

## A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Anton Chekhov

*ANTON CHEKHOV (1860- 1904), dramatist and short story writer of Russia, was a doctor by profession. He began his literary career by writing comic sketches. He lived in Russia during the rule of the czars, or emperors. His works present an accurate picture of the Russia of his day. They also explore the depths of human emotion. Chekhov introduced to the stage the realistic problems of common people. His works often show a comic attitude towards the behaviour expected from the elite of that time. Even his saddest plays contain humour. His comedies are based on recognizable human weaknesses. Hence, they portray human life in a sensitive way. His important works include **Uncle Vanya**(1900), **The Three Sisters** (1901), and **The Cherry Orchard** (1904). He had a considerable influence on twentieth century drama. George Bernard Shaw paid tribute to him in **Heartbreak House** (1919). The present comedy '**A Marriage Proposal**' presents characters who cause their own discomfort.*



**A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:**

- 1. How are marriages settled in your family ?**
- 2. What are the major factors that decide the relation of brides/ grooms?**

### A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL CHARACTERS

STEPAN STEPANOVICH CHOODOBKOV: a land owner

NATALIA STEPANOVA:

his twenty-five year old daughter

IVAN VASSILIEVICH LOMOV:

their neighbour, a healthy and well- fed, but terribly **hypochondriac** landowner

The action takes place in the drawing room of CHOODOBKOV'S **country** house

Scene 1

(CHOOB000KOV and LOMOV. The latter enters, wearing tails and white gloves)

CHOOB000KOV (*going over to welcome his guest*): Why, of all people! My old friend, Ivan Vassilievich! How nice to see you! (*shakes hand.*) This really is a surprise, old boy .... How are you?

LOMOV: Very well, thank you. And may I ask how you are?

CHOOB000KOV: Not bad at all, old friend, with the help of your prayers and so on .... Please have a seat .... Now, really, it's not very nice of you to neglect your neighbours, my dear boy. And what are you all dressed up for? Morning coat, gloves, and so on! Are you off on a visit, old boy?

LOMOV: No, I'm just calling on you, my **esteemed** neighbour.

CHOOB000KOV: But why the morning coat, old friend? Thus isn't New Year's Day!

LOMOV: Well, you see, the fact of the matter is ... (*Takes his arm.*) I've burst in on you like this, Stepan Stepanovich, my esteemed neighbour, in order to ask a favour of you. I've already had the honour more than once of turning to you for help and you've always, so to speak, uh! ... but forgive me, my nerves ... I must have a sip of water, dear Stepan Stepanovich. (*Drinks some water.*)

CHOOB000KOV (*aside*): He's after money. Fat chance! (*to LOMOV*) What is it, my dear fellow?

LOMOV: Well, you see, my Stepan dearovich, uh! I mean dear Stepanovich ... uh! I mean, my nerves are in a terrible condition, which you yourself are so kind as to see. In short, you're the only one who can help me, although, of course, I've done nothing to deserve it and ... and I don't even have the right to count on your help ...

CHOOB000KOV: Now, now; don't **beat about the bush**, old friend. Out with it! ... Well?

LOMOV: All right, here you are. The fact of the matter is, I've come to ask for your daughter Natalia's hand in marriage.

CHOOB000KOV (*overjoyed*): My dearest friend! Ivan Vassilievich. Could you repeat that – I'm not sure I heard right!

LOMOV: I have the honour of asking —

CHOOB000KOV (*breaking in*): My oldest and dearest friend... I'm so delighted and so on .... Yes really, and all that sort of thing. (*hugging and kissing him*): I've been **yearning** for this for ages. It's been my constant desire. (*sheds a tear.*) And I've always loved you like a son, you wonderful person, you. May God grant you love and guidance and so on, it's been my most

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**fervent** wish ... but why am I standing here like a **blockhead**? I'm **dumbstruck** by the sheer joy of it, completely dumbstruck. Oh, with all my heart and soul ... I'll go get Natasha, and so on.

LOMOV *(deeply moved)*: Stepan Stepanovich, my esteemed friend, do you think I may count on her accepting me?

CHOOBOOOKOV: A handsome devil like you? How could she possibly resist? She's madly in love with you, don't worry, madly, and so on ... I'll call her right away.

### Scene II

LOMOV

*(alone)*: It's so cold ... I'm shaking all over, like before a final exam. The important thing is to make up your mind. If you think about it too long, or waver, talk about it too much, and wait for the ideal woman or for true love, you'll never marry ..... Brr! It's cold! Natalia Stepanovna is an excellent housekeeper, she's not bad-looking, and she's got some education ... What more could I ask for? Oh, I'm so nervous; I can hear a buzzing in my ears. *(Drinks some water.)* It would be best for me to get married ... first of all, I'm thirty-five years old already – and that, as they say, is a critical age. And then, I have to start leading a steady and regular life .... I've got a heart condition, with **palpitations** all the time ... I've got an awful temper and I'm always getting terribly **wrought up**... Even now, my lips are trembling and my right eyelid is **twitching**.... But the worst thing is when I try to sleep. The instant I get to bed and start dropping off, something **stabs** me in my left side – Ungh! And it cuts right through my shoulder straight into my head – Ungh! I jump like a lunatic, walk about a little, and then I lie down again, but the moment I start to doze off, I feel it in my side again – ungh! And it keeps on and on for at least twenty times ...

### Scene III

(NATALIA STEPANOVNA and LOMOV)

NATALIA *(entering)*: Ah, it's you. And Papa said a customer had come for the **merchandise**. How do you do, Ivan Vassilievich!

LOMOV: How do you do, my esteemed Natalia Stepanovna!

NATALIA: I'm sorry about my apron and not being dressed ... We're **shelling** peas for drying. Where've you been yourself? Have a seat.... *(They sit down.)* Would you like a bite of lunch?

LOMOV: Thank you so much, but I've already eaten.

NATALIA: Well, then have a cigarette ... The matches are over here.... The weather's magnificent today, but yesterday it rained so hard that the men couldn't do a thing all day long. How much hay did you get done? Can you imagine, I was so greedy that I had the whole meadow **mown**, and now I regret it, I'm sacred that all my hay may rot. I should have waited. But what's this? I do believe you're wearing a morning coat! How original! Are you going to a ball or something? Incidentally, you're getting quite handsome.... But honestly, why are you all **dolled up**?

LOMOV: (*nervously*): You see, my esteemed Natalia Stepanovna..... the fact is I've made up my mind to ask you to listen to me ..... Naturally you'll be surprised and even angry, but I .... (*aside*): God, it's cold!

NATALIA: What is it? (*pause*) Well?

LOMOV: I'll try to be brief. You are well aware, my esteemed Natalia Stepanovna, that for a long time now, in fact since my childhood, I have had the honour of knowing your family. My late aunt and her husband, whose estate as you know I inherited, always held your father and your late mother in utmost esteem. The Lomov family and the Choobookov family have always maintained extremely friendly, one might even say, intimate relations. Furthermore, as you know, my property borders on yours. Perhaps you will be so kind as to recall that my Ox Meadows run along your birch forest.

NATALIA: Excuse me for **interrupting** you. You said "my Ox Meadows" .... Are they yours?

LOMOV: Of course ....

NATALIA: Oh, come now! The Ox Meadows belong to us, not you!

LOMOV: Oh no! They're mine, dear Natalia Stepanovna.

NATALIA: That's news to me. How did they ever get to be yours?

LOMOV: What do you mean? I'm talking about the Ox Meadows that are **wedged in** between your birch forest and the Burnt Marsh.

NATALIA: Exactly .... They're ours.

LOMOV: No, you're mistaken, dear Natalia Stepanovna – they're mine.

NATALIA: Do be reasonable, Ivan Vassilievich! Since when have they been yours?

LOMOV: Since when? They've always been ours, as far back as I can remember.

NATALIA: Excuse me, but this is too much!

LOMOV: You can look at the documents, dear Natalia Stepanovna. At one time, there were some quarrels about the OX Meadows, you're quite right.



But now, everyone knows they're mine. Why argue about it? If you will permit me to explain: my aunt's grandmother lent them to your paternal great-grandfather's peasants for an indefinite period and free of charge in rerun for their firing her bricks. Your great grandfather's peasants used the Meadows free of charge for some forty years and began thinking of them as their own .. and then after the Emancipation, when a *statute* was passed - You've got it all wrong! Both my grandfather and great-grandfather regarded their property as reaching all the way to the Burnt Swamp - which means that the Ox Meadows were ours. What's there to argue about? - I don't understand. How annoying!

NATALIA:

I'll show you the documents, Natalia Stepanovna.

LOMOV:

NATALIA:

No; you're joking or trying to tease me ..... What a surprise! We've owned the land for practically three hundred years and now suddenly we're told it's not ours! I'm sorry, Ivan Vassilievich, but I just can't believe my ears. Those Meadows don't mean a thing to me. The whole area probably doesn't come to more than forty acres, it's worth about three hundred rubles; but I'm terribly upset by the injustice of it all. You can say what you like, but I simply can't stand injustice.

LOMOV:

Please listen to me, I beseech you. Your paternal great - grandfather's peasants, as I have already had the honour of telling you, fired bricks for my aunt's grandmother. Now, my aunt's grandmother, wishing to do them a favour in return -

NATALIA:

Grandfather, grandmother, aunt ..... I don't know what you're talking about! The Meadows are *ours*, and that's that.

LOMOV:

They're mine!

NATALIA:

They're ours! You can keep arguing for two days, you can put on fifteen morning coats if you like, but they're ours, ours, ours! .... I don't desire your property, but I don't care to lose mine .... Do as you like!

LOMOV:

I don't need the Meadows, Natalia Stepanovna, but it's the principle of the thing. If you want, I'll give them to you.

NATALIA:

It would be my privilege to give them to you, they're mine! .... All this is rather odd - to put it mildly. Ivan Vassilievich. Up till now we've always considered you a good neighbour and friend. Last year we let you borrow our threshing machine, and as a result we couldn't finish our own grain until November, and now you're treating us like Gypsies. You're giving me my own land. Excuse me, but that's not a neighbourly thing to do! To my mind, it's *impertinent*, if you care to -

- LOMOV: Are you trying to tell that I'm a **landgrabber**? Madam, I've never seized anyone else's property, and I won't allow anyone to say I have .... (*Hurries over to the carafe and drinks some water.*) The Ox Meadows are mine!
- NATALIA: That's not true. They're ours.
- LOMOV: They're mine.
- NATALIA: That's not true. I'll prove it to you! I'll send my men over to mow them this afternoon.
- LOMOV: What?
- NATALIA: My men will be there this afternoon!
- LOMOV: I'll kick them out!
- NATALIA: You won't dare!
- LOMOV: (*clutching at his heart*): The Ox Meadows are mine! Do you hear! Mine!
- NATALIA: Stop shouting! Please! You can shout your lungs out in your place, but I must ask you to control yourself here.
- LOMOV: Madam, if it weren't for these awful, **excruciating** palpitations and the veins throbbing in my temples, I'd speak to you in a totally different way! (*Shouting*): The Ox Meadows are mine.
- NATALIA: Ours!
- LOMOV: Mine!
- NATALIA: Ours!
- LOMOV: Mine!

**B.1.1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:**

- i. Lomov is a neighbour of the Stepanovnas.
- ii. He wore the morning coat to attend a party.
- iii. Mr Choobokov becomes angry to know Lomov's desire.
- iv. Lomov is a man of nervous temperament.
- v. Natalia is a quiet and peace loving lady.
- vi. The ownership of Ox-meadows is disputed.

**B.1. 2. Answer the following questions briefly :**

- 1) How is Lomov greeted by Choobokov?
- 2) How does Choobokov react when he comes to know that Lomov wants to marry Natalia ?
- 3) Why does Lomov think that his is a critical age?
- 4) Why does Lomov feel nervous before proposing to Natalia?
- 5) Why is Natalia afraid that all her hay may rot?
- 6) What, according to her, is the real worth of Ox-meadows?
- 7) Who, according to Lomov, had let the meadows and to whom?

## Scene IV

(Enter CHOObOOKOV)

CHOObOOKOV: What's going on? What's all the shouting about?

NATALIA: Papa, please tell this gentleman whom the Ox Meadows belong to us or him.

CHOObOOKOV (to LOMOV): Why, the Meadows belong to us, old friend.

LOMOV: But for goodness' sake, Stepan Stepanovich, how can that be? Can't you be reasonable at least? My aunt's grandmother lent the Meadows to your grandfather's peasants for temporary use and free of charge. His peasants used the land for forty years and got in the habit of regarding it as their own, but after the Land Settlement –

CHOObOOKOV: Excuse me, old boy ... You're forgetting that our peasants didn't pay your grandmother and so on precisely *because* the Meadows were **disputed** and what not .... But now every child knows that they're ours. I guess you've never looked at the maps.

LOMOV: I'll prove they're mine!

CHOObOOKOV: You won't prove a thing, my boy.

LOMOV: I'll so prove it!

CHOObOOKOV: My dear boy, why carry on like this? You won't prove a thing by shouting. I don't want anything of yours, but I don't intend to let go of what's mine. Why should I? If it comes to that, dear friend, if you mean to dispute my ownership of the Meadows, and so on, I'd sooner let my peasants have them than you. So there!

LOMOV: I don't understand. What right do you have to give away other people's property?

CHOObOOKOV: Allow me to decide whether or not I've got the right. Really, young man, I'm not accustomed to being spoken to in that tone of voice, and what not. I'm old enough to be your father, and I must ask you to calm down when you speak to me, and so forth.

LOMOV: No! You're treating me like an idiot, and laughing at me. You tell me that my property is yours, and then you expect me to remain calm and talk to you in a normal fashion. That's not a very neighbourly thing to do, Stepan Stepanovich. You're no neighbour, you're a **robber baron**.

CHOObOOKOV: What? What did you say, my good man?

NATALIA: Papa, have the men mow the Ox Meadows right now!

CHOObOOKOV (to LOMOV): What did you say, sir?

- NATALIA: The Ox Meadows are our property, and I won't let anyone else have them. I won't, I won't, I won't!
- LOMOV: We'll see about that! I'll prove to you in court that they're mine.
- CHOOBOOKOV: In court? My good man, you can take it to court, and what not. Go right ahead! I know you, you've just been waiting for a chance to **litigate**, and so on. You're a **quibbler** from the word go. Your whole family's nothing but a bunch of **pettifoggers**. All of them!
- LOMOV: I must ask you not to insult my family. The Lomovs have always been law-abiding folk. None of them was ever **hauled** into court for **embezzlement** the way your uncle was..
- CHOOBOOKOV: Every last one of them was insane.
- NATALIA: Every last one of them, every last one!
- CHOOBOOKOV: Your grandfather drank like a fish, and the whole country knows that your youngest aunt, Nastasia, ran off with an architect, and what not –
- LOMOV: And your mother was a hunchback! (*clutching at his heart*): There's a twitching in my side .... My head's throbbing.... Oh, God ... Water!
- CHOOBOOKOV: And your father was a gambler and he ate like a pig!
- NATALIA: And no one could beat your aunt at scandalmongering.
- LOMOV: My left leg's paralysed .... And you're a schemer .... Oooh! My heart! .... And it's no secret to anyone that just before the election you ... There are stars bursting before my eyes ..... Where's my hat?
- NATALIA: Vermin! Liar! Brute!
- CHOOBOOKOV: You're a spiteful, double-dealing schemer! So there!
- LOMOV: Ah, my hat .... My heart. Where am I? Where's the door? Oooh! ... I think I'm dying .... My foot's totally paralysed. (*Drags himself to the door.*)
- CHOOBOOKOV: (*calling after him*): And don't ever set your foot in my home again!
- NATALIA: Go to court! **Sue** us! Just wait and see! (*Lomov staggers out.*)

## Scene V

(CHOOBOOKOV and NATALIA STEPANOVNA)

- CHOOBOOKOV: He can go straight to hell, damn him! (*Walks about, all wrought up.*)
- NATALIA: Isn't he the worst crook? Catch me trusting a good neighbour after this!
- CHOOBOOKOV: The chiseler! The scarecrow!
- NATALIA: The monster! He not only grabs other people's property, he calls them names, to boot.

- CHOOBOOKOV: And that clown, that .... freak had the **colossal** nerve to ask me for your hand in marriage, and so on. Can you imagine? He wanted to propose.
- NATALIA: Propose?
- CHOOBOOKOV: Exactly! That's what he came for. To propose to you.
- NATALIA: Propose? To me? Why didn't you say so?
- CHOOBOOKOV: And he got all dolled up in a morning coat. That pipsqueak. That **upstart**.
- NATALIA: Propose? To me? Ohhh! (collapses into an armchair and wails): Bring him back. Get him. Ohh! Get him!
- CHOOBOOKOV: Get whom?
- NATALIA: Hurry up, hurry! I feel sick. Bring him back. (*hysterical*).
- CHOOBOOKOV: What is it? What's wrong? (Grabbing his head) This is awful. I'll shoot myself. I'll hang myself. They've worn me out.
- NATALIA: I'm dying! Bring him back!
- CHOOBOOKOV: Alright. Stop **yelling**! (*Runs out*)
- NATALIA (*alone, wailing*): What've we done? Bring him back! Bring him back!
- CHOOBOOKOV (*running in*): He's coming and all that, goddamn him. Ughh! You talk to him, alone. I really don't feel like ....
- NATALIA (*wailing*): Bring him back!
- CHOOBOOKOV (*shouting*): He's coming, I tell you. Oh God! What did I ever do to deserve a grown-up daughter? I'll cut my throat. I swear, I'll cut my throat. We insulted and abused him, and it's all your fault!
- NATALIA: My fault? It was yours!
- CHOOBOOKOV: Now I'm the culprit! (LOMOV appears at the French doors. CHOOBOOKOV exists.)

**B.2.1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:**

- i. Choobookov supports Lomov's claim over Ox-meadows.
- ii. His peasants used the land for forty years.
- iii. It is Natalia who threatens to take the matter to court.
- iv. She does not use abusive language for Lomov.
- v. She feels delighted to have behaved decently with Lomov.



**B.2. 2. Answer the following questions briefly:**

- 1) What is Lomov's explanation of Ox-meadows becoming a disputed piece of land?
- 2) What does Choobookov say about Lomov's father and grandfather?
- 3) Why does Lomov refer to the land settlement?
- 4) Why does he complain all the time of palpitation and veins throbbing?
- 5) Why does Natalia cry and weep to know that Lomov has come to propose to her?

**Scene VI**

(NATALIA and LOMOV)

LOMOV: (*entering, exhausted*) What horrible palpitations .... my foot's gone **numb** .... there's a **jabbing** in my side ....

NATALIA: My apologies, Ivan Vassilievich, we got so worked up .... I do recall now that the Ox Meadows are actually your property.

LOMOV: My heart's palpitating .... The Meadows are mine .... There are starts bursting in my both eyes. (*They sit down.*)

NATALIA: We were wrong.

LOMOV: It's the principle of the thing .... I don't care about the land, it's the principle of the thing -

NATALIA: Exactly, the principle .... Let's talk about something else.

LOMOV: Particularly since I have proof. My aunt's grandmother let your paternal great-grandfather's peasants -

NATALIA: All right, all right .... (*aside*) : I don't know how to go about it .... (*to LOMOV*) Will you start hunting soon?

LOMOV: Yes, for **grouse**, Natalia Stepanovna. I think I shall begin after the harvest. Oh, have you heard what bad luck I had? My hound Guess - you know the one - he's gone lame.

NATALIA: What a pity! How did it happen?

LOMOV: I don't know . he must have twisted his leg, or else some other dog bit him .... (*sighs*) My very best hound, not to mention the money! Why, I paid Mironov a hundred and twenty-five rubles for him.

NATALIA: You overpaid him, Ivan Vassilievich.

- LOMOV: I don't think so. It was very little for a wonderful dog.
- NATALIA: Papa bought his dog Leap for eighty-five rubles, and Leap is vastly superior to your Guess!
- LOMOV: Leap superior to Guess? Oh, come now, (*laughs*) Leap superior to Guess!
- NATALIA: Of course he is! I know that Leap is still young, he's not a full-grown hound yet. But for points and action, not even Volchanietsky has a better dog.
- LOMOV: Excuse me, Natalia Stepanovna, but you're forgetting that he's pug-jawed, which makes him a poor hunting dog.
- NATALIA: Pug-jawed? That's news to me.
- LOMOV: I can assure you, his lower jaw is shorter than his upper jaw.
- NATALIA: Have you measured it?
- LOMOV: Indeed, I have. He'll do for pointing, of course, but when it comes to **retrieving**, he can hardly hold a candle –
- NATALIA: First of all, our Leap is a **pedigreed** greyhound – he's the son of Harness and Chisel, whereas your Guess is so piebald that not even Solomon could figure out his breed .... Furthermore, he's as old and ugly as a broken-down nag –
- LOMOV: He may be old, but I wouldn't trade him for five of your Leaps .... The very idea! Guess is a real hound, but Leap ... Why argue? It's ridiculous .... Every huntsman's assistant has a dog like your Leap. At twenty-five rubles he'd be overpriced.
- NATALIA: You seem to be possessed by some demon of contradiction, Ivan Vassilievich. First you fancy that the Ox Meadows are yours, then you pretend that Guess is a better hound than Leap. If there's one thing I don't like it's a person who says the opposite of what he thinks. You know perfectly well that Leap is a hundred times better than .... than that stupid Guess of yours. Why do you insist on denying it?
- LOMOV: You obviously must think, Natalia Stepanovna, that I'm either blind or mentally retarded. Can't you see that your Leap has a pug jaw?
- NATALIA: That's not true.
- LOMOV: A pug jaw.
- NATALIA: (*screaming*): That's not true.
- LOMOV: Why are you screaming, Madam?
- NATALIA: Why are you talking such rubbish? It's *exasperating*! Your Guess is just about ready to be put out of his misery, and you compare him to Leap.

- LOMOV: Excuse me, but I can't keep on arguing like this. My heart's palpitating.
- NATALIA: I've noticed that the sportsmen who argue most don't understand the first thing about hunting.
- LOMOV: Madam, pleeeeeease, keep quiet.... My heart's bursting.... (*shouts*): Keep quiet!
- NATALIA: I won't keep quiet until you admit that Leap is a hundred times superior to your Guess!
- LOMOV: He's a hundred times inferior. Someone ought to shoot him. My temples ... my eyes ... my shoulder ...
- NATALIA: No one has to wish that idiotic mutt of yours dead, because he's just skin and bones anyway.
- LOMOV: Keep quiet! I'm having heart failure!
- NATALIA: I will not keep quiet!

## Scene VII

- CHOOBOOKOV (*entering*): What's going on now?
- NATALIA: Papa, tell me, honestly and sincerely: which is the better dog – our Leap or his Guess?
- LOMOV: Stepan Stepanovich, I beseech you, just tell me one thing: is your Leap pug-jawed or isn't he? Yes or no?
- CHOOBOOKOV: So what! Who cares? He's still the best hound in the country, and what not.
- LOMOV: And my Guess isn't better? Tell the truth.
- CHOOBOOKOV: Don't get all worked up, old boy .... Let me explain .... Your Guess does have a few good qualities. .... He's pure-bred, he's got solid legs, he's well put together, and what not. But if you must know, my good man, your dog's got two basic faults: He's old, and his muzzle's too short.
- LOMOV: Excuse me; my heart's racing madly.... Let's examine the facts.... Please, don't forget that when we were hunting in the Maposkin Fields, my Guess ran neck and neck with the count's dog Waggy, while your Leap lagged behind by half a mile.
- CHOOBOOKOV: That was because the count's assistant struck him with his riding crop.
- LOMOV: Naturally. All the other dogs were chasing the fox, but yours started running after sheep.
- CHOOBOOKOV: That's a lie! My dear boy, I fly off the handle easily, so, please let's stop arguing. The man whipped him because people are always envious

of everyone else's dogs. Yes, they're all filled with **spite**! And you sir, are no exception. Why, the minute you notice that anyone else's dog is better than your Guess, you instantly start up something or other ... and what not. I've got the memory of an elephant!

LOMOV: And so do I.

CHOOBOOKOV (*mimicking him*): "And so do I" ... and what does your memory tell you?

LOMOV: My heart's palpitating.... My foot's paralysed ... I can't anymore...

NATALIA (*mimicking*): "My heart's palpitating ..." What kind of hunter are you anyway? You ought to be home in bed catching cockroaches instead of out hunting foxes. Palpitations! ....



CHOOBOOKOV: That's right, what kind of hunter are you? If you've got palpitations, stay home; don't go **wobbling** around the countryside on horseback. It wouldn't be so bad if you really hunted, but you only tag along in order to start arguments or **meddle with** other people's dogs, and what not. We'd better stop, I fly off the handle easily. You, sir, are not a hunter, and that's that.

LOMOV: And you are, I suppose. The only reason you go hunting is to flatter the count and carry on your backstabbing little **intrigues** .... Oh, my heart! .... You schemer!

CHOOBOOKOV: Me, a schemer. (*shouting*): Shut up!

LOMOV: Schemer!

CHOOBOOKOV: Upstart! Pipsqueak!

LOMOV: You old fogey! You hypocrite!

CHOOBOOKOV: Shut up, or I'll blast you with a shot gun like a partridge.

- LOMOV: The whole country knows that - Oh, my heart! – your late wife used to beat you .. My leg .. my temples ... I see stars .... I'm falling, falling ..
- CHOOBOOKOV: And your housekeeper **henpecks** you all over the place!
- LOMOV: There, you see .... my heart's burst! My shoulder's torn off .... Where's my shoulder? .... I'm dying! (*collapses into armchair*) Get a doctor! (*faints*)
- CHOOBOOKOV: Pipsqueak. Weakling. **Windbag**. I feel sick. (*drinks some water*) I feel sick.
- NATALIA: What kind of hunter are you anyway? You don't even know how to sit in a saddle! (*to her father*): Papa! What's the matter with him? Papa! Look, Papa! (*screams*) Ivan Vassilievich! He's dead!
- CHOOBOOKOV: I feel sick! .... I can't breathe! .... Air!
- NATALIA: He's dead! (*tugs at LOMOV's sleeves*) Ivan Vassilievich! Ivan Vassilievich! What've we done! He's dead. (*collapses into easy chair*) Get a doctor. (*She becomes hysterical.*)
- CHOOBOOKOV: Oh! .... What is it? What's wrong?
- NATALIA (*moaning*): He's dead .... He's dead!
- CHOOBOOKOV: Who's dead? (*glancing at Lomov*): He really is dead! Oh, my God! Get some water! Get a doctor! (*holds a glass to Lomov's mouth*) Go ahead and drink! .... He won't drink .... I guess he's dead and so on .... Why does everything have to happen to me? Why didn't I cut my throat? What am I waiting for? Give me a knife! Give me a gun! (*Lomov stirs.*) He's reviving, I think.... Drink some water! .... That's right.
- LOMOV: Stars .... fog .... where am I?
- CHOOBOOKOV: You two'd better hurry up and get married .... Dammit! She accepts .... (*joins Lomov's hand with Natalia's*) She accepts .... My blessings and so forth..... Just do me a favour and leave me in peace.
- LOMOV: What? (*getting up*) Who?
- CHOOBOOKOV: She accepts. Well ? Kiss her and .... the two of you can go straight to hell.
- NATALIA (*moaning*): He's alive .... I accept, I accept ....
- CHOOBOOKOV: Kiss and make up.
- LOMOV: What? Who? (*kisses Natalia*) Enchante .... Excuse me, but what's going on? Oh yes, I remember .... My heart .... stars .... I'm very happy, Natalia Stepanovna. (*kisses her hands*) My leg's paralysed ....
- NATALIA: I .... I'm very happy, too ....
- CHOOBOOKOV: That's a load off my back .... Whew!



- NATALIA: But .... all the same, why don't you finally admit that Guess isn't as good as Leap.
- LOMOV: He's much better.
- NATALIA: He's worse.
- CHOOBOOKOV: The **launching** of **marital bliss**! Champagne!
- LOMOV: He's better.
- NATALIA: Worse! Worse! Worse!
- CHOOBOOKOV (*trying to shout them*): Champagne! Champagne!

**B.3.1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:**

- i. Lomov refuses to come back to Natalia.
- ii. The name of Lomov's dog is Leap.
- iii. Choobookov bought his dog for eighty five 'rubles'
- iv. According to Lomov, Leap is pug-jawed.
- v. Lomov claims to have the memory of an elephant.
- vi. Choobookov thinks that Lomov is possessed by some 'demon of contradiction'.
- vii. Lomov faints when he realises that he will not succeed in marrying Natalia.
- viii. Choobookov takes the lead to settle the marriage of his daughter with Lomov.

**B.3.2. Complete the following sentences on the basis of the unit you have just studied:**

- a) It is not very nice of you to \_\_\_\_\_ your neighbours.
- b) Do you think I may \_\_\_\_\_ on her accepting me?
- c) I'm always getting terribly \_\_\_\_\_ up.
- d) I was so greedy that I had the whole meadows \_\_\_\_\_
- e) I have had the \_\_\_\_\_ of knowing your family.
- f) Your Leap \_\_\_\_\_ behind by half mile.
- g) You only tag along in order to \_\_\_\_\_ with other people's dogs.

**B.3. 3. Answer the following questions briefly:**

- 1) Why does Natalia want to talk about something else?
- 2) What, according to Lomov, is the main defect of Leap?
- 3) How does Natalia describe her own pet dog, Leap?
- 4) 'That's a load off my back.' What is this 'load'? Why does Choobookov say so?

## GLOSSARY AND NOTES

**hypochondriac** (adj): a person who has extreme worries about his health, while there nothing wrong with him

**country house**(adj): villa, cottage

**esteemed** (adj): respected, honoured

**beat about the bush** (phr): talk about a thing for a long time without coming to the main point

**yearning** (v): craving, longing

**fervent** (adj): keen, ardent

**blockhead** (n): a stupid person

**dumbstruck** (adj): speechless

**palpitations** (n): quick and irregular beating of heart

**wrought up** (v. phr.): worked up, aroused

**twitching** (v): contracting, convulsing

**merchandise** (n): goods, commodities

**shelling** (v): removing the shell or covering from nuts

**mown** (pp): cut or tripped

**dolled up** (v): embellished, given a face lift, (here, well dressed)

**interrupting** (ger): stop by saying or doing something

**wedged in** (v.phr): squeezed in, jammed

**statute** (n): law, formal rule

**impertinent** (adj): rude, impolite

**land grabber** (n): a person who acquires land in any way possible

**disputed** (pp):in question

**accustomed to** (phr): familiar with, used to

**robber baron** (n.phr): a robber in the guise of a nobleman, controlling estate

**litigate** (v): to being a court case, sue

**quibbler** (n): a person who argues

**embezzlement** (n): stealing money, misappropriation

**sue** (v): make a claim against somebody in court, take somebody to court

**colossal** (adj):huge, very big

**upstart** (n): insignificant person, nonentity

**yelling** (ger.): shouting

**numb** (adj): unfeeling, without sensation

**jabbing** (v): strong hitting with a pointed object, punching

**grouse** (n): complaint

**hound** (n): a variety of dog, used in hunting

**retrieving** (ger.):getting back, recovering

**pedigreed** (adj): coming from a family of the same breed

**exasperating** (adj): annoying, infuriating

**fly off the handle** (phr): lose temper, blow up

**spite** (n): malice

**mimicking** (v): imitating

**wobbling** (adv): moving in an unsteady way

**meddle with** (phr): play about with, fidget with

**intrigues** (n): schemes, secret plans

**henpecks** (v): dominates

**windbag** (n): a person who talks too much but does not say anything important

**launching** (ger.): beginning, initiation

**marital bliss** (v): conjugal pleasure or harmony (said sarcastically)

### C. 1. Long Answer Questions

1. On the basis of your reading of Scene I, do you think that Lomov and Choobukov are cordial neighbours?
2. Write a short note on the character of Lomov on the basis of his self-revelation in scene II?
3. Are Lomov and Natalia really interested in laying claim to Ox- meadows?
4. Do you think that Natalia was also interested in marrying Lomov ? What makes you think so?
5. Despite his heated arguments with Lomov, Choobukov in the last scene shows haste in finalising the marriage. What could be the reason of his haste?
6. Do you think the title of the drama is suitable? Give reasons in support of your views. Suggest a different title for the drama?
7. Natalia and Lomov would be an ideal couple. Do you agree? Give reasons.

### C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

1. Arguments for the sake of argument leads to nowhere.
2. Marriages are settled in heaven but are solemnised on the earth.

### C. 3. COMPOSITION

1. Write a short essay in about 150 words on the following.
  - a) Role and responsibility of parents in marriage
  - b) Social relevance of marriage
2. Write a letter to your friend describing the marriage ceremony that you attended recently in your family.

**D. WORD STUDY****D.1. Dictionary Use**

**Ex. 1.** Correct the spelling of the following words:

interupt      weged in      impertinant      embegelman      kolossal  
 retrive      palpitetion      intrige      twiching

**D.2. Word-formation**

Go through the drama and underline the use of the following words, wherever they occur:

land-grabber      windbag      countryside      horseback      housekeeper

These are compound words, made by joining two words. Make at least five similar words, using the following ones:

air      college      night      cyber      young

**D.3. Word-meaning**

**Ex 1.** Fill in the blanks with suitable phrases given in the box:

call on      make up      count on  
 carry on      run after      talk about  
 superior to      envious of      accustomed to

- Snigdha's intelligence made her \_\_\_\_\_ to her classmates.
- In time of crisis, you may \_\_\_\_\_ your friends.
- We must \_\_\_\_\_ the glorious tradition of the past.
- I advised Ankita to \_\_\_\_\_ a doctor.
- You should \_\_\_\_\_ your mind before joining the army.
- Shylock was \_\_\_\_\_ Antonio's popularity.
- We were asked to \_\_\_\_\_ our aim in life.
- Priya is not \_\_\_\_\_ such severe cold.

**E. GRAMMAR**

**Ex.1.** The following verbs in their past participle forms have been used as adjectives in the drama. Go through the text and underline them wherever they have been used as adjectives:

esteemed      delighted      inherited      maintained  
 mistaken      disputed      paralyzed      accustomed  
 abused      insulted      twisted

**Use each of these words both as verb and adjective in sentences of your own. The first one is done for you:**

esteemed (v): Tendulker is esteemed as the best batsman.

esteemed (adj): He is my esteemed neighbour.

## F. ACTIVITY

**Ex.1.** Organise an inter class debate on:

Dowry system and the role of the youth in its eradication

**Ex.2.** Rewrite dialogues between Natalia and Lomov, making the latter propose to the former according to your own choice and views.

**Ex.3.** Select some interesting dialogues from the drama, rewrite them and make a stage presentation of them with the help of your teacher.

**Ex.4.** Observe how marriages are settled in different religions and make a note of different customs and rituals.

**Ex.5.** Select a humorous story in Hindi or in any other language, on the theme of marriage and tell it in the class.

