

ANTON CHEKHOV

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

Two-Scene Reading Handout and 120-Minute Class Workshop

Course	World Literature	Student	_____
Class / section	_____	Reading due	_____

MỤC ĐÍCH ĐỌC

Đọc *The Cherry Orchard* như một vở kịch về ký ức, quyền sở hữu và sự chuyển dịch xã hội. Khu vườn anh đào đồng thời là tài sản kinh tế, không gian tuổi thơ, dấu tích của chế độ nông nô và vật liệu cho một tương lai chưa chắc đã tốt đẹp hơn. Khi đọc, chú ý không chỉ lời thoại mà cả khoảng dừng, động tác, âm thanh và những việc nhân vật không làm.

BEFORE YOU READ

- Đọc các đoạn thành tiếng ít nhất một lần. Đánh dấu nơi giọng nói thay đổi hoặc nơi một khoảng dừng có thể làm đổi nghĩa câu thoại.
- Khoanh các từ thuộc bốn nhóm: past / future; home / property; ownership / labour; sound / silence.
- Gạch dưới ít nhất ba stage directions. Ghi bên lề điều khán giả có thể nhìn hoặc nghe thấy mà lời thoại không nói trực tiếp.
- Đánh dấu một khoảnh khắc có thể được diễn như hài kịch và một khoảnh khắc có thể được diễn như bi kịch.
- Chuẩn bị một nhận xét về Lopakhin không dùng các nhãn đơn giản như “good,” “bad,” “hero,” hoặc “villain.”

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The excerpts use Julius West's 1916 English translation. Older diction and transliteration are retained. The selected scenes are sufficient for the class activities; students are not required to read the entire play before class.

WHOLE-PLAY ORIENTATION

Act	Dramatic movement
Act I	Ranevskaya returns to the family estate. Lopakhin warns that debt will force the sale and proposes cutting down the orchard to lease the land for summer villas. The family cannot accept the plan.
Act II	The approaching auction becomes unavoidable. Trofimov links the beauty of the orchard to the history of serfdom and imagines a future that requires labour and moral reckoning.
Act III	While a party continues at the house, the estate is auctioned. Lopakhin returns and announces that he has bought the orchard once owned by the family who owned his ancestors.

Act	Dramatic movement
Act IV	The family departs. “Old life” and “new life” are announced, but Firs is forgotten in the locked house. The final sounds are a breaking string and axes cutting the trees.

Key characters for this handout

Lubov Andreyevna Ranevskaya	Landowner returning from Paris; emotionally attached to the estate and orchard.
Ermolai Alexeyevitch Lopakhin	Wealthy merchant; son and grandson of people formerly bound to the estate.
Gaev	Ranevskaya’s brother; eloquent, nostalgic, and unable to act effectively.
Firs	Eighty-seven-year-old servant; remembers how the orchard functioned in the old social order.
Varya	Ranevskaya’s adopted daughter; manages the estate and throws down the household keys after the sale.
Anya	Ranevskaya’s daughter; responds to the sale by imagining a different future.

Key terms

Term	Working meaning
serf / serfdom	nông nô / chế độ nông nô; peasants legally bound to landowners before the 1861 Emancipation reform
estate	điền trang, gồm nhà ở và đất đai
auction	cuộc đấu giá
mortgage	khoản nợ được bảo đảm bằng tài sản
villa / summer cottage	nhà nghỉ ngoại ô; dấu hiệu của một nền kinh tế và tầng lớp xã hội mới
stage direction	chỉ dẫn sân khấu về cử chỉ, vị trí, âm thanh, khoảng dừng hoặc hành động

READING 1 — ACT I: LOPAKHIN, CLASS MEMORY, AND THE “SOLUTION”

WHY THESE MOMENTS

The first passage introduces Lopakhin's divided identity. The second presents a financially rational plan that requires the destruction of the orchard. Read the two moments together: the person offering the solution is also historically connected to the estate's violence and hierarchy.

[1] *[The nursery. It is close on sunrise. It is May. The cherry-trees are in flower, but there is an early frost. Lopakhin waits for Ranevskaya's train.]*

[2] **LOPAKHIN.** Lubov Andreyevna has been living abroad for five years; I don't know what she'll be like now.... She's a good sort—an easy, simple person. I remember when I was a boy of fifteen, my father, who is dead—he used to keep a shop in the village here—hit me on the face with his fist, and my nose bled.... We had gone into the yard together for something or other, and he was a little drunk.

[3] **LOPAKHIN.** Lubov Andreyevna, as I remember her now, was still young, and very thin, and she took me to the washstand here in this very room, the nursery. She said, “Don't cry, little man, it'll be all right in time for your wedding.” [Pause] “Little man”.... My father was a peasant, it's true, but here I am in a white waistcoat and yellow shoes... a pearl out of an oyster. I'm rich now, with lots of money, but just think about it and examine me, and you'll find I'm still a peasant down to the marrow of my bones.

[4] **LOPAKHIN.** [Turns over the pages of his book] Here I've been reading this book, but I understood nothing. I read and fell asleep. [Pause.]

LATER IN ACT I

[5] **LOPAKHIN.** As you already know, your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts, and the sale is fixed for August 22; but you needn't be alarmed, dear madam, you may sleep in peace; there's a way out. Here's my plan.

[6] **LOPAKHIN.** Your estate is only thirteen miles from the town, the railway runs by, and if the cherry orchard and the land by the river are broken up into building lots and are then leased off for villas you'll get at least twenty-five thousand roubles a year profit out of it.

[7] **GAEV.** How utterly absurd!

[8] **LUBOV.** I don't understand you at all, Ermolai Alexeyevitch.

[9] **LOPAKHIN.** In a word, you're saved. I congratulate you. Only, of course, you'll have to put things straight, and clean up.... For instance, you'll have to pull down all the old buildings, this house, which isn't any use to anybody now, and cut down the old cherry orchard....

[10] **LUBOV.** Cut it down? My dear man, you must excuse me, but you don't understand anything at all. If there's anything interesting or remarkable in the whole province, it's this cherry orchard of ours.

[11] **LOPAKHIN.** The only remarkable thing about the orchard is that it's very large. It only bears fruit every other year, and even then you don't know what to do with them; nobody buys any.

[12] **GAEV.** This orchard is mentioned in the “Encyclopaedic Dictionary.”

[13] **LOPAKHIN.** [Looks at his watch] If we can't think of anything and don't make up our minds to anything, then on August 22, both the cherry orchard and the whole estate will be up for auction. Make up your mind! I swear there's no other way out, I'll swear it again.

[14] **FIRS.** In the old days, forty or fifty years back, they dried the cherries, soaked them and pickled them, and made jam of them.... And money! And the dried cherries were soft, juicy, sweet, and nicely scented.... They knew the way....

[15] **LUBOV.** What was the way?

[16] **FIRS.** They've forgotten. Nobody remembers.

[17] **LOPAKHIN.** Up to now in the villages there were only the gentry and the labourers, and now the people who live in villas have arrived. All towns now, even small ones, are surrounded by villas. And it's safe to say that in twenty years' time the villa resident will be all over the place.... Then your cherry orchard will be happy, rich, splendid....

[18] **GAEV.** [Angry] What rot!

Close-reading prompts

1. What contradiction is contained in Lopakhin's image of himself as both a "pearl" and "still a peasant"?
2. Compare the verbs used by Lopakhin—"broken up," "leased," "pull down," "cut down"—with the family's words "interesting," "remarkable," and "ours." What different kinds of value are being expressed?
3. Why does Chekhov place the practical deadline and Lopakhin's watch beside Gaev's speech about the Encyclopaedic Dictionary?
4. What does Firs's "They've forgotten. Nobody remembers" add to the conflict?

READING 2 — ACT III: THE AUCTION AND LOPAKHIN'S TRIUMPH

CONTEXT

A party continues at the estate while the auction occurs elsewhere. When Lopakhin returns, his announcement is at once economic fact, personal victory, historical reversal, emotional violence, and theatrical spectacle.

[1] **LUBOV.** Is the cherry orchard sold?

[2] **LOPAKHIN.** It is sold.

[3] **LUBOV.** Who bought it?

[4] **LOPAKHIN.** I bought it.

[5] *[Lubov Andreyevna is overwhelmed. Varya takes her keys off her belt, throws them on the floor, into the middle of the room, and goes out.]*

[6] **LOPAKHIN.** I bought it! Wait, ladies and gentlemen, please, my head's going round, I can't talk.... [Laughs] When we got to the sale, Deriganov was there already.... I saw how matters were, so I grabbed hold of him and bid forty. He went up to forty-five, I offered fifty-five. That means he went up by fives and I went up by tens.... Well, it came to an end.

[7] **LOPAKHIN.** The cherry orchard is mine now, mine! [Roars with laughter] My God, my God, the cherry orchard's mine! Tell me I'm drunk, or mad, or dreaming....

[8] **LOPAKHIN.** [Stamps his feet] Don't laugh at me! If my father and grandfather rose from their graves and looked at the whole affair, and saw how their Ermolai, their beaten and uneducated Ermolai, who used to run barefoot in the winter, how that very Ermolai has bought an estate, which is the most beautiful thing in the world! I've bought the estate where my grandfather and my father were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a dream, an illusion....

[9] **LOPAKHIN.** [Picks up the keys, smiling] She threw down the keys, she wanted to show she was no longer mistress here.... [Jingles keys] Well, it's all one! [Hears the band tuning up] Eh, musicians, play, I want to hear you! Come and look at Ermolai Lopakhin laying his axe to the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here....

[10] **LOPAKHIN.** Play on, music! [The band plays. Lubov Andreyevna sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly.] Why then, why didn't you take my advice? My poor, dear woman, you can't go back now. [Weeps] Oh, if only the whole thing was done with, if only our uneven, unhappy life were changed!

[11] **LOPAKHIN.** [Ironically] The new owner, the owner of the cherry orchard is coming! [He accidentally knocks against a little table and nearly upsets the candelabra] I can pay for everything!

[12] **ANYA.** The cherry orchard is sold, we've got it no longer, it's true, true, but don't cry mother, you've still got your life before you.... We'll plant a new garden, finer than this, and you'll see it, and you'll understand....

Close-reading prompts

1. Why does Chekhov repeat "I bought it" and "mine"? What changes between the short announcement and the longer speech?
2. Interpret the keys as a stage object. What changes when Varya throws them down and Lopakhin picks them up?
3. How can Lopakhin laugh, command music, remember slavery, comfort Ranevskaya, and weep within the same scene?
4. Does "I can pay for everything" sound powerful, comic, insecure, or tragic? Explain through performance choices.

QUESTIONS FOR CLOSE READING AND SYNTHESIS

1. Compare the orchard in Reading 1 and Reading 2. How does it change from a proposed economic resource into an object of possession, memory, and spectacle?
2. How does the Act III purchase fulfil Lopakhin's Act I plan while also exposing consequences that the word "solution" conceals?
3. Trace Lopakhin's divided identity from "a pearl out of an oyster" and "still a peasant" to "The cherry orchard is mine." What remains unresolved after his social rise?
4. Compare the watch in Act I with the keys in Act III. How do these stage objects turn time and ownership into visible dramatic action?
5. How do laughter, tears, music, accidental movement, and repeated words make the auction scene unstable between comedy and tragedy?
6. Ranevskaya and Gaev reject the only practical plan but offer no workable alternative. How does Chekhov dramatize inaction without simply explaining it?
7. Comparative thesis (3–4 sentences): How does Chekhov use a beautiful or cherished object to expose a deeper social or moral conflict? You may connect the orchard to Keats's urn or Tolstoy's socially "correct" life.

BRING TO CLASS

- The annotated handout with at least eight annotations: four in each selected reading.
- One 80–100 word close reading of a repeated word, stage direction, pause, or object.
- One staging choice for Lopakhin: identify his movement, tone, and use of the keys, watch, or surrounding space.
- One interpretive question that cannot be answered by plot summary alone.

PRE-CLASS RESPONSE SHEET

1. Passage and first observation

Copy one short line or stage direction from either reading. Explain what you notice about diction, repetition, gesture, pause, space, or sound.

2. Character contradiction

Choose Lopakhin, Ranevskaya, Gaev, Firs, Varya, or Anya. State one contradiction the character contains and cite one short phrase.

3. Question for class

Write one interpretive question that would require the class to return to the wording or staging of one of the two passages.

120-MINUTE STUDENT-CENTRED CLASS WORKSHOP

CENTRAL QUESTION

Does Lopakhin's ownership of the orchard represent liberation, repetition, or an unstable combination of both?

Time	Activity	Student work	Required product
0–10 min	Entry task: What is the orchard worth?	Individually identify three forms of value in the passages: economic, emotional, historical, aesthetic, or symbolic. Support each with one exact word.	Three evidence-based meanings.
10–20 min	Whole-play orientation	In groups, arrange four Act cards into a cause-and-effect sequence, then locate the two selected passages within that movement.	One concise dramatic timeline.
20–40 min	Two-passage expert reading	Half the class analyses Reading 1 and half analyses Reading 2 through diction, stage directions, objects, time, and social position.	One completed evidence card per group.
40–55 min	Performance laboratory	Each group stages 60–90 seconds twice: once emphasizing practical realism or triumph, once emphasizing vulnerability or loss.	Two contrasting performances.
55–65 min	Break	Keep the handout open to the group's strongest textual evidence.	—
65–80 min	Expert exchange	Pairs containing one expert from each reading compare the proposed "solution" with its outcome. Identify one continuity and two changes.	A Reading 1 → Reading 2 comparison map.
80–100 min	Structured debate	Motion: "Lopakhin's purchase is a form of historical justice." Teams must offer a claim, complication, rebuttal, and performance-based piece of evidence.	A qualified position, not a binary verdict.
100–120 min	Canvas close-reading assignment	Complete the individual assignment in the final section of this file.	A 20-minute independent submission.

Two-passage evidence card

Exact word / phrase	Stage direction, pause, or object	Character contradiction	Claim about social change

Debate requirement

MOTION: "LOPAKHIN'S PURCHASE IS A FORM OF HISTORICAL JUSTICE."

Your team must use evidence from both selected passages. A strong argument must distinguish social reversal from moral repair and explain how at least one stage direction complicates the motion.

IN-CLASS CANVAS ASSIGNMENT — 20 MINUTES

TASK CONDITIONS

Complete all three tasks in this file and upload the completed .docx to Canvas within 20 minutes. Use only this handout and your own handwritten annotations. Do not use ChatGPT, other generative-AI tools, search engines, online summaries, translation tools, or shared notes. Keep each quotation to 10 words or fewer. Save as: Day6_Chekhov_StudentID_FullName.docx.

PASSAGE ALLOCATION

Last digit of student ID	Assigned reading	Central contradiction
0–4	Reading 1 — Act I	Class mobility versus inherited identity; economic rescue versus destruction
5–9	Reading 2 — Act III	Historical reversal versus emotional violence; triumph versus instability

TASK 1. EVIDENCE MAP

Suggested time: 4 minutes | 5 points. Complete both rows using your assigned reading.

Short quotation (≤10 words)	Language / stage feature	What contradiction it reveals

TASK 2. MICRO CLOSE READING

Suggested time: 10 minutes | 10 points. Write 100–130 words. Make one arguable claim about your assigned passage. Analyse one exact word or repeated phrase and one stage direction, pause, or object. Explain how the passage complicates a simple story of progress or decline. Do not retell the plot.

TASK 3. PERFORMANCE JUDGMENT

Suggested time: 6 minutes | 5 points. Write 60–80 words. Should your assigned moment be performed primarily as comedy, tragedy, or unstable tragicomedy? State one precise choice about movement, tone, pause, sound, or use of space, and explain how that choice changes the audience's judgment.

Final check before uploading

- ☐ I completed all three tasks and used only my assigned reading.
- ☐ My quotations are no more than 10 words each and are followed by analysis.
- ☐ I analysed stagecraft, not only ideas or plot.
- ☐ I completed the work independently without generative AI, online summaries, translation tools, or another person's answers.

Student initials: _____

TEXTUAL SOURCE AND TEACHING NOTE

Primary text: Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, translated by Julius West (1916), in *Plays by Anton Chekhov, Second Series*. Public-domain English text. Selected and lightly excerpted for teaching; original character names, diction, and stage directions are retained.

Teaching rationale: The two selections create a coherent dramatic arc from Lopakhin's proposed rescue in Act I to his purchase of the estate in Act III. Together they give undergraduate students sufficient evidence to study class transition, inherited violence, competing forms of value, character contradiction, inaction, stage objects, and tragicomedy without requiring the whole play in advance.

Further reading: Students who read the complete play should examine how Trofimov's historical vision in Act II and the abandoned Firs and final axe sounds in Act IV complicate the two selected passages.