

### About the Author

Anton Chekov was born on 29 January, 1860 in Southern Russia. He (1860-1904) was a famous writer. He is chiefly known for his short stories. He was a Russian physician, playwright and author who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short stories in history.

### Theme

'The Proposal' is a satirical play that exposes the drawbacks of a society and its concepts regarding the institution of marriage and relationships. The play exposes the tendency of wealthy families to seek ties with other wealthy families, to increase their estates by encouraging marriages that make good economic sense.

## Summary

When the play begins, we see that Lomov comes to meet Chubukov at his house. Chubukov who is a farmer welcomes Lomov. He asks him why he is wearing formal clothes and whether he is going to attend a function. Lomov replies that he is not going anywhere; he has come only to meet him. Lomov appears excited and perturbed. He calms himself down and begins to tell him the purpose of his visit. He tells him that he came to him many times in the past also for his help, but he did not help him. Before telling the purpose of his visit, Lomov is excited once again. Chubukov thinks that perhaps he has come to ask for a loan. He makes up his mind not to help him in any way.

Lomov once again begins to tell Chubukov about the purpose of his visit. But he once again becomes excited. He talks about himself in exaggerated terms. Chubukov asks him not to beat about the bush and to talk about his purpose of coming. Lomov gathers courage and tells him that he has come to ask for his daughter, Natalya's hand in marriage. On hearing this, Chubukov becomes very happy, he goes in to call Natalya. But before this, Lomov asks him whether Natalya would give her consent for this. Chubukov replies that she will readily accept a match like him.

Lomov is left alone in the room. His body is trembling with excitement. He thinks about his present life. He wants to settle the question of his marriage at once. He thinks that now he should not delay. He thinks about Natalya. She is a skilled house-keeper. She is educated and is not bad to look at. At this age, he should not expect a better girl than her. Now, he is thirty-five years old. Now, he should lead a regulated life. He is suffering from serious diseases like



## THE PROPOSAL

palpitation, excitement and insomnia. Because of these reasons, he should marry.

Just then, Natalya comes in. Her father has not told her that Lomov has come to meet her. He only told her that a customer had come. Even then she welcomes Lomov. Before Lomov can speak, she starts speaking. When she mentions his beautiful dress-jacket, he is again excited. Before he can talk about his marriage to her, he starts trembling. Natalya encourages him and he recovers. He says that he will tell her everything in brief. Even then he cannot talk in a straight-forward manner. He beats about the bush. He tells her that for the last many decades their families have had good relations. Their estates are also adjoining. His Oxen Meadows touch their birchwoods. Natalya right away protests against this. She says that the Oxen Meadows belong to her. They start quarrelling about the ownership of the Oxen Meadows. They shout loudly at each other. They do not seem to calm down in any way.

Chubukov comes in and finds them both quarrelling. He is greatly surprised. But when he finds that they are quarrelling about the ownership of the Oxen Meadows, he also becomes angry. Instead of calming them down, he also starts quarrelling along them. He claims to be the owner of the Meadows. He insults not only Lomov but also his entire family members. Lomov becomes more excited. He uses insulting words for Chubukov, Natalya and their family members. Lomov's palpitation increases and he becomes very perturbed. He goes out of the room. Chubukov mentions how the foolish Lomov dared to bring a proposal for Natalya's marriage. When Natalya hears this, she is deeply shocked. She almost faints. She starts weeping and asks her father to bring him back. Chubukov feels sad. He says that it is the biggest misfortune to be the father of a girl. He goes out to call Lomov.

Lomov again enters the room. Natalya thinks that she will not annoy him this time. She tries to please him. She says that the Meadows belong to him. She tries to change the topic, so that he could propose to her. But he is still not all right. He is feeling disturbed. He does not come to the point. Lomov starts praising the qualities of his dog Guess, which he has purchased for 125 roubles. But Natalya says that her dog Squeezer which she purchased for 85 roubles is much better than Lomov's dog Guess. Both of them praise the qualities of their dogs. Now, they start quarrelling on this topic. They again start shouting at each other. In the meantime, Chubukov comes in. Instead of putting an end to their quarrel, he also starts quarrelling. In this dispute, Lomov's condition deteriorates and he falls on the chair, unconscious. Both the father and the daughter think that he has died. Natalya starts lamenting that her chance of getting married has gone.

After sometime, Lomov comes to his senses. Chubukov tells Lomov that Natalya is willing for marriage. So, he should marry her. Natalya expresses her willingness as well. Chubukov does not want to lose even a moment and joins their hands. He asks them to kiss each other. But soon, they start quarrelling again. They start debating over the qualities of their respective dogs. Chubukov tries to calm them down. With this, the play comes to an end.

### ANSWERS TO NCERT QUESTIONS

#### THINKING ABOUT THE PLAY

1. What does Chubukov at first suspect that Lomov has come for? Is he sincere when he later says "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son"? Find reasons for your answer from the play.

**Ans.** At first, Chubukov suspected that Lomov had come to borrow money. He was not sincere when he told Lomov he had always loved him and that he was like his own son. He had decided that he would not give Lomov any money if he tried borrowing from him. If he truly meant what he said, then he would not have thought of not giving him money. He said so only because Lomov had come with the proposal to marry his daughter.



## THE PROPOSAL

2. **Chubukov says of Natalya: “...as if she won’t consent! She’s in love; egad, she’s like a lovesick cat...” Would you agree? Find reasons for your answer.**

**Ans.** Chubukov thinks that Lomov was a good marriage prospect for his daughter. He had been waiting for this proposal. When Lomov expressed his doubt regarding Natalya’s consent to the proposal, Chubukov immediately told him that she was in love with him. However, this was not true. Natalya did not seem to be in love with Lomov at any point in the play. It seemed like she was more attached to her land, meadows, and dog than to Lomov. In fact, the way they kept getting into arguments about trivial matters suggest that neither Lomov nor Natalya was in love with the other.

3. (i) **Find all the words and expressions in the play that the characters use to speak about each other, and the accusations and insults they hurl at each other. (For example, Lomov in the end calls Chubukov an intriguer; but earlier, Chubukov has himself called Lomov a “malicious, doublefaced intriguer.” Again, Lomov begins by describing Natalya as “an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated.”)**

(ii) **Then think of five adjectives or adjectival expressions of your own to describe each character in the play.**

**Ans.** Several words and expressions have been used by the characters to describe each other. Some of them are as follows:

**Chubukov:** grabber; intriguer; old rat; Jesuit

**Natalya:** a lovesick cat; an excellent housekeeper; not bad-looking, well-educated

**Lomov:** a good neighbour; a friend; an impudent; a pettifogger; a malicious, double-faced intriguer; rascal; blind hen; turnip-ghost; a villain; a scarecrow; a monster; the stuffed sausage; the wizen-faced frump; boy; fool

### THINKING ABOUT THE LANGUAGE

I. 1. **This play has been translated into English from the Russian original. Are there any expressions or ways of speaking that strike you more Russian than English? For example, would an adult man be addressed by an older man as *my darling* or *my treasure* in an English play?**

**Read through the play carefully, and find expressions that you think are not used in contemporary English, and contrast these with idiomatic modern English expressions that also occur in the play.**

**Ans. Expressions not used in contemporary English**

- (i) “my darling”, “my beauty”, “my precious”, “my angel”, “my beloved” (Here, an older man is addressing an adult man.)
- (ii) “... and so on ...” (Here, it is used after a sentence in order to complete it.)
- (iii) “... and all that sort of thing.” (not explaining what it is, just leaving it as it is)
- (iv) “... and all that.” (again leaving the sentence as it is)
- (v) “the scarecrow”, “the stuffed sausage”, “the wizen-faced frump” (In this way, they hurled insults at each other.)
- (vi) “And how may you be getting on?” (Here, Lomov is asking Chubukov about his well-being.)

#### Modern English expressions

- (i) “Madam”, “my heart”, “honoured Natalya Stepanovna” (used by Lomov for Natalya)



## THE PROPOSAL

- (ii) "Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch" (used by Lomov for Chubukov)
- (iii) "I beg your pardon..."
- (iv) "My dear fellow" (Chubukov addressing Lomov)
- (v) "malicious, double-faced intriguer", "fool" (Chubukov insulting Lomov)

2. Look up the following phrases in a dictionary to find out their meanings, and then use each in a sentence of your own.

- (i) You may take it that
- (ii) He seems to be coming around
- (iii) My foot's gone to sleep

- Ans. (i) You may take it that I am lying, but in fact it will help you in long run.  
(ii) He seems to be coming round after the trauma of his father's death.  
(iii) After the three hour long yoga session, my foot's gone to sleep.

II. You must have noticed that when we report someone's exact words, we have to make some changes in the sentence structure. In the following sentences, fill in the blanks to list the changes that have occurred in the above pairs of sentences. One has been done for you.

- (1) To report a question, we use the reporting verb asked (as in Sentence Set 1).
- (2) To report a statement, we use the reporting verb \_\_\_\_\_.
- (3) The adverb of place *here* changes to \_\_\_\_\_.
- (4) When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the \_\_\_\_\_ tense (as in Sentence Set 3).
- (5) If the verb in direct speech is in the present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to \_\_\_\_\_ tense. For example, \_\_\_\_\_ changes to *was getting*.
- (6) When the sentence in the direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverb \_\_\_\_\_ in the reporting clause (as in Sentence Set 1).
- (7) The pronouns, *I, me, our, and mine*, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change to third person pronouns, such as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ in reported speech.

- Ans. (1) To report a question, we use the reporting verb asked.  
(2) To report a statement, we use the reporting verb declared.  
(3) The adverb of place *here* changes to there.  
(4) When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the past tense.  
(5) If the verb in direct speech is in present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to past continuous tense. For example, am getting changes to *was getting*.  
(6) When the sentence in direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverb respectfully in the reporting clause.  
(7) The pronouns, *I, me, our, and mine*, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change to third person pronouns, such as he/she, him/her, their or his/hers in reported speech.



III. Here is an excerpt from an article from The Times of India dated 27 August, 2006. Rewrite it, changing the sentences in direct speech into reported speech. Leave the other sentences unchanged.

“Why do you want to know my age? If people know I am so old, I won’t get work!” laughs 90-year-old A. K. Hangal, one of the Hindi cinema’s most famous character actors. For his age, he is rather energetic. “What’s the secret?” we ask. “My intake of everything is in small quantities. And I walk a lot,” he replies. “I joined the industry when people retire. I was in my 40s. So I don’t miss being called a star. I am still respected and given work, when actors of my age are living in poverty and without work. I don’t have any complaints,” he says, adding, “but yes, I have always been underpaid.” Recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Hangal never hankered after money or materialistic gains. “No doubt I am content today, but money is important. I was a fool not to understand the value of money earlier,” he regrets.

**Ans.** 90-year-old A. K. Hangal, one of the Hindi cinema’s most famous character actors, laughingly asked why we wanted to know his age. If people knew he was old, he would not get work. For his age, he is rather energetic. We asked him what the secret was. He replied that his intake of everything was in small quantities and he walked a lot. He said that he had joined the industry when people retire. He had been in his 40s. So he did not miss being called a star. He was still respected and given work, when actors of his age were living in poverty and without work. He said that he did not have any complaints, adding that he had always been underpaid. Recipient of Padma Bhushan, Hangal never hankered after money or materialistic gains. He said that no doubt he was content at present, but money was important. He said regretfully that he was a fool not to understand the value of money before.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

### Extract-Based Questions

(5 Marks each)

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. It’s cold... I’m trembling all over, just as if I’d got an examination before me. The great thing is, I must have my mind made up. If I give myself time to think, to hesitate, to talk a lot, to look for an ideal, or for real love, then I’ll never get married.

(a) Why did Lomov not want to wait for real love? (1)

(i) Because he was scared he’d die soon

(ii) Because he liked Natalya

(iii) Because he wanted to inherit Oxen Meadows

(iv) Because he was anxious to get married

(b) What is the great thing that the speaker is talking about? (1)

(c) Why does Lomov want to marry Natalya? (2)

(d) Why is Lomov trembling? (1)

(i) Because he is about to buy Oxen Meadows back

(ii) Because he is there to lend their threshing machine

(iii) Because he is about to propose to Natalya

(iv) Because he is there to break his engagement off

**Ans.** (a) (iv) Because he was anxious to get married

(b) The great thing that the speaker is talking about is the making up of his mind.



## THE PROPOSAL

(c) Though Lomov was not in love with Natalya, he wanted to marry her because he was suffering due to a weak heart and sleep-sickness. He wanted a companion who could look after him.

(d) (iii) Because he is about to propose to Natalya

2. Last year we lent you our threshing-machine, although on that account we had to put off our own threshing till November, but you behave to us as if we were gypsies. Giving me my own land indeed! No, really, that's not at all neighbourly! In my opinion, it's even impudent, if you want to know.

(a) **What happened after that?** (1)

- (i) They left their home to travel.
- (ii) They left their farm overlooked.
- (iii) They lent their threshing machine.
- (iv) None of these

(b) **Which word from the extract means the same as 'not showing due respect'?** (1)

(c) **What happened after Natalya lent her threshing machine to Lomov last year?**(1)

- (i) She went bankrupt. (ii) She needed financial aid.
- (iii) She has to put off her threshing. (iv) She incurred a loss.

(d) **How did Natalya try to prove that they were at least good neighbours?** (2)

**Ans.** (a) (iii) They lent their threshing machine.

(b) 'Impudent' means the same as 'not showing due respect'.

(c) (iii) She has to put off her threshing.

(d) Natalya tried to prove that they were at least good neighbours by reminding Lomov of the favours they did him.

3. **LOMOV:** But you can see from the documents, honoured Natalya Stepanova. Oxen Meadows, its true were once the subject of dispute, but now everybody knows they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see my aunts grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for her. The peasants belonging to your father's grandfather had the free use of Meadows for forty years, and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own, when it happened that . . . .

**NATALYA:** No, it isn't at all like that! Both grandfather and great grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh - which means Oxen Meadows were ours. I don't see what there is to argue about, its simply silly.

(CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/4/3; 2022-23)

(a) **The subject of dispute was regarding:** (1)

- (i) free use of Meadows (ii) making of bricks
- (iii) peasants using Meadows (iv) ownership of Meadows

(b) **Find the word from the extract which means 'continuance'.** (1)

- (i) Dispute (ii) Perpetuity
- (iii) Belonging (iv) Reckoned

(c) **Lomov's aunt's grandmother gave Oxen Meadows to Natalya's father's grandfather in lieu of \_\_\_\_\_.** (1)



## THE PROPOSAL

(c) Though Lomov was not in love with Natalya, he wanted to marry her because he was suffering due to a weak heart and sleep-sickness. He wanted a companion who could look after him.

(d) (iii) Because he is about to propose to Natalya

2. Last year we lent you our threshing-machine, although on that account we had to put off our own threshing till November, but you behave to us as if we were gypsies. Giving me my own land indeed! No, really, that's not at all neighbourly! In my opinion, it's even impudent, if you want to know.

(a) **What happened after that?** (1)

- (i) They left their home to travel.
- (ii) They left their farm overlooked.
- (iii) They lent their threshing machine.
- (iv) None of these

(b) **Which word from the extract means the same as 'not showing due respect'?** (1)

(c) **What happened after Natalya lent her threshing machine to Lomov last year?** (1)

- (i) She went bankrupt. (ii) She needed financial aid.
- (iii) She has to put off her threshing. (iv) She incurred a loss.

(d) **How did Natalya try to prove that they were at least good neighbours?** (2)

- Ans.** (a) (iii) They lent their threshing machine.  
 (b) 'Impudent' means the same as 'not showing due respect'.  
 (c) (iii) She has to put off her threshing.  
 (d) Natalya tried to prove that they were at least good neighbours by reminding Lomov of the favours they did him.

3. **LOMOV:** But you can see from the documents, honoured Natalya Stepanova. Oxen Meadows, its true were once the subject of dispute, but now everybody knows they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see my aunts grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for her. The peasants belonging to your father's grandfather had the free use of Meadows for forty years, and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own, when it happened that . . . . .

**NATALYA:** No, it isn't at all like that! Both grandfather and great grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh - which means Oxen Meadows were ours. I don't see what there is to argue about, its simply silly.

(CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/4/3; 2022-23)

(a) **The subject of dispute was regarding:** (1)

- (i) free use of Meadows (ii) making of bricks
- (iii) peasants using Meadows (iv) ownership of Meadows

(b) **Find the word from the extract which means 'continuance'.** (1)

- (i) Dispute (ii) Perpetuity
- (iii) Belonging (iv) Reckoned

(c) **Lomov's aunt's grandmother gave Oxen Meadows to Natalya's father's grandfather in lieu of \_\_\_\_\_.** (1)



## THE PROPOSAL

**NATALYA:** Worse!

**CHUBUKOV:** Well, that's a way to start your family bliss! Have some champagne!

**LOMOV:** He's better!

**NATALYA:** Worse! Worse! Worse!

**CHUBUKOV:** (*trying to shout her down*) Champagne! Champagne!

(CBSE Question Bank)

- (a) How would you describe Chubukov's feeling, based on the given extract? (2)
- (b) Based on the extract, Lomov and Natalya's closing lines can best be seen as: (1)
- (i) a humourous and ironic take on typical marriage vows.
  - (ii) a reflection of their affections for Guess and Squeezer.
  - (iii) a sign of the prospective instability in their marital bliss.
  - (iv) the writer's statement that disagreement is part of marriage.
- (c) Choose the option that correctly uses the idioms to fill in the blanks of the paragraph below. (1)

In a team, it is important to (1) \_\_\_\_\_. Otherwise, you would become (2) \_\_\_\_\_, and incur the displeasure of the others. When that happens, you might feel (3) \_\_\_\_\_. However, for the others, not having to carry you along would be a (4) \_\_\_\_\_.

- (i) (1) pull your weight, (2) dead weight, (3) the weight of the world on your shoulders, (4) weight off the shoulders
  - (ii) (1) weight yourself, (2) the weight of the world on your shoulder, (3) like dead weight, (4) weight off their shoulders
  - (iii) (1) throw weight around, (2) worth your weight in gold, (3) weight off your shoulders, (4) dead weight
  - (iv) (1) lend weight to someone, (2) heavy weight, (3) like pulling your weight, (4) weight off their shoulders
- (d) Complete the given statement. (1)

The liberal use of exclamatory marks in the given extract indicate that the characters are expressing \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ans.** (a) Chubukov is feeling relieved and jubilant. He showers his affection on Lomov and sheds a tear out of happiness, and thinks that Lomov would make a good match for his daughter.
- (b) (i) a humourous and ironic take on typical marriage vows.
- (c) (i) (1) pull your weight, (2) dead weight, (3) the weight of the world on your shoulders, (4) weight off the shoulders
- (d) strong feelings with a raised voice

### Short Answer Questions

(40-50 words: 3 Marks each)

#### 1. Lomov was a quarrelsome person. Justify.

- Ans.** Lomov was a quarrelsome person. He came to Chubukov's house to propose Natalya. But he started arguing about the meadows and insisted that those meadows belonged to him. Later, he kept on proving that his dog Guess is better than Squeezer – the dog



## THE PROPOSAL

of Chubukov's. He did not care for his health or his proposal, but kept on arguing with Natalya. It proves that he was a quarrelsome person.

**2. Natalya was not Lomov's real love. But still, he wanted to marry her. Give two reasons for his decision.**

**Ans.** Although Lomov was not in love with Natalya, he wanted to marry her because he was suffering with a weak heart and sleep-sickness. He wanted a companion who could look after him. He was also getting old, so he thought waiting for real love or an ideal was not a good decision.

**3. What did Natalya say about Guess?**

**Ans.** Natalya said that Squeezer was superior to Guess —Lomov's dog. Lomov said that his dog Guess was better than Squeezer. Natalya believed that Guess had become old and ought to be shot. She also claimed that Squeezer was a hundred times better than Guess.

**4. Describe Lomov's first meeting with Natalya.**

**Ans.** Lomov goes to his neighbour Chubukov's house to ask for the hand of his daughter, Natalya. He is in a fix how to make the marriage proposal. He talks in a roundabout manner. He makes a mention of his Meadows which touch their birchwoods. At this, a quarrel ensues between them over the ownership rights of the Meadows.

**5. What kind of a man is Lomov?**

**Ans.** Lomov is a man of thirty-five years old. He is really a very funny and comical character. He comes to make a proposal to Natalya. But he is so nervous and excited that he continues quarrelling with the girl over trifles, and fails to make the proposal. He has no confidence and no self-control. He suffers from the fits of epilepsy.

**6. Why does the proposal remain unmade during Lomov's first visit?**

**Ans.** The proposal remains unmade during Lomov's first visit because Lomov is very much nervous and excited. He beats about the bush. When Natalya comes, Lomov gets into a quarrel with her over a piece of land. He gets very much excited and leaves the room, cursing and threatening the old man and his daughter, Natalya. He forgets all about the proposal.

**7. How did Chubukov react when Lomov asked for the hand of his daughter in marriage?**

*(CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/6/1; 2022-23)*

**Ans.** Chubukov was first suspicious and thought that Lomov had come to ask for some money. But when he came to know the real reason he was overwhelmed with joy because he believed Lomov would be a profitable match for his daughter. So he embraced and kissed Lomov.

**8. "The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always had the most friendly, and I might almost say the most affectionate, regard for each other." How would you evaluate Lomov and Chubukov's relationship as neighbours?**

*(Competency-based Question)  
(CBSE Question Bank)*

**Ans.** Lomov and Chubukov are neighbours. They had good relations in the past. Both the families had respect and affection for each other. But they fight over the ownership of a piece of land and their dogs. This is not the quality of good neighbours.

**9. Do you think Chubukov is a good father? Justify your opinion based on your reading of the text.**

*(CBSE Question Bank)*

**Ans.** Chubukov cannot be described as being a 'good father'. He is projected as a greedy man when it comes to his property, and the merging of properties if his daughter marries



## THE PROPOSAL

Lomov. He does not seem particularly fond of his daughter, as he considered her to be a burden. When the problems got resolved and the two decide to get married, Chubukov says, "I'll give you my blessings and so on. Only leave me in peace!" as he places her hand into Lomov's hands. His disfavour for his daughter is further evident from his words, "What a weight off my shoulders, uuf!"

**10. Read the statements given below:**

**Statement 1 - 'Lomov is looking to marry.'**

**Statement 2 - 'Lomov is looking to marry Natalya.'**

**Bring out the difference between the two statements and explain what it tells you about Lomov.**  
*(CBSE Question Bank)*

**Ans.** The two statements given above infer Lomov's willingness to get married and particularly to Natalya. Initially, he wanted to get married but somewhere in his mind, there was a little hitch because he had reached a critical age of 35. He wanted to marry someone who could look after him. He knew Natalya, his neighbour, was good looking and a good housekeeper.

**11. What justification did Lomov give to Natalya and Chubukov to prove that he is the rightful owner of Meadows?**

**Ans.** Lomov told Natalya and Chubukov that his aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of Chubukov's grandfather's peasants. So, he is the rightful owner of the Oxen Meadows.

**12. How can you say that Natalya was not convinced that Oxen Meadows were owned by Lomov?**

**Ans.** Natalya was not convinced as she said that they have owned Oxen Meadows for nearly 300 years. It was surprising and ridiculous if someone else claimed it to be his own. Chubukov also joined the quarrel.

**13. Natalya calls Lomov a 'landgrabber'. Justify the statement.**

**Ans.** Lomov and Natalya argue over the ownership of Oxen Meadows. Natalya calls him a 'landgrabber' as he claims his ownership over it. Lomov says that he is not a 'landgrabber' as he has never done so and would never let anyone do so.

**14. What is the ailment that Lomov is suffering from?**

**Ans.** Lomov suffers from palpitations. He is easily excitable, and his left eyebrow twitches. When he goes off to sleep, his left side gives a pull which he can feel in his shoulder and head. This goes on several times. In the course of their argument, he experiences a discomfort in his heart, and feels that his left foot has gone numb. And in the course of time, at Chubukov's house, he crumbles and falls into an arm chair.

**15. Why is Natalya so anxious to marry Lomov?**

**Ans.** Natalya is an average looking, middle-aged woman. She knows that only a fool like Lomov can marry her. So, the moment she comes to know about Lomov's marriage proposal, she gets anxious to marry him.

**16. To what end does the playwright employ Lomov's palpitations in the play?**

*(CBSE Question Bank)*

**Ans.** Natalya and her father ridicule him for his palpitations every now and then. When Mr Chubukov insults Lomov and his family, he turns belligerent and his palpitation increases and pretends to retire from the situation.



**17. How can we say that Chubukov was continuously trying to reconcile the differences between Natalya and Lomov?**

**Ans.** We can see to some extent that Chubukov was actually trying to reconcile the differences between Natalya and Lomov. For example, he tells Natalya that Lomov had come to propose to her for marriage. He laments that it is a great burden to be a father of a grown-up daughter.

**18. Which two issues about himself convinced Lomov of his decision to get married?**

*(CBSE Sample Paper, 2022; Term 2)*

**Ans.** Lomov wants to get married because he is already thirty-five and he is not healthy and fit enough. Apart from that, he wants to be settled and he suffers from anxiety and palpitations. According to him, Natalya would be a suitable wife for him who will take care of him.

### **Long Answer Questions**

**(100-120 words: 6 Marks each)**

**1. Neighbours must have a cordial relationship which Lomov and Natalya do not have. Describe the first fight between them.**

**Ans.** Neighbours must have a cordial relationship which Lomov and Natalya do not have. Although he had come there to propose Natalya, he started fighting with her over a small piece of land. This land adjoined her land and touched her birchwoods. Natalya told Lomov that Oxen Meadows belonged to her, but Lomov claimed that the Oxen Meadows were his. Lomov tried to convince Natalya by telling her that his aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for temporary and free use to Chubukov's grandfather's peasants. They did not demand money for it for a long time, so the Chubukov's misunderstood that the Meadows belonged to them. While Chubukov insisted that yelling could not prove anything because everyone knows that Meadows belong to Chubukov, since last three hundred years. Both threatened each other.

**2. Write a brief character sketch of Lomov.**

**Ans.** Lomov is a man who is of marriageable age. He also suffers from a weak heart and sleeplessness. So, he is desperate to settle down in life, and lead a quiet and regular life. Despite his ailments, Lomov was a rich and prosperous farmer. This makes Chubukov secretly wish him to marry his daughter, Natalya. As for Lomov, he did not love her, though he was desperate to have a life partner, and so decided to marry Natalya. Lomov was however hesitant to ask for her hand from Chubukov. That made him beat around the bush, argue with Natalya, and leave without proposing. Thus, we can find that Lomov's conditions overpower the other traits he has. He is an eligible, assertive, rich bachelor, who will be liked by any girl. However, we also know that he is nervous, lacks confidence, and is prone to talk in a long-winded manner.

**3. Describe how Chubukov got Natalya married with Lomov.**

**Ans.** Chubukov was thinking that Lomov had come to borrow money from him, but when he told him that he had come to propose to his daughter, he was overjoyed and even shed a tear. He kissed and embraced Lomov. He told Lomov that he was hoping it for a long time. He also told Lomov that he loved him as his own son.

In fact, Chubukov secretly wished Lomov to marry his daughter as he knew that Lomov was a rich and prosperous farmer, and his only daughter could lead a comfortable life with him. No wonder, he was overjoyed to know that Lomov was there to propose to his daughter.



## THE PROPOSAL

### 4. Bring out the humorous element in the one-act play, 'The Proposal'.

**Ans.** The one-act play, 'The Proposal' is full of humorous element. The characters in the play behave ridiculously. Lomov comes to propose to Natalya. But he cannot talk in a straight-forward manner. He beats about the bush. He starts quarrelling with her over a piece of land. When he comes back, he quarrels about the superiority of his dog. Chubukov is also a humorous character. He knows that Lomov has come to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage, even then he quarrels with him. We laugh at the words used by them and their behaviour. The sudden marriage of Lomov and Natalya induces laughter. Chubukov puts his daughter's hand in Lomov's in a foolish manner. Lomov is a comic character. His complaints about his poor health, provoke laughter. Thus, the play gives us a lot of laughter.

### 5. Give a brief character sketch of Natalya.

**Ans.** Natalya was twenty-five years old and the daughter of Chubukov. She was a good housekeeper, not bad to look at, and educated, that was why, Lomov wanted to marry her. She could be a good wife to him. Natalya wishes that somebody should love her and propose to her. Her father calls her 'a love-sick cat'.

She secretly loved Lomov. She became hysterical when she came to know that Lomov had come to propose to her. She asked her father to call him back. To please Lomov, she asked him to forgive her and agreed to his ownership of the Oxen Meadows.

She was greedy and short-sighted. She got the whole field of hay cut. She was also very inquisitive and wanted to know why Lomov was dressed up formally.

She was touchy and short-tempered and fell into contradiction and argument on two occasions—once over the ownership of Oxen Meadows and second time over the superiority of her dog, Squeezer.

She is as rigid as Lomov. She is not ready to give up even after getting ready to marry him.

### 6. Forgiveness is the foundation of a cordial relationship. Do you agree? How is the message conveyed in the play 'The Proposal'?

*(CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/5/1; 2022-23)*

**Ans.** Yes, it is true that forgiveness is the foundation of a cordial relationship. Most of the time, enmity is developed due to communication gap or misunderstanding. Anton Chekov has conveyed this message in the play 'The Proposal'. Lomov wants to resolve the issue and visits Chubukov with a purpose to propose Natalya. However, when Chubukov sees Lomov, he suspects that he must have come for borrowing money. The latest controversy being over the ownership of the Oxen Meadows causing a severe argument between Lomov and Natalya. They have a difference of opinion on the superiority of the breed of their dogs. It is the lack of forgiveness, acceptance and tolerance, that creates unnecessary misunderstandings and leads to quarrel on petty issues. The matter will not get sorted out until they forgive each other.

### 7. Though the play revolves around three people, Russian society emerges as an important character through the ongoings of the play and the thoughts and interactions of its characters. Imagine yourself to be a historian who has been invited to speak about nineteenth century upper class Russian society. Based on your reading of the play, how might you describe it? Support your evaluation with instances from the text.

*(Competency-based Question) (CBSE Question Bank)*

**Ans.** A general perception about women in Russian society or women in general is that they have never effectively enjoyed the same rights as their male counterparts. So, as a historian, it is crucial to continue raising awareness about women's rights in the 19th century Russia. Through the portrayal of the characters in the play 'The Proposal', it is



## THE PROPOSAL

evident that women even in those times were not the rightful owner of their individual identity. The proposal seems to serve the nuptial proceedings between Natalya who is only 25, whereas Lomov who is at his critical age of 35. Such a big gap in marital arrangement was seen nothing unusual. The only criteria required to engage into such an arrangement was that the grooms should be well-to-do and hold a reputable social rank. It's apparent from the way Stepan Chubukov gets excited when he learnt the precise reason of Lomov's arrival. A father of 19th century Russian society always aspires to get a son-in-law of such stature.

**8. Natalya and her father Chubukov 'turn around' when Lomov puts his proposal in the open. As a reader, briefly describe what you think of Natalya and Chubukov from the play "The Proposal".** (CBSE Question Paper, 2022; Term 2)

**Ans.** When Lomov says that he has come to ask for the hand of his daughter, Chubukov gets off balanced with joy. He embraces and kisses Lomov, sheds a tear of joy and calls for God's blessings for Lomov and Natalya. They celebrate that moment with champagne. Natalya repeatedly insists that Oxen Meadows are theirs and tells Lomov that up to now she considered Lomov a good neighbour and friend. It was when Natalya came to know that Lomov had come to propose her, so she left the topic of argument (Oxen Meadows) behind. She also asked for forgiveness from Lomov and requested him to come to the point. This shows that whether they fought unnecessarily upon insignificant issues like breed of dog, etc. but when it was about the marriage proposal, they forgot their enmity and agreed to marry. Even Chubukov who was insulted by Lomov enjoyed the moment and agreed for their marriage.

**9. The proposal of the marriage was forgotten amidst the arguments over petty things. Which right approach should have been followed by Lomov and Natalya?**

(CBSE Question Paper, 2020; Code no.: 2/3/2)

**Ans.** Lomov came to seek the hand of Chubukov's daughter, Natalya in marriage. However, all three were quarrelsome people and they began to quarrel over petty issues such as their land and their dogs. Amidst this quarelling, they completely forget the real issue about the marriage proposal. This was not the right approach. Lomov and Natalya should have kept their trivial issues aside and focused on the more important issue of marriage. They should have shown patience and compassion towards each other. They could have avoided the argument if they had emphasised the positive aspects in each other.

**10. Natalya and Ivan argued about the ownership of Oxen Meadows and the superiority of their respective dogs in the play, 'The Proposal'.**

**Imagine yourself as the playwright of the play. Based on your understanding of the personality traits of Natalya and Ivan, write a dialogue based on an imaginary event, showcasing another argument between them.**

(Competency-based Question)  
 (CBSE Sample Paper, 2021)

**Ans. Natalya:** What! What did you say? Say it again.

**Ivan:** Yes, you heard me right! You all are a bunch of crooks. The Oxen Meadows had always been a temporary gift to you.

**Natalya:** Well, in that case, I won't utter anything in support of your statement. Because I know who you all are. You know what ..... You don't even realise that yours in nothing less than mine. Your claim is absolutely baseless. The Oxen Meadows had always been ours. And you cannot prove it wrong.

**Ivan:** Why .... Why can't I? The documents are still with us that distinctly prove it belongs to us. But it's not a matter of my land. It's a matter of principle that urges me to accept no wrong. Oh.....I am getting numb! My hand, I feel a little



## THE PROPOSAL

pain in my chest! I don't know the reason of our miseries these days. My dog, Guess, has also gone lame.

**Natalya:** You shouldn't have accepted Guess. My Squeezer is far better than him in toughness.

**Ivan:** Hugh! I won't accept 5 Squeezers in exchange for Guess.

### QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

#### Extract-Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. **Natalya:** Excuse my interrupting you. You say, "my Oxen Meadows". But are they yours?

**Lomov:** Yes, mine.

**Natalya:** What are you talking about? Oxen Meadows are ours, not yours!

**Lomov:** No, mine, honoured Natalya Stepanova.

**Natalya:** Well, I never knew that before. How do you make that out?

**Lomov:** How? I'm speaking of those Oxen Meadows which are wedged in between your birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh.

**Natalya:** Yes, yes .... they're ours.

**Lomov:** No, you're mistaken, honoured Natalya Stepanova, they're mine.

**Natalya:** Just think, Ivan Vassilevitch! How long have they been yours?

(a) Complete the analogy by selecting the suitable word from the extract. (1)

me : mine :: our : \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Select the reason that displays why Natalya interrupted Lomov. (1)

**Because:**

- (i) her father appeared in the scene
- (ii) Lomov had just received an attack of palpitation
- (iii) Natalya wanted Lomov to rectify himself about his claim for Oxen Meadows
- (iv) Natalya wanted Lomov to discuss only about his marriage proposal

(c) What was the reason of the spat between the two, according to the extract? (1)

- (i) Oxen Meadows
- (ii) Guess and Squeezer
- (iii) Lomov's contemptible appearance
- (iv) Chubukov's derogatory remarks

(d) Based on the extract, recall any two incidents of verbal spat over which the two characters indulged into. (2)

2. I can make you a present of them myself, because they are mine! Your behaviour, Ivan Vassilevitch, is strange, to say the least! Up to this we have always thought of you as a good neighbour, a friend; last year we lent you our threshing-machine, although on that account we had to put off our own threshing till November, but you behave to us as if we were gypsies.



## THE PROPOSAL

- (a) What else does Natalya and Lomov argue about? (1)
- (b) What happened when Natalya and Chubukov helped their neighbour last year? (1)
- (i) They incurred heavy losses.
  - (ii) They had to put off their threshing until November.
  - (iii) They could not make ends meet themselves.
  - (iv) They were played by their neighbour.
- (c) How does Natalya find Lomov's behaviour? (2)
- (d) Why was Natalya and Lomov's debating insignificant? (1)
- (i) Because they were friends
  - (ii) Because they were good neighbours after all
  - (iii) Because after marriage they were to share everything anyway
  - (iv) Because they were in love and quarrels are a normal part of life

### Short Answer Questions

(40-50 words)

1. Why was Stepan Chubukov not happy to welcome Lomov in his house?
2. What request did Lomov make to Chubukov?
3. Why is Lomov anxious to marry Natalya?
4. Justify the title of the play, 'The Proposal'.

### Long Answer Questions

(100-120 words)

1. Why does Lomov go to Chubukov's house? How does he react when he tells him the real purpose of his visit?
2. Give a character sketch of Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov.
3. Describe the controversy between Lomov and Natalya about the Oxen Meadows and their dogs.

