

The Proposal – Revision Notes

Summary of the Play

- **Writer:** Anton Chekhov (Russian playwright).
- **Characters:**
 - Chubukov → Landowner, Natalia's father.
 - Natalia Stepanovna → 25-year-old daughter, strong-headed, quarrelsome.
 - Lomov → Neighbour, wealthy landowner, hypochondriac, comes to propose to Natalia.

Plot:

- Lomov visits Chubukov's house to ask for Natalia's hand in marriage.
 - Instead of proposing directly, they start arguing:
 - First about a piece of land (*Oxen Meadows*).
 - Then about whose dogs are better (*Guess vs. Squeezer*).
 - Both Natalia and Lomov quarrel heatedly.
 - Chubukov joins in, making the fight worse.
 - Lomov, who already suffers from nervousness and a weak heart, faints.
 - Finally, the marriage proposal is hurriedly agreed upon—but the couple resumes quarrelling even after engagement.
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Themes

- Marriage as a social contract (economic security over love).
 - Materialism and greed.
 - Comedy of manners → quarrels over petty issues.
 - Human folly & stubbornness.
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Characters

- Lomov → Nervous, hypochondriac, indecisive, landowner who wants to marry Natalia.

- Natalia → Young, strong-willed, argumentative, eager for marriage but quarrelsome.
 - Chubukov → Shrewd, money-minded father who pushes for marriage.
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☀ Message of the Play

- Human beings often quarrel over petty issues and forget the bigger picture.
 - Marriage in those days was based on wealth, land, and social position, not love.
 - Chekhov satirizes human greed, stubbornness, and foolishness.
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🗨 Literary Devices

- Satire → on materialistic marriages.
 - Irony → Proposal turns into quarrels instead of romance.
 - Humour → exaggerated quarrels, Lomov's health issues.
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? Short Questions & Answers

1. Who are the main characters of *The Proposal*?
👉 Chubukov, Natalia, and Lomov.
 2. Why did Lomov visit Chubukov's house?
👉 To propose marriage to Natalia.
 3. What were the quarrels about?
👉 First about *Oxen Meadows* (land), then about whose dog was superior.
 4. What is the significance of Oxen Meadows?
👉 A small piece of land symbolizing greed and quarrels over property.
 5. How does the play end?
👉 With Lomov and Natalia's engagement, but they continue fighting.
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☀ Long Q&A

Q1. How does Anton Chekhov use humour to highlight human weaknesses in *The Proposal*?

Answer: Chekhov creates humour through exaggerated quarrels between Lomov, Natalia, and Chubukov. Instead of love, their conversation is filled with arguments about land and dogs. Lomov's nervousness and health complaints add comedy. The ending, where they agree to marry but keep quarrelling, satirizes human folly, greed, and stubbornness.



Q2. What do we learn about the institution of marriage from *The Proposal*?

Answer: The play shows that in 19th-century Russian society, marriage was a practical arrangement rather than a romantic relationship. Families valued land, wealth, and social standing more than love or compatibility. Through satire, Chekhov criticizes this materialistic view of marriage.

Q3. Why is the play titled *The Proposal*?

Answer: The play revolves around Lomov's intention to propose marriage to Natalia. However, the actual proposal is constantly interrupted by quarrels. The irony is that instead of romance, the proposal turns into a battlefield of petty disputes, making the title humorous and satirical.

Value-Based Q&A

1. What lesson does the play teach us?
 Not to quarrel over trivial issues, to value relationships over property, and to avoid greed.
 2. Do you think Lomov and Natalia will live happily after marriage? Why/Why not?
 Probably not, as they constantly fight over small matters, showing lack of understanding.
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