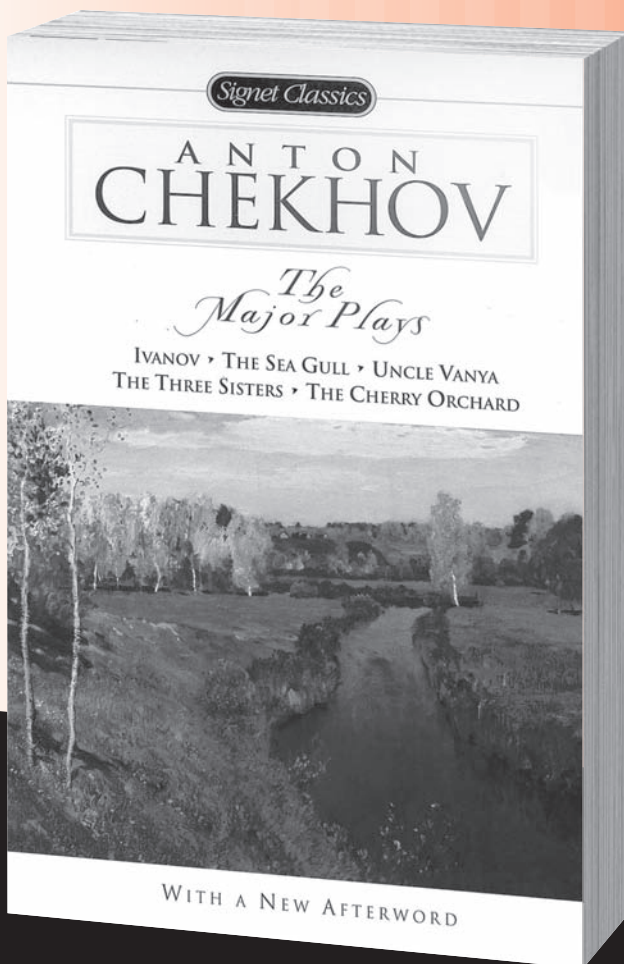


Signet Classics

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

ANTON CHEKHOV: THE MAJOR PLAYS

WITH FOCUS ON *THE SEA GULL*, *THE THREE SISTERS*, AND *THE CHERRY ORCHARD*



BY **LISE KLOEPP**

SERIES EDITORS: JEANNE M. McGLINN AND JAMES E. McGLINN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SYNOPSIS OF THREE PLAYS	3
<i>THE SEA GULL</i>	3
<i>THE THREE SISTERS</i>	4
<i>THE CHERRY ORCHARD</i>	4
PREREADING ACTIVITIES.....	5
I. THINKING LIKE A DRAMATURG: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON THE WRITER, GENRE, AND PERIOD	5
II. THINKING LIKE A DRAMATURG: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES.....	9
DURING READING ACTIVITIES.....	12
I. THINKING LIKE A DIRECTOR: SCRIPT, CHARACTER, & THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	12
II. THINKING LIKE AN ACTOR: EXPLORING TEXT & SUBTEXT	15
AFTER READING ACTIVITIES	16
I. MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PLAYS	16
II. CREATIVE WRITING PROJECTS.....	17
III. PERFORMANCE-BASED PROJECTS.....	18
IV. MULTIMEDIA-INSPIRED PROJECTS	19
V. COMPARING TEXTS	20
ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE	20
ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE	20
FREE TEACHER'S GUIDES.....	23

Copyright © 2011 by Penguin Group (USA)

For additional teacher's manuals, catalogs, or descriptive brochures,
please email academic@penguin.com or write to:

PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC.
Academic Marketing Department
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014-3657
<http://www.penguin.com/academic>

In Canada, write to:
PENGUIN BOOKS CANADA LTD.
Academic Sales
90 Eglinton Ave. East, Ste. 700
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4P 2Y3

Printed in the United States of America

INTRODUCTION

Writing at the turning point of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Anton Chekhov described a world in transition, which may be one of the reasons why his work still resonates with audiences today. Next to Shakespeare, Chekhov is one of the most often produced playwrights from the canon of world literature. Directors and actors gravitate to his layered characters and universal themes. His ability to balance the comedic and tragic and the pathetic and ridiculous demonstrates his understanding of human nature's messiness. His characters are full of contradictions and quirks just like people in real life.

Chekhov once said, "It is time for writers to admit that nothing in this world makes sense. Only fools and charlatans think they know and understand everything." Even though his plays portray the nonsensical side of life, modern audiences can make sense of his characters' boredom, awkwardness, indifference, and embarrassment. Chekhov's sense of humor enabled him to display the foibles of his characters, while showing reverence for human beings' capacity to endure. Chekhov's style has been compared to the work of the

American filmmakers, the Coen brothers, famous for *Fargo*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, and *The Big Lebowski*, because of their absurd, sad, and ridiculous tone. Viewing Chekhov's plays through this pop culture lens may help to make them more immediate and alive to students.

In the classroom, *Anton Chekhov's Major Plays* can speak to the personal, historical, social, political, and cultural transitions students face today as technological and environmental factors situate them in a time of rapid change. How has their past shaped who they are today? What dreams do they have for the future? What choices do they face? Have they dealt with failure or disappointment? What gives them hope?

This guide is designed to provide an approach to teaching the plays of Chekhov focusing on themes, character analysis, and dramatic presentations. The before, during, and after reading instructional activities can be utilized for one or all of the plays contained in this anthology and serve to enrich the students' experience of the plays and increase their appreciation of the art and craft of theater.

SYNOPSIS OF THREE PLAYS

The Sea Gull

In this play Chekhov explores the lives of artists and those around them. He takes an eclectic mix of characters from various ages and occupations and creates a circumstance that forces them to interact. That circumstance is the gathering of locals and visitors at Sorin's estate. The main action revolves around Arkadina (an aging actress visiting from the city), Treplev (her son and aspiring playwright), Trigorin (Arkadina's lover and famous writer), and Nina (an aspiring actress). Arkadina and Treplev's mother/son relationship parallels that of Shakespeare's Gertrude and Hamlet. Treplev seeks his mother's artistic approval while she seeks his undying affection. He is also passionately in

love with Nina, the lead actress in his play, who is attracted to Trigorin's fame, which causes her to leave her home and pursue her acting career in the city.

In two years time, Nina's real life events play out like those of a fictional character in one of Trigorin's short stories. "A man comes along by chance, sees her, and having nothing better to do, destroys her, just like this sea gull here" (p. 123). Once an innocent and bright young woman, she returns to her hometown, ruined and distraught, but still clinging to her dream of becoming a famous actress. The supporting characters fill out the story with love triangles, duels, and philosophical musings. The characters are so preoccupied with their individual troubles that they seem to be incapable

of listening and empathizing with others. The play ends with the sound of Treplev shooting himself as the household prepares for a game of cards. They are so focused on what they do not have that they fail to see what it is they do have until it is gone.

The Three Sisters

Exploring the decay of the aristocratic class in Russia, this play follows the Prozorov family (Olga, Andrei, Masha, and Irina) over the course of four years. Having grown up in the city of Moscow and then moving to their current provincial Russian town, the family feels continually displaced and dreams of returning to the “good life” of Moscow. The play begins on the day of the youngest sister Irina’s birthday, which also is the one-year anniversary of their father’s death. Olga, the oldest sister, is unmarried and unhappy in her job as a local teacher. Masha has a husband but pursues an illicit affair with a married man. Irina is single and chooses to ignore the courting of her suitors until she bends to the social pressure to marry the Baron. To his sisters’ dismay, Andrei marries and has a child with an “unsophisticated” and seemingly shy local woman named Natasha who later asserts her dominance over the household. Andrei’s plan to become a scholar is thwarted by married life. In order to cope with his despair, he begins gambling away the family’s inheritance and eventually mortgages the house to pay off his gambling debt.

To survive, the sisters exchange the cultured knowledge of their upbringing for the common and “boring” domestic life of work and marriage. Questioning her will to live, Irina pleads: “Oh, my God, my God! I have forgotten everything, I’ve forgotten...it’s all muddled in my head...I can’t remember how to say window or floor in Italian. I’m forgetting everything, every day I forget, and life is slipping by, never to return, never, we shall never go to Moscow...” (p. 291). Irina ultimately resigns herself to marrying the Baron, and the departure of the military from the town marks the end of an era for the Prozorov family. As Irina prepares for her wedding day, she learns that the Baron has been killed in a

duel with one of her former suitors. Struggling between who they were in the past and who they hope to become in the future, the sisters are forced to reconcile their dreams with reality. All they can do is simply work and live. (See the “Forward” [pp. xii-xxiii] for a detailed examination of this play.)

The Cherry Orchard

As the play opens Lyubov Andreyevna’s relatives and servants await her return from Paris to the family’s prized cherry orchard estate. It is the eve of its sale at auction to pay the defaulted mortgage. This relatively straightforward story exploring the rising middle class and the falling aristocracy is complicated by a colorful assortment of characters, including a clumsy clerk and a narcoleptic neighbor, whose antics arouse both pity and compassion. A shrewd businessman named Lopakhin, whose father and grandfather had worked as serfs on the estate, suggests a way for Lyubov Andreyevna to earn money to pay the mortgage by renting the property as summer cottages. She is immediately repulsed by this vulgar recommendation and decides to host a dance rather than seek a solution to the problem. The evening ends with Lopakhin triumphantly telling the story of how he purchased the cherry orchard at auction. His judicious reason and hard work have prevailed over the family’s sophistication and frivolous manners.

In the last act, the house is bare and empty as the family is forced to leave the only home they have ever known. Even after selling nearly all her material possessions, Lyubov Andreyevna cannot help but give her purse to the peasants as she bids them a final goodbye. Everyone has left except for Firs, the family’s old valet, who has been accidentally left behind and has fallen ill. He silently passes away on the sofa as the audience hears the sound of a “snapped string mournfully dying away” followed by an ax cutting down a cherry tree in the orchard (p. 393).

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

I. THINKING LIKE A DRAMATURG: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON THE WRITER, GENRE, AND PERIOD

A dramaturg is a very important member of the theatrical production team whose job is to support the actors, directors, and designers by conducting in-depth research on the contextual, literary, and historical aspects of the production. They may help the director develop a cohesive concept. Working to contextualize the world of the play, the dramaturg acquires a great deal of background knowledge about the playwright, play, genre, and other influences.

Chekhov, the Man

Born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia, the Ukrainian part of Russia near the Black Sea, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was the third of six children. His paternal grandfather bought himself out of serfdom, and his father was a grocer who abandoned the family after his business went bankrupt. At the time, his mother and the rest of the family moved to Moscow. After finishing his schooling, Chekhov joined the family in Moscow and supported them financially through his writings. He went to medical school and became a physician. He was famous for saying, "Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress, who is dearer to me than a wife." After graduation, he became a freelance journalist and writer of comic sketches. He started writing one-act plays and eventually graduated to full-length plays. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent most of his time in the country where he wrote the majority of his plays. He died on July 14, 1904, at the age of 44, and was buried in Moscow. His life experience of witnessing the changing rural and urban social structures permeates the characters and themes in his plays. Also, Chekhov's dual career as a scientist and artist is apparent in his unique talent to harmonize the scientific and empirical with the artistic and mysterious. Students

can read Rosamund Bartlett's "Afterword" in the Signet Classics edition to find more examples of how his personal experiences impact the fictional world of his plays.

Watch this 10-minute dramatized, first-person narrative video about Chekhov with the students http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CY6ltI1n5Lo&feature=player_embedded. Discuss the following questions with them: Why does Chekhov say he loves his family even though he had a difficult childhood? What was it about the theater that was so appealing to him? What was happiness for Chekhov? Who was Chekhov writing for? What did the images and tone of the video tell them about who Chekhov was as a man and the conditions of Russia during his lifetime?

Chekhov's Point of View

To get a better sense of Chekhov's point of view, ask students to reflect on some of his famous quotes found at PoemHunter.com. In journal format, ask them to explain what they think the quote means, giving personal and specific examples to support their ideas.

- "He who desires nothing, hopes for nothing, and is afraid of nothing, cannot be an artist."
- "Nothing lulls and inebriates like money; when you have a lot, the world seems a better place than it actually is."
- "They say that in the end truth will triumph, but it's a lie."
- "You ask 'What is life?' That is the same as asking 'What is a carrot?' A carrot is a carrot and we know nothing more."
- "Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life's become extinct, and the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day."

- “Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice.”
- “Any idiot can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day living that wears you out.”
- “If you are afraid of loneliness, don't marry.”
- “It seems to me that all of the evil in life comes from idleness, boredom, and psychic emptiness, but all of that is inevitable when you become accustomed to living at others' expense.”

Chekhov, the Playwright

Known as one of the greatest modern playwrights, Chekhov's works belong to the literary style of Realism. At the time, over-the-top farces and melodramas were the standard fare available to theater audiences. Chekhov wanted to show the realness of people through their relationships with each other. In contrast to the stock characters of melodramas, his characters had multiple dimensions. No one person was purely evil or wholly good. His compassionate writing reflected the incongruity of everyday life. Most audiences had never seen people who behaved and dressed similar to themselves on the stage. This style of storytelling radically changed people's relationship to the theater and has continued to influence many of the television shows and movies audiences view today. Students can read the “Forward” (p. vii-xii) for more information on Chekhov's writing style. Ask them to outline the key points they learn.

Life As Is

Share this Chekhov quote with the students.

“After all, in real life people don't spend every minute shooting at each other, hanging themselves and making confessions of love. They don't spend all the time saying clever things. They're more occupied with eating, drinking, flirting and talking stupidities—and these are the things which ought to be shown on the stage. A play should be written in which people arrive, go away, have dinner, talk about the weather and play cards. Life must be exactly as it is. And people as they are—not on stilts...Let everything on the stage

be just as complicated, and at the same time just as simple as it is in life. People eat their dinner, just eat their dinner, and all the time their happiness is being established or their lives are being broken up.” (<http://www.enotes.com/drama-criticism/pavlovich-anton-chekhov>)

Ask students to reflect on their day and list all the mundane activities they completed. Tell them to include specific details. Rather than “I brushed my teeth” encourage them to be more specific and say “I brushed my teeth with an electric toothbrush.” Then, play the game “Come my neighbor...” One at a time, each student walks to an open space in the room and calls out “Come my neighbor, anyone who (insert an activity from their list).” For example, “Come my neighbor, anyone who brushed their teeth with an electric toothbrush.” Then, anyone who also did this activity today should move toward the caller and form a group. Continue in this way forming new groups as each student gets a chance to be the caller. Afterwards, discuss with the class if they noticed any surprises. What did it feel like to be or not be a part of a group? How do their everyday activities influence their individual and group identities? Can bus riders relate to each other more easily than carpool riders? As they read Chekhov's plays, have them consider how different activities define different social groups and notice how the simple observation of everyday life can be compelling and interesting on its own.

Docudrama

Chekhov's stimulus for writing was real life. He is the master of everyday natural dialogue. In 1888, in a letter to a friend, he wrote, “In my opinion it is not the writer's job to solve such problems as God, pessimism, etc; his job is merely to record who, under what conditions, said or thought what about God or pessimism. The artist is not meant to be a judge of his characters and what they say; his only job is to be an impartial witness. I heard two Russians in a muddled conversation about pessimism, a conversation that solved nothing; all I am bound to do is reproduce that conversation exactly as I heard it. Draw-

ing conclusions is up to the jury, that is, the readers. My only job is to be talented, that is, to know how to distinguish important testimony from unimportant, to place my characters in the proper light and speak their language.” (http://threesisters.gallery-forster.com/about_the_play.htm; Letter to Alexei Suvorin, May 30, 1888.)

Ask the students to capture on paper a two-person ordinary, everyday verbal exchange they witness in real life. This may be in the school cafeteria, waiting for their bus, or even at the dinner table. Encourage them to record the dialogue exactly as they hear it, including non-verbal words and sounds such as um, ah, sighs, or laughter. The length should be approximately one page. Have students share out loud their documented dialogues in class with a partner and discuss each mini-drama to discover the central theme. Ask students to sort each docudrama into a specific category, i.e. the weather or relationships, and then analyze the categories to see if any patterns emerge. For example, how often do people complain or talk about how miserable they are? How often do people wish to be somewhere else? How often are people hopeful for the future? As students begin to read the plays, encourage them to reflect upon this exercise and make connections between their everyday lives and those of Chekhov's characters. Do they know someone who “wear[s] morning” (p. 89) like Masha in *The Sea Gull* or who openly admits his/her faults like Lyubov Andreyevna in *The Cherry Orchard* but continues to make the same mistakes?

A Day in the Life Photo Essay

Read this quote by Chekhov to the students: “One has to write what one sees, what one feels, truthfully, sincerely. I am often asked what it was that I was wanting to say in this or that story. To these questions I never have any answer. There is nothing I want to say. My concern is to write, not to teach! And I can write about anything you like. ... Tell me to write about this bottle, and I will give you a story entitled ‘The Bottle.’ Living truthful images generate thought, but thought cannot

create an image.” (http://threesisters.gallery-forster.com/about_the_play.htm; Letter to Alexei Suvorin, May 30, 1888.)

Ask students to create a photo essay about a day in their life. A photo essay is simply a collection of images that are placed in a specific order to tell the progression of events, emotions, or concepts. Students can visit this website for examples: <http://photophilanthropy.org/galleries/explore-essays/> Much like Chekhov's blending of the objective and subjective, photo essays combine art with journalism. During Chekhov's time, photography became a popular pastime. In *The Three Sisters*, this new trend can be seen in the character of Lieutenant Fedotik who is always snapping photos. The birth of photography also greatly influenced the Realist movement. People could look into the eyes of someone they had never met or seen before and feel a connection with them that transcended time and distance.

Using digital cameras, have students take photos over a 24-hour period. In order to find the “living truthful images,” tell them not to prearrange or stage anything. Then, have them choose and sequence ten photographs that capture the emotional journey of their day from their unique point of view. The photos should flow together and be visually connected. The students should exchange photo essays with a partner and write out captions for the photos without hearing the real story from their partners. Share the photos and captions with the whole class by posting the photo essays around the room. Invite students to move around and view the gallery. Then, discuss how the captions enhanced or distracted from the photos. How can an image tell a story? How did the students interpret the different images?

Chekhov's Homeland: KWL Group Research Presentation

Create a class chart with three columns with the labels: What I Know, What I Want to Learn, What I Learned. Engage students in a discussion about what they already know about 19th century Russia. List this informa-

tion on the board in the first column. If disagreements arise, suggest listing them in the middle column under questions they want to have answered. Then, tell students to categorize the information. Provide an example to model how they might begin to combine ideas and concepts. Students can work individually or with a partner. Then, as a class, discuss the categories and arrive at consensus.

Working individually, students should develop a list of what they want to learn, generating research categories. In addition to the topics that interest the students, consider incorporating the following:

- The differences between Moscow & St. Petersburg
- Dueling (made legal among military officers in 1894 when Nicholas II became czar; Chekhov wrote a short story called “The Duel”)
- Russian railways
- Pushkin
- 19th century Russian literature, painting, dance, and music

Divide students into research groups. Assign each group specific research questions. Have them use the websites provided below as well as other available media resources to complete the last column, which describes what they have learned. Each group presents their new findings to the class.

Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia> provides a comprehensive listing of facts and information about Russia. The easy-to-use “Table of Contents” allows students to quickly find a specific research area.

Russia and Empire, 1856-1903 <http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/h47-ru.htm> includes an overview of Russia in 1855, the freeing of the serfs, other reforms and technological progress, the war against the Turks, expansion into Poland, student rebellions, assassination attempts, and the beginnings of the Communist Party.

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN NAMES

When reading Chekhov's plays for the first time, some students may have difficulty understanding the characters' names. They may ask why they have so many names or why their names keep changing. Begin by having the students reflect upon their own names. Then, explain the significance of having three names and the etiquette associated with formal and informal name usages. Finally, encourage them to create their own Russian names.

The Story of Your Name

On a piece of paper, have students create a mind map of their full names. Ask them to brainstorm what they already know about the different parts of their names. This might include the story behind how they received the name, the literal meaning of the name, or the language of origin. Students should share their maps with a partner, and then share what they discovered through a group discussion on the topic of names. How do their cultural and ethnic backgrounds influence the construction and use of their names? What nicknames have they been called? Is there a story behind their nicknames?

Overview of Russian Names

In Russia, people have three names—a given (first) name, a patronymic (middle name), and a surname (last) name. First names can vary in origin to include Hebrew, Latin, Greek, or Slavic. The patronymic is comprised of the father's given name, plus an ending that means “of” (as in son or daughter of). These endings usually look like “-ov/ova/ovna”, or “-ev/eva/evna”, or “-ich/ovich/evich.” (The versions ending with an –a identifies the daughter while the other endings identify the son.) The root of a surname may simply be an adjective, a variation on a patronymic, or an occupational description.

The most formal way of addressing someone in Russia is by using the person's given name and patronymic. This is considered the appropriate way to address an unfamiliar or

respected person, such as a teacher, doctor, elder, or leader. Individuals who are more familiar with one another, such as family members and friends, can use a given name alone. Finally, a diminutive or nickname might be used to show affection or condescension. These can be created by adding “-ya”, “-ochka”, or “-ushka” to the end of a name, or sometimes the nickname does not resemble the given name at all. For example, Sasha is the diminutive for Alexander.

Here is an example:

Given name: Lyubov

**Patronymic name (male name)
identifying one's father:** Andreyevna
(daughter of Andrey)

A surname (a family name): Ranevskaya

Formal address: Lyubov Andreyevna

Familiar: Lyubov

Diminutive: Lyuba

After explaining the basics of Russian names, have students analyze different character names from the plays. This will help them become more familiar and comfortable using these names when they begin reading the plays.

Create Your Own Russian Name

Ask students to visit the following websites http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_names or http://www.foreigndocuments.com/russian_names.html and encourage them to create their own Russian names. Instruct them to make nametags and refer to each other by their Russian names throughout the unit on Chekhov.

II. THINKING LIKE A DRAMATURG: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

MEMORY

Sentimental Object Show-n-Tell

Many of the characters in Chekhov's plays have attachments to materials that remind them of happier times. In *The Cherry Orchard*, Gayev salutes the existence of the

family's hundred-year-old bookcase (p. 334-335). Invite students to bring in an object or a picture of an object that holds sentimental value to them and share the item and story with a small group. Discuss: Why is it important to them? How would they feel if they no longer had this object?

Childhood Memories Freewrite & Tableaux

Students can individually freewrite on a piece of paper about good and bad memories from their childhoods. Give the students a time limit and encourage them to spend the whole time writing. When the time limit is up, ask the students to underline one good memory and circle one bad memory. Have all the students stand and close their eyes. At the same time, ask them to create a spontaneous frozen image or tableau with their bodies that represents the good memory. Cue students by saying, “One, Two, Three, Freeze!” Now do the same with the bad image. On a three-count, have them seamlessly transition back to the good image so they end the exercise with a positive feeling. Have the students respond in writing to the following questions: In what ways have these memories shaped who you are today? How have they changed the decisions you make? Have you ever tried to forget these memories? Why? Can a good memory be also a bad memory? How might a bad memory become a good one? Invite students who feel comfortable to share with the whole class or in small groups what they wrote.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND PROGRESS

2011 marked the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Manifesto in Russia, which liberated millions of serfs. Nearly one year after Chekhov's birth, Tsar Alexander II proclaimed the manifesto on February 19, 1861. <http://www.newsahed.com/preview/2011/02/19/moscow-19-feb-2011-tsars-emancipation-manifesto-proclaimed-150-years-ago/index.php> Russia was the last European country to abolish serfdom. This action reportedly influenced U.S. President Abraham Lincoln to initiate the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which officially ended slavery.

Enslaved People and Serfs

Serfdom evolved from agricultural slavery of the Roman Empire and spread throughout Europe around the 10th century, eventually dominating the Middle Ages. Serfs were people born into servitude and bound to the land. Unlike slaves, they were not considered property of the landowner and could not be bought or sold apart from the land which they worked. Ask students to research these websites to learn more about serfdom in 19th century Russia: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/language/Ruslang/tolstoy/history.html> or <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom>. Then have students create a Venn diagram to show the similarities and differences between serfs and enslaved people. Have students compare their diagrams with a partner and discuss with the whole class what they learned about the lives and rights of serfs vs. slaves.

Class and Social Issues: Then and Now

The Cherry Orchard is set during the time of the transition in Russia when emancipated serfs were given the opportunity to buy or rent the land they had farmed. Many of the wealthy landowners sold their land due to lack of agricultural or managerial knowledge and moved to the cities to join the professional or commercial classes. In *The Cherry Orchard* Firs represents the last living generation of former serfs.

LYUBOV: Firs, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FIRS: Wherever you tell me to go, I'll go.

LYUBOV: Why do you look like that? Aren't you well? You ought to go to bed.

FIRS: Yes.... [With a smirk] Go to bed, and without me who will serve, who will see to things? I'm the only one in the whole house (p. 372).

Although legally he was free, the only life Firs knew was serving his master. Many wealthy families had become dependent on their servants for their day-to-day survival. Chekhov portrays the time period following the emanci-

pation as unstable and uncertain for both lower and upper classes. The play became a social commentary on Russian life in the early 1900s.

Ask students to identify pressing social issues in their world. Discuss the following questions: Do these issues equally or disproportionately affect the lower, middle, and upper classes? Do students think these same problems existed during Chekhov's time? What are some modern examples of TV shows, movies, plays, or books that comment on social injustices? How effective are they in generating a true understanding of the issues and promoting social change?

Rate Your Freedoms Continuum

Ask students, individually, to list and rank the freedoms they possess. Discuss as a group, how they decided which freedoms were rated highest. Collect the students' writings. Post two signs on opposite ends of the room. One should say "Most Important" and the other "Least Important." Read the freedoms the students listed and ask the class to silently place themselves on the continuum based on how important that freedom is to them. The purpose of the exercise is not to challenge or debate belief systems but to respect and recognize the diversity of opinions in the room. Following this exercise, discuss with the students the following questions: In what ways might the story of enslaved people in the Americas mirror the story of former serfs in Russia? Is there a difference between social change and social progress? What constitutes progress? What does it mean to be free?

Servant & Master Exercise

Students can explore the impact of social standing by engaging in the following exercise. In pairs, have students decide who will be the master and who will be the servant. The objective of the game is for the master to keep the servant busy with as many tasks as they can complete. The orders should be immediate and continuous. The servant is not allowed to speak, unless required to, and must obey all the master's commands. (Of course, always preface this activity by reminding students to be respectful of one another during game playing and never

ask someone to do something they would not be willing to do themselves.) Have students reverse roles so each person gets a chance to experience these opposing roles. Discuss which role was easier to play. Why? What emotions did they feel as the servant and the master? How did they feel about the other person? Why?

Status Reversal Exercise

Give two students a scenario to act out. At the beginning of the scene, one character must be high status and the other low, but by the end of the scene they should reverse the status roles. Example: A manager (high) of a local grocery store is training a new cashier (low). The manager is not very patient with or respectful of the cashier. Later that night, when the cashier is driving home, they see the manager stranded on the side of the road. The manager's car has just broken down. After engaging in the role playing, ask students to journal about how they felt in each situation and how their roles changed as a result of circumstances. Students can share their writing and discuss as a class how status impacts relationships.

CONNECTION TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Water Color Painting

In Act I of *The Sea Gull*, Arkadina is reading Maupassant's travel writing "On the Water." Maupassant was a popular 19th-century French writer of the naturalistic school considered one of the fathers of the modern short story. Have students read this story at <http://www.online-literature.com/maupassant/265/> and discuss the impact of nature on the characters. What relationship do the characters have to water? What does water symbolize? After discussing the story, ask student to think about a time when nature affected their mood. Then using watercolor paints ask students to create a visual representation of the natural event and to discuss with a partner what mood that natural setting evoked in them.

Nature Experience Storytelling

The notion of a retreat or the experience of new physical surroundings, especially in nature, allows people to gain new perspec-

tives and re-energize their thinking. Ask students to respond in writing to the following story prompt: "Tell a story about a time you were affected by the natural world. What were the circumstances? Was there anyone else with you or were you by yourself? How did you react? In what ways might you have been changed by this event?" Form circles of 4-5 people and go around the circle giving each student two minutes to tell their story.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Old vs. Young Pantomime

In Act II of *The Sea Gull*, Arkadina asks Dorn who looks younger—her or Masha. Dorn replies that she looks younger. Arkadina affirms his response by explaining, "Because I work, I feel, I am always on the go, while you [Masha] stay in the same place all the time, you don't live..." (pp. 109-110). Engage students in a creative drama exercise to explore this theme of aging. Explain that pantomime is acting without using words and often involves the use of imagined objects, which require the performers to create space objects that maintain their weight and size. The class can watch a video of Shelia Kerrigan <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xns7RRpDFTg> to learn more about pantomime. Then divide students into small groups. Give each group a different everyday physical activity (making a bed, folding laundry, watering plants, crossing a busy street). Have each group prepare a pantomime performance that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. They will perform the activity three times—as themselves, as young children, and as older adults. All the groups perform at the same time. Then ask if any group wants to share their performances with the whole class. Tell the class/audience to observe any changes that occur between each performance. Discuss: What similarities exist between the various young pantomimes? Between the old? Were the performances believable and truthful or were they exaggerated and stereotypical? What qualities make someone or something young or old? How might perceptions and stereotypes create conflicts between generations? What factors divide generations? In what ways are they similar?

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

I. THINKING LIKE A DIRECTOR: SCRIPT, CHARACTER, & THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As Chekhov was developing as a writer, Constantin Stanislavski was spearheading the revolutionary Moscow Art Theater (MAT) as he developed his own modern system of actor training. Watch this 3-minute video with students to learn more about Stanislavski and the MAT: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_dcTikQ_g8 Ask students to brainstorm TV shows that seem melodramatic and shows that seem very realistic and true to life. Ask students to list the characteristics of a melodramatic show vs. a realistic show. Which shows are more appealing to them and why? What is behind the current craze for reality TV? What is the appeal of these shows?

Investigation, Inference, Invention (3 I's)

Most students have little exposure to reading or even seeing dramatic literature; therefore, it is important to teach them how to visualize what they read on the page. The acting teacher Robert Barton offers one approach to analysis known as the three I's—investigation, inference, and invention. Investigation refers to the facts provided in the text. This may include what the character says about him/herself or what characters say about each other. Any evidence the reader or viewer can see, hear, smell, or feel, he considers part of investigation. From these facts, the students draw conclusions or inferences. Finally, invention is filling in any blanks that the playwright may not have directly stated. Model for students how to fold a piece of paper into three columns. Label the columns “Investigation, Inference, Invention.” Explain how they will be viewing two different video clips twice in a row without the sound. Students should take notes on their paper under each column.

Clip #1 Opening scene from the Goodman Theatre's production of *The Sea Gull*:

<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2010/10/27/theater/1248069246989/the-seagull.html>

Investigation

After watching the clip for the first time, ask students to simply explain the action they see without trying too hard to derive meaning from it. For example, a young woman was talking by herself while others sat and watched her, then a young man quickly walked over to her and she ran off. He then followed her off-stage. Walking to the middle of the stage, an older woman began talking to an older man.

Inference

Then, ask them to infer meaning from the characters' gestures and facial expressions by describing and even recreating the gestures and facial expressions they saw. For example, the young woman used wide, expansive, and dramatic arm movements. As the men with the lanterns moved towards her, she looked behind her, and her facial expression became panicked and afraid. The young man briskly walked to the center of the stage forcibly gesturing with his right hand. His face was mad and angry. Probe the students to draw conclusions from the evidence provided in the video. Run the clip again, asking students to attend closely to facial expressions and movement.

Invention

Now ask the students to invent the story. What might be the relationships between these characters? Are they family, friends, strangers, neighbors, etc.? What is the motivation behind their actions? Are they trying to convince, explain, entertain, plead, forgive, or another action?

Repeat the exercise with Clip #2 except rather than guiding the students through each section ask them to quietly watch the clip twice and take notes.

Clip #2 Hungarian production of *The Three Sisters*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saiH6HJH2Zw>

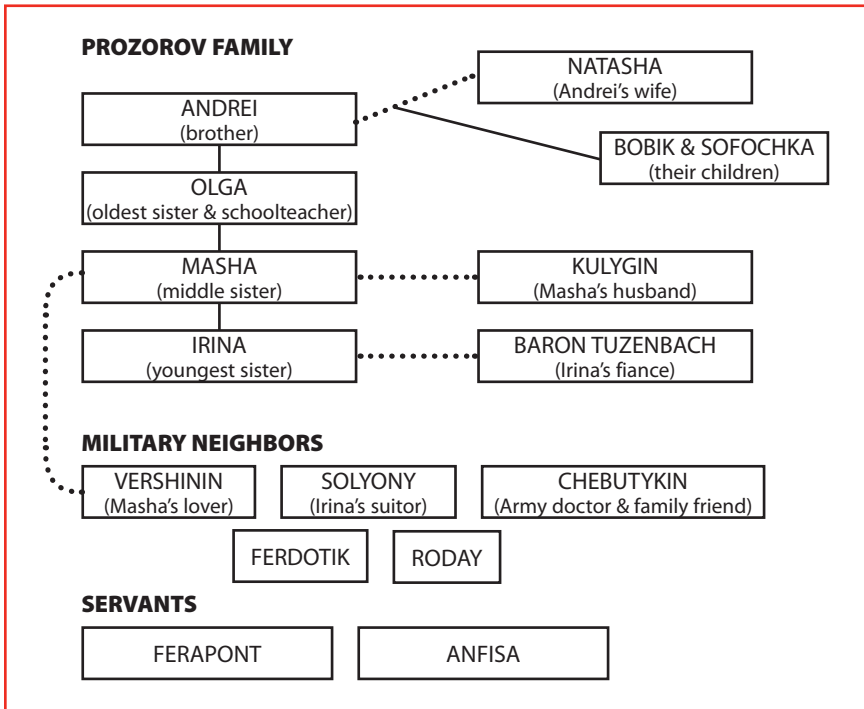
After watching the clips, have students discuss in small groups what they observed about each clip, noting similarities and dif-

ferences. Then, designate one person from each group to report to the whole class what they learned. Discuss why it is important for students to learn to visualize the action on stage while reading. What information do they anticipate being the easiest to visualize? The most difficult?

Character Relationship Map

The director's job is to tell the story of the play as clearly and effectively as possible; therefore, they must thoroughly understand who the characters are and how they relate to one another in order to stage and coach the actors. As your students read the plays, create a semantic map that gives a brief description of the characters and maps their biological, romantic, and/or occupational connections.

Example from *The Three Sisters*:



Discussion Questions

A good director knows how to ask and respond to questions. Invite students to develop their own list of discussion questions. Encourage them to include a variety of comprehension and evaluative questions. Here are some to consider:

The Sea Gull

1. What does it mean to be “Bohemian”? (p. 95)

2. What is the significance of the lotto game?
3. Why does Treplev attempt to shoot himself?
4. In what ways is the play a comedy? In what ways is it a tragedy?
5. What does Arkadina mean when she says to Trigorin, “. . .your characters are like living people.” (p.135)? How does this contrast the characters in Treplev's plays?

6. Why does Nina sign her letters to Treplev as “the sea gull”?
7. Plays generally have a main character, or protagonist. Who would you say is the protagonist of this play and why?
8. Is there an antagonist? If so, who would it be?
9. When analyzing the plot structure, what would you say is the turning point or climax in the play and why?
10. Would you consider any of these characters innocent victims or do you think they got what they deserved? How might different choices result in different outcomes?

The Three Sisters

1. Tuzenbach says, “The time has come, something tremendous is hanging over our heads, a powerful, invigorating storm is gathering; it is coming, it’s already near, and will blow away indolence, the indifference, the prejudice against work, the rotten boredom of our society” (p. 235). What might this “something” be?
2. What is the occasion for the gathering? Why does Masha decide to leave? (p. 237)
3. “Today there are no torture chambers, no executions, no invasions, and yet, how much suffering” (p. 243). What kind of suffering is Tuzenbach referring to? Is this type of suffering going on in America today?
4. In what ways are the Prozorovs different from the local people of the town?
5. Who is Bobik? How has his presence impacted the Prozorov family?
6. How does Natasha’s personality change from act to act? Why do the sisters allow Natasha to take over their home?
7. Vershinin states, “Happiness is something we never have, but only long for” (p. 268). Either agree or disagree with this proposition and give real-life examples which support your position. Identify the main source of unhappiness for each of the main characters: Olga, Masha, Irina, Vershinin, and Andrei.

8. Throughout the play, Chekhov uses irony to comment on the contradictory nature of the characters and to illustrate the paradox between their actual and the ideal worlds. Identify ironic moments in the play.
9. Analyze the symbolism behind Natasha lighting and extinguishing the candles, the town fires, and Andrei pushing the baby carriage.
10. Why does Irina decide to marry the Baron?
11. Why don’t the sisters ever go to Moscow?

The Cherry Orchard

1. What is suggested by the start of *The Cherry Orchard* occurring at dawn with cherry trees blossoming in cold weather? Why does the first act occur in a nursery? What is the significance of the trains arriving or departing?
2. At the beginning of each act, how does the time, season, and location set a particular tone that complements or contrasts the action of the story or psychological state of the characters?
3. Who are Lopakhin and Dunyasha waiting for? Why did Anya go to Paris with Charlotta to retrieve her mother? How long has Lyubov been away? Why did she leave?
4. Chekhov considered *The Cherry Orchard* a comedy. Identify farcical moments throughout the play. How do these bits of action help to heighten the more serious moments?
5. Does the servant class perceive the cherry orchard differently from its owners?
6. Lopakhin says to Lyubov, “All I want is that you should trust me as you used to...” (p. 331). Should Lyubov trust Lopakhin? Why or why not?
7. Why does Lyubov not agree to Lopakhin’s plan for the cherry orchard?

8. Firs says, "Forgotten. Nobody remembers..." (p. 334). What has literally and figuratively been forgotten?
9. Many of the most important and traumatic events in the play either happen before the play's action begins or off-stage. Why would Chekhov stage some of the most dramatic events this way? What effect does this have on the play?
10. What do you feel about Lyubov, considering the way she acts or is treated in the play? Is she likeable or not? Explain why.
11. Is the Ranevsky family doomed to lose the cherry orchard? What does Trofimov suggest are the historical causes behind the loss? (p. 360)
12. What is the meaning of Gayev's constant use of expressions used in the game of billiards e.g. "cue ball into the center" (p. 385)? Why is he always eating candy?

Group Sculptures

A director must also visually tell the story. Before beginning rehearsals, a director typically blocks the show by determining where and how the actors will move on stage and what visual images they will leave in the audience's mind. Divide students into groups of 4-5 students. Pass out one quote from key dramatic moments in the plays to each group.

Examples:

The Three Sisters Act III, p. 286
CHEBUTYKIN [drops the clock, which smashes]: Smashed to smithereens!

The Three Sisters Act IV, p. 317
OLGA [embracing both her sisters]: The music plays so gaily, so valiantly, one wants to live!

The Cherry Orchard Act III, p. 377
LOPAKHIN: I bought it.

Each group should create three frozen pictures with their bodies that illustrate the before, during, and after actions connected to their quote. Then, each group shares their

images as the class interprets them. This is less about playing charades (although the students should read their quotes afterward) and more about prompting the students to make meaning from visual pictures and begin to see how the cliché "actions speak louder than words" applies to this exercise and also to Chekhov's plays.

II. THINKING LIKE AN ACTOR: EXPLORING TEXT & SUBTEXT

In the "Afterword," Bartlett references Peter Brook's observation of Chekhov's ability to orchestrate "theatrical poetry" by employing "the right word at the right moment" (p. 401). "Living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" is Stanislavski's definition of acting. Finding the character's psychological motivation is the foundational work of any actor preparing for a role. This is especially true of Chekhov's characters who have strong, sincere needs and desires.

Thought-Tracking

Have students perform selected scenes from the plays. At any point in the scene, call "Pause" so students will stop the action. Then, place your hand above the head of one of the characters and tell the rest of the class to imagine your hand is a thought bubble like in a comic strip. Ask them to speak out loud what the character is thinking at that particular moment.

Text vs. Subtext

Do characters always say what they feel? Subtext is the meaning underneath the actual text or words the characters are speaking. Chekhov's vision of reality as a playwright sought to present life from a scientific, objective point of view or what he referred to as "life as it is." He avoided didactic and contrived writing by minimizing the temptation to show "life as it ought to be." He wrote in a way that trusted the actor's ability to fill in the subtext of the characters.

Give two students an activity, a situation, and a topic of conversation. They must stick solely to the topic of conversation. Example: A couple is packing a suitcase. He is going off

to war. They discuss only the weather. Ask students to suggest other situations. After pairs have tried out at least one conversation, discuss what they discovered about the relationship between text and subtext.

Alternatively, choose a scene from the play. Have the students write out the subtext for a particular character. Here are some suggested scenes from *The Three Sisters*:

- p. 244-245 starting with Andrei's entrance and ending with Irina's line "Bravo, bravo! Bis! Andryusha is in love!"
- p. 252-253 starting with Natasha's entrance and ending with Fedotik and Roday's entrance.
- p. 295 Andrei's monologue about Natasha.
- p. 307-308 starting with Irina and Tuzenbach's entrance and ending with Tuzenbach's exit.

Character Objective Graph

Ask students to choose a character from one of Chekhov's plays to analyze as they read the play. They can consider the character's primary objective by asking the following questions: What does the character want most of all? What obstacles prevent them from getting what they want? How is this objective different or in opposition to the other characters' objectives in the play? How might opposing objectives create dramatic tension and conflict? In what ways is the character's objective met or not met? Have the students

create a visual graph to mark the character's journey toward reaching his/her objective.

Silence Improvisation

Chekhov said, "Silence accompanies the most significant expressions of happiness and unhappiness: those in love understand one another best when silent, while the most heated and impassioned speech at a graveside touches only outsiders, but seems cold and inconsequential to the widow and children of the deceased." (<http://www.readcentral.com/author/Anton-Chekhov/quotes>) Working in pairs, students are given a scenario (who, what, where). The tension is so strong between the two characters that they are unable to speak. They must communicate the "who, what, and where" of the scene in silence, using no dialogue. Examples: two siblings are waiting in the emergency room to hear the status of their younger sibling who was in a car accident; a teacher keeps a student after class for cheating on a test; a parent and child are cooking dinner after the parent reveals that they are getting a divorce. Encourage students to look and really see one another. Have pairs share their improvisations with the class and evaluate how effectively they were able to communicate through the silence. Ask students to identify key moments of silence in Chekhov's plays. Some examples are on the following pages: 242, 261, 341, 353, 377. Discuss: How does Chekhov use pauses for characterization? What effect does silence have dramatically?

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

After reading the plays, students are ready to make connections and engage in activities which deepen their understanding of Chekhov's artistry and themes.

I. MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PLAYS

If students read more than one of Chekhov's plays, the following prompts and questions can lead to whole class discussion or topics for essay writing.

1. The three plays focused on in this guide tell the story of the downfall of aristocratic families. Compare and contrast the main sets of characters, in terms of personality, speech and language, actions, and morality.
2. What do Chekhov's plays say about the roles of women during his time? Are there any noticeable generational patterns between the women of his plays? What roles were available for men? How are the roles of women and men

in the plays similar or different from current conceptions of gender roles?

3. What love relationships are developed in the plays and how do they each end? Why does Trofimov say that he is not interested in love? Why is love often a target of criticism in the plays? Why is love perceived as a problem? (For example, look at p. 367-370.) What factors influence how love is given and received?
4. What does the idea of work offer Chekhov's characters? How is work measured and valued? (p. 234, 355) How is Chekhov's view of work similar or different from modern-day American viewpoints?
5. How are the motifs of age and memory treated by Chekhov? How are men like Ferapont and Firs similar?
6. At the end of *The Cherry Orchard*, what do the contrasting actions between the younger (Anya/Trofimov) and older (Lyubov/Gayev) couples say about generational attitudes towards societal shifts?
7. Vershinin and Tuzenbach express two contrasting philosophies about the future. Describe how their viewpoints differ. Which one most closely aligns with students' belief systems? Do students look to the future with optimism or pessimism? Why?
8. Revisit the endings of all three plays. Notice how all end with a death. Why does Treplev commit suicide? Is Tuzenbach's death a blessing or a curse for Irina? Why is Firs left behind to die alone? What do the final stage directions mean? Is Firs' death sad or peaceful? What feelings do the students have about the endings? How might they react if they were audience members seeing a live production of these plays?
9. In what ways do the physical landscapes of the plays reflect or contrast the inner psychological and/or emotional life of the characters? For example, why does *The Sea Gull* occur near a lake?

II. CREATIVE WRITING PROJECTS

Trading Places Short Story or Play

In Act II of *The Sea Gull*, Nina says to Trigorin, "And I should like to be in your shoes... To find out how it feels to be a famous, gifted writer. What does it feel like to be famous? How does it affect you?" (p. 119). Many of Chekhov's characters desire to be someone else. Discuss with the students if they have known anyone who wanted to trade places with another person. Why? What do they assume about the other's person's life? What would happen if they could trade? Would they be different? After discussing these personal experiences with students ask them to write a short story or play about a character who trades places with someone else.

Thinking like a Playwright

Have students read and/or listen to Chekhov's short story "Misery" about a sledge driver dealing with the grief of losing his son and having no one to talk to about his misery except for his mare.

Audio recording by Kenneth Branagh:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFLhL1BJrrM&list=PL92A3C135220A7135&index=6>

Link to written text: <http://classicit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/achekhov/bl-achek-misery.htm>

Discuss with the students how the story's plot, characters, and/or themes are similar to or different from ones in Chekhov's plays. If the students were asked to adapt this story into a short play that speaks to a 21st century audience, what essential elements of the play would they preserve to stay true to Chekhov's original intentions? How important is the protagonist's occupation to the story? How important is it that in the end the only person the protagonist can open up to is an animal? What details might they consider changing to make it more appealing to a contemporary audience? For example, what if Iona was a taxi driver with a calico cat named Moxie? For a more extensive project, students might adapt the story into dramatic form and perform it for other classes.

III. PERFORMANCE-BASED PROJECTS

Moscow Monologue

Discuss with students the significance of “going to Moscow.” How might “Moscow” be a metaphor to explain a larger concept? Do any of the characters or relationships in the plays remind them of someone they know? How and why? Ask students to write and perform a monologue of a person who longs to be somewhere else.

What is Success? Ted Talk

TED Talks <http://www.ted.com/talks> have become a popular way for big thinkers to share their ideas with the masses. Revisit Trigorin's monologue about success (p. 122). Have students create a “TED Talk” (a 3-5 minute monologue) defining what success looks like to them. Students can share their monologues in small groups.

Comedy vs. Tragedy Debate

Begin by asking students to brainstorm characteristics of comedy and tragedy. Then, discuss whether or not they think the different plays are a comedy, a tragedy, or some other category. What would they call this new category? Encourage them to support their claims with details from the script. Students form debate teams, and the teacher acts as the judge, probing the students to articulate a sound argument and support it with evidence. Tell the students to provide “video” evidence, which could be in the form of a live or pre-recorded performance of scenes or moments from the plays they discuss.

Chekhov 101 Sketch Comedy

Some say parody is the highest form of flattery. Students should be familiar with parody and sketch comedy already, but if they are not, then show this video of a parody of Chekhov <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQHovMQ8ZII&feature=related>

Students can work in groups to write and perform their own Chekhov sketch or parody.

Chekhov Trailer

The purpose of a trailer is to capture the feeling and mood of the play and entice people to come see the show. For this project, ask students in groups to create a trailer for one of Chekhov's plays. Students can view an example of a trailer from the Lyceum Theatre's production of *The Cherry Orchard*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBuFkjT1HC4&feature=related>

IV. MULTIMEDIA-INSPIRED PROJECTS

Real Life Comic Strips

Divide the class into groups and have them storyboard the events of the play. This can be quick stick figure drawings that outline the essential action and moments in the story. Depending on the size of the group and time limitations, consider giving each group a specific act or scene rather than the entire play. Tell them to pay close attention to the visual composition of the images and facial expressions. Then, the students should re-create the images with their bodies and take photos of each image. To complete the project, they can select a template, sequence their images, and add captions. The images might then be presented on presentation software such as PowerPoint or Comic Life (<http://plasq.com/products/comiclife2/>—this is a relatively inexpensive, student-friendly software).

Character Collage

Using a piece of poster board, create a visual collage from recycled magazines or images found on the Internet for one of the characters. Include at least the following:

- Character's External Life: name; clothing that represents the character's personal style; objects that are important to the character; animals that evoke similar movements as the character; occupation; family.
- Character's Internal Life: colors that suggest the character's personality or mood; images and words that represent the character's dreams; images and words that represent the character's fears; abstractions

(i.e. modes of transportation, toys, music, art or other abstract, symbolic items that represent the character).

Chekhov Playlist

Visit this website to see how Ben Greenman created a playlist for some of Chekhov's short stories: <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/13/living-with-music-a-playlist-by-ben-greenman-2/?hp> Ask students to create a playlist for one of Chekhov's plays. Have them choose songs that support or comment on the action, characters, or themes of the plays. Ask them to state the reasons for their choices as they present their playlists in small groups.

Celebrity Chekhov

"Celebrities with Character" <http://celebritieswithcharacter.blogspot.com/> is a blog site created by Ben Greenman inspired by his book *Celebrity Chekhov* which "reimagines the short stories of Anton Chekhov with modern celebrities in the place of the original characters." The purpose of the site is "to allow readers to interact directly with their favorite celebrities in an attempt to see how modern celebrity is constructed and/or deconstructed." Have students create and send submissions or design a similarly inspired blog site focused on the characters in Chekhov's plays.

Thinking like a Designer

Ask students to choose a scene from one of the plays and take the role of the stage designer, describing the costumes, set, and/or lighting. Before beginning, encourage students to seek inspiration from other famous productions by researching production photos and reviews. Encourage them to pay attention to the visual, aural, and spatial elements. What colors, textures, shapes, and lines are used? How do the costumes reflect the differing backgrounds, activities and opinions of the characters? Are the designs naturalistic (exactly as one might find in them in real life), suggestive (gives the audience just enough to activate their imaginations into filling in the blanks) or abstract (something one is not likely to find in real life

and is open to multiple interpretations)? How might the set & lighting designs reflect the themes present in the play? Where is the audience in relationship to the actors? Are they sitting only on one side, three sides or all around?

Here is a list of film versions of Chekhov's plays. Some clips are available on YouTube.

The Sea Gull

Dir. Sidney Lumet. Warner Brothers/Seven Arts: 1968.

Dir. Yuli Karasik. U.S.S.R: 1970.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCNiXqF5uEo> (in Russian with English subtitles)

Dir. Michael Lindsay-Hogg. BBC: 1974.

Dir. John J. Desmond. Williamston Theatre Festival: 1975.

The Three Sisters

Dir. Paul Bogart. Commonwealth United Entertainment: 1966.

Dir. Cedric Messina. BBC: 1970.

Dirs. Laurence Olivier and John Sichel. Lion International Films: 1970.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saiH6HJH2Zw>

The Cherry Orchard

Dir. Michael Elliot. BBC: 1962

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeFMWSbincc>

Dir. Richard Eyre. BBC: 1981.

<http://www.imdb.com/video/screenplay/vi1931936537/>

<http://www.imdb.com/video/screenplay/vi489030425/>

Dir. Mihalis Kakogiannis. Melanda Film Productions: 1999.

V. COMPARING TEXTS

Comparing *The Sea Gull* & Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

If students are reading *The Sea Gull*, consider having them read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a comparative text. Chekhov expressed his admiration of Shakespeare by including several direct and indirect references in his first play, *The Sea Gull*. Encourage students to closely examine how the character relationships within the two plays mirror each other—the mother/son relationship between

Treplev and Arkadina and Hamlet and Gertrude. What other traces of *Hamlet* occur in *The Sea Gull*? What plot elements, such as dueling or a play-within-a-play, are in both plays? How is Nina similar to or different from Ophelia?

Comparing Chekhov & Tolstoy

Have students read the section of Leo Tolstoy's epilogue of *War and Peace* that references the breaking string. What is the meaning of this metaphor? How does it relate to the story Chekhov tells in *The Cherry Orchard*?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

LISE KLOEPEL is an Assistant Professor of Drama at the University of North Carolina Asheville. In addition to coordinating the K-12 Theater Arts Licensure Program, she teaches courses in acting, theater education,

and community cultural development. She received her MFA in Theater for Youth from Arizona State University and is K-12 Theater Arts licensed in the state of North Carolina.

ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

JEANNE M. McGLINN, Professor in the Department of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches Children's and Adolescent Literature and directs the field experiences of 9-12 English licensure candidates. She serves on various editorial and professional boards, and is the chair elect of the Language Experience Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. She has written extensively in the area of adolescent literature, including a critical book on the historical fiction of adolescent writer Ann Rinaldi for Scarecrow Press Young Adult Writers series.

JAMES E. McGLINN, Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, has taught high school English and developmental reading at all levels, elementary through adult. His research interests focus on motivating and increasing the reading achievement of students in high school and college. He is the author and editor of numerous Signet Classics Teachers' Guides.

NOTES

NOTES

FREE TEACHER'S GUIDES



A full list of *Teacher's Guides* and *Teacher's Guides for the Signet Classic Shakespeare Series* is available on Penguin's website at: us.penguin.com/tguides

TEACHER'S GUIDES

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Animal Farm
Anthem
■ Atlas Shrugged
■ The Awakening
Beowulf
The Call of the Wild
Cannery Row
■ Chekhov's Major Plays
City of God
The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories
The Crucible
Dear Zoe
Death of a Salesman
Doctor Faustus
A Doll's House
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
Dubliners

Ethan Frome
The Fountainhead
Frankenstein
The Grapes of Wrath
Great Expectations
■ Heart of Darkness
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
Jane Eyre
A Journey to the Center of the Earth
The Jungle
The Kite Runner
Listening is an Act of Love
Looking Backward
Lysistrata
Main Street
The Mousetrap and Other Plays
My Ántonia

A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
Nectar in a Sieve
1984
The Odyssey
Of Mice and Men
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
The Pearl
Persuasion
■ The Phantom of the Opera
■ Plays of Sophocles
■ Poems by Robert Frost
Pride and Prejudice
The Prince and the Pauper
Pygmalion
Ragged Dick
A Raisin in the Sun
The Red Pony

The Scarlet Letter
The Scarlet Pimpernel
The Secret Life of Bees
Silas Marner
Sophocles: The Complete Plays
A Streetcar Named Desire
A Tale of Two Cities
A Thousand Splendid Suns
The Time Machine
Treasure Island
Two Years Before the Mast
Up from Slavery
The Wal-Mart Effect
Washington Square
We the Living
The Women of Brewster Place
Wuthering Heights

TEACHER'S GUIDES FOR THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE SERIES

Antony and Cleopatra
As You Like It
Hamlet
Henry IV Part I
Henry V

Julius Caesar
King Lear
Macbeth
Measure for Measure

A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Merchant of Venice
Much Ado About Nothing
Othello

Richard III
Romeo and Juliet
The Taming of the Shrew
The Tempest
Twelfth Night



PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC.
Academic Marketing Department
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014-3657

Visit

www.signetclassics.com

to browse all Signet Classics
paperback editions and

<http://us.penguin.com/scessay>

for information about the Annual

Signet Classics Scholarship Essay Contest

Signet Classics