

## Some Features of the Formation of A.P. Chekhov as a Writer

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**Annotation:** *The article is devoted to some of the features of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's development as a writer, starting from childhood, casually mentioning his years of study at the gymnasium and university, outlining the main milestones of his creative path, focusing on prose works, especially early humorous stories.*

**Keywords:** *Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, the art of writing, culture, craftsmanship, writer, stories, creativity.*

*Life is given once, and you want to live it*

*Cheerful, meaningful, beautiful.*

*(“The Story of an Unknown Man” by A.P. Chekhov)*



As is known, the work of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (January 29, 1860 /Taganrog, Russia/ – July 15, 1904 /Badenweiler, Germany/) is a phenomenon that belongs not only to Russian but also to world culture.

Even more than one hundred and twenty years after the writer's death, interest in his works continues unabated.

A.P. Chekhov is a Russian writer, prose writer, playwright, publicist, and public figure in the field of charity, although he is a doctor by training /medical faculty of Moscow University 1879 – 1884/.

In addition, he is also an honorary academician of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in the category of fine literature.

In 1899, by decree of Emperor Nicholas II, the writer was awarded the Order of St. Stanislav, 3rd degree, "for excellent zeal in matters of public education", and with it the nobility.

A.P. Chekhov loved art, knew how to play the violin, was fond of painting and created his own church choir, where the future writer sang.

Chekhov wrote: "As a child, I had no childhood".

His life was divided between studying at the gymnasium, working in a shop, rehearsing and singing in the church choir.

He recalled his childhood years with bitterness, although it was then that the foundations of his education were laid - at the age of eight, the future writer entered a Greek gymnasium school, where his love for literature was formed and Chekhov's first literary and stage experiments began, where he published the humorous magazine "Spectator", came up with captions for drawings, wrote stories and skits.

His first drama, "Fatherlessness", was written by him at the age of 18.

The years at the gymnasium gave Chekhov enormous material for his writing: the most typical and colorful figures will appear much later on the pages of his works. Thus, the inspector of the Taganrog gymnasium, where he received his education, Dyakonov, nicknamed Centipede, became the prototype of the Greek teacher Belikov from the story "The Man in a Case".

The Taganrog men's classical gymnasium provided a solid education and upbringing for those times; after graduating from eight classes, young people could enter any Russian university without exams or go to study abroad.

It is noteworthy that while studying as a student, he writes a lot to earn a living.

Soon his works (short stories, anecdotes, witticisms and notes) under various pseudonyms (most often – Antosha Chekhonte, which was awarded to him by the teacher of the Law of God Fyodor Pokrovsky, who jokingly altered the surnames of his students in the Latin manner) began to appear on the pages of cheap humorous magazines "Strekoza" (the first printed story "Letter to a learned neighbor" /1880/), "Budilnik", "Zritel", "Oskolki" and others.



Issue No. 10 of the Dragonfly magazine.

First publication of the story

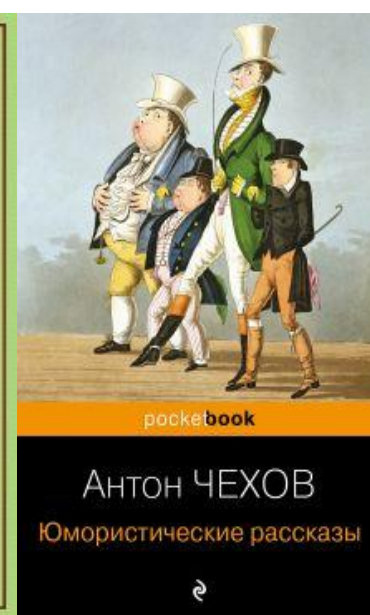
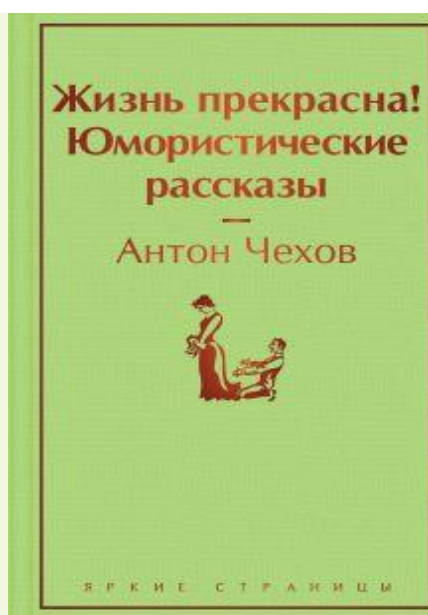
*"Letter from a Don landowner to a learned neighbor"*

Issue No. 27 of the magazine "Oskolki" for 1883.

First publication of the story

*"Death of an Official"*

Work in humorous magazines became the literary school of the young Chekhov: the need to fit a story into a certain number of lines taught him the art of writing concisely.



Since 1883, the main genre of A.P. Chekhov became a sketch – a short, often anecdotal story, built on a dialogue between two or more persons depicted in an everyday setting.

The writer knows how to depict a broad picture of life. Therefore, Chekhov's stories are very short, but capacious.



“Beware of refined language. The language should be simple and elegant.” (from a letter to Al. P. Chekhov, May 8, 1889).

Chekhov wrote a lot and quickly, and this debut was followed by the publication of short humorous stories and feuilletons in various Moscow and St. Petersburg publications. Soon he outgrew feuilletons, vaudevilles and humoresques.

It is noteworthy that the famous Russian writer Dmitry Grigorovich in a letter (1886) criticized Chekhov for wasting his talent on “little things – мелочишки”.

Having listened to the advice, the writer began to collaborate less with humor magazines, his works became more serious and longer.

A significant part of the stories of this period belong to the genre that Chekhov himself, in contrast to “little things – мелочишки” and “sketch”, called “serious sketches”.

From the second half of the 1880s, the themes of his works became more serious, the author became increasingly interested in the tragedy of everyday, everyday life.

They finally determined the type of Chekhov's hero and also the main object of the image – the “average person”.

During these years, Chekhov's interest in everyday life arose, and that special “eventlessness” of Chekhov's prose began to appear, which many critics would later note.

A feature appeared in his writing style that some contemporaries considered an advantage, others considered a disadvantage: dispassionate description, an emphasized lack of authorial evaluation. This feature is especially characteristic of the following stories “I want to sleep”, “Women”, “Princess”.

By the end of the 1880s. humorous miniatures gave way to stories: “The Steppe” (1888) and “A Boring Story” (1889), published in thick magazines, brought Chekhov literary fame.

Moreover, the story “The Steppe” (which was a kind of result of his early work, which combined humor, lyricism, the skill of everyday sketches and landscapes) was a great success among readers, was highly appreciated by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Vsevolod Garshin, Alexei Pleshchev and promoted Chekhov to the ranks of Russian writers for the first time.

Chekhov devoted most of his time to collaboration with the magazine “Russian Thought”, where the stories “Ward No. 6”, “Man in a Case”, “House with a Mezzanine” were first published.

Interestingly, in 1882, Chekhov prepared his first collection of short stories, “Prank,” but it was not published, perhaps due to censorship difficulties.

In 1884, the first collection of stories "Tales of Melpomene. Six stories by A. Chekhonte" was published, in 1886 – "Motley Stories", although he did not abandon his medical activity.

In 1888 (October 7), the Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences awarded the Pushkin Prize for the collection of stories “At Twilight. Essays and Stories”.



At dusk. Essays and short stories.

Published by A. S. Suvorin, St. Petersburg 1887.

In 1889, the 4th collection of stories, “Gloomy People,” was published.

Chekhov’s works, from the humorous stories of the first two collections (“Motley Stories”, “In the Twilight”), published under the pseudonym “Antosha Chekhonte,” to the story “The Steppe” and masterpieces (“The Lady with the Dog”, “The Man in the Case” etc.), to the famous plays (“Uncle Vanya”, “The Seagull”, “Three Sisters”, “The Cherry Orchard”), are artistic wealth that is not limited to the present, but belongs to future generations.

The plots and dialogue of his early stories are presented in a dramatic rather than a narrative or descriptive vein, and several of his nine one-act plays, namely the vaudeville plays “The Jubilee” (1886), “The Bear” (1888), “The Proposal” (1889), and “The Wedding” (1890) were dramatizations of stories. Bright comedy and genuine gaiety ensured Chekhov's vaudevilles constant success during productions.

The stories written by A.P. Chekhov in the last period of his creative work represent a multifaceted analysis of Russian society, the social orientation of which is almost always obvious, although the writer never violates the fundamental artistic unity of the work. Among these stories and novellas, his best creations are “The Student” (1894), “Anna on the Neck” (1895), “Murder” (1895), “My Life” (1896), “The Peasants” (1897), “The Darling” (1898), “In the Ravine” (1899), “The Bishop” (1902) and “The Bride” (1902-1903) – the last story.

During the Melikhovo period (1892-1898) 42 works were created: the story “Ward No. 6” (1892), the stories “The House with a Mezzanine” (1896), “Women's Kingdom” (1894), “A Case from Practice” (1898), “Ionych” (1898), the trilogy – “The Man in a Case” (1898), “Gooseberries” (1898), “About Love” (1898), a large “village cycle” of works was written, such as the story “The Peasants” (1897), “On the Cart”, “New Dacha” (1899), “On Official Business” (1899), the story “Three Years” (1895), the plays “The Seagull” (1896), “Uncle Vanya” (1897) (a new artistic language, his lyricism and the special internal movement of his plays) and more than 30 others.

During the Yalta period, the stories “New Dacha”, “On Business Matters”, “Darling”, “Lady with a Dog” (all in 1899), the story “In the Ravine” (1900), the stories “On Christmastide” (1900), “The Bishop” (1902), “The Bride” (1903) were created.

While preparing the collected works (1901-1902), proposed by the publisher Adolf Marx, having sold him the rights to publish all the works, Chekhov revised his early works, rejected many of them, and significantly revised others.

In 1895, Anton Pavlovich visited Yasnaya Polyana to meet L.N. Tolstoy, who had been waiting for this meeting for a long time.

Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, not at all inclined to humor, laughed at Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's stories "Surgery", "Book of Complaints", "Boots", "Burbot" and others to the point of tears. Thus, in the story "The Horse's Name" the life of the old estate is accurately and vividly described.

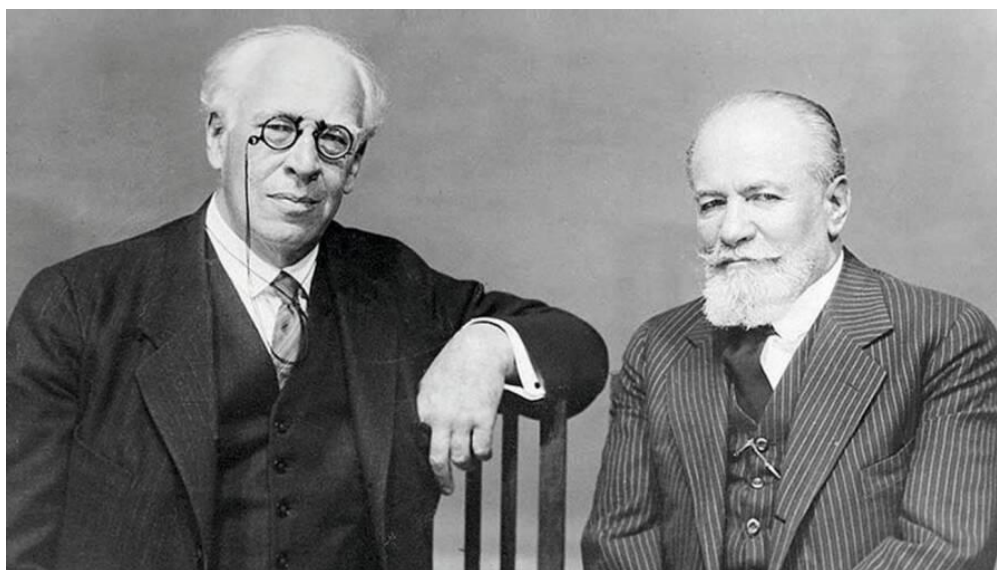
Highly appreciating the work of A.P. Chekhov, L.N. Tolstoy called the writer "an incomparable artist of life." "Chekhov is Pushkin in prose. Just as in Pushkin's poems everyone can find something that they themselves have experienced, so in Chekhov's stories, at least in some of them, the reader will certainly see himself and his thoughts..." wrote Leo Tolstoy. /from the book by Boris Lazarevsky "Tales and Stories", 1906./

A.P. Chekhov not only continued what was already in Russian literature - the humor of N.V. Gogol, satire by M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, but gave us something that did not exist before: a culture of laughter that enlightens an overly serious, gloomy outlook on life.

It was during these years that Chekhov wrote over one and a half thousand letters to various addressees.

In Chekhov's legacy, epistolary work occupies a significant place: 12 volumes in the 30-title complete collection of the writer's works: it includes correspondence with authoritative contemporaries (D. Grigorovich, V. Veresaev, V. Korolenko, etc.) and young writers (M. Gorky, I. Bunin, A. Kuprin, N. Teleshov, etc.).

Intensive written communication with publishers and editors (A. Suvorin, I. Sytin, A. Tikhonov, etc.) and theater figures, especially in the last period of life (K. Stanislavsky, Vl. Nemirovich-Danchenko).



*K.S. Stanislavsky and V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko*

In addition, valuable material is contained in Chekhov's notebooks, where the writer wrote down everything that happened to him, as well as interesting names that he encountered, which he then used in his works.

Mother, Evgenia Yakovlevna, passionately loved the theater, although she did not visit it often. She had a huge influence on the formation of the characters of her children, instilling in them responsiveness, respect and compassion for the weak, and a love of nature and the world. Anton Chekhov said that "Talent comes from our father's side, and our soul comes from our mother's side".

Therefore, undoubtedly, a feature of his work was the ability to deeply and accurately convey human emotions and states. Although Chekhov is also known for his satirical and humorous works.

The more complete the knowledge about Chekhov's creative development today, the more accurate and deeper the comprehension of his works will become.

The fame of Chekhov as a playwright has not eclipsed his reputation as a master of storytelling; his plays are on stage in theaters all over the world, and his stories are republished in large editions and included in school curricula.

The most textbook (most famous) early stories of Chekhov:

- "Joy" (1883)
- "The Triumph of the Winner" (1883)
- "The Weasel" (1883)
- "The Groom" (1883)
- "Mysterious Nature" (1883)
- "Death of an Official" (1883)
- "The Angry Boy" (1883)
- "Albion's Daughter" (1883)
- "Swedish Match" (1883)
- "Thick and Thin" (1883)
- "Book of Complaints" (1884)
- "Surgery" (1884)
- "Chameleon" (1884)
- "Bubot" (1885)
- "Horse Name" (1885)
- "The Intruder" (1885)
- "Unter Prishibeev" (1885)
- "Over-salted" (1885)

Chekhov's early stories are classics of humorous literature.

Their plots are well known and have become exemplary for humorous stories.

The stories still make you laugh, lift your spirits, and at the same time make you think about serious issues.

The work of early Chekhov is witty, in later works his humor takes on a tinge of bitterness and ceases to make people laugh, turning into bitter irony.





In memory of the writer, the Moscow city and Moscow regional organizations of the Union of Writers of Russia and the Union of Writers-Translators established the A.P. Chekhov Memorial Medal in 2004.

The city of Chekhov near Moscow is named after the writer.

It is noteworthy that when January 29, 2010 marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of the great world-famous writer, in connection with this significant event, the world organization UNESCO declared 2011 the year of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov.

Over the entire period of artistic creativity of A.P. Chekhov created more than 500 different works (short humorous stories, serious stories, plays, not counting many feuilletons and humoresques), many of which have become classics of world literature and have been translated into more than 100 languages of the world.