

- The Proposal Summary

## The Proposal Summary

"**The Proposal**" by Anton Chekhov is a one-act play that humorously explores the trivial quarrels among the wealthy class, focusing on a marriage proposal between Lomov and Natalya. Lomov, a rich bachelor, wishes to marry Natalya, the daughter of Chubukov, another wealthy man. The play highlights how the characters are quarrelsome and engage in petty disputes over insignificant matters such as property, rather than the proposal itself. Lomov is not deeply in love but sees Natalya as a suitable match due to her qualities as a housekeeper, beauty, and education. Natalya initially misunderstands Lomov's visit as a claim over her property, leading to a quarrel involving her father. Eventually, when she learns of the proposal, she agrees to marry Lomov, accepting that quarrels are part of life but should not overshadow important decisions.

### Key Elements

- **Themes:** Absurdity of human nature, societal hypocrisy, importance of marriage alliances, triviality of quarrels.
- **Characters:** Lomov (the suitor), Natalya (the proposed bride), Chubukov (Natalya's father).
- **Literary Devices:** Irony, satire, farce, and characterization through dialogue.

### Textual Evidence

The trivial arguments between Lomov and Natalya, such as disputes over Oxen Meadows, illustrate the absurdity of their quarrels. For example, Lomov and Natalya argue fiercely

over property boundaries, which is ironic given the serious nature of a marriage proposal.

## Solved Example

*Extract:* "I have come to propose to you, Natalya Stepanovna." – Explain the significance of this line.

**Answer:** This line marks the turning point in the play where Lomov reveals his true intention. It contrasts with the earlier quarrels and highlights the theme that despite petty disputes, important matters like marriage proposals take precedence.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who are the three main characters in "The Proposal"?
- What is the main reason Lomov wants to marry Natalya?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how the quarrels between Lomov and Natalya reflect human nature.
- Describe the role of Chubukov in the play.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss the theme of societal hypocrisy as portrayed in "The Proposal".
- Analyze how Chekhov uses irony to enhance the humor in the play.

## Answer Key

- **Q1:** Lomov, Natalya, and Chubukov.
- **Q2:** Lomov wants to marry Natalya because he considers her a good housekeeper, beautiful, and well-educated, and he feels it is time to settle down.
- **Q3:** The quarrels show that people often focus on trivial matters and let pride and stubbornness affect relationships, reflecting the absurdity of human nature.
- **Q4:** Chubukov is Natalya's father who supports the marriage but also engages in the quarrels, showing the importance of property and social status.
- **Q5:** The characters pretend to value love and respect but are driven by self-interest, highlighting societal hypocrisy.
- **Q6:** Chekhov uses irony by having characters argue fiercely over minor issues during a marriage proposal, creating humor and emphasizing human folly.

## Quick Reference

- **Author:** Anton Chekhov
- **Genre:** One-act play
- **Main Theme:** Absurdity of trivial quarrels in human relationships
- **Setting:** A country estate

## Glossary

- **Quarrelsome:** Argumentative; inclined to argue.
- **Trivial:** Of little importance; insignificant.
- **Proposal:** An offer of marriage.
- **Hypocrisy:** Pretending to have qualities or beliefs that one does not actually possess.