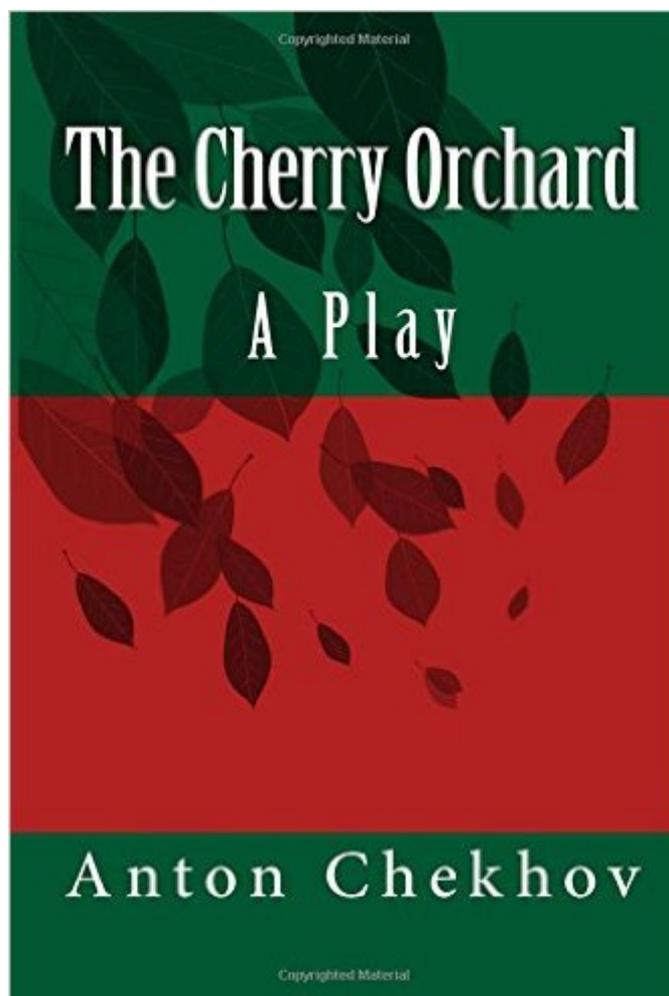


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# The Cherry Orchard: A Play



## Synopsis

The Cherry Orchard is a play by Russian playwright Anton Chekhov. It opened at the Moscow Art Theatre on 17 January 1904. Although Chekhov intended it as a comedy, it does contain some elements of farce. The play is often identified on the short list of the three or four outstanding plays written by Chekhov. In *The Cherry Orchard*, an impoverished landowning family is unable to face the fact that their estate is about to be auctioned off. Lopakhin, a local merchant, presents numerous options to save it, including cutting down their prized cherry orchard. But the family is stricken with denial. *The Cherry Orchard* charts the precipitous descent of a wealthy family and in the process creates a bold meditation on social change and bourgeois materialism.

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## Customer Reviews

As I read this play, my family is in the process of moving a thousand miles away from the farm where I grew up. Though I am so far away from the Russian culture and time of this play, the themes of place, tradition, and inevitable change resonated inside of me, and I am grateful to Chekhov for the way he has handled them. *The Cherry Orchard* is a play about change, and the symbolism is pretty easy to recognize. What makes it stand apart, I think, from a thousand other plays on the same theme is its wonderful sense of comedy, of smiling sadness. Chekhov all his life insisted it was a comedy. As *The Cherry Orchard* slips away from the Ranevskys, they seem to smile at its going. As they are unable to change their habits -- still lending money they don't have, still spending extravagantly -- they quietly laugh at their own foolishness. The change comes, and they leave, heartbroken -- but embracing the change at the same time, only feebly struggling against it. One feels saddest, in the end, for Lopakhin, the new owner of the Cherry Orchard. He seems to

believe he has bought happiness and friends, but is quickly discovering the emptiness of money and possessions, as no one wants to borrow from him, and no one seems to pay him much heed at all. Chekhov paints with a fine brush, and I appreciate that. There is no thunderstorming, no ranting and raving in this work. There is a fine and subtle, sad and comedic portrayal of a family and a place encountering change. It is a heartbreak with a smile. The translation, though the only one I've read, seems good. It is easy to follow and rich in simple feeling. If you'd like to discuss this play with me, or recommend something I might enjoy, or just chat, e-mail me at [williekrischke@hotmail.com](mailto:williekrischke@hotmail.com).

The Cherry Orchard was my first experience with Chekhov, and I was surprised at the depth in this 49 page play. By no means would I consider myself a "literary expert," but this was very readable and you can pull a lot of the deeper meanings and its context in Russian history by yourself. I was confused at a couple people who write that they simply couldn't understand it and it put them to sleep! It's not THAT tough! If I could understand and appreciate it, almost anyone can! What I like most about Chekhov is that he doesn't simplify his characters. He's a realist in this sense. Lopahkin and Trophimof each have admirable and detestable characteristics, just like you and I. While it may be set in the tumultuous period prior to the Russian revolution, the ideas and the discussions this play provokes are timeless. Highly recommended!

I bought the Kindle edition of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* under the impression that it was the translation done by English playwright Tom Stoppard as the authorship of the item clearly states in its description. However, upon examining the title page of the Kindle book I was shocked to see someone else listed as the translator. I have not read this translation and therefore cannot review it, but I am extremely disappointed that it is misrepresenting this item and they need to fix it!

As much as I enjoy Chekhov, I'm not a big fan of *THE CHERRY ORCHARD*; it never made much sense to me. However, this adaptation by David Mamet makes the play easier to follow and understand. The play itself is often labeled as a tragedy, but really isn't. As Mamet points out in the introduction to this adaptation, the closest form of drama *THE CHERRY ORCHARD*'s structure resembles is the farce. In fact, if all the characters weren't so depressing, the play would be hilarious. Perhaps that is what Chekhov originally intended, that as we would see the outrageous, pitiful existence of the characters in this play we would laugh at their moping and folly and strive to make our lives more meaningful. This isn't the best work to introduce one to the genius of Chekhov, but it is a classic and if one can get past all the whining (or to use a more pc term "reminiscing") it's

worth the read.

Anton Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" is a captivating, but somewhat confusing tale of an aristocratic household that comes face to face with adversity. His impressionistic portrayal of characters delivers a power-packed package of meaning that both appeals to and appalls every human heart. Through subtle messages and powerful passages Chekhov purveys his sentiments about a world that is tainted by a dark cloud of selfishness. Although the play itself is tragic-like the characters are not tragic. They seem to blindly stumble upon the pages of life accomplishing absolutely nothing. Through Chekhov's genius they still remain human, with dreams and fears like the rest of us. It is through these characters that Chekhov's beliefs are made known.

Anton Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard* is an extremely interesting play that has a dual nature as both comedy and tragedy. However, some non-Russian audiences may have difficulty understanding the sense of futility Chekhov gives it. The plot of the play centers around an aristocratic woman and her family whose fortunes have gone sour. They are about to sell their famed cherry orchard to pay the mortgage. Through the course of the play, the family finds several options to save the cherry orchard, but they do nothing. The estate is sold to a former serf, who doesn't seem to appreciate the cherry orchard and cuts it down. The tragedy is a symbolic one. The aristocracy tries in vain to maintain its social position, while the new bourgeoisie can't find meaning in their new wealth. Bottom Line: *The Cherry Orchard* is a fantastic play, both to read or to watch, though parts of it get "lost-in-translation" from the original Russian audience. For more of my reviews, visit [trevsliteraryreview.blogspot.com](http://trevsliteraryreview.blogspot.com)

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