

Biography of Chekhov

Russian writer Anton Chekhov is recognized as a master of the modern short story and a leading playwright of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Synopsis

Anton Chekhov was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia. Through stories such as "The Steppe" and "The Lady with the Dog," and plays such as *The Seagull* and *Uncle Vanya*, the prolific writer emphasized the depths of human nature, the hidden significance of everyday events and the fine line between comedy and tragedy. Chekhov died of tuberculosis on July 15, 1904, in Badenweiler, Germany.

Youth and Education

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia. His father, Pavel, was a grocer with frequent money troubles; his mother, Yevgeniya, shared her love of storytelling with Chekhov and his five siblings.

When Pavel's business failed in 1875, he took the family to Moscow to look for other work while Chekhov remained in Taganrog until he finished his studies. Chekhov finally joined his family in Moscow in 1879 and enrolled at medical school. With his father still struggling financially, Chekhov supported the family with his freelance writing, producing hundreds of short comic pieces under a pen name for local magazines.

Early Writing Career

During the mid-1880s, Chekhov practiced as a physician and began to publish serious works of fiction under his own name. His pieces appeared in the newspaper *New Times* and then as part of collections such as *Motley Stories* (1886). His story "The Steppe" was an important success, earning its author the Pushkin Prize in 1888. Like most of Chekhov's early work, it showed the influence of the major Russian realists of the 19th century, such as Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Chekhov also wrote works for the theater during this period. His earliest plays were short farces; however, he soon developed his signature style, which was a unique mix of comedy and tragedy. Plays such as *Ivanov* (1887) and *The Wood Demon* (1889) told stories about educated men of the upper classes coping with debt, disease and inevitable disappointment in life.

Major Works

Chekhov wrote many of his greatest works from the 1890s through the last few years of his life. In his short stories of that period, including “Ward No. 6” and “The Lady with the Dog,” he revealed a profound understanding of human nature and the ways in which ordinary events can carry deeper meaning.

In his plays of these years, Chekhov concentrated primarily on mood and characters, showing that they could be more important than the plots. Not much seems to happen to his lonely, often desperate characters, but their inner conflicts take on great significance. Their stories are very specific, painting a picture of pre-revolutionary Russian society, yet timeless.

From the late 1890s onward, Chekhov collaborated with Constantin Stanislavski and the Moscow Art Theater on productions of his plays, including his masterpieces *The Seagull* (1895), *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *The Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904).

Later Life and Death

In 1901, Chekhov married Olga Knipper, an actress from the Moscow Art Theatre. However, by this point his health was in decline due to the tuberculosis that had affected him since his youth. While staying at a health resort in Badenweiler, Germany, he died in the early hours of July 15, 1904, at the age of 44.

Chekhov is considered one of the major literary figures of his time. His plays are still staged worldwide, and his overall body of work influenced important writers of an array of genres, including James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams and Henry Miller.

ANALYSIS and Themes of ENEMIES

“Enemies” Is a Story about Anger That Never Dies

Introduction

Examples of Anger Responses:

1. Telemarketer calls you every night.
2. Your neighbor's dog barks whenever you're trying to sleep.
3. You lose your job and find out the boss replaced you with his wife's son, who happens to be a worthless jerk.
4. You spend a bunch a money on an online dating service and it sets you up with your ex.
5. Your husband cheats on you and then gives you herpes.
6. You bring your groceries home and you realize you bought moldy blueberries.

The problem with anger is that it's addictive. You can't shut it off. It becomes a way of being. We lose a sense of proportion. We only know anger for all situations so that anger makes us boring. "He's that guy who's angry all the time." We don't want to be that angry nutcase of a guy.

Always Know the Difference Between Healthy Anger and Self-Destructive Anger

Healthy anger is a normal reaction to something that is detrimental to your daily operation. You let off steam, you address the situation as best you can, and then you move on.

Healthy anger has these qualities:

It is motivational (mad at yourself for failing a test and using that anger as fuel to improve),

It is modulated (controlled)

It is temporary (you let go of it and move on).

However, self-destructive anger is a disease. Self-destructive anger has these qualities:

You don't or can't or are not willing to let go of it (you enjoy it in a perverse way and allow it to become your identity;

You love the drama of being angry because it fills the void in your life),

You let your anger control you (road rage, swearing in front of children, becoming a bitter person with the soul of an old man even though you may be in your early twenties)

You let your anger grow out of proportion to the original problem so that the anger is WORSE than the original source of your anger (TV commercials are bad but if you throw a brick through your TV because you're sick of the commercials, your rage just cost you a TV)

You misapply your anger to the wrong targets so that it is inappropriate (relationships and friendships, reciprocity; your talent level, resenting people who are more talented than you are)

You are blind to the manner in which the anger is destroying you (you become ugly and unpleasant around others and you don't even realize it).

All these self-destructive components of anger are evident in Kirilov.

The Irrational Mind Is Built on Self-Centered Anger

One. We learn that the scary thing about the ego is that often the ego asserts itself without our knowing it. Kirilov thinks his anger for Abogin is justified, but Kirilov's anger is an overreaction poisoned with class envy and self-centered egotism.

Two.

One way the ego asserts itself is by adding up grievances. "I've been wronged many times and I need to get even. I need to find justice. I need to find vindication. I need to find vengeance."

Three.

We learn that the ego says, "I'm right" and "My suffering is of greater depth than yours" and the implicit "therefore I'm a superior person."

Four.

We also learn that the ego says, "My pain is so important no circumstance should impede me from finding relief even if the person in question is suffering the loss of a child."

Five.

We also learn that the ego says, "Screw forgiveness of Abogin and his pathetic ways. Anger defines who I am."

Six.

We also learn that ego (from Abogin's point of views) says, "Screw the doctor's pain from the death of his child. I need his help. Now."

Seven.

Anger is often born of the ego, especially when the anger is relentless and self-centered, and lacks proportion. Both Kirilov and Abogin lose proportion of their grievances and as such they become eternal enemies to each other.

Eight.

Not all anger is bad, but the kind that impedes your growth, makes you lose proportion, renders you self-centered, and gnaws at you resulting in a slow self-destruction is a poison directed toward yourself.

Nine.

But even if you understand this, your ego will not allow you to let go. Your ego doesn't care if you are destroyed. Your ego only lives to perpetuate itself.

Conclusion

So far we've learned that the Irrational Mind is comprised of self-deceit, addictive rage, and the self-destructive ego.

Example of Self-Centered Anger Making Us Lose Proportion Used as an Introduction and Followed by a Thesis

So your ego's been damaged. Your girlfriend told you that you both "need to take a breather" and get some "quality alone time" so you can get back together and both be the better for it. But that time never comes. When you start calling her again, she's more determined about breaking up than before. She starts giving you clues, like "I think we need to start seeing other people." And "Since getting away from you, I feel like I've been given my life back." And worse, "I think being your girlfriend was like dying a slow painful death." And then the final nail in the coffin: "I'm seeing someone. It's serious, so you'll need to stop calling me—indefinitely."

At this point, any man with half a brain realizes the relationship is officially over. If you're a healthy-minded dude, you wish her well and hope she finds the happiness and romantic bliss she couldn't find with you. But needless to say, you're not that dude. You're a spiteful SOB whose ego needs to see her life miserable in your absence. To see her squirm and fail as she tries to make it in the world without you gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. Her lowly existence "proves" that indeed you were the best thing that ever happened to her. Needing to believe this about yourself, you long to see her languish through a life of unending agony. You need to hear through the grapevine that she's unhappy with her "dating life" and that she has a dead-end job with an obnoxious, penny-pinching boss who micromanages her every move. You need to know that her credit card bills and other expenses were just too great and she had to move back with her parents.

And then you get what you've been craving more than anything—the Surprise Meeting. These Surprise Meetings usually happen at a party. You see her standing all alone by a bowl of potato chips and onion dip. She's overweight, needy, makeup running down her face. At which time you walk a circle around her, shake your head in disdain, puff on your Cuban cigar, and say, "Look at you now, sweetheart. Look at you now." And then with a sneer you walk away from her as you make your grand exit from the party. Of course, you're flanked by your eye-catching entourage—two slender scandalously dressed super models who accompany you as you get inside your silver Ferrari Barchetta Pininfarina you bought with the riches afforded by your new Fortune 500 company. As you sit in your three-hundred-thousand-dollar Italian sports car and your "girls" run their sensuous fingers through your thick head of hair, you see your ex-girlfriend, still alone at the party, now looking at you through the parted curtains and she's shaking her head, her eyes full of sadness and regret. You can read her mind. She's saying to herself, "Now that is one studly dude I should have stayed with. Just look how incredible his life is, and look how crappy mine turned out to be. If only I had listened to him I wouldn't have to spend the rest of my life wondering how amazing it would have been to spend my life with a man of such incomprehensible greatness."

This gratifying scenario would have lasted longer, only your three-hundred-pound mother in a muumuu wakes you from your dream and tells you to get off your fat ass. You promised her you'd find a job by now and you've got less than an hour before your interview at Toys R Us. As you lay on your filthy bare mattress and look at your mother shaking her finger at you while spitting a venomous lecture about what a lazy thirty-seven-year-old loser you turned out to be, you wonder what your ex-girlfriend is up to these days and you feel the urge to call her, but you know that's impossible. Your pathetic existence would only vindicate her decision to have left you many years before.

You are like the characters from Chekhov's short story "Enemies" and you've allowed your life to be ruined by the Irrational Mind evidenced by

