those states of feeling get her into difficulties with those closest to her, as dramatized in this section with Rakitin and in the following section with Vera.

Act 3, Part 2

Act 3, Part 2 Summary

Vera enters. Natalya sits down with her, and after talking about how Vera's becoming a young woman, she explains that she's received an offer of marriage for her. Vera reacts with shock and surprise, saying she's in Natalya's power. Natalya tells her to stop crying and urges her to speak as though Natalya is her sister. Vera agrees, and Natalya says she thinks Vera is too young for marriage. If that were the only factor, the discussion would be closed. She then says, however, that the suitor for Vera's hand is a good man, well off and only asking permission to visit in the hopes of gaining her affections. Vera asks who the suitor is. When Natalya admits that it's Bolshintsov, Vera laughs, but then she suddenly realizes Natalya is not joking.

After talking briefly about how Bolshintsov is exactly the right age to be married, Natalya agrees that it's only natural for someone of Vera's age to want to marry for love. Vera asks whether Natalya married for love, and after hesitating a moment, Natalya admits that she did. She then changes the subject, saying that after seeing Vera's reaction she's decided to end the discussions about the marriage. She then talks about how, now that they're talking to each other like sisters, they can have no secrets from each other. She wonders whether Vera has another reason for not wanting to marry Bolshintsov. She hints that she thinks Vera might love someone else, and after listing several men with whom Vera has spent some time, she asks about Beliayev. Vera admits that she likes him, that they like spending time together and that he talks to her, saying he told her that Natalya frightens him. She then talks at enthusiastic length about how everyone in the house likes him and how kind he is, referring to his picking a flower and giving it to her. Natalya wonders why he doesn't do those kinds of things for her.

Vera says he doesn't know or understand Natalya and that he's frightened of her. She offers to tell him how kind Natalya is and that he has no reason to be afraid of her. Natalya warns her to be careful around him, saying that it's the responsibility of old people like her to be concerned about the younger ones. She then encourages Vera to again think of her as a sister and impart her true feelings. Vera confesses that she doesn't really know what she feels, which Natalya takes to mean that she's actually in love. Vera realizes that Natalya has become upset and offers to call the servants, but Natalya tells her everything's fine and urges her to run along, saying they'll talk later. Vera wonders whether Natalya is angry with her, but Natalya says she just wants to be alone.

Vera goes out, and Natalya speaks in soliloquy about how she never noticed how Vera felt. She muses that she can still marry Vera off to Bolshintsov and get her out of the way, and she feels that her life has been poisoned by love. She talks about feeling as though she's going out of her mind because of the intensity of her feelings for Beliayev and because she's so confused about what to do. After admitting to herself that it's the first time she's ever been in love, she decides that the only thing to do is to send both

Beliayev and Rakitin away and return her attention to her marriage, but then she hopes that Beliayev can and will love her.

Natalya collapses in despair just as Rakitin is coming back in, saying Vera told him she was unwell. Natalya says she's fine and asks what he's come for. Rakitin confesses that he's come to ask her forgiveness for his behavior earlier, saying no matter how modest a man's ambitions and dreams are, when they're taken from him he becomes upset. The audience understands him to mean that he had his hopes for further intimacy for Natalya taken away when she confessed her feelings for Beliayev.

Natalya, who has been preoccupied the entire time he was speaking, says she hasn't heard a thing he said. He asks whether she will let him be her friend again. She asks him what's wrong with her. He tells her she's in love. She says it's impossible, and he tells her to not lie to herself. She asks what she should do, saying that Beliayev and Vera are in love with each other. Rakitin says that he'll advise her as long as she promises to trust that he's doing so only out of concern and love for her, not because he's got any other motives. The audience understands him to mean that he doesn't want her to think he gives the advice he does so that he can have her for himself. After Natalya agrees, Rakitin says that Beliayev must go away because if he stays her situation will be difficult, painful and ultimately intolerable. He then says that he must go away as well, for the sake of Natalya's peace. Natalya confesses that she was prepared to marry Vera off to Bolshintsov so she (Natalya) could be free to be with Beliayev, adding that at the last minute she was unable to follow through on her plan. Rakitin tells her that's evidence that Beliayev must be sent away. Natalya asks what there is for her to live for after he's gone. Rakitin offers to stay and help her for a few days, and she takes him to mean that he hopes she'll love him. He says he's only concerned for her well being, and she apologizes, referring to how miserable she is and how lost she would be without him.

Act 3, Part 2 Analysis

The possibility that Natalya is torn between the selfishness of her pursuit of Beliayev and her compassion for those affected by that selfishness is developed further in this scene. The audience sees how she's pulled back and forth between being driven by her own feelings and taking into account those of Rakitin, Arkady and Vera. She's confused and heartsick, and she's being driven to sudden spasms of intense grief, passion, despair and hope. Her soliloquy is a vivid dramatization of her condition, as she speaks her confused thoughts aloud, shifting rapidly and completely between emotional states.

The desperation that can often accompany intense feelings of love is portrayed very effectively here, not only through the character and actions of Natalya but also through the character and actions of both Vera and Rakitin. In their own ways, these two characters are just as much in love as Natalya, and they are just as upset and confused. The difference between their situations and Natalya's is that Rakitin and Vera are less inclined to behave selfishly. They in fact tend towards reacting with sensitivity and with forethought instead of acting impulsively and without precaution, as Natalya

has done. Once again in this scene, Natalya is caught up not only in her own feelings but also in her own lack of prudence. The way she allows her feelings to run away with her gets her into even more difficulty than she would otherwise experience. This sense of self-generated difficulty continues through the rest of the act, increasing the pressure on her and making her situation even harder to handle.

Act 3, Part 3

Act 3, Part 3 Summary

Arkady and Anna come in. Natalya sees them and immediately runs out, embarrassed. Arkady demands to know why she's so upset and why she ran away. After Rakitin says there's nothing wrong, Anna starts to follow Natalya out, but Rakitin stops her, promising to explain the situation later and saying that if they trust him at all, they'll leave Natalya alone. After Arkady agrees, Rakitin asks him and Anna to leave them alone so that they can finish their conversation. After considering a moment, Arkady takes Anna out.

Rakitin calls Natalya back in, reassuring her that Arkady suspects nothing. He then asks whether she agrees with him that he and Beliayev have to leave, and he offers to talk to Beliayev himself. Natalya talks about how silly they've both been behaving. She says it's time to stop and that she'll confess everything to Arkady. Then, they'll be able to go on as before. She accuses Rakitin of creating all this upset so he doesn't have to suffer the loneliness of love by himself and tells him that if he says anything to Beliayev she'll never forgive him. Then, she admits that she wants to dismiss Beliayev herself. She tells Rakitin to send him to her immediately, saying she's calm and must take the opportunity to act while she can. Even though it seems as though he doesn't believe that she'll be able to do what she plans, Rakitin goes out to fetch Beliayev.

Natalya speaks in soliloquy, saying that she can't let Beliayev go and that she just wants to know whether he truly loves Vera. She tries to talk herself into dismissing him, going back and forth between the idea of talking to him right away and putting the conversation off for one more day. Finally, she talks about longing for peace, and then she sees Beliayev coming.

Beliayev comes in, and after having some difficulty speaking, Natalya tells him she's displeased with him, not because of his work with Kolya, which she says he's very happy about, but because Vera has told her everything. Beliayev says he doesn't know what she's talking about. Natalya asks whether it's possible that he hasn't noticed how Vera feels about him. Beliayev seems to be completely at a loss, leading Natalya to assure him that they can be comfortable and honest with each other. She then tells him that she doesn't blame him for what's happened, saying Vera's young and her infatuation will soon pass. She adds that now Beliayev knows how Vera feels, and Natalya is sure he'll change his behavior and attitudes. She concludes by telling him that she said everything she did on the assumption that Beliayev doesn't feel the same way about Vera that she feels about him.

Then, she adds that Vera believes he does. Beliayev says he can no longer remain in the house. Natalya angrily says that that decision is hers to make, but Beliayev says he doesn't care for Vera in that way. It's his responsibility to tell her the truth, and it's also his responsibility to leave because the situation is too awkward. Natalya says it wasn't her intention to get him to leave, only to make him aware of the situation, but she adds

that if he's determined to go she's not going to restrain him. When he sees how angry she is, Beliayev agrees to stay. Natalya becomes suspicious about why he changed his mind so quickly, and she says that she needs time to think about the situation. She asks him to say nothing to Vera and then says he can go.

After Beliayev is gone, Natalya speaks in soliloquy, saying that she's reassured that Beliayev doesn't love Vera and that he'll stay. She then wonders what she'll say to Rakitin and what right she had to trap Vera into confessing her feelings. She asks herself whether Beliayev was telling her the truth about how he feels about Vera and thinks about how good a man he seems to be. She concludes by realizing that if he stays, she's in danger of completely losing her self-respect. She resolves to write him a letter of dismissal and goes out.

Act 3, Part 3 Analysis

The sense of integrity in Beliayev, referred to in the analysis of Act 2, Part 3, appears for the first time in this scene. Of all the characters, he is the one who consistently reacts with a sense of responsibility and respect, without agenda or manipulation. In that sense, he serves as a kind of touchstone for characters like Natalya, Shpigelsky and Rakitin, the standard against which their lack of integrity and/or indecision are both measured and defined. Placed alongside his relative simplicity and decisive straightforwardness, the confusion and manipulations of Natalya in particular appear even more extreme, more tortured and more wretched, further highlighting the play's thematic point about how desperation for love leads to desperate action.

The audience also sees, in contrast to Beliayev's uncomplicated honesty, the extent to which Natalya repeatedly lies to herself and to others. Her sudden shifts of mood define with ever increasing clarity how tortured she is by desires that she's clearly never had to deal with before - if, that is, her earlier claim that she's never been in love before is to be believed. The extremity of her reactions makes this likely, but because she's so obviously a manipulator the question must be asked whether anything she says can be trusted. It seems likely that under the circumstances she's being as honest as she can be. Possibly, there are in fact truths to at least some of her stories, particularly those relating to her loveless childhood, giving genuine depth and complication to a character that might otherwise be seen simply as selfish and manipulative.

Natalya's soliloquies in this section, and indeed throughout the act, function as stream of consciousness, defining for us the way her thoughts and emotions fluctuate wildly as a result of her being torn between her feelings and her ideas about appropriate behavior. In the following act, her continued indecision gets her into further trouble, but before then, there is another example of the way love and marriage can, and do, become as much of a business-like transaction as a meeting of souls.

Act 4, Part 1

Act 4, Part 1 Summary

This act is set in an outdoor pavilion. Katya comes in, looking for Beliayev. She talks in soliloquy about how everyone in the house will miss him, implying that Vera begged her to arrange for one last meeting between them. She sees someone coming and hides.

Shpigelsky and Lizaveta come in, saying they can take shelter there from the rain. They talk about how upset Anna is at seeing Natalya so upset, referring to the beginning of Act 3, Part 3 when Anna and Arkady discovered Natalya and Rakitin together. Lizaveta says Rakitin has promised to explain everything, and Shpigelsky refers to how harmless Rakitin is. Then, Lizaveta wonders whether Natalya is ill, saying she ate nothing at dinner. Shpigelsky hints that there are things other than illness that lead people to lose their appetites and suggests Rakitin was probably upset at dinner as well. Lizaveta says everyone was upset and wonders what's wrong. Shpigelsky tells her it's a good idea to not know too much and then suggests that they should be talking about their own concerns. Lizaveta coyly asks what he means.

Shpigelsky delivers a long speech in which he tries to persuade Lizaveta to marry him. He says that neither of them is young any more. He's got a good job, and he says she must be tired of working for other people. Then, he mentions the one obstacle he sees, that they don't know each other well. When Lizaveta says marriage will provide lots of opportunities for them to learn about each other, Shpigelsky goes into extensive detail about how he's really not as good humored as he lets people, particularly Natalya, believe. His jokes mask his contempt for, and resentment of, the upper classes, and in spite of their pretensions, the upper classes are still human beings like everyone else, He says that he challenged an upper class young man who made fun of him to a duel. Finally, he talks about how picky and self-centered he is about the way he lives. He's not jealous and isn't given to finding fault, and he declares that most men would have kept quiet about their faults but that he would never lie to her. He urges her to take her time and seriously consider what he proposes, and after some banter about Lizaveta's age, she promises to answer his proposal the next day. He kisses her hand, and they comment on how the rain has stopped and prepare to leave.

Before Lizaveta and Shpigelsky go, however, Lizaveta asks whether Shpigelsky really does think Rakitin is harmless and says it seems both Vera and Natalya are attracted to Beliayev. Shpigelsky tells her that there's something he forgot to mention about himself, that he can't stand inquisitive women. Nevertheless, he says he'll tell her what he thinks about Natalya, Beliayev and Vera, and he sings a song about how an innocent young goat was eaten by wolves. The audience understands that he thinks Vera is going to be destroyed by Natalya, an understanding reinforced when he says that he has to have a talk with Natalya and hopes that she won't eat him. As they go out, Katya emerges from her hiding place.

Act 4, Part 1 Analysis

Love isn't mentioned in Shpigelsky's lengthy discussion of himself and of what married life with him would be like. He clearly believes he's conducting a kind of business transaction, an aspect to his character that doesn't come as much of a surprise considering how he treated Bolshintsov's desires to marry Vera. In the same way as he, in that case, was prepared to exchange access to the family for three horses, he seems in this case prepared to exchange blunt honesty for companionship. In doing so, he provides another contrast, albeit a somewhat extreme one, to the lack of honesty practiced by Natalya. Where she plays games, he presents blunt truth.

Where she talks about feelings, he talks about facts. Whether his approach is any better is open for discussion, notwithstanding the fact that in Act 5 Lizaveta appears prepared to accept his offer and leave the house. Ultimately, whether it's better isn't the point. The purpose of the scene, aside from providing a dash of comic relief, is to foreshadow the events of the last part of this act by illustrating how some room has to be made for practicality and honesty in relationships. Up to this point, Natalya's attitude is entirely impractical, and while Shpigelsky's practicality might come across as extreme or excessive, the fact remains that something of his approach might have made, or still make, Natalya's torturous situation easier.

Act 4, Part 2

Act 4, Part 2 Summary

Katya watches Shpigelsky and Lizaveta go, commenting in soliloquy about how she doesn't like Shpigelsky. She sees Beliayev and calls him into the pavilion. When he comes in, he compliments her and offers her a peach, saying he picked it specially for her. Even though she seems confused by his gift, she thanks him and then says that Vera needs to talk to him. She goes on to say that Vera likes him very much, and she starts to go in to fetch her. Before she goes, she asks whether it's true that Beliayev is leaving. Beliayev says nothing's been decided. Katya seems confused and goes out.

Beliayev delivers a soliloquy about how strange and embarrassing the situation is and how fond he is of Vera, referring to a note given to him by Natalya that asks him to not leave until she's had a chance to talk to him. He talks about how his heart is throbbing and how he doesn't know what he's going to say to Vera.

Vera and Katya come in. Vera seems nervous, but Katya urges her to have courage and says that she'll keep a look out. She goes outside, leaving Vera and Beliayev alone. Vera says she's come to ask Beliayev's forgiveness, saying that she knows Beliayev is being sent away because she confessed to Natalya that she loved him. Beliayev tells her that he might be staying, but Vera doesn't believe him. She adds that by manipulating her into revealing her feelings, Natalya revealed her own.

When Beliayev asks what she means, Vera changes the subject, asking whether he really wants to leave on his own accord. He says yes, and when she asks why, he explains that Natalya told her everything. He says that he loves Vera as a sister, that he never meant to inspire any other feeling in her and that nothing could come of their relationship anyway. He adds that he didn't mean to hurt her, but Vera says he's not to blame for her being upset. She suggests that Natalya isn't to blame either, telling him that Natalya's in love with him. Vera knows Natalya is jealous of her and that Natalya is considering marrying her to Bolshintsov so that she can have Beliayev to herself. Beliayev responds by saying that nothing is decided about his departure. Vera then realizes that Natalya is still hoping Beliayev will love her in return.

Natalya comes in, stopping suddenly when she sees Vera and Beliayev. They don't notice her as Vera talks further about how jealous Natalya is. She accuses Beliayev of loving Natalya back and suggests that he wants to be rid of her as much as Natalya does. She turns to go, but she stops when she sees Natalya, who says she's come looking for her. Then Natalya accuses her of being indiscreet at the same time as she accuses Beliayev of breaking his promise to not tell anyone of their earlier conversation. Vera tells her to stop behaving as though Vera was a child, saying that from now on she's a woman. She tells Natalya that the meeting with Beliayev was her idea, revealing that he doesn't care for her. Natalya therefore has no reason to be jealous. When Natalya protests, Vera goes on to say that she's been driven to anger and to speaking

out by everything Natalya's done. Instead of being as manipulative as Natalya's been, Vera says she's been honest and told Beliayev everything. She dares Natalya to tell her that she's wrong. Natalya says nothing. Vera suddenly apologizes, saying she doesn't know what came over her, and runs out.

Act 4, Part 2 Analysis

In this section, the thematic and dramatic core of the entire act is clearly honesty, the revealing of various truths, perspectives and attitudes. This sub-theme, about the necessity for being honest, was introduced in a relatively light-hearted fashion in the first part of the act, through the honesty of Shpigelsky. It develops further in this section through the honesty of Vera and extends into the painfully honest confrontation between Beliayev and Natalya that follows, the climax of both the act and the play.

The peach that Beliayev gives to Katya is a symbol of this honesty. In the same way as the peach is offered as a manifestation of a simple, honest emotion, similar honest emotions are offered by Vera in this section and by both Beliayev and Natalya in the following section. At the same time, Katya's confusion at receiving the peach simultaneously symbolizes and foreshadows the confusion that Beliayev, Natalya and Vera all feel when confronted with those honest emotions. In short, in the same way that Katya, as a servant, is unaccustomed to being treated with the generosity shown by Beliayev in giving her the peach, Beliayev, Natalya and Vera are all unaccustomed to dealing with honest expressions of emotion.

Act 4, Part 3

Act 4, Part 3 Summary

Natalya confesses to Beliayev that everything Vera said was true. She speaks at length about how she deceived them both. Her only hope for redemption is complete honesty, and she's disgusted by her behavior. She's afraid that having learned the truth, Beliayev will want to leave. She says Beliayev's silence means he doesn't love her and that she accepts that. She's also prepared to accept his departure.

Beliayev starts to leave, but then he stops and speaks incoherently about how he never believed it was possible for someone as uneducated and as ordinary as him to be loved by someone from the upper classes like her. He says that he can't leave now, no matter what she says. Natalya says that if she didn't know how honest he was, she wouldn't have believed him. She will continue to be honest about her feelings, and she's glad to know it wasn't her as a person, but her class, that kept them apart. She then says she still thinks it's best if he goes, saying that she didn't mean to confuse or upset him, only to be honest. Beliayev confesses that even while he's been avoiding her and saying he was afraid of her, he still felt a thrill at being in her presence. She tries to get him to stop, saying again that he has to leave. He talks about being surprised by how bold he's being in expressing his feelings so openly. He doesn't know how he ever felt shy with her, and he talks about how full his heart is. She says goodbye one more time, and he kisses her hand and starts to go. Then, just as he's almost out the door, she quietly asks him to stay.

Just as Beliayev is going to Natalya with his arms outstretched as if to embrace her, Rakitin appears, saying everyone is looking for Natalya. Beliayev quickly goes out, and Natalya explains to Rakitin that she and Beliayev explained everything to each other and that everything's fine. She starts to go in the house. He asks what decision she's come to, and the audience realizes that he's asking about whether she's decided to ask Beliayev to leave or stay. Natalya tells him that all the confusion about what Vera and Beliayev felt for each other was just a misunderstanding, and that it's all over. She then asks whether he's talked to Arkady, and he says he hasn't decided what story to tell. Natalya angrily says that she's fed up with having to have her activities and reactions explained all the time. Rakitin tells her to calm down, saying that it's only natural that misunderstandings like the one between Vera and Beliayev should happen. He refers to how young they are and how, in time, they'll all learn to keep up appropriate appearances. He is implying that Natalya will also learn how to behave.

Arkady enters with Shpigelsky, comments on finding Rakitin and Natalya together again and says they must be continuing their discussion of the morning. He explains that he was looking for Natalya to come in for tea and offers Natalya his arm at the same time as he talks to Shpigelsky about how the pavilion could be turned into servants' quarters. He and Natalya go out as Shpigelsky invites Rakitin to walk in with him, making a joke about how they're again walking at the rear of the parade. Rakitin says he's sick of

Shpigelsky, and Shpigelsky jokes about how sick he is of himself. Rakitin smiles, and together they go out into the garden.

Act 4, Part 3 Analysis

In this section we see how honesty has a domino effect. Vera's honesty about Natalya's motivations leads to Natalya's confession of what she did and how she feels, which leads to Beliayev's honesty about how he feels. This again leads to Natalya's honesty in asking him to stay. It's interesting to note that even after all the honesty that's gone before, Natalya still feels she has to lie to Rakitin about what's just happened, telling him everything's been settled when it hasn't. Her dishonesty, however, doesn't stop him from figuring out what's going on. In spite of her efforts to conceal the truth, that truth becomes apparent. Rakitin seems to display uncommon sensitivity and compassion, albeit tinged with a hint of spite, when he comments that in time both Natalya and Beliayev will learn how to conceal their feelings. He's not advocating dishonesty, just discretion. Ironically, in the following act it becomes clear that this sensitivity is itself a lie and that he truly feels bitter and wounded by everything that's happened. These feelings are hinted at and foreshadowed by his pointed comments about appearances and by his angry reaction to Shpigelsky's joke.

The confrontation between Natalya and Beliayev serves as the climax of the play, as they both reveal their deepest and truest feelings. As a result, they become extremely vulnerable and are left without a clear sense of what's going to happen next. These are all aspects of what defines a climax, the point in a story at which emotions are at their highest and both the characters and their stories are at the point of greatest crisis. The nature of Natalya's crisis is clear. She's proclaimed her love for a man other than her husband and asked him to stay when he's determined to leave. She is faced with the choice of how to follow through on her proclamation.

Beliayev's crisis is somewhat less clear, but if both his apparent joy at being loved and his previous avoidance are signals that he loves Natalya as much as she loves him, his crisis is similar to hers. He knows that there is love between them and that it's inappropriate and dangerous. He knows that he has to make a decision about what to do. The process of decision for both Natalya and Beliayev, and the fallout when they announce what those decisions are, defines the dramatic action of the play's final act.

Arkady's appearance functions on two levels, reminding the audience of the lack of attention he pays to his wife and illustrating, just by his presence, the pressure on both Natalya and Beliayev to make a decision. Shpigelsky's joke about the parade also functions on two levels. First, it makes an ironic comment on the way that Rakitin, while being the first and only person that Natalya can confide in, is also the last person she thinks about when considering the effects of her actions. It also reminds the audience of Shpigelsky's comments to Lizaveta about how his jokes mask his contempt. His joke at this point tells us how contemptuous he is of not only Rakitin but also Natalya, Beliayev, Arkady and Vera.

Act 5, Part 1

Act 5, Part 1 Summary

This act again takes place in the drawing room. Arkady tries to look through files and papers, but he is too restless to concentrate. Anna comes in, and after getting Arkady's attention, she says she's concerned about Natalya. She asks whether Rakitin has said anything about their conversation the previous day. Arkady says Rakitin has told him nothing and that Anna shouldn't trouble herself any further. Anna says she'll not bring the subject up again, but in spite of Arkady's attempts to talk about something else, Anna says he's too trustful and then goes out. Arkady, in soliloquy, states that the people who love you the most are the ones who interfere the most often in your life, and he doesn't know what to do. He rings for Matvey, and when Matvey enters, Arkady asks him to send Rakitin to him. After Matvey goes, Arkady talks briefly in soliloquy about how upsetting all these upheavals are.

Rakitin comes in, and Arkady reminds him that he promised to explain what he and Natalya were talking about earlier. When Rakitin appears to hesitate, Arkady reminds him that they're old friends and that they've always been honest with each other. Then, he asks whether Rakitin loves Natalya, and not just as a friend. Rakitin admits that he does, and Arkady thanks him for his honesty. Then Arkady suggests they talk over what to do next. He speaks at length about what an ordinary person he is compared to Rakitin. He noticed the affection between him and Natalya a long time ago, and if other people like his mother and Shpigelsky weren't involved, the situation would be different. Because they are involved, he feels something has to be done.

Rakitin tells Arkady that he's decided to go away. Arkady says everyone will miss him but that it's probably best because Rakitin is a danger. Then he says he's noticed over the last few days that Natalya has changed. Rakitin comments pointedly that she certainly has. After a brief interruption by Matvey, who says the Bailiff's arrived, Arkady asks Rakitin how long he's going to be away. Rakitin says he'll probably be gone a long time, leading Arkady to comment that he hopes Rakitin doesn't see him as an Othello. He doubts there's ever been such a strange conversation between two friends before. He then talks about how no one can replace Rakitin in the family's friendship, referring to Bolshintsov and Beliayev. Rakitin tells him to keep an eye on Beliayev, but Arkady says there's no reason to worry. He sees Beliayev coming, tells Rakitin there's no need to rush away because they've got to give Natalya time to adjust to the idea and then adds that by confessing the truth of his feelings, he's lifted a huge weight off his (Arkady's) shoulders. Beliayev comes in, and after brief small talk about Kolya and his lessons, Arkady exits.

Beliayev and Rakitin greet each other, with Rakitin commenting on how happy Beliayev seems and on his new coat. Rakitin then announces that he's leaving for Moscow the next day and will be staying for some time. Beliayev asks whether Natalya knows his plans, and Rakitin asks what makes him think of her. Beliayev becomes embarrassed,

and Rakitin says that because there's nobody else in the room they can be completely honest with each other.

Beliayev doesn't understand what he means. Rakitin explains that Arkady just asked whether Rakitin was in love with Natalya. He makes a joke about what a strange idea that is and talks pointedly about how grateful he is that Arkady was so direct. He adds that he doesn't feel that way about Natalya at all. He then says it's important sometimes for a man to sacrifice his own happiness to enable happiness in others, adding that that's why he's leaving. He suggests that if Beliayev were in his position, he's such a decent person that he'd do the same thing. He also refers to the importance of a woman's honor and finally asks whether Beliayev thinks love is "the greatest bliss on earth."

Beliayev tells him that he has no real experience of love, but he adds that he supposes that being loved is a great happiness. Rakitin says that in his experience, love of any kind is a real problem if one surrenders to it completely. As Beliayev repeatedly tries to interrupt, Rakitin talks at length about how torturous it is to be tied to the same person for years, how freedom is longed for and how little return there is for so much suffering. Beliayev thanks him for the lesson, and Rakitin says he wasn't giving a lesson and that he was just talking. Beliayev asks whether he was "talking about anyone in particular," and Rakitin says he might have been. They talk for a moment about whether Rakitin can bring Beliayev anything from Moscow, and then Natalya comes in.

Act 5, Part 1 Analysis

An important element to note here is the contrast drawn between Arkady and Rakitin, between compassionate honesty and dishonest manipulation. Rakitin is correct when he describes Arkady as being admirable for his capacity for direct confrontation of an issue, particularly when he's the only character in the play who has that capacity. Everybody else, to one degree or another, lies, manipulates and dissembles. Even Beliayev, who is clearly something of an innocent caught up in an impossible situation, behaves with less than complete honesty when he evades Rakitin's clearly pointed comments about love and pretends he doesn't understand what he's truly getting at. This contrast again highlights the play's sub-theme about the importance of honesty in relationships.

The allusion to "Othello" refers to a play by William Shakespeare, in which the title character is destroyed because of his tragic flaw, jealousy. In making the reference, Arkady is suggesting that he hopes Rakitin doesn't think he's acting the way he is because he's jealous. It's difficult to see him as anything but jealous, but at the same time from how he behaves, it's possible to understand that in spite of his relative lack of attention to Natalya, he does have some perspective on her situation and a degree of compassion for everyone involved. His conversation with Rakitin reveals more depth to his character than the audience has perhaps suspected. He has the wisdom to see that it's an uncomfortable situation for all of them and the grace to open a friendly discussion rather than initiate an emotionally violent confrontation.

Again, there is a clear contrast between his behavior and Rakitin's, who later in the scene clearly attempts to manipulate Beliayev into leaving the situation so he won't have to. This is indicated by the way he tries to flatter Beliayev into volunteering to go and also by the way he talks at such length about how torturous love and marriage are. Also, his comment at the beginning of their conversation on how they can be fully honest with each other is clearly ironic, in that he has no intention whatsoever of being honest. In short, we see in this scene how Rakitin in his own way has become as desperate to retain his place in Natalya's affections as she has been to gain a place in Beliayev's. The play's main theme, about how desperation for love makes people do desperate things, is reiterated in the way the previously reliable Rakitin has become as manipulative as the woman whose manipulations he resents.

Act 5, Part 2

Act 5, Part 2 Summary

Natalya comes in, followed by Vera. Natalya and Rakitin greet each other, but Beliayev says nothing, apparently confused. Rakitin and Natalya make small talk about how beautiful the morning has been, with Natalya saying to Beliayev that she and Vera had been hoping to meet him while they were walking in the garden. Rakitin abruptly tells Natalya that he's leaving and that he doesn't know when he'll be back. Natalya urges him to return as soon as possible and then makes pointedly casual comments about Beliayev's sketches, shown to her by Kolya. Rakitin makes a pointed comment in response about how more of Beliayev's talents are being discovered all the time, leading Natalya to ask Beliayev to see more sketches. Rakitin goes to pack, and Natalya reminds him to say good-bye before he goes. Beliayev says he wants to speak with Rakitin, and they go out together.

After Beliayev and Rakitin have left, Natalya asks for Vera's forgiveness. Vera talks angrily about on how kind and "soft" Natalya has been all morning, saying she's only behaving that way because she feels loved, not because she wants Vera's forgiveness. Natalya reminds her to remember the difficulty of the position, saying that instead of being nasty to each other they should be trying to find a way to resolve the situation. Vera says again that Beliayev loves her, and Natalya says nothing, going out when Arkady calls and says he wants to talk to her.

Shpigelsky comes in from another door and sees Vera. He believes her to be unwell and checks her pulse. Vera asks whether he truly believes Bolshintsov to be a good man. Shpigelsky speaks in some detail about his good qualities, and Vera says she's prepared to marry him as soon as possible. Shpigelsky enthusiastically says Bolshintsov will worship the ground she walks on and that she'll be very happy. Vera demands that he stop talking. Shpigelsky says he'll be quiet and then goes out to give Bolshintsov the good news. When he's gone, Vera speaks in soliloquy about how anything would be better than living under the same roof as Natalya.

Beliayev comes in to say goodbye, talking at length about how he's upset everyone and how awkward he feels being there. Vera tells him that she's planning to leave as well. When he asks where she's going, she tells him it's a secret. He says he's still leaving, referring to how bitter Rakitin is and how excited he (Beliayev) is about getting into the open air. Vera refers to how much he loves Natalya, but Beliayev says his love flared up and immediately went out like the light of a match. He tells Vera he'll never forget her and then gives her a note to give to Natalya, saying that he isn't able to say goodbye to her and is leaving immediately. He rushes out to pack.

Natalya comes in, sees Vera is upset and asks what's wrong. Vera gives her the note. Natalya reads it and collapses into a chair, talking about how Beliayev has no right to do what he's doing. She describes him as contemptible. Vera reminds her that she said the

situation needed to be resolved, and then she says that she too is leaving. Arkady comes in, sees Natalya is upset and urges her to rest. Rakitin comes in, and Arkady asks what made him tell Natalya he was leaving in such an upsetting way. Rakitin seems confused, and Natalya starts to leave. Arkady reminds her that Rakitin is a good man, and Natalya refers to how they're all good men and quickly goes out. Vera follows her.

Rakitin bitterly comments on what a wonderful goodbye it was, saying how good it is to finally be done with all "these sickly, morbid relations." He says goodbye to Arkady, who also says goodbye, commenting that he didn't think parting would be so upsetting. Shpigelsky comes in, worried about Natalya. Arkady tells him there's no reason for concern. A moment later Anna, Lizaveta, Kolya and Schaaf all run in, worried about Natalya.

As they pester Arkady for information, Rakitin announces he's leaving. Anna says in response that she understands why Natalya is upset. Kolya asks Arkady where Beliayev is going, saying he saw him walking down the driveway. Arkady says Beliayev won't be long, but Rakitin tells him he's going away for good. He says that Vera has fallen in love with him, and because he's an honorable man, he has decided the thing to do is to leave. Arkady talks about how upset and confused he is by all these "honorable" actions, tells Schaaf to give Kolya a German lesson and then as Schaaf and Kolya leave, tells Rakitin he'll walk with him a while. He then goes out, telling Anna to not disturb Natalya. Shpigelsky asks whether he can drive Rakitin to town in a carriage drawn by his three new horses, saying he's heard from Vera about her decision. Rakitin agrees to go with him, says his goodbyes to Anna and Lizaveta and goes out. Shpigelsky also says his goodbyes, hinting to Lizaveta that he'll be back soon. After he goes out, Anna asks Lizaveta what she thinks of everything that's happened. Lizaveta says she doesn't know what to say, adding that she too will probably be leaving soon. Anna is amazed.

Act 5, Part 2 Analysis

This act consists of denouement or falling action, terms used to describe events in a play or story that happen as the result of the climax. In this case, the audience sees how Natalya's carelessness with emotions, both hers and those of other people, has damaged not only her life but also the lives of all the people for whom she has professed to care and who have in turn cared for her. The extent of this damage appears throughout the scene and is summed up in Lizaveta's final comment that she's leaving too. On the most apparent level, her comment indicates that more members of the household than originally thought are going their separate ways. On a metaphoric level, however, the comment reinforces the idea that the household has actually been destroyed as a result of what Natalya did - or didn't do, as the case may be.

In short, this section is a clear and pointed dramatization of the play's central thematic point, illustrating what happens when people desperate for love take desperate action. Beliayev is perhaps the least damaged of everyone, partly because of his youth, partly

because he was in many ways Natalya's pawn and partly because his relationship with her was in many ways much less significant than those of Rakitin, Vera and even Arkady. They, by contrast, have all been seriously wounded emotionally as a result of Natalya's self indulgence and lack of control, whether it comes from selfishness or helplessness in the face of strong emotions. Whichever motivation is at the core of her actions, she has destroyed lives, and therein lies the play's potential for tragedy.

Natalya can be interpreted as a tragic character in the classic tradition, an admirable human being whose life is destroyed by a particular tragic flaw. In some ways she truly is admirable, and her giving the orphaned Vera a home is the clearest example. Another example is the way her conscience troubles her about what she's doing. Ultimately, however, in the same way as the noble hero in *Othello* is destroyed by jealousy, Natalya is destroyed by her desperation for love, which leads her to selfishness and insensitivity. This in turn leads to the destruction of other lives, which leads to the ruin of her own. In short, in the manner of classic tragic heroes, she is destroyed by her own weakness and therefore serves as a warning to us to be careful of that weakness in ourselves.

Finally, a small but very telling incident in the play's final moments illuminates an additional aspect of the story. Shpigelsky's reference to the three horses not only reminds us of how the transaction he arranged with Bolshintsov in relation to Vera has born fruit. It also symbolizes how Natalya treating Vera as a commodity in the same way as Shpigelsky has also born fruit, albeit in the opposite way from what Natalya hoped. The point here is that love cannot be treated with anything but sensitivity and as anything but a gift offered and received with the same kind of simple honesty with which Beliayev presented Katya with the peach. Natalya, to continue the metaphor, both offers and receives love with a clenching, iron grip, crushing its delicacy and sweetness in the same way as a ripe peach would be crushed by such a grasping hand. In needing to love, Natalya forgets to love, and in doing so she turns *A Month in the Country* into an eternity of regret.

Bibliography

Turgenev, Ivan. "A Month in the Country" from *Three Plays*. Trans. by Constance Garnett. Cassell and Company, Ltd. London. 1934.

Characters

Vera Alexandrovna

Vera is Natalya and Islayev's adopted daughter. As a seventeen-year-old, Vera is caught in the precarious situation of still being considered a naïve child, when in fact she proves to be a perceptive and precocious young woman. Vera is smitten with Beliayev and when she comes to believe that he loves only Natalya, she agrees to marry Bolshintsov, who had been previously undesirable to her.

Alexei Nikolayich Beliayev

Beliayev is a twenty-one-year-old student hired by Natalya to tutor Kolya. In contrast to other characters in the play who profess their honorable nature, Beliayev's honor appears to be genuine when it comes to caring about others. He describes himself as lazy; however, his intelligence and ingenuity contrast with this quality. His translation of a book into French without knowing the language attests either to his facility with languages or his willingness to misrepresent himself and his capabilities.

Lizaveta Bogdanovna

Liza is a lady companion who plays cards with Anna and Schaaf, teaches Kolya piano, and becomes involved with Shpigelski. Liza accepts Shpigelski's marriage proposal, although the audience might wonder why she does this. During the proposal scene, she tells him that she is only thirty-years-old when in fact she is thirty-seven. She is apparently self-conscious of her age, and this is perhaps her motivation for accepting Shpigelski as a suitor and a husband.

Afanasy Ivanovich Bolshintsov

Bolshintsov is the forty-year-old single neighbor of Islayev and Natalya. He is not highly regarded by most of the characters and is quite nervous throughout the play about his courtship of Vera.

Anna Semyenovna Islayev

Anna is Islayev's fifty-eight-year-old mother. She spends her time leisurely and is suspicious of Natalya's behavior. She is concerned for her son and feels that Natalya's youth does not work in his favor.

Arkady Sergeyich Islayev

Arkady is a wealthy landowner in his mid-thirties, who spends much of his time working. His work keeps him away from his wife, who develops an interest in Rakitin, a family friend. He is not a jealous man, nor does he handle his wife's behavior with suspicion or malice once he learns of Rakitin's love for her.

Kolya Islayev

Kolya is Natalya and Islayev's ten-year-old son. He is an energetic youth who loves to play and is dazzled by his new tutor, Beliayev.

Katya

Katya is a twenty-year-old maidservant who acts as Vera's confidant. She entertains advances from Schaaf and seems to always be in the right place to overhear the conversations of the other characters in the play.

Matvey

Matvey is a forty-year-old servant who plays a small role introducing characters and announcing meals.

Natalya Petrovna

Natalya is the complicated main character of the play. She is a married twenty-nine-year-old who finds herself bored with much of the life and people around her. From childhood she has lived a structured and hence seemingly constrained life from which she would like to break free. Her domineering father kept her in line as a child, and it seems that her choice in marrying Islayev has continued her feeling of confinement. The claustrophobic feeling that she has is replicated in her relationship with Rakitin. When she hires a new tutor for her son; however, she sees a glimpse of a different life. Beliayev is a breath of fresh air for Natalya and through him, she hopes to give her son the fun, happiness, and freedom she never had. In the process, she develops a yearning to capture these things for herself as well. Ultimately she does not attain the freedom that she seeks, and she must accept her life as it is.

Mikhail Alexandrovich Rakitin

Rakitin is a thirty-year-old friend of Natalya and Islayev. While Islayev considers Rakitin a close friend to him, Rakitin most certainly has a stronger affinity for Natalya. After admitting his love for Natalya to Islayev, Rakitin departs the estate. In his lecture to Beliayev, Rakitin reveals his belief that a woman's honor is very important; however, his

lecture can also be seen as self-serving. Rakitin recognizes his devotion to Natalya and is perplexed by her coolness toward him. He sees only his passion for her and does not understand how such feelings are not mutual. On one level, he does the honorable thing by leaving Natalya; however, he also knows that he is welcome to return.

Adam Ivanich Schaaf

Schaaf is a forty-five-year-old German tutor who is playfully smitten with Katya. In the first scene, he demonstrates his skill at the card game Hearts as well as his willingness to attribute his loss to someone else.

Ignaty Ilyich Shpigelski

Shpigelski is the forty-year-old doctor who calls on the family and is interested in marrying Lizaveta. Though his public persona is one of an accommodating, thoughtful, and jovial country doctor, his private persona is quite different. He expresses disdain and dislike for the other characters in the play. He uses people for what they can provide for him and does not see himself as particularly kind, talented, or romantic. He has clear views about a wife's and a woman's place in society and prides himself on his honesty.

Themes

Love and Marriage

The many pairings in this play make love a prominent theme□Schaaf and Katya, Liza and Shpigelski, Vera and Bolshintsov, Natalya and Rakitin, Natalya and Beliayev, and Natalya and Islayev. The play is not a glowing portrait of loving, stable marriages or relationships, however. Natalya's toying with Rakitin and Beliayev calls her fidelity into question, while Shpigelski's reasons for marrying hardly seem to be related to love (he mostly seems to desire a trustworthy housekeeper/cook). Marriage as such, becomes an institution or a commitment that either binds and inhibits people's freedom or serves a practical purpose.

In no instance is a loving relationship correlated with a passionate romantic relationship between two people. For example, the match between Shpigelski and Liza does not appear to be based on a mutual romantic affinity, nor does Natalya and Islayev's relationship appear to have the level of respect and commitment that one might characteristically associate with a good marriage. Natalya's feelings for Beliayev hint that a love full of passion and freedom is possible; however, by the end of the play, a happy, fulfilling love relationship seems ultimately unattainable for them.

Apathy and Passivity

The theme of apathy is largely introduced by Natalya's apparent boredom with most everyone and everything except Beliayev. She can't bother to listen to Rakitin when he tries to apologize to her, and she seems unconcerned that her husband will discover her true feelings about the young tutor. In concert with this apathy, much of Natalya's behavior is coupled with an extreme case of passivity. She rarely acts or makes decisions unless she is prodded by others. Even her relationship with Rakitin, though obviously charged, seems to be an unconsummated flirtation. Other characters seem to be haunted by this passivity as well, including Islayev, who, while consoling his mother about Natalya's behavior, seems generally unaffected by what he encounters between his wife and Rakitin.

Greed

The theme of greed plays a large part in the development of Shpigelski's character. He is motivated by his greed and his desire to please only himself. It is ironic that he is a doctor; however, his profession serves as a good front for his otherwise undesirable personality. He agrees to help Bolshintsov in his pursuit of Vera, not because he hopes to make a perfect match between two people he cares about, but rather to advance his own concerns. He wants to replace his horse and for assisting with the matchmaking, he will gain not only one horse but a whole team. Shpigelski's self-absorption motivates

much of his action, including his courtship of Liza. He finds that his cooks are often thieves and sees that having Liza as his wife would remedy that problem in his life.

Honor

Honor is a theme that swirls around many characters in the play including Natalya, Beliayev, Shpigelski, Rakitin, and Islayev. Natalya's honor is at stake because she is willing to engage in extramarital affairs. She questions her own honor in acting on behalf of these urges and consistently wavers on sending Beliayev away or not. Her behavior as Islayev's wife also calls his honor into question. His reputation is at stake and his judgment in choosing Natalya for a wife is up for review, particularly by his mother.

Rakitin's honor is likewise a bit questionable because although he claims to do the proper thing by leaving, he knows that he can return at any time. His honor is also in question because despite the fact that Islayev is his friend, he becomes involved with Natalya. Rakitin redeems himself a bit by being honest with Islayev. Honesty and honor are certainly not qualities that can be associated with Shpigelski, who, although he presents an honorable facade, is actually far from honorable when it comes to his personal relationships.

Coming of Age

Coming of age is a theme that is flushed out by the characters of Vera and Beliayev. Vera is perceived by Natalya as a child in the beginning of the play; however, as the situation develops with Beliayev, Natalya comes to see Vera as much less of a child. Vera's own thoughts on this subject confirm the fact that while Natalya thinks that Vera is a naive child who can be manipulated and tinkered with, she is in fact a mature perceptive woman who is quite aware of Natalya's motives.

In some ways, Beliayev also comes of age during the play, although he is perhaps less self-reflective about it than Vera. As the situation with Natalya unfolds, Beliayev is forced to confront adult love for the first time and as he does this, even Natalya notice the change in him. She says, "he is a man," not a boy any longer.

Style

Setting

A Month in the Country is set in Russia during the mid-1800s on the estate of a wealthy landowner. The entire play takes place within one week and the majority of the action takes place in the Islayev's drawing room. By setting the play during the 1840s, Turgenev adds a political dimension to the work. The expansion of the secret police and the increase in censorship during Tsar Nicholas I's reign limited the degree to which Russian citizens could express themselves freely. To the extent that Natalya wants to break free from the constraints imposed upon her by men and the institution of marriage, *A Month in the Country* can be symbolically read as a political commentary about Russian citizens wanting to assert their free wills and act in accordance with their desires and passions. Like Natalya, who seeks the freedom to do as she pleases without any fear of the consequences, Russia's citizens, including its artists, desired the same opportunity.

Realism

Realism is a literary term that describes the way that stories are told as well as a literary movement that was popular during Turgenev's lifetime. *A Month in the Country* is an example of a realist work because it depicts people and circumstances that could very well exist in everyday life. The characters and the plot are realistic as opposed to fanciful creations of the author's mind.

Biographical Elements

While *A Month in the Country* is not a biography of Turgenev's life, the play does include some elements that can be considered biographical. For example, his longtime love for Pauline Viardot can be paralleled to Rakitin's unwavering devotion to Natalya. Throughout his lifetime, Turgenev often moved so that he could be close to Pauline and her husband. Like Rakitin's relationship with Islayev, Turgenev' s relationship with Pauline's husband was a friendly one. In addition to hints of Turgenev being found in the character of Rakitin, the author can also be found in the character of Natalya. As an artist who faced the limitations of censorship, Turgenev shared Natalya's passion for freedom. Further, whereas Natalya was influenced by her fear of her domineering father, Turgenev was highly influenced by his fear of his mother, who was known for her unpredictable cruelty.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a technique used by authors to tip off readers/viewers about events that will come later in the story. Turgenev uses foreshadowing in the first act by having

Anna, Schaaf, and Liza playing hearts. The card game is symbolic and its placement in the beginning of the play indicates that just as in the card game, there will be winners and losers in the game of love by the play's end.

Another use of foreshadowing involves Rakitin and Beliayev. Rakitin's decision to leave the estate suggests that, in the name of honor, Beliayev may make a similar decision and also decide to leave.

Symbolism

The card game, hearts, that Anna, Schaaf, and Liza play in the opening scene is one example of the symbolism used by Turgenev in this play. Although the card game is part of the action of the play, the name of the game has an added significance. Placing the game in the very first scene makes its symbolism even more weighty. It is as though from the start, Turgenev is signaling the reader that the play is about the heart or love. The game is symbolic because, as in love, not everyone who plays wins. In cards and in love, one runs the risk of losing, and indeed by the play's end, many have lost in love. Schaaf s disappointing loss mirrors the disappointment felt by other characters when their desires to succeed in love are not fulfilled.

Irony

Irony is defined as an outcome that is directly opposite an expected result. One of the central ironies in *A Month in the Country* is the fact that while love is one of the play's major themes, no one seems to sustain a romantic, loving relationship. While love is intended to be a passionate uplifting endeavor, none of the play's characters are happy in their romantic relationships. Further, the play does not suggest that any of the characters will likely be happy in their relationships. Vera agrees to marry Bolshintsov in order to leave the estate, Natalya remains with Islayev but wishes that she could be with someone else, and Anna joins with Shpigelski, with whom she is not in love.

Historical Context

The hope for reform and the tensions of revolution serve as the political backdrop against which much of Turgenev's work was created. From the 1820s and into the 1880s, Russia's government and its people were embroiled in the tenuous process of distinguishing an identity on the world stage. Nicholas I's reign, which spanned from 1825 to 1855, was characterized primarily by the idea that Russia should be independent from and uninvolved with the European West and its ideas. Nicholas I's highly nationalistic approach to government was coupled with his belief in having his government as centralized as possible. In his attempt to consolidate his power, Nicholas I expanded the role of the secret service and increased censorship.

During Nicholas I's rule, society was segmented by two growing forms of thought. While this segmentation was encouraged in academic circles where like-minded people met in discussion groups, mainstream thought was also divided along the same lines. The two primary groups were comprised of the Philosophical Idealists, or the Slavophiles, and the Westerners. According to Herbert J. Ellison in *History of Russia,* the Philosophical Idealists of the 1830s "conceived of Russia as a vigorous new civilization coming rapidly to maturity and leadership beside a declining Europe." While the Slavophiles favored a nationalistic approach to government, "they were opposed to the actual tyranny of the imperial regime," according to Sidney Harcave in *Russia: A History*.

On the other side of the spectrum, as Ellison noted, "The Westerners of the 1840s and 1850s ... recommend[ed] the Western path of development for the future" and were not as nationalistic. In general, the Westerners saw a decided value in continuing to emulate the West. They supposed that Russia had not achieved the level of development that the West had and were critical of censorship and the great economic and social disparities between the serfs and the nobility.

Not surprisingly, the artists of this time were impacted by the political climate. While censorship certainly had a negative effect on the writing of many authors, Russia's cultural output during Nicholas I's reign did not suffer on the whole. According to Ellison, "the reign of Nicholas I was in many ways a period of extraordinary growth and of great attainments . . . particularly in literature." While this may be true, it is perhaps necessary to wonder what the cultural output would have been like, both in content and quantity, had censorship not been expanded during Nicholas I's reign.

Prior to the 1840s, Russia's literary canon had been largely dominated by poetry; however, with the advent of realism, prose fiction began to figure more prominently in the literary circles of the time. Realism, or naturalism as it was called in Russia, brought "everyday people who had hitherto been admitted neither to the homes nor to the writings of the fashionable" into the mainstream. Nikolai Gogol *(The Inspector General)* is perhaps one of the most well-known contributors to this body of Russian literature.

By the mid-1850s, the agitation for reform had become quite heated, and with Alexander II stepping in as ruler, the nation's policies began to change. As Ellison noted, Nicholas I

had failed to stem "the tide of intellectual radicalism ... to buttress the traditional social order ... [and] to achieve a more enlightened and efficient government." This being the case, his successor set to work putting the wheels of change into motion. Alexander II relaxed censorship and began reforming all aspects of bureaucracy including the government administration, the judiciary, the educational system, the military, and the nation's economic policies.

Success can not be measured by intent alone, and as Ellison pointed out, Alexander II's "failures were of speed and scope, not of direction." Harcave concluded, "Although Alexander II, like Peter [the Great], failed to attain all the goals that he set for himself, his reforms helped to bring about such changes that his reign may be considered the second great watershed in Russian history."

Critical Overview

Turgenev was and is a controversial author. As his brief stay in prison attests, his politics, which were often evident in his writing, placed him in a rather precarious position with a good portion of his contemporaries□particularly those in power. Turgenev supported the ideas of reform and westernization and detested serfdom. For these reasons, he fell into disfavor with many; however, for as much as he inspired dislike, Turgenev was equally liked by others. For those who agreed with his ideas, Turgenev was a master storyteller who had a unique facility for weaving realism with carefully developed characters and well-crafted prose.

As might be expected in the politically charged environment of nineteenth-century Russia, his champions and detractors were more often than not divided by their political leanings rather than their staunch literary convictions. Outside of Russia, readers and critics found Turgenev's works instructive and readily accessible, making him popular in the West as well. As A. V. Knowles noted in *Ivan Turgenev,* the playwright was "the first Russian novelist to achieve international recognition." During the mid-1800s, Turgenev reached his highest literary moments by locating the middle ground wherein his fans and previous skeptics could find cause to approve of him and his work.

The public's reception of *A Month in the Country* reflected the finicky tastes of his contemporary audiences. The play was finished in 1850, published in 1855, and performed for the first time in Moscow in 1872. Immediately after its release, the officialdom banned any performances of it, and after its debut in Moscow, it was not warmly embraced. Seven years later, however, when a young actress, Marya Savina, chose to star in the play, Russia's theater-going community changed its mind and the play began to be regularly performed□and enjoyed.

According to Knowles, "A production of 1909 at the Moscow Art Theatre with Stanislavsky directing and playing the part of Rakitin and Chekhov's widow Olga Knipper an Natalya Petrovna made it famous and established the interpretation it is usually given today.... Stanislavksy saw it as a psychological study and played down its social or political aspects." While Turgenev's political content, real or implied, caused some of his critics and the officialdom to reject his works on principle, his psychological explorations have come to be one of his signatures in more contemporary times. *A Month in the Country* originally suffered because of its implicit social commentary; however, it has now become more widely accepted and recognized for its literary merit rather than for its political overtones. As Knowles confirmed, *"A Month in the Country* is still successfully and regularly produced" today.

Turgenev's fame and notoriety have persisted into subsequent eras. His literary achievements and his portrayal of Russia's tumultuous nineteenth century have left him regarded both as one of Russia's finest literary figures and as one of its lesser achievers. He is most often praised for his keen character development, his knack for description as well as his realism; however, he has been criticized for his failure to measure up to some of Russia's other greats□Gogol, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and

Dostoevsky. To Turgenev's credit, Knowles noted that "his best stories are models of construction, and his use of language superb.... Turgenev is at his best when he keeps things simple, when he describes rather than analyzes." Further, Knowles noted, "Turgenev once said that he was first and foremost a realist... [and perhaps] this provides a clue to the strengths of his methods of characterization and his writing style in general."

Though considered a skilled craftsman, Turgenev has been berated quite vehemently for falling short of his contemporaries' successes. Quoting from Charles A. Moser' s *Ivan Turgenev,* Knowles noted that Turgenev "cannot boast the verbal exuberance and astounding inventiveness of a Gogol, the profound energy and conviction of a Dostoevsky wrestling with problems of a sort our age thinks very relevant, the epic sweep and inquiry to be found in Tolstoy, the painstaking attention to detail and psychological analysis of a Goncharov." This statement reveals that Turgenev is both praised and criticized for the very same things.

His manipulation of the Russian language, his portrayal of his people and Russia's history, and his psychological characterizations all seem to be both his strengths and his weaknesses in the eyes of critics. The controversy over his work perhaps dates back to the highly dichotomized society in which his writings were first introduced; however, whatever the cause for such division, Turgenev and his works are sure to be a rich source for discussion for years to come.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Kellett has an M.A. in literature and works in corporate communications. In this essay she discusses Turgenev's use of dichotomies as a structural and character development device.

In the introduction that precedes Richard Newnham's English translation of *A Month in the Country,* Richard Schechner applauded Turgenev for what he called "a masterful study of Natalya Petrovna," the play's main character. While Schechner discussed at some length the ways in which Natalya's fear of men is closely linked to her fear of her father, his analysis also culminated in an important conclusion: "Natalya Petrovna is a failure in love, and that is the crux of her personality and the play. She cannot consummate love with her husband or Rakitin; Beliayev slips out of her grasp. She dissolves in a series of futile gestures and contradictions as the play draws to a close."

It is certainly true that Natalya fails to achieve a fulfilling romantic relationship with any of her three leading men□Islayev, Rakitin, or Beliayev. Her attitude toward her husband seems at its best a benevolent tolerance, while her toying with Rakitin can be viewed as an ego-feeding, yet yawn-inspiring dalliance for her. As Schechner aptly noted, there is only a chance for her with Beliayev, for "he is young, athletic, virile," and because she perceives him to be naive, he is initially approachable. Ultimately, however, his departure from the estate also makes him inaccessible to her. Natalya is indeed a failure in love. Ironically, her eagerness to obtain the freedom and passion she desires is somehow too closely linked to her inability to attain the love that she believes will provide these things for her. She assigns value and ultimate happiness to the very things that she can not have, or does not attain, and thus, she dissolves into the "futile gestures and contradictions" of which Schechner spoke.

Schechner argued that it is Natalya's very fear of men that makes having any man impossible for her. She can only love that which is not a threat to her, yet all of her lovers either become threatening or boring, and as a result, love and the subsequent freedom and passion she seeks from it are unattainable for her. Her ultimate contradiction is perhaps a trite one□she wants what she can not have and does not want what is readily hers for the taking. As the play wraps up, all of Natalya's desires and realizations come to naught. Beliayev and Rakitin leave the estate, and she is left with her husband, who mistakenly believes that all happiness has been restored.

One way to understand the play's ending is offered by Schechner when he concluded that it is the "denouement of her [Natalya's] ineffectuality." Indeed, her ineffectuality is central to her character development. As she grapples with her own contradictions, she dissolves into a perpetual state of frustration with her unfulfilled wishes. The elements of contradiction and opposition manifest themselves very clearly in Natalya's inner conflicts□should she or should she not pursue Beliayev, does she like or dislike Rakitin, can she be free or will she always feel like a prisoner? Embedded in her questions are dichotomies like faithful/unfaithful, love/hate, freedom/entrapment, and honesty/dishonesty.

In addition to being defining characteristics of Natalya's character, such dichotomies are central elements in the work's overall structure. In fact, Turgenev's use of these elements permeates the play on almost every level. A quick glance at act one demonstrates the ways in which Turgenev incorporates these elements in his work from the very start.

When the curtains first rise, Schaaf, Liza, and Anna are playing hearts, a card game that is based not only on winning or losing but on a strategy that requires players to think in terms of all or nothing. To ensure a winning hand of hearts, one must hold all of the hearts in the deck and the queen of spades, or no hearts at all. Having any number of hearts in between these two extremes puts one at risk of losing the hand and eventually the game. Turgenev's placement of hearts in the opening scene signals to the reader that the play is about the heart, or the game of love, and at the same time it introduces one of the play's guiding organizational structures: dichotomies. Oppositions, contradictions, and contrast dominate *A Month in the Country*—all or nothing and winning or losing are just the beginning.

By interweaving the conversation about the card game with Natalya and Rakitin's interchange, Turgenev hints that the two lovers might also be considered in light of his structural web of contradiction and opposition. And indeed they can be. The two are very clearly at odds, and their romance is an unconsummated one. At the same time that their love appears to be everything to Rakitin, it seems at times to mean nothing to Natalya. The tension surrounding the couple is obvious in the first scene when they quibble over Rakitin's reading of *Monte Cristo*.

As the act unfolds, it becomes apparent that Rakitin is caught up in a web of choices and consequences. He must either read or talk, obey Natalya or not, bore her or not, and as the audience later learns, he must decide to leave her or not. Their relationship is a balancing game. At some moments it appears that their affair is one-sided, and then in the next Natalya admits her love for him. Rakitin is aware of the precarious ground on which their relationship treads. He notes, "You know, Natalya Petrovna, the more I look at you today, the less I can recognize you." Contradictions abound even for Rakitin—that which should be most familiar to him becomes unfamiliar and almost unknowable.

When Shpigelski arrives, the oppositions and contradictions continue to grow. Of Verenitsm and his sister Shpigelski proclaims, "It's my opinion that they're either both mad or both normal, for there is nothing to choose between them." The choices offered by Shpigelski are extremes and as such they fall right in line with the other contradictory oppositions in the play. Natalya does not respond to Shpigelski's assessment; however, her later comment about his story reveals that her reasoning parallels his. When responding to Shpigelski's story about the girl who loves two men, Natalya notes, "I don't see anything surprising about that: Why shouldn't one love two people at once?" As though this were not enough of a contradiction, she goes on to surmise, "but no, I really don't know .. . perhaps it simply means that one isn't in love with either."

The possibility of loving more than one man or no one at all goes hand in hand for Natalya, and in conclusion, she admits that she really just doesn't know what to think.

Natalya is confused by what it means to love and almost immediately she adapts an all or nothing mentality. Rakitin echoes her sentiments about the perplexity of love when he ponders their relationship a bit later. He reflects, "What does all this mean? Is it the beginning of the end, or the end itself? Or is it the beginning, perhaps?" Rakitin's question is an appropriate one and it further epitomizes the dichotomies that populate Turgenev' s play. The end and the beginning, though obviously opposite, are indistinguishable to Rakitin, who struggles to discover at which point he finds himself in his relationship with Natalya.

The presence of so many oppositions has a rather curious effect on the overall work. On the one hand, *A Month in the Country* is a highly charged play riddled with conflict. Natalya experiences a deep personal turmoil as she questions infidelity, to love someone so young, and if she should she act based on her own self-serving interests and marry Vera off to Bolshintsov. Interestingly, however, the contradictory nature of her options and the prevalence of so many other dichotomies in the play also add a feeling of balance to the work. Natalya is tortured and fragmented in terms of her personal loyalties, yet her struggle is set against a backdrop of opposites that create a certain sense of unity.

The idea of balance created by opposition is not a new concept. In fact, it traces back to the idea of yin and yang, the Chinese symbol for balance and harmony. This is not to suggest that the conflicted Natalya is in balance because she questions whether she should be unfaithful to her husband, yet it is to suggest that there is a certain sense of wholeness evoked by the presence of so many complementary oppositions in the play. In addition to presenting oppositions and contrasts in the development of the plot and the other characters, Turgenev includes such elements on a thematic level as well. Some of the more notable thematic contrasts he plays upon include young/old, public/private, work/play, truth/ lies, upper class/lower class, and, of personal interest to the playwright, Russia/the West.

The world of opposites that populates *A Month in the Country* can also be said to swirl around its author. Attempting to draw parallels between Turgenev's fiction and his real life is merely speculative; however, it is intriguing that one of the elements that permeates *A Month in the Country* also dominated Turgenev's life. In *Turgenev: The Novelist's Novelist,* Richard Freeborn noted that Turgenev was "a man of extraordinary, innate contradictions." Further he added, "During his lifetime Turgenev acquired many reputations. He was a political figure whose views received approval and sympathy in some quarters, disdain and outright rejection in others, a man who regarded himself as European in Russia and a Russian in Europe ... a man, finally, who never married but devoted the greater part of his adult life to a seemingly unrequited passion for a married lady."

From his reception by his critics to his political views and his personal preferences, Turgenev was indeed a man haunted by contradiction. Some consider *A Month in the Country* to be at least somewhat autobiographical, and in that both the author and his work share such a dominant characteristic, one might assume that in an effort to achieve balance in his own life, Turgenev used his fiction as a forum for exploring his

own conflicts. Whether *A Month in the Country* served personal purposes or not is difficult to say; however, from the distance of close to 150 years, one can certainly conclude that Turgenev's use of contradiction and opposition served his craft well. As a man and an artist, Turgenev grappled with the tenuous balance between life's greatest contrasts and while his success in walking this fine line was evident in much of his work, *A Month in the Country* serves as one of his best examples and as one of his greatest literary achievements.

Source: D. L. Kellett, for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

In this essay, Briggs provides an overview of A Month in the Country *and discusses its significance within the canon of modern Russian drama, particularly the play's influence upon the pyschological dramas of Anton Chekhov*.

A Month in the Country is a five-act play in prose written by the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev in the period 1848-50. After objections by the censors to some of its overt social criticism, the play was finally passed for publication in 1855. It was performed for the first time in Moscow (at the Maly Theatre) in 1872 and assured of continuing success in the 20th century by a famous Stanislavsky production at the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1909.

The story concerns a young tutor, Aleksey Belyaev, who is hired during the summer to teach the ten year old son of the Islaevs on their country estate. Despite his own mild manner the charming Belaev has a devastating impact on the household. Mme. Islaeva (Natalia Petrovna) vies with her own young ward, Vera, for his attention. Both women fall in love with him but Vera is no match for her protectress. Natalia maneuvers her into an arranged marriage with a ridiculous middle-aged neighbour. Belyaev departs, leaving all of the characters facing changes in their lives. In particular, Rakitin, a close friend of the family who has long been a secret admirer of Natalia, is forced to go away, suspected by her uncomprehending husband of having made advances towards her. Secondary interest, and not a little humour, arises from the down-to-earth love relationship between two middle-aged characters, Dr. Shpigelsky and Lizaveta Bogdanovna.

The play has had an unusual destiny. Its author was reluctant to believe in its quality because of the negative criticism which it received. He went so far as to admit that it was not really a play, but a novel in dramatic form. In fact, a good case could be made in the opposite direction: that Turgenev, with his skill in creating atmosphere, character, and dialogue far exceeding his narrative inventiveness, might be regarded as a dramatist *manqué*. This play has not only remained in the Russian repertory, it has travelled abroad with great success, proving particularly popular on the British stage.

Its major achievement is to have introduced into Russia, half a century too early for the author's own good, a wholly new theatrical genre, the pyschological drama. *A Month in the Country* is a play in which very little overt action occurs. There are arrivals and departures, one listens to conversations and gains a strong sense of hidden passions and tensions seething just below the surface of events. There are two or three moments of crisis, resolved with words rather than deeds, sufficient to raise an audience's involvement from interest to anxiety. But what is remarkable is the disparity between the radical nature of these developments and the lack of any external adventure or sensation. Ordinary people leading humdrum lives are subjected to turmoil and trauma; it is as if a whirlwind has passed through and blown away their comfortable routine, and no one saw anything happen.

Turgenev's characterization is remarkable. Not ony are the 13 characters extremely realistic, they actually develop and mature during the action of the play, without ever straining credulity. Particularly poignant are the two leading female roles. For all her understated depiction, Vera approaches tragic status and cannot fail to move the spectators as they watch her rapid transformation from girlishness to womanhood, followed by her painful resignation to a hopeless future. As for Natalia, she attracts some degree of sympathy because of her boring marriage and her forceful personality, but she is despicable in her ruthless treatment of the young girl whose interests she is supposed to be protecting. Her villainy is mitigated by a sense of her powerlessness before the forces which take control of her physical love together with a sense of panic that her youth and beauty are rapidly coming towards their end. She is complex and fascinating. Alongside these leading characters there is much else to sustain the interest: the innocence of Belyaev, the sadly amusing remoteness of Natalia's husband, the bitterness of Rakitin who only now comes to full realization of how empty his life has been. There is a good deal of comic relief, particularly in the exchanges between Shpigelsky and Bogdanovna but also in the character of Shaaf, the German tutor, and the satirical picture of Bloshintsov, Vera's eventual husband-to-be. Productions which play upon the comedy and leave the more serious issues to speak for themselves in Turgenev's restrained manner bring out all the qualities of *A Month in the Country,* and, by keeping them nicely in balance, tend to be more successful than those which attempt to propel the complex drama explicitly in the direction of tragedy.

The question of Chekhov's debt to Turgenev has never been fully resolved. Chekhov himself denied it and claimed he had not even read *A Month in the Country* before writing his major plays. This can scarcely be true, as even a glance at the cast lists of this play and *Uncle Vanya* will reveal. Both plays (and also Balzac's *La Maratre* from which *A Month in the Country* derives) involve groupings of characters which are anything but conventional; all three are certainly interrelated. Critics tend either to take for granted a certain influence by Turgenev, or else to deny it almost entirely. The influence seems, however, beyond question, extending as it does to setting, characterization, atmosphere, dialogue, and even perhaps to thematic interest. The outstanding success of Chekhov's psychological drama is itself a vindication of Turgenev's method, which was so unpopular in its day. What is remarkable is the early date at which Turgenev attempted to introduce the Russians to a form of drama which would sweep to popularity half a century later; *A Month in the Country* was written ten years before Chekhov was even born.

Source: Anthony D. P. Briggs, *"A Month in the Country* " in *The International Dictionary of Theatre,* Volume 1: *Plays,* edited by Mark Hawkins-Dady, St. James Press, 1992 , pp. 531-32.

Adaptations

A Month in the Country was made into a film for Mastervision's arts series on drama. Produced in the 1980s, this ninety-minute version of the play stars Susannah York and Ian McShane. Derek Marlowe wrote the screenplay, Quentin Lawrence directed, and Peter Snell produced the film.

In 1969, Melodiia in the U.S.S.R. published a recording called *Stseny iz spektaklei,* or *Scenes from Plays,* that included scenes from *A Month in the Country*. This recording is in Russian.

A Month in the Country was performed as an opera and recorded in 1981 by the Boston and New England Conservatories. John Moriarty was the conductor and David Bartholomew directed the show.

A 100-minute sound recording of the play was released in 1981 by A.B.C. in Sydney, Australia.

Topics for Further Study

Climax is a literary term that refers to the turning point in a story during which the most important part of the action occurs. Identify the climax in *A Month in the Country* and discuss why you chose this point.

Research Alexander II' s reform policies in education, the judiciary, the military, and government. Discuss how you agree and disagree with his intentions. What was he trying to accomplish? Was he successful in your opinion?

Research the Hohenzollern dynasty in Prussia and discuss the parallels between it and Nicholas I's rule of Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Research Philosophical Idealism, or slavophilism, movement of Russia's 1830s. Who were its major proponents and detractors? Given your vantage point in the twentieth century, discuss why you think the Philosophical Idealists' vision would or would not work in today's society.

Discuss the similarities and differences between *A Month in the Country* and similar works, such as Balzac's *The Stepdaughter* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*.

Compare and Contrast

Mid-1800s: During Nicholas I's reign, there are many restrictions placed on education. In particular, there are restrictions on the use of western ideas and texts in the classroom. The government has a strong influence on curriculum. When Alexander II assumes power, he seeks educational reforms by relaxing censorship standards and increasing the autonomy of universities.

Today: Along with the collapse of the Soviet system in the early-1990s came a marked increase in the number of private schools and institutions of higher education. In addition, the educational curriculum has been broadened to include previously banned works and reinterpre-tations of Russian and Soviet history.

Mid-1800s: Land is primarily owned by the wealthy, who use serfs for labor. While there is growing agitation for freeing the serfs under Nicholas I, the official emancipation statues are not initiated until February 19, 1861. The statutes call for land ownership to pass from noble landowners to the serfs in three stages. Ultimately, serfs have to pay high prices in exchange for little land; however, despite the flaws in the reforms, they do substantially raise the social position of Russia's lowest class.

Today: Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the agricultural industry has been slow to privatize. As late as the mid-1990s, 90% of agricultural land was in control of former collective and state farms. While these farms have been reorganized into cooperatives or joint stock companies, land ownership remains concentrated.

Mid-1800s: Russia's most impressive industrial expansion takes place during the 1860s and 1870s; however, prior to this time, much had been done to pave the way. The completion of close to five thousand miles of roads and the Moscow-Petersburg railroad line contributed greatly to Russia's budding industrialization as did the growth of cities and cottage industries. During Alexander II's reign, wasteful excise tax collection is abolished, railroad construction continues, and the system of banks, joint stock companies, and credit institutions is expanded. Russia is primed for the industrial and commercial expansion it needs to strengthen its empire.

Today: As the twentieth century comes to a close, Russia is finding itself, along with the rest of the world, in the midst of a new revolution the technological revolution. Advances in the computer industry are transforming the global landscape and like the rest of the world, Russia is enjoying and eagerly anticipating the progress made possible by the new communication age.

Mid-1800s: Russia is ruled by autocrats whose personal preferences and dispositions characterize and determine the goals of the government.

Today: In the past two decades, Russia has been faced with the difficult task of transitioning from a single-party totalitarian style of government (communist) to a multiparty democratic style of government. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(CPSU) has been replaced by hundreds of parties whose orientations range from monarchists to communists. In general, the political parties can be divided into three groups: 1) nationalist/communist, 2) pro-market/democratic, and 3) centrist/special interest.

What Do I Read Next?

In his time, Nikolai Gogol was known for his unabashed criticism of Russia's bureaucracy. Today he is known as the Father of Russian realism. His short story "The Overcoat" was published in 1840 and reflects the author's skilled use of realism.

Hedda Gabler is another play with a domineering aristocratic female heroine who is looking for happiness from within the confines of a dissatisfying marriage. This play was written by Norwegian Henrik Ibsen and was first published in 1890.

Also a contemplation on what makes a life well lived, Leo Tolstoy's short story "The Death of Ivan Ilych" was first published in 1886. Tolstoy has long been considered one of Russia's finest prose writers and is best known for his novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

The French author Gustave Flaubert was a contemporary of Turgenev's. In his novel, *Madame Bovary,* which was published in 1856, Flaubert explores the theme of disillusionment through a female protagonist who has an adulterous affair.

The themes of love, youth, and happiness are all to be found in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard,* which was written in 1903 and first performed at the Moscow Art Theater in 1904.

Fathers and Sons is considered by some to be one of Turgenev's pinnacle works. Published in 1862, this novel favorably explores the rejection of all forms of tradition and authority through its male protagonist, Bazarov.

.

Further Study

Ellison, Herbert J. *History of Russia,* Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964, pp. 134-218.

This book chronicles Russia's history. The particular pages noted cover the years 1801 through 1881, roughly encompassing the period of Turgenev's life.

Freeborn, Richard. *Turgenev: The Novelist's Novelist: A Study,* Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. xi-36.

While this book focuses upon Turgenev as a novelist, its beginning chapters provide an introduction to his guiding philosophies, political leanings, and development as a writer.

Garnett, Edward. *Turgenev,* Kennikat Press, 1966, pp. v-34.

This work presents a discussion of Turgenev's childhood, family life, and his early works as well as a chapter about his critics.

Knowles, A. V. *Ivan Turgenev,* edited by Charles A. Moser, Twayne, 1988.

This book offers an in-depth look at Turgenev with chapters devoted to his biography, literary career, reputation, six of his novels, and his final years. *A Month in the Country* is also discussed.

Schapiro, Leonard. *Turgenev: His Life and Times,* Oxford University Press, 1978.

This book contextualizes Turgenev's life and works within the nineteenth century.

Yarmolinsky, Avraham. *Turgenev: The Man His Art His Age,* Hodder & Stroughton, 1926.

Yarmolinsky's work offers a survey of Turgenev's life and his literary accomplishments.

Bibliography

Harcave, Sidney. *Russia: A History,* J. B. Lippincott, 1968, pp. 248-74.

Schechner, Richard. Introduction to *A Month in the Country,* translated by Richard Newnham, Chandler, 1962, pp. vii-xviii.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Drama for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) 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, DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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

DfS 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 Drama 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 DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS 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 Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama 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 DfS 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.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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:

Editor, Drama for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535