

Chapter 11: The Proposal

Thinking about the Text

Question: 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.

Answer:

At first Chubukov suspected that Lomov had come to borrow money as he was in his evening dress. He was not sincere when he told Lomov that he had always loved him and that he was like his own son, because he had decided to not give any money to Lomov. It was only when Lomov asked for his daughter's hand in marriage that his attitude changed and he rushed out to call his daughter, Natalya.

Question: 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.

Answer:

Yes, Natalya is in love. This is clear by the way she behaves when she gets to know that Lomov came to propose to her. She starts weeping and asks her father to bring Lomov at once.

Question: 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.
- iii. Can you now imagine what these characters will quarrel about next?

Answer:

The words and expressions that have been used to describe each other by various characters of the play are Chubukov: intriguer, grabber, old rat Natalya: a lovesick cat, an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated. Lomov: a good neighbour, impudent, pettifogger, malicious, double faced intriguer, rascal, blind hen, turnip ghost, a villain, scare crow, stuffed sausage, etc.

Thinking about the Language

Question: 1

1. This play has been translated in English from the Russian original. Are there any expressions or ways of speaking that strike you as 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.

Answer:

Expressions not used in contemporary English are- my angel, my beloved, my beauty (Here these expressions, are used for an adult man) and 'all that sort of thing' (not explaining what it is just leaving it as it is) and 'how may you be getting on'? reported speech

2. Look up the following words in a dictionary and find out how to pronounce them. Pay attention to how many syllables there are in each word, and find out which

syllable is stressed, or said more forcefully.

palpitations	interfere	implore	thoroughbred
pedigree	principle	evidence	misfortune
malicious	embezzlement	architect	neighbours
accustomed	temporary	behaviour	documents

- palpitations – pal-pi-ta-tions (four) : pal-pi-**ta**-tions
- interfere – in-ter-fer-e (three) Primary syllable stress: in-ter-**fer-e**
Secondary syllable stress: **in**-ter-fer-e
- implore- im-plore (two) : im-**plore**
- thoroughbred – thor-ough-bred (three) Primary syllable stress: **thor**-ough-bred
Secondary syllable stress: thor-ough-**bred**
- pedigree – ped-i-gree (three) : **ped**-i-gree
- principle – prin-ci-ple (three) : **prin**-ci-ple
- evidence – ev-i-dence (three) : **ev**-i-dence
- misfortune – mis-for-tune (three) : mis-**for**-tune
- malicious – ma-li-cious (three) : ma-**li**-cious
- embezzlement – em-bez-zle-ment (four) : em-**bez**-zle-ment
- architect – ar-chi-tect (three) : **ar**-chi-tect
- neighbours – neigh-bours (two) : **neigh**-bours
- accustomed – ac-cus-tomed (three) : ac-**cus**-tomed
- temporary – tem-po-rar-y (four) : **tem**-po-rar-y
- behaviour – be-hav-iour (three) : be-**hav**-iour
- documents – doc-u-ments (three) : **doc**-u-ments

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

- You may take it that
- He seems to be coming round
- My foot's gone to sleep

Answer:

- You may take it that – to understand or comprehend something
– You may take it that trekking is a passion for me.
- He seems to be coming round – to return to a former condition
– After the last years financial loss, he seems to be coming round.
- My foot's gone to sleep – to be without feeling for a brief time
– As I moved my leg in the cramped space, I realised that my foot's gone to sleep.

II. Reported Speech

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.

- To report a question, we use the reporting verb asked (as in Sentence Set 1).
- To report a statement, we use the reporting verb declared.
- The adverb of place here changes to there.
- When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the past tense (as in Sentence Set 3).
- If the verb in direct speech is in the present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to past continuous tense. For example, am getting changes to was getting.
- When the sentence in direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverb respectfully in the reporting clause (as in Sentence Set 1).
- The pronouns I, me, our and mine, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change according to the subject or object of the reporting verb 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 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.

Answer:

90-year-old A.K. Hangal, one of Hindi cinema’s most famous character actors, laughingly asked why we wanted to know his age. If people knew he was that 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 retired. 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 he did not have any complaints, adding that he had always been underpaid. Recipient of the 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.

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