Thinking about the Play

1. What does Chubukov at first suspect that Lomov has come for? Is he sincere when he later says "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son"? Find reasons for your answer from the play.

Answer

At first, Chubukov suspected that Lomov had come to borrow money. He was not sincere when he told Lomov that he had always loved him and that he was like his own son. He had decided that he would not give Lomov any money if he tried borrowing from him. If he truly meant what he had said, then he would not have thought of not giving him money. He said so only because Lomov had come with the proposal to marry his daughter.

2. Chubukov says of Natalya: "… as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat…" Would you agree? Find reasons for your answer.

Answer

Chubukov thought that Lomov was a good marriage prospect for his daughter. He had been waiting for this proposal. When Lomov expressed his doubt regarding Natalya's consent to the proposal, Chubukov immediately told him that she was in love with him. However, this was not true. Natalya did not seem to be in love with Lomov at any point in the play. It seemed like she was more attached to her land, meadows and dogs than to Lomov. In fact, the way they kept getting into arguments about trivial matters suggests that neither Lomov nor Natalya was in love with the other.

3. (i) Find all the words and expressions in the play that the characters use to speak about each other, and the accusations and insults they hurl at each other. (For example, Lomov in the end calls Chubukov an intriguer; but earlier, Chubukov has himself called Lomov a "malicious, double faced intriguer." Again, Lomov begins by describing Nayalya as " an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated.")

Answer

(i) Several words and expressions have been used by the characters to describe each other. Some of them are as follows:
Chubukov: grabber; intriguer; old rat; Jesuit
Natalya: a lovesick cat; an excellent housekeeper; not bad-looking, well-educated
Lomov: a good neighbour; a friend; impudent; pettifogger; a malicious, double-faced intriguer; rascal; blind hen; turnip-ghost; a villain; a scarecrow; monster; the stuffed sausage; the wizen-faced frump; boy; pup; milksop; fool

Thinking about the Language

1. This play has been translated into English from the Russian original. Are there any expressions or ways of speaking that strike you as more Russian than English? For example,

would an adult man be addressed by an older man as my darling or my treasure in an English play?
Read through the play carefully, and find expressions that you think are not used in contemporary English, and contrast these with idiomatic modern English expressions that also occur in the play.

3. Look up the following phrases in a dictionary to find out their meaning, and then use each in a sentence of your own.

(i) You may take it that
(ii) He seems to be coming round
(iii) My foot's gone to sleep

Answer

1. Expressions not used in contemporary English

1. "my darling", "my beauty", "my precious", "my angel", "my beloved" (here, an older man is addressing an adult man)

2. "…and so on…" (here, it is used after a sentence in order to complete it)

3. "…and all that sort of thing." (not explaining what it is, just leaving it as it is)

4. "…and all that." (again leaving the sentence as it is)

5. "the scarecrow", "the stuffed sausage", "the wizen-faced frump" (In this way, they hurled insults at each other)

6. "And how may you be getting on?" (Here, Lomov is asking Chubukov about his well-being)

Modern English expressions

1. "Madam", "my heart", "honoured Natalya Stepanovna" (used by Lomov for Natalya)

2. "Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch" (used by Lomov for Chubukov)

3. "I beg your pardon…"

4. "My dear fellow" (Chubukov addressing Lomov)

5. "malicious, double-faced intriguer", "fool" (Chubukov insulting Lomov)

3.(i)You may take it that I am lying, but in fact it will help you in the long run.

(ii) He seems to be coming round after the trauma of his father's death.

(iii) After the three hour long yoga session, my foot's gone to sleep.

II. You mush have noticed that when we report someone's exact words, we have to make some changes in the sentence structure. In the following sentences fill in the blanks to list the changes that have occurred in the above pairs of sentences. One has been done for you.

1. To report a question, we use the reporting verb asked (as in Sentence Set 1).
2. To report a declaration, we use the reporting verb _____.
3. The adverb of place *here* changes to _____.
4. When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the _____ tense (as in Sentence Set 3).
5. If the verb in direct speech is in the present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to _____tense. For example, _____ changes to *was getting*.
6. When the sentence in direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverb _____in the reporting clause (as in Sentence Set 1).
7. The pronouns *I*, *me*, *our* and *mine*, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change to third person pronouns such as_____, _____, _____ or _____in reported speech.

Answer

1. To report a question, we use the reporting verb asked.
2. To report a declaration, we use the reporting verb declared.
3. The adverb of place *here* changes to there.
4. When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the pasttense.
5. If the verb in direct speech is in the present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to past continuous tense. For example, am getting changes to *was getting*.
6. When the sentence in direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverbrespectfully in the reporting clause.
7. The pronouns I, me, our and mine, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change to second person pronouns such as he/she, him/her, their or his/hers in reported speech.

III. Here is an excerpt from an article from the Times of India dated 27 August 2006. Rewrite it, changing the sentences in direct speech into reported speech. Leave the other sentences unchanged.

"Why do you want to know my age? If people know I am so old, I won't get work!" laughs 90-year-old A. K. Hangal, one of Hindi cinema's most famous character actors. For his age, he is rather energetic. "What's the secret?" we ask. "My intake of everything is in small quantities. And I walk a lot," he replies. "I joined the industry when people retire. I was in my 40s. So I don't miss being called a star. I am still respected and given work, when actors of my age are living in poverty and without work. I don't have any complaints," he says, adding, "but yes, I have always been underpaid." Recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Hangal never hankered after money or materialistic gains. "No doubt I am content today, but money is important. I was a fool not to understand the value of money earlier," he regrets.

Answer

90-year-old A.K. Hangal, one of Hindi cinema's most famous character actors, laughingly asked why we wanted to know his age. If people knew he was that old, he would not get work. For his age, he is rather energetic. We asked him what the secret was. He replied that his intake of everything was in small quantities and he walked a lot. He said that he had joined the industry when people retired. He had been in his 40s. So he did not miss being called a star. He was still respected and given work, when actors of his age were living in poverty and without work. He said he did not have any complaints, adding that he had always been underpaid. Recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Hangal never hankered after money or materialistic gains. He said that no doubt he was content at present, but money was important. He said regretfully that he was a fool not to understand the value of money before.