

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

Home

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 2, 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 3, 5



Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development (RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2),
- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding...how the characters are introduced and developed (RL.11-12.3), and
- analyze how an author's choices concerning...where to begin or end a story...contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5).

Time:

1-2 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (10 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (6 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Chekhov (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Chekhov's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...**activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.

Anton Chekhov

Home

Like so many other short stories, Anton Chekhov's "Home" is deceptive. Its simplicity can lead the reader into believing that this is merely a small slice-of-life tale, but "Home" is not straightforward in its subject matter and message, either. Clearly, on the surface, the story is about a father struggling to determine how best to discipline his young son for what the man considers a minor infraction. This surface story contains humor: the father's internal vacillation in which he criticizes every attempt he makes at connecting with his son and the son's responses that reflect a typical child's inability to understand an adult's concern or to maintain focus on one topic for more than a few seconds. The surface story also contains a humorous bit of irony in that the father who cannot satisfactorily discipline his son is also a prosecutor for the state.

The father's dilemma, however, is merely the surface, the vehicle through which Chekhov explores more abstract issues like the nature of truth. As both a realist and a modernist, Chekhov disapproved of unnecessary embellishment. Remember this as you consider how the father finally convinces the son never to smoke again and how the father accepts his ultimate success.

Certainly Chekhov, the storyteller, wants his reader to smile at the poor father's attempts and at the son's delightful childishness. But Chekhov, the artist, wants his reader to think about something else as well.

Don't let the apparent simplicity of the story fool you into missing what this is.

"Home" first appeared in an 1887 collection of Chekhov's stories titled *V Sumerkakh* (*At Dusk*). It was introduced to American readers in 1922 in *The Cook's Wedding and Other Stories*, a collection of Chekhov stories translated into English by Constance Garnett.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia, near the Black Sea. His father was a grocer, and much of Chekhov's childhood was spent working long hours in the store. The elder Chekhov was physically and emotionally abusive, and many of the most unpleasant characters Chekhov inhabits his works with would resemble his father.

Anton Chekhov

Home

Lexile Measure: 1020L

“SOMEONE CAME FROM the Grigoryevs’ to fetch a book, but I said you were not at home. The postman brought the newspaper and two letters. By the way, Yevgeny Petrovitch, I should like to ask you to speak to Seryozha. To-day, and the day before yesterday, I have noticed that he is smoking. When I began to expostulate with him, he put his fingers in his ears as usual, and sang loudly to drown my voice.”

Yevgeny Petrovitch Bykovsky, the prosecutor of the circuit court, who had just come back from a session and was taking off his gloves in his study, looked at the governess as she made her report, and laughed.

“Seryozha smoking...” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “I can picture the little cherub with a cigarette in his mouth! Why, how old is he?”

“Seven. You think it is not important, but at his age smoking is a bad and pernicious habit, and bad habits ought to be eradicated in the beginning.”

“Perfectly true. And where does he get the tobacco?”

“He takes it from the drawer in your table.”

“Yes? In that case, send him to me.”

When the governess had gone out, Bykovsky sat down in an arm-chair before his writing-table, shut his eyes, and fell to thinking. He pictured his Seryozha with a huge cigar, a yard long, in the midst of clouds of tobacco smoke, and this caricature made him smile; at the same time, the grave, troubled face of the governess called up memories of the long past, half-forgotten time when smoking aroused in his teachers and parents a strange, not quite intelligible horror.

Anton Chekhov

*Home***STUDENT QUESTIONS:**

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) What effect does Chekhov achieve by beginning this story *in medias res* with a character speaking? How does the nature of the quoted conversation contribute to this effect?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) What do Yevgeny Petrovitch's thoughts about how to deal with his son suggest about his own character?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) What is Chekhov saying when the father considers how to reprimand his son for smoking?

The living organism has the power of rapidly adapting itself, growing accustomed and inured to any atmosphere whatever, otherwise man would be bound to feel at every moment. . . . how little of established truth and certainty there is even in work so responsible and so terrible in its effects as that of the teacher, of the lawyer, of the writer.

What possible theme is he introducing by including "the writer" in the list of those whose work produces "responsible and terrible effects"?

4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) What realization does the son's decision not to smoke anymore inspire in the father? What theme is suggested by this conflict?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) What do the father's attitudes toward the anti-smoking lesson and the role of the storyteller in society suggest about Chekhov's main point in the story?

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Anton Chekhov, *Home*

Question 1: What effect does Chekhov achieve by beginning this story *in medias res* with a character speaking? How does the nature of the quoted conversation contribute to this effect?

STEP 1: List the principles and conventions commonly associated with the technique of beginning a story *in medias res*.

STEP 2: List also the conventions and assumptions commonly associated with direct dialogue in fiction.

Use the following chart to record your ideas and organize your material as you prepare your final answer.

	Principle or Convention	Effect or Impact	Application to "Home"	Overall Effect of Techniques
In Media Res	no early background or exposition	fast-paced: no waiting for inciting incident or introduction of conflict		
	suspenseful: immediately interesting or puzzling	opening event is usually a crucial event or right before a major turning point	Any one of the issues alluded to could prove to be the main conflict of the story.	
Dialogue	the identities of the speakers	begin to understand or sympathize with characters	not identified but sounds like someone with authority	
	the relationship between the speakers	begin to predict protagonist, antagonist, and nature of conflict		
	the situation of the dialogue (occasion, setting, etc.)			
	exposition provided in the text of the dialogue			

STEP 3: Consider the possible impact on the reader's experience of using these techniques and adhering to these conventions.

STEP 4: Describe the specific impact Chekhov's use of these techniques has on "Home."

STEP 5: Look at the ideas you've generated and noted on the chart. Whatever you would write in the right hand column, "Overall Effect of Techniques," is your answer to Question 1.