

1. What is suggested by the start of the play at dawn with cherry trees blossoming in cold weather?
2. What is symbolized by such a setting?
3. Why does the action of the play begin at the nursery?
4. What is beginning?
5. What is ending?
6. Why is the new day so cold?
7. Is it important that a train is in the process of arriving?
8. How does that contribute to the characterization of the changes under way?
9. What do trains symbolize?
10. How about the telegraph poles and the city outline in the horizon mentioned at the start of Act 2?
12. How is the businessman Lopakhin characterized?
13. What sort of a person is he?
14. Why does he stress the fact that his father was a peasant?
15. How is the social class change significant?
16. How did he make his fortune?
17. What puts him in a situation of power over the former land-owning masters?
18. What forms of behavior caused him to prosper?
19. What is suggested, on the other hand, by his inability to read a book?
20. How about his relations with other human beings?
21. Is he interested in people? How does he respond to them in

conversation?

22. Why does he often mention time, his many travels, and the need to hurry?

23. What is his interest in the Ranevskys?

24. Is he serious about marrying Varya?

25. What does he want them to do with their estate?

26. How does he expect to profit?

27. What is his plan?

28. Why does he want to cut down the cherry orchard?

29. What does that suggest or represent?

30. How is Lopakhin representative of historical changes underway in Russian society?

31. What are the implications of the Ranevskys putting their hopes in a marriage between Lopakhin and Varya?

32. Does Varya love Lopakhin? Does he care about her?

33. Essentially how are the Ranevskys aiming to solve their economic problems?

34. Is it significant that the attitudes, weaknesses, and vices of the upper classes are often reflected or mirrored in corresponding features of their servants?

35. What are some examples?

36. What does that suggest?

37. What social and historical problems is Chekhov addressing through those observations?

38. What are the overall causes and effects of the processes by which

certain social classes rise and others fall?

39. What picture of history does that suggest?

40. Does it support the optimism of Peter and Anya?

41. What does the old servant Firs suggest about the supposed emancipation of the serfs?

42. Does he see it as an improvement in the condition of the serfs? Why or why not?

43. How does that compare, for example, to the emancipation of the slaves in 19th-century America?

44. What historical, social, and economic forces brought about those changes?

45. Were the slaves and the serfs truly liberated?

46. Did they merely change masters?

47. Was their condition in any way worse after emancipation?

48. Why did Firs refuse freedom? Why does he call freedom a "misfortune"?

49. What is suggested by the figure of the governess Charlotte and her circus skills, card tricks and such? What is Chekhov addressing through this character?

50. How about the figure of Yasha, Mrs. Ranevsky's servant?

51. What sort of person is he? What do you make of his treatment of Dunyasha and his opinions about women?

52. How does he treat his own mother?

53. What is notable about the conversational exchanges between the characters in the play?

54. What seems to characterize their communications?

55. How do they respond to each other? Do they listen to or understand what others are saying? What does that suggest about the sorts of personalities and mentalities associated with the modern world?
56. What is the meaning of Gayev's constant use of expressions used in the game of billiards (pool) e.g. "pot the red in the middle"?
57. How about his also constant consumption of candy (fruit drops)? What does that suggest about him?
58. How is that reinforced by his saying things such as "It would be marvelous if somebody left us some money. It would be marvelous if we found a very rich husband for Anya"? How are such attitudes and habits related to the fall of the family fortunes?
59. What do you make of images like that of Mrs. Ranevsky asking for her coffee and Firs putting cushions under her feet?
60. How about her saying things such as, "oh, my darling little bookcase ... my sweet little table"?
61. Does she care about people as much as she does about things?
62. What is her response to the comment that the Nanny died in that very room?
63. What impression do we get about Mrs. Ranevsky?
64. Are there other examples in the play of inanimate objects treated as if they were people, of people treated as if they were things?
65. Are there redeeming traits in Mrs. Ranevsky?
66. Is she in some ways a much better person than Lopakhin?
67. What does that say about the changes underway in their world?
68. Why were the Ranevskys doomed to lose the cherry orchard?
69. What does Trofimov suggest are the historical causes behind the loss?

70. What does he mean by saying "Think Anya: your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all your ancestors owned serfs. They owned living souls. Can't you see human beings looking at you from every tree in your orchard, from every leaf and every tree trunk?" What does he mean by that?

71. Is the orchard haunted?

72. Why does he further say that "we must atone for our past"? How does he suggest that atonement have to take place?

73. What does Trofimov represent?

74. Why does he say that he wants to be "an eternal student"?

75. What ideas or concepts does Chekhov embody in the figure of Trofimov?

76. Why does he tell Lopakhin that "just as a beast of prey devours everything in its path and so helps to preserve the balance of nature, so you, too, perform a similar function"? What theory of human society is Trofimov alluding to?

77. Does he believe in such ideas or is he being ironic?

78. How is Trofimov the opposite of Lopakhin? How do their values and ideas differ?

79. What is Trofimov's idea of what is necessary for the progress of humanity? What does he recommend?

80. What problems does he suggest must be solved? What are the "ineffable visions of the future" that he refers to?

81. Why does he say that "happiness is coming"? How do Trofimov and Anya intend to contribute toward those goals?

82. Why does Trofimov say that he is not interested in love?

83. Why is love a target of the criticism of the play? Why is love perceived as a problem? How is that represented in other relationships in the play?

84. Do you think Trofimov will end up marrying Anya?
85. What sorts of positions is the writer adopting in his criticism of both "freedom" and "love"? How are they false or deceptive values?
86. With what social classes or interests are such concepts associated? What critical perspectives is Chekhov espousing?
87. What may be the meaning of the dance, the Grande Ronde, that the characters perform in Act 3? Is it significant that the participants belong to different social classes? Which?
88. What role does work and labor play in both texts?
89. What is suggested by the idea of work?
90. What social and economic issues does it address?
91. What is Chekhov's attitude toward the idea of work? How does it contrast with his attitudes toward money and power?
92. What is the meaning of the cherry orchard? What does it symbolize?
93. How is it significant that Lopakhin intends to cut down the orchard?
94. How is the orchard connected to the past? How about the future?
95. Why does Trofimov say that "the whole of Russia is our orchard"?
96. What does Anya mean when she says that "we shall plant a new orchard, an orchard more splendid than this one"?
97. What is the significance of the "sound of a breaking string" heard at the end of the play (also in Act 2)?