

Chapter Review

- 'The Proposal' is a one-act comic play by the Russian writer Anton Chekhov. It is a satire on the greed and quarrelsome nature of the landed gentry.
- Characters: Stepan Stepanovich Chubukov (a landowner), his daughter Natalya Stepanovna (25), and Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov, a neighbouring landowner who is 35, healthy but a hypochondriac.
- Lomov comes dressed formally to Chubukov's house. He says he has come to ask for the hand of Natalya in marriage. Chubukov is delighted.
- While Chubukov calls Natalya, Lomov becomes nervous. When Natalya arrives, they start talking about the land, Oxen Meadows. Lomov says it belongs to him, Natalya says it is theirs.
- The argument escalates into a quarrel. Lomov's heart starts palpitating and he faints. They then fight about their dogs, Guess and Squeezer, one of which is lame and has a wrong bite.
- Chubukov throws Lomov out of the house. When Natalya hears that Lomov had come to propose, she screams and demands him to be brought back.
- Lomov returns. Soon the quarrel starts again, this time over the dogs. They shout until Lomov again faints and Chubukov thinks he is dead.
- Lomov revives and Chubukov joins their hands and orders them to kiss. Even as the engagement is made, they are still quarrelling, which makes the play very humorous.
- Theme: marriages are often decided by property and ego; people quarrel over trivial things.

Key Terms

Proposal – A formal offer of marriage.

Hypochondriac – One who always imagines he is ill.

Palpitation – A fast and irregular heartbeat.

Meadow – A field of grass.

Satire – Making fun of people's faults.

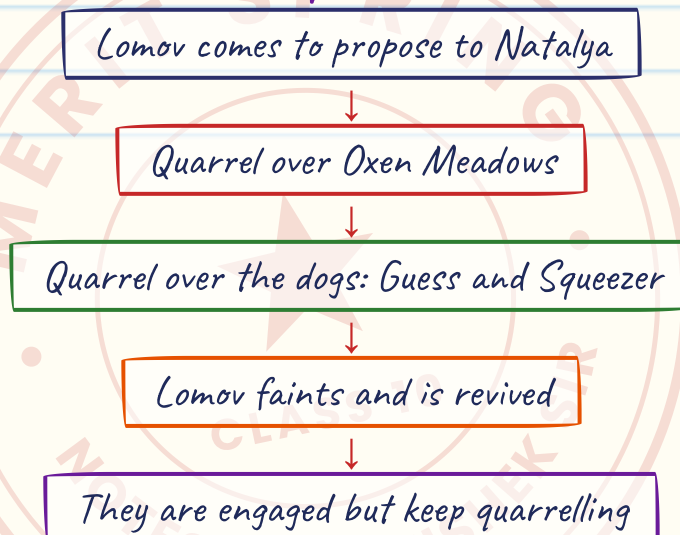
Squabble – A noisy quarrel over a small matter.

Dowry – Property given at marriage.

Landowner – One who owns land.

Diagrams / Flowcharts

The Play at a Glance



Characters

- Lomov: nervous, hypochondriac, quarrelsome, wants a wife for comfort.
- Natalya: sharp-tongued, stubborn, proud, but wants to be married.
- Chubukov: greedy, hot-tempered, wants a rich son-in-law; he is first welcoming then angry then eager again.

Literary Note

- Genre: farce (a comic play with exaggerated situations). Humour is created by quick changes of mood and absurd reasons for quarrel.

Textbook Exercise Questions

Q.1 Why did Lomov come to the Chubukovs?

Ans. He came to propose marriage to Natalya, Chubukov's daughter.

Q.2 Why did Lomov feel his heart palpitate?

Ans. He was nervous about proposing and angry at the dispute. He suffered from imaginary illnesses and was a hypochondriac.

Q.3 What was the first quarrel about?

Ans. It was about the ownership of Oxen Meadows. Both families claimed the land.

Q.4 What was the second quarrel about?

Ans. It was about whose dog was better: Lomov's Guess or Natalya's Squeezer.

Q.5 How did the play end?

Ans. Chubukov made them kiss and gave his blessing. They became engaged but kept on quarrelling.

Board Exam Questions (Important)

Q.1 Write a character sketch of Chubukov / Lomov / Natalya (any one).

Ans. Natalya is a 25-year-old who is practical and proud. She quarrels over trifles, yet she is anxious to be married. She is stubborn, but when she learns of the proposal, she is quick to call him back.

Q.2 What makes 'The Proposal' a comedy?

Ans. The situation is comic, since a proposal turns into a fight. Moods change quickly, the reasons for quarrel are silly, and the characters faint, shout and then become friends.

Q.3 Value-based: What does the play teach about anger?

Ans. Anger over small things can ruin relations and happiness. We should be patient and settle differences calmly.

