

A joke that is not so
funny essay sample



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“ Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he’s been given. But up to now he hasn’t been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life’s become extinct, the climate’s ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day” (Russell). From this quote from Anton Chekhov, one can tell he viewed life in a very different way. Chekhov enjoyed writing stories about reality. He often wrote about tragic, true stories that happened in his own life.

Chekhov liked to write stories that were very sad and depressing but he just wanted to write about how he viewed life. The story, “ A Joke,” can be a true story in many lives, possibly even Anton Chekhov’s life (kirjasto). The story “ A Joke” is about a girl named Nadyzhda Petrovna and a guy whose name is not mentioned. The story begins when the two go sledding down a big hill. Nadya is very scared to go down but after the first time she wants to go again and again. They continue to go down the big hill more and more, day after day. Every time they would go down the hill, the guy would always say, “ I love you, Nadya! ”

Towards the end of the story, Nadya was at the top of the hill looking for the guy she always went down with but she could not find him. She went down the hill by herself and was very shaken up and faint at the bottom. In the end, Nadya got married to another man and had three children. The guy who once said the precious words “ I love you” to her, looked back on the times he had with Nadya and wondered what his motives were in that “ joke” (imagi-nation). Anton Chekhov was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia. He worked long and hard at his dad’s grocery store when he was growing up.

For awhile, Chekhov went to a Greek school but when his dad went bankrupt they had to move to Moscow. He went to a school to study grammar when he moved there. He went to college at the University of Moscow to be a doctor. As Chekhov went to college, he started to write stories and comics for newspapers to make some money. He began to be popular not only with his stories and comics but with his novels. When Chekhov finished college he was a doctor for eight years. Even while he was working in the medical field, he wrote stories in the St. Petersburg daily *Novoe vremya*.

As he wrote so much in this newspaper he found his style of writing to be detached and liberal (Steinberg 767). As Chekhov grew more and more popular he made many accomplishments. The Pushkin Prize and getting nominated one of the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature were a couple of his achievements. Chekhov moved to Melikhove when he made writing his full time job. *Neighbors*, *Ward Number Six*, *The Black Monk*, *The Murder*, and *Ariadne* were some of his best stories.

His first play was called “ *The Seagull*,” and it was very successful. Since that play went so well, he wrote a few more including “ *Uncle Vanya*,” “ *The Three Sisters*,” and “ *The Cherry Orchard*” (Murphy 192). In 1904, Chekhov married Olga Knipper who acted in many of the plays he wrote. Their marriage did not last long because Chekhov had to go into exile in the conclusion of his life because he got a lung hemorrhage. He still tried to make the productions of his plays but many times he had to stay in Crimea to get help with his health. A few years later he died of tuberculosis on July 14, 1904, when he was forty-four. Chekhov quoted, “ All I wanted was to say

honestly to people: ‘ Have a look at yourselves and see how bad and dreary your lives are! ‘

The important thing is that people should realize that, for when they do, they will most certainly create another and better life for themselves. ” Many of the plays and stories he wrote were literal reflections and experiences he had in his own life (Russell). Chekhov took his stories and plays very seriously. He quoted, “ A writer is not a confectioner, a cosmetic dealer, or an entertainer. He is a man who has signed a contract with his conscious and his sense of duty” (Russell). Chekhov loved to write stories that were very realistic.

Though his stories were very depressing and sad at times, Chekhov just wanted to get the point across that life is hard. He did not view life as a fairy tale so; therefore, he did not want to write about fairytales. Many times, his style of writing turned people off because it was so negative. He enjoyed writing about love and work but the two themes never worked out in a happy ending. There was usually a killing, affair, or failure that occurred that had to ruin the “ fairytale” theme (kirjasto). The story “ A Joke” is a good example of Chekhov’s writing style.

At the beginning of the story, Nadya and the guy go sledding. It turns into a love story when they started to constantly go down the hill together and the guy always told Nadya he loved her. Sure enough, in the end, the two separate and Nadya gets married to another man. The guy was left always wondering what happened with the girl and him. It seemed like he regretted not ever finding out why nothing ever happened between the two of them. It

is a good possibility that something like that happened to Chekhov or someone he knew because he liked to relate his stories to his personal life.

Maybe when he was younger, he was in love with a girl and he told her that he loved her. Eventually things did not work out and ever since, his view of love was changed for the worse. He could have possibly always regretted telling the girl he loved her, or the opposite, letting her go (imagi-nation). Chekhov was a very talented writer who could go from comics to sad short stories. His view of life was very clear through his writings.

He said, “ My life is tedious, dull, monotonous, because I am a painter, a queer fish, and have been worried all my life with envy, discontent, disbelief in my work: I am always poor, I am a vagabond, but you are a wealthy, normal man, a landowner, a gentleman – why do you live so tamely and take so little from life? ” (Russell). It seemed like he never enjoyed life and always looked at it from a negative point of view. Life should contain a balance between reality and optimism. Chekhov had a drastic view of reality and needed more optimism in his life. Realistic stories were Chekhov’s specialty and that is why it is a good possibility one of his life experiences was reflected in the story “ A Joke” (Murphy 192).