UNCLE VANYA
by ANTON CHEKHOV
adapted by ANNIE BAKER
directed by ROBERT FALLS

CONTENTS
3 Introduction to the Study Guide
4 A Conversation with Uncle Vanya Director
   Robert Falls
6 Uncle Vanya: Translated and Adapted
7 Melodrama, Realism, and Hyperrealism:
   The Revolutionary Style of Chekhov’s
   Theater and his Influence on Annie Baker
10 Russian Name Game
11 Crash Course in Russian History
12 Four Masterworks, One Brief Life
14 Life of Anton Chekhov
15 The Women of Uncle Vanya
20 The Economic Landscape Surrounding
   Anton Chekhov
24 The Urban/Rural Divide in Chekhov’s Russia
28 Russian and American Geography
30 Putin Problems
33 Uncle Vanya Glossary
38 Information About Coming to the
   Goodman

Editors | Willa J. Taylor, Elizabeth Rice
Production Manager | Elizabeth Rice
Designer | Anna Gelman

Contributing Writers | Willa J. Taylor, Steve Scott, Neena Arndt,
Angie Feak, Dani Weider, Anna Gelman, Teresa
Rende, Jorge Silva, Brigitte Wittmer

This study guide is published by Goodman Theatre’s Education
and Community Engagement Department for participants in the
Student Subscription Series.

For more information about Education and Engagement at The
Goodman, click here.
Introduction to The Study Guide
by Willa J. Taylor

America prides itself on the absence of royalty or nobility in our representative democracy, but there are and always have been elites. Throughout American history, defenders of the American Dream have cited cases of men who made their fortunes through ambition and industry. Certain influential figures—including Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Carnegie, and Russell H. Conwell—stand out for their contributions to cultural dialogue on business ethics and social values. We are shown examples constantly—like Dr. Ben Carson—of people who’ve overcome the circumstances of their birth to rise high. These images, this narrative, help construct an ideology that associates success with individualism, determination, and morality.

This myth of the American Dream has inspired generations of immigrants and motivated many citizens towards success. But is it a distraction from policies that construct and protect inequality? While Carnegie and Franklin—and Bill Gates, Steve Jobs—were not born with the proverbial silver spoon in their mouths (they were not born into wealth), they were born with certain privileges and had certain assets that made it more likely for them to be successful. Assets and privilege are not just about wealth and capital; they are also about social networks, family connections, access to transportation and good schools and physical appearance, gender and able-bodiedness.

Can hard work and perseverance take you as far if you start ten steps behind someone else? Is someone truly the master of his or her own fate when there are systemic policies and conditions that favor one group over another? Uncle Vanya, Anton Chekov’s brilliant play originally set in the late 1800s just outside Moscow, may seem like it is completely irrelevant to our lives in 2017 Chicago. I would argue though, that it is a show that is in many ways reflective of how our society constrains our choices and options because of the circumstances of our birth. Each of characters in the play is trapped. Yelena cannot determine the course of her own life because at that time women’s live are constrained to men by the customs of a patriarchal society. Vanya, who in youth was smart and ambitious, did not have the opportunity to go away to study because of family obligations. Thinking that by ingratiating himself to Serebryakov, his upwardly-mobile brother-in-law, he might gain more wealth and freedom, he stays to care take the estate, a sacrifice that goes unappreciated by Serebryakov.

Russian society had very strict class distinctions at the time Chekhov wrote Uncle Vanya. Is it different here now in the US? In Chicago?

Do all schools have the same resources? Are all neighborhoods brightly lit at night with parks open and safe? Do south and west side communities have as much access to healthy foods, fast and comprehensive medical care, clean water, as communities on the north side? If you use a wheelchair or a walker for mobility, is the city easily accessible to you?

Uncle Vanya is a classic text that speaks softly to the times we live in today.
Anton Chekhov’s masterpiece takes the stage in a new adaptation from Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Baker. Shortly before rehearsals began, Robert Falls spoke with Goodman Producer Steve Scott about returning to Chekhov following his acclaimed 2010 production of The Seagull, which the Chicago Tribune hailed as “one of the deepest dives into (Chekhov’s) psyche one ever is likely to see.”

STEVE SCOTT: One of the most successful shows that you’ve done in your time at the Goodman was a 2010 production of The Seagull, also in the Owen Theatre. How did that production come about, and how did that lead to this staging of Uncle Vanya?

ROBERT FALLS: Well, I consider my work on The Seagull to be one of the most satisfying experiences I’ve had in my three decades at the Goodman. It climaxed an intensive period of study for me of the directing techniques developed by Konstantin Stanislavsky, the Russian director who collaborated with Chekhov on his major works. I spent months and months reading contemporary analyses of Stanislavsky’s work, and traveled to Russia to study at the Moscow Art Theatre with directors who really knew the revolutionary methods that Stanislavsky developed. These are not the rather watered-down versions that we’ve inherited from American acting teachers, but the highly experimental approaches that he explored in his work with Chekhov, who was himself an extremely experimental writer for his time. In the same way, The Seagull was an experimental process for me, and helped me develop new techniques of my own which I’ve applied in the work that I’ve done since.

SS: We’re now so familiar with Chekhov’s work—or think we are—that it’s difficult to think of him as an experimental writer.

RF: Chekhov was really the creator of modern drama; to an enormous extent, everything that we are as modern theater artists comes from Chekhov and his very complex collaboration with Stanislavsky. He broke tradition with everything that had come before him: the melodrama, for example, or classical poetic dramas, or the highly symbolist works of [playwright] Maurice Maeterlinck and others. Imagine what the audiences of his day felt when the curtain rose on The Seagull: instead of highly wrought declamation in front of opulently rendered sets, Chekhov’s characters were dressed in the same clothes as the audience, performing everyday actions like smoking or drinking or eating in rooms that looked like contemporary rooms, speaking simple dialogue with no poetry or verbal embellishment. It was a revolutionary approach to the making of theater—telling a story about recognizably contemporary characters in which an enormous amount happens without anything really happening. And nowhere is that approach more evident than in Uncle Vanya.

SS: So is Uncle Vanya very similar to The Seagull?
RF: Not really—*The Seagull* was really a turning point for Chekhov, in which he was trying hard to release himself from the theatrical conventions of the day, and the play itself is about being young, experimenting, flaunting tradition. *Uncle Vanya* is his first fully mature play—and as such, is his most radical.

SS: And his most difficult?

RF: Well, it’s certainly the play of his that I’ve least understood until fairly recently. It’s about aging, regret, loss, mourning, humiliation—and for many years I had a hard time connecting to. But I re-read it last year, and suddenly it demanded to be done.

SS: How so?

RF: I think because I’m finally at the age when I can understand it. In the play, Vanya says something like, “I’m 47 years old. If I live for 13 more years, I’ll be 60. What happens then?” I’m very different from Vanya in many ways, but I’m now 62, and in 13 years I’ll be 75. What the hell does that mean? Uncle Vanya is essentially about life—whether you’re 27, 47, 60 or 80. Time is going by, and you naturally start to examine your life and how you’re living it, or have lived it. You may be like Serebreyakov, the retired professor in Vanya who’s constantly complaining about his various aches and pains (which I certainly identify with)—but yet you go on. You don’t give up—none of the characters in the play ever gives up. Chekhov understood that; he doesn’t judge his characters, ever. They’re simply trying to live their lives the best they can, often facing enormous obstacles: sometimes loving the wrong person, or being loved by the wrong person, or making choices that may seem odd or hilarious to the outside eye—but not to them.

SS: Do you have a particular concept for your production, or a particular interpretation?

RF: I can honestly say that I don’t. I love the play, and I have an extraordinary cast—so I want to learn from all of them what the play is about. With Chekhov, I try to resist “interpretation” as such—I don’t think, “I’m going to make this a funny production, or a tragic production,” or whatever. It’s life, and my job is to let the characters live their lives in all of their human contradictions. I haven’t done a lot of pre-planning; at this point in my life and my career, it’s about me having enough experience and maturity to go into a room and make something beautiful.
What does it mean to translate or adapt a play? Anton Chekhov wrote *Uncle Vanya* in Russian, his native language. The play has been translated countless times (into English and dozens of other languages) and adapted into other theatrical works and films, with varying degrees of adherence to the original text. Now, 36 year-old Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Annie Baker—who is not fluent in Russian—creates a “transladaptation” of Chekhov’s masterwork that has been hailed as “easygoing, free of the stilted or formal locutions that clutter up some of the more antique-sounding translations” (The New York Times).

In her preface to the play’s script, Baker notes she aimed to “create a version that sounds to our contemporary American ears the way the play sounded to Russian ears during the play’s first productions.” This means that she worked from a “literal” translation that provided the basis for the text. Of course, the word “literal” should never be understood literally when pertaining to literary translation. Human languages are defined by their structural and semantic idiosyncrasies; no two languages express the same thought in exactly the same way. Working from a translation, an adaptor works to make a text “playable”—to create language that actors can use to create believable characters.

If a text is highly poetic, then the adaptor must possess poetic skills equal to those of the original author. In the case of Chekhov, whose work comes to us from both far away and long ago, an adaptor must decide whether to make the language sound as if it comes from the era in which it was originally written—in this case, the late 19th century—or, to make it sound contemporary, as Baker did. Many plays contain references to people, places or things that its original audience would have understood, but which would leave a contemporary audience scratching their heads. An adaptor chooses whether to leave these references intact and accurate, or to change them to similar references that the audience might recognize, which arguably enables contemporary people to understand the play in the same way that past audiences did. For *Uncle Vanya*, Baker maintains the integrity of these references; when a character exclaims, “It was a scene worthy of Aivazovsky!” she does not substitute another artist’s name. (She notes in the preface that this line is usually translated as “It was a scene worthy of a painter of shipwrecks!”)

Baker is not the only contemporary playwright to create a version of Chekhov’s plays. David Mamet, another Pulitzer Prize winner, also made his own *Uncle Vanya*, which features the distinctive, staccato rhythms characteristic of his work. Noted British playwright Tom Stoppard has similarly infused his own writing style into Chekhov’s plays. But Sarah Ruhl, a writer known for her poetic abilities, took a different approach with her take on Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*: “Getting to the root of the original Russian was what I wanted, rather than putting my own authorial stamp on the text.”

Like Ruhl, Baker aimed to drill down to the original text. Yet, describing her role in creating the text remains difficult. Is she a “translator” because she dealt not with changing the story but with preserving the story for English-speaking audiences? Is she an “adaptor” because she has limited Russian proficiency and therefore cannot fully access the Russian text without assistance? Is she a “transladaptor?” Perhaps it will simply suffice to say, as reflected in the published version of the play, that this is “a new version by Annie Baker.”
Melodrama, Realism, and Hyperrealism: The Revolutionary Style of Chekhov’s Theater and his Influence on Annie Baker
by Dani Weider

In the Victorian Era, theater was more popular than ever before. People were pouring into urban centers as a result of the Industrial Revolution, and the performing arts burgeoned as a result. The type of theater that most interested people was called melodrama. Melodrama, coming from “music drama,” was comprised of highly stylized scenes and songs that were meant to appeal to the emotions and senses. The plays were extremely visual and easy to understand. These theater makers had little interest in psychology or the inner life of characters; rather, they used archetypes, or recognizable types of characters, that they could tailor to their specific story. Audience recognized stock characters like the greedy aristocrat or the good-hearted village girl were from play to play. Melodramas focused on epic journeys where heroes defeated villains and always had a happy ending when good prevailed. They exhibited clear and simple moral values; every story had right and wrong side. Because these plays were all similar, melodramas relied heavily on special effects, and often used fire, elaborate sets, moving backdrops, and more to distinguish themselves. Some even put entire swimming pools onstage, while others used live animals. These works were hugely entertaining and extremely popular amongst people of all social classes in the 19th century, not unlike soap operas today.

However, with the Industrial Revolution came some crucial developments in science. Many academics started to lose confidence in the mysticism and romanticism of the Victorian era and decided to challenge the idea that behavior is innate and unchanging. They began to wonder what it really meant to be human. Among these thinkers was Charles Darwin. In his conclusions on evolution, he argued that all species are constantly evolving, adapting to their ever-changing surroundings. This placed human beings in the same category as all other life, contradicting the previously widespread belief that people were superior to the rest of nature. Sigmund Freud also contributed to this revolution from the perspective of psychology, arguing that people
are products of their environment, and to understand their desires and motivations we must consider their immediate circumstances. Lastly, Auguste Comte began to develop the field of sociology, a method based on the detailed observation of behavior. These discoveries showed that people did not fit into archetypes, but were unique and constantly evolving.

As science urged people to think more deeply about the nuance of the human psyche, theater artists began to take up this challenge by attempting to portray people as realistically and specifically as possible. These new plays took place in locations familiar to playwrights and audiences alike. They were faithful to the contemporary social manners and the physical locations of their communities. While some aspects of the play were drawn from classical theater, such as tropes like an unrequited love or a journey home, their stories didn’t always play out happily or positively as they would have in melodrama. Playwrights such as Anton Chekhov began to use the conventions of theater as a foundation to explore the complex psychological experiences of people as they are forced to deal with the dramas of daily life. This style became what we know as realism.

Because of how it violated the rules of melodrama, Chekhov’s work was not immediately embraced by the Russian people. In fact, his early plays were met with criticism; audiences did not yet understand how to watch a play that was humorous, but not a farcical comedy. He once wrote in a letter that he was fully aware that his plays were, “sinning against stage conventions,” and expressed that the use of many narratives, the lack of a protagonist the seeming neglect of plot, and the use of mundane locations rendered him, “not a playwright at all.” Chekhov is actually a revelatory playwright, however, because of all the things that made him initially unpopular. One scholar, Yael Harussi, explains that all of Chekhov’s choices are, “pointing always to an undercurrent of hidden and never expressed emotions.” He has slowed down theater to be as close as possible to the pace of life, in hopes of getting his audiences to think about what it means to be in the world as it is right now. Chekhov does try to entertain or provide an escape in his theater. Rather, Chekhov’s realism forces the audience to spend a long time with both the mundanity and beauty of the everyday.

Even though playwright Annie Baker is writing in 21st century instead of the 19th, her realism is not unlike Chekhov’s. Her plays all take place in present time, with no clear lead characters, no heroes or villains, and sometimes not even an obvious storyline. For example, her play, *The Flick*, follows three movie theater employees as their movie house transitions from reel-too-reel to digital film. The play is almost three hours long, much of it happening in silence while they sweep up real popcorn and clean up soda between showings. When they do speak, the conversation is rarely monumental, but actually resembles mundane chats with co-workers. While at first glance there may not be strong story, Baker’s work is actually operating on a much more subtle level: the way in which people behave during even the most underwhelming moments reveal as much if not more about their wants and needs than words do. The experience of daily life is what is interesting to Baker. How do we reveal and mask our deepest desires in the smallest ways? What do words and actions that seem to mean nothing actually tell us about a character’s most secret hopes? It is not a
surprise that Baker is interested in *Uncle Vanya*, another play in which the internal journeys are privileged over action or plot.

Annie Baker’s productions are marked by an even more extreme commitment to realism than was possible for Chekhov. Every detail is perfectly accurate, every piece of food edible, and every appliance functional. There is so much thought and skill put into every aspect of the production that the result is almost more real than life, or hyperrealism. This style is a commentary on the reproducibility and emptiness of real life; the act of producing something perfectly real-looking that is actually fake is one of the goals of this style. Furthermore, hyperrealism strives to be an exact replica such that it is devoid of the artist’s style or personal voice. This way, the artist simply presents the recreated reality as it is without telling the viewer how to feel about it, allowing the audience to form their own opinions. Baker’s pieces aren’t always easy to watch as they both require extreme attention to detail, and also ask us to think critically about our own lives. It is the very challenge she poses that makes her an important voice in American culture.

What does it mean for one realist to adapt the work of another? In adapting *Uncle Vanya*, Baker says she wanted to, “to create a version that sounds to our contemporary American ears the way the play sounded to Russian ears during the play’s first productions.” Working from a literal translation of the original Russian, she made the dialogue more contemporary while staying faithful to Chekhov’s style and culture. This “transadaptation” does not quite exemplify her normal hyperrealism, as she adheres to Chekhov’s style of writing, but rather updates his realism for modern ears. In the first production in New York, the actors even wore contemporary clothes. In this way, Baker is not so much presenting her Uncle Vanya, but rather an updated version that gives insight into Chekhov’s original goals for the piece.

Realism is still a really popular style of storytelling. Many TV shows use the conventions of Chekhov to this day. Next time you are watching shows like *Mad Men* or *The Crown*, think about how they are a part of a tradition started all the way back in the 1890’s with plays like *Uncle Vanya*!
So why do these Russian characters have so many names? The Russian language deals with names in varying levels of formality and informality. The most formal way you can refer to someone in Russian is by their name, patronymic, and last name. For instance, Vanya’s full name is Ivan Petrovich Voinitsky. If you were a little bit more familiar with him, but still wanted to address him formally, you would use just his name and patronymic – Ivan Petrovich. The patronymic is a unique aspect of the Russian language and takes the place of a middle name. They are familial, and come from the father’s name. Essentially, they say: This is my name, and this is who my father is. From Vanya’s patronymic, Petrovich, we can tell Vanya’s father’s name was Peter. This applies to women, as well. Women’s patronymics are given a feminine ending. Sonya’s patronymic, since her father’s name is Aleksandr, is Alexandrovna. It’s an easy formula that applies to all names – the male ending is –vich, and the female is –ovna.

But say you were close with Vanya; you would refer to him by his nickname: Vanya, a diminutive version of Ivan. If you were even closer, or maybe a member of his family, you could call him an even more diminutive name: something like Vanechka or Vanyusha.

Below are the names of all of the characters in Uncle Vanya, and common Russian nicknames that they could also go by. When reading Uncle Vanya, note how the characters refer to each other, and what that means for their relationships.

Alexander Vladimirovich Serebryakov (Sasha, Shurick, Shashenka)
Yelena Andryevna (Lena, Lenechka, Lenok)
Sophia Alexandrovna (Sonya, Sophie, Sonyutecha, Sophechka)
Maria Vasilyevna Voinitskaya (Masha, Mashenka, Mashoosha)
Ivan Petrovich Voinitsky (Vanya, Vanyushka, Vanyusha)
Mikhail Lvovich Astrov (Misha, Mishenka, Mishka)
Ilya Ilych Telegin (Ilyusha)

Anton (or Antosha) Chekhov and his family at Melikhovo, their family estate. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
Russia is the largest country in the world, and it’s history as a country (in all of it’s various forms) dates back as far as 862 A.D. Included here are two videos (one crash course, and one more detailed), that fill in what politically shaped the country before, during and after Anton Chekhov’s life.

**Animated Russian History**

**Epic History**

**Key for Epic History Video**

00:00 - 5:00  2000 BC - 1453 AD
“A second rome” Moscow is founded

5:00 - 10:06  1453 AD - 1654
Ivan The Terrible, conquest of Siberia, Beginning of Romanov empire, creation of serfdom

10:06 - 17:45  1654 - 1762
Peter the 1st (Peter the Great), Seven Years War, Winter Palace completed, Empress Catherine

17:45 - 24:50  1762 - 1815
Massive expansion of arts (The Bolshoi, Hermitage Museum collection created, art museums), Creation of The Pale of Settlement, French Revolution, Formation of Holy Alliance,

24:50 -33:00 1815-1868
Napoleon, The Decemberists, Czar Nicholas (Church & Nationalism, rejection of european liberalism), Abolition of Serfdom by Czar Alexander, Creation of Provincial Assembly, The Great Game, Selling of Alaska

33:00 - 40:45 1868 - 1905
Golden age of art, Russo-Turkish War, The People’s Will, Alexander II Assasinated, Pogroms, Potemkin Mutiny, October Manifesto, First Constitution (shared power) - DUMA

40:45 - 46:59 1905-1917
World War One, Rasputin murdered, Revolution brewing, Czar Abdecated in favor of Grand Duke Michael (who declined), Romanov rule ends, Provisional rule, rise of soviets, Bolsheviks (Lenin), October Revolution
Anton Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* holds an unwavering place in the theatrical canon. But like other genre-defining plays, its playwright and his creative partners had no idea at the time that they were making history. An intimate play about relationships in pre-revolutionary Russia, replete with subtext that lays bare the characters’ frailties and longings, *Uncle Vanya*’s creators simply hoped their ideas had merit, and their production would earn modest success. Since its 1899 premiere at Moscow Art Theatre, the play has enjoyed countless productions worldwide—and along with Chekhov’s other work, and that of Henrik Ibsen, laid a foundation for realism in theater, and later in film. Initial audience response, however, gave Chekhov little reason to think he had created an enduring classic.

A year earlier, Chekhov and his collaborators, Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, achieved popular and artistic success with their production of The Seagull. The creators defied what was the accepted convention of a director simply telling actors where to stand, to memorize lines, and hope for the best on opening night; this production was directed with careful precision. Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko held 26 rehearsals (fewer than today’s standard, but far more than the 19th century standard), and detailed each moment of the play. Years later, one of the actors in *The Seagull*, Vsevolod Meyerhold, recalled, “Probably there were individual elements of naturalism, but that’s not important. The important thing is that it contained the poetic nerve-center, the hidden poetry of Chekhov’s prose which was there because of Stanislavsky’s genius as a director.

Until Stanislavsky, people had only played the theme in Chekhov and forgot that in his plays, the sound of the rain outside his windows... early morning light through the shutters, mist on the lake, were indissolubly linked...with people’s actions.”

Fresh off this triumph, Chekhov, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko endeavored to replicate their success with another play. They aimed to produce Uncle Vanya, a comprehensive rewrite of an earlier Chekhov play titled *The Wood Demon*, which had flopped in its 1889 premiere. Immediately, this proved complicated: Chekhov had already promised Uncle Vanya to the Maly Theatre, a state-support-
Chekhov's work. All through the summer of 1899, Stanislavsky pored over Uncle Vanya, creating a production score with meticulous specifications for each moment of the play—how an actor would gesture, when to cross the stage, where to stand in relation to other actors. In addition to co-directing with Nemirovich-Danchenko, he also intended to play the title role. But Uncle Vanya being an ineffectual, not necessarily handsome man, Nemirovich-Danchenko objected to the tall, striking Stanislavsky playing the role. Instead, he played Astrov, an attractive doctor. If Chekhov had had his way, Stanislavsky would not have trod the boards at all. “He’s an artist [when he directs] but when he acts he’s just a rich young merchant who wants to dabble in art,” he said. To appease his collaborators, the playwright allowed Stanislavsky to act, but remained concerned about his performance throughout the process. Chekhov’s apprehension proved prescient when Stanislavsky neglected for weeks to memorize his lines. He slowed rehearsals by frequently turning to the prompter (in European theater, a prompter is commonly used to feed forgetful actors their lines throughout rehearsals and performances).

Nemirovich-Danchenko pleaded with him to memorize; meanwhile an anxious Chekhov was ordered by doctors to Yalta, a seaside town on the Crimean Peninsula, to soothe his worsening tuberculosis with the salt air.

Surprisingly, by opening night Stanislavsky was off book, and reportedly gave an excellent performance. Other individual actors were praised for their work, but critical reviews were mixed, and Leo Tolstoy, upon seeing the play, reportedly shouted, “Where is the drama? What does it consist of?” Nemirovich-Danchenko fretted that the play’s pace was too slow. Local professors shared the Maly’s concern about insulting intellectuals and boycotted the play. After the spectacular success of The Seagull, Uncle Vanya seemed unexciting. Nonetheless, audiences kept coming, and the play entered the Moscow Art Theatre’s burgeoning repertoire, performing in rotation with other plays. And Chekhov, always philosophical, felt that an average success was the best kind. “After a triumph a reaction always sets in, expressing itself in heightened expectation, followed eventually by certain disappoint-ment and cooling,” he said.

It wasn’t until the spring of 1900 that Chekhov saw the play when it toured to Yalta. By then, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko clamored for Chekhov to write another script. At 40 years old, Chekhov was perpetually ill and only four years away from death; though he couldn’t have predicted the date of his own demise, his day job as a doctor meant he knew that tuberculosis would cut his life short. But before succumbing to his illness in 1904, Chekhov wrote Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard. Together with The Seagull and Uncle Vanya, those plays comprise his four masterpieces, each written during the final decade of his short life.
The Life of Anton Chekhov

Anton Chekhov was a playwright, essayist, short-story writer and medical doctor who is remembered as one of the greatest figures in Russian literature and drama, and one of the fathers of modern theater.

Click [HERE](#) for a biography detailing his life, work, and place in history.
The late 19th century was marked by the “Woman Question,” or the question of a woman’s place in society in Russia. Women of nobility and those with connections to the clerical, business, and mercantile professions sought further access to higher education, work opportunities, and independence from patriarchal and familial norms. After the serfs were emancipated in 1861, some women feared social upheaval in the home by way of the dissolution of the traditional family. Other women saw this rapid social change as a chance to pursue their larger aspirations. Either way, women began to value higher education and work opportunities like never before and flocked to Russian cities.

Not everyone joined in the revolutionary frenzy or sought detachment from their families. Women of the peasantry did not have the status, education, or resources to challenge society in the same way. Some peasantry went to work in the cities, like those of higher class; however, many remained in the countryside in order to manage and work their farms, care for their families, and pay the redemption fees incurred from Emancipation. The peasantry did not instigate the Woman Question; rather, young intellectuals, both men and women, seeking to revolutionize society and politics did.

The characters in Uncle Vanya belong to the landed gentry, which was neither of the nobility nor of the peasantry. They represent a small but growing middle class of Russian society. In rural Russia, they reside in a 20+ bedroom estate owned by Vanya’s family and manage a farm worked by peasants. Though they seem well-off, Vanya and Sonya, as well as most landed families in that time, struggle to keep the estate running while making payments to Serebryakov. Compared to the elite, the women of the household—Yelena, Sonya, Maria, and Marina—show us a more normal and stationary view of a Russian country home than that of the feminism and political movements of the 19th century.

EDUCATION
At the turn of the century, the middle and working class barely composed 6% of Russia’s population. For the over 130 million people that lived in Russia, 82% were peasantry and about 13% were nobility and high clergy. Vanya’s family then gives us insight into a very small portion of Russian society. Most peasants, and thus the majority of Russia, were uneducated and illiterate, and a growing number of only the high class was receiving secondary and university-level education. Some 5 million students were attending primary school in 1904, which was less than 1% of the population. At the time of the first census in 1897, less than 0.1% of the population had attended or were attending university, and a majority of these were progeny of nobles or officials. Less than 1% of the population had studied or were studying in secondary school, a little less than half of whom were children of nobles and officials. Education was not guaranteed by the government, nor was it encouraged in women;
it took until 1917 for educational institutions to be nationalized. Those outside of nobility and lacking disposable income were more likely to not receive secondary or higher education.

It’s not surprising then that a young woman of the middle class, Sonya, shows no indication of receiving higher education. Her time is spent managing the farm with Vanya. Yelena, a 27 year-old woman from the city, attended “conservatory,” which most likely meant music school. However, she married Serebryakov and did not pursue further education, as higher education was not easily attained nor was she clearly invested in women’s liberation. Maria, Vanya’s mother, frequently discusses political pamphlets and Serebryakov’s articles on art with Vanya, so she has a high level of literacy. Given their levels of education, the household is not of the peasantry. However, they are also not as wealthy and mobile as others that flocked to the cities.

Much of the revolutionary frenzy of the late 19th century involved women finding ways to acquire further education. In 1872, the first institution for higher education of women was opened in Moscow: the Guerrier Courses. The government barely funded universities, so some feminists and philanthropists privately donated to subside education. Women, dissatisfied by the pace of educational reform, started studying abroad in Switzerland. Fearing how ideas from outside of the country might radicalize these women, the government allowed for more higher education courses to open in Russia. Institutions in Odessa, Kharkov, and Warsaw planned or established further courses. After the assassination of Alexander II by the People’s Will, of which women were a part, and due to the government’s fear of the freedom women sought through education, the government closed most of these courses by the mid 1880s. This time, the fear of radicalization from education within the country limited higher education for women in Russia.

One institution that outlasted the 1880s was the Bestuzhev Courses. Founded in 1878 in St. Petersburg, the courses welcomed women of all
social statuses. However, given the low subsidy from the government, women with financial resources were more likely to attend. In 1881, only 9 out of 938 students were peasants whereas 610 were gentry. Vanya’s family is gentry, but a combination of laziness, boredom, age, work on the estate, and their own finances keep them home. Some women received financial and moral support through the Society for Providing Means of Support for the Higher Women’s Courses, which helped ensure the longevity of these and other courses. Women who could seek higher education represented a minority of the populace. The ideology behind women’s liberation may have traveled across the country through political pamphlets, but in action, higher education was only just becoming accessible.

To counter censorship during the 19th century, elite women held salons in their private homes in order to discuss social problems. Chekhov attended one such salon hosted by Varvara Tverskaia. In the play, Vanya recalls Maria “going on and on about women’s liberation,” so it’s clear whether through Serebryakov’s work or other pamphlets, that the house is reading about revolutionary thought. Though the ideology has reached them, they only talk about the movement and do not participate in one way or another. Some of the salons in the 1870-90s went beyond discourse and organized to take action, one of which was associated with the assassination of Alexander II. This lead to the criminalization of independent organizing, and though salons were created to combat censorship, they declined in the latter part of the 19th century.

FAMILIAL ROLES
According to Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation, “We know most about the women who preferred leaving the domestic sphere to renegotiating relations within it” (138). There is much literature on women who partook in the revolutionary push for education and work outside of the home. There is less that helps us understand how women changed the dynamics within the household. In some families, it was less about renegotiating relations than it was about taking on whatever job needed to get done. The household of Uncle Vanya shows that some men and women took on whatever roles they needed to keep the household functioning.

Though Western history tends to depict the woman as wife, caretaker, and child-rearer and the man as husband and breadwinner, there is not such a clear divide in this Russian play. In fact, there is no husband or wife at the head of the household. The only married couple is Yelena and Serebryakov, who recently
moved to the countryside. Sonya and her uncle Vanya manage the estate, and of late, she alone has had to manage it due to his growing lethargy and cynicism. Sonya provides more financially for her father than he does for her. In fact, Sonya and Vanya sent payments to him while he lived in the city.

Marina is the nanny of the house, which is a more classic, stereotypical figure. Women of the peasantry, which Marina may have been a part, were known to nanny and serve as medicinal healers outside of their homes. Nannies typically cared for girls when they were young, and French or German governesses would take over when they grew older. Nannies were usually reserved for the wealthiest of families, which Vanya’s family is not. However, they may have had to find funds after Sonya’s mother died to help raise Sonya. Nurses typically worked within the Orthodox Church or semi-religious societies, which could explain the moments she uses religious platitudes.

We do not know much about Sonya’s mother, Vera, beyond the fact that she died and that this estate, now managed by her brother and daughter, was her dowry. Vanya relinquished his inheritance, as well, in order to pay for the estate and now feels it his duty to maintain his family’s home. Had she been alive, she probably would have lived in the city like Yelena as the law required a married woman to live with her husband. Regardless, Sonya and Vanya have taken on her dowry, which is now legally Sonya’s.

Daughters, outside of the peasantry, were legally allowed to inherit land from their parents, but their brothers would have received more. In this case, Sonya is the only offspring of Vera and Serebryakov, so she is granted the entire estate.

Serebryakov actually has no right to sell the estate, as Vanya points out, without Sonya’s permission. Daughters of the peasantry were endowed money and livestock, not land. Peasants did not have large amounts of land to grant their offspring. Men tended to run and work the land, thus it makes sense that sons, not daughters, would inherit it. By the late 19th century, we see women of the peasantry managing and laboring on their land while their husbands sought employment elsewhere to help the family.

WORK
In 1861, Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom, effectively liberating the peasantry from indentured servitude. The Tsar’s main goal was not so much to grant equal rights as it was to westernize Russia and bring the country closer to the stature of power-houses like Britain and France. Though the emancipation had complicated ramifications for the peasantry for some 50 years to come, this, along with industrialization, censorship, and radical, young intellectuals, helped spark the tinder beneath the Woman Question.

Industrialization and Emancipation led to an influx of women in search of factory work in cities. While some women were able to find work, many others joined a growing group of jobless women. Conditions in factories, as in other industrializing countries, included unequal wages for women and condescending, scornful behavior from male workers. Women could also teach, but wages were low, job postings few, and teaching did not always allow women to take advantage of their higher education. Sonya reminds Yelena that she has other options than boredom on the countryside—she could help around the house, she could help the sick and dying, or she could be a teacher. However, Yelena responds that she doesn’t know how to do any of these things. Yelena isn’t willing to learn either.

Others created their own jobs. Women, in the vein of Chernyshchevski’s famed novel, What Is To Be Done?, began collectivized labor organizations. Maria Trubnikova, was part of a triumvirate of women who began the Women’s Publishing Cooperative and the Society of Cheap Apartments. The Cooperative’s goal was to help women transform their ideas into action, while the Society offered courses such as sewing workshops and basic education for peasants. Some women even pretended to be part of the peasant class in order to instigate an uprising that would lead to equality for everyone.

Elite women joined revolutionary organizations, as well, the most renowned of which was the People’s Will (Narodnaya Volya in Russian). People’s Will fought the tsardom with a populist agenda. This group wanted the peasantry to rise up and redefine their place in society, but the group never succeeded in achieving this, primarily because they were run by higher class intellectuals. The People’s Will did, however, assassinate Alexander II who was only succeeded by someone more conservative and politically repressive.

It’s worth noting that women of higher statuses fought for work opportunities while women of the peasantry had to work in order to make ends meet. It was, in a way, a luxury for elite women to fight for work or for them to have a choice to seek it. Women across social classes sought work in the same place, the factory, but women invested in the revolutionary movement also pursued higher education and ways to disrupt politics.
MARRIAGE

In the 19th century, marriage slowly transitioned from being a societal expectation to a more personal choice. Early on, women needed the approval of their parents in order to marry. They weren’t so much forced into courtships as simply in need of the blessing of their guardians to marry. For upper class women, it was strange and even seen as a tragedy if daughters weren’t married by the age of 20-22. This could be one of the reasons why Sonya is upset that Astrov and no one else wants to be with her. Marriage was seen as the greatest event of a woman’s life, and her education typically stopped once she wed, except for those of the highest rank. Women typically married a man in their own class, but those of a lower class sometimes married in order to climb the social ladder. In the late 19th century, working women began to marry for affection, not by their family’s approval or by societal expectations. Particularly urban working class women began seeking men independent of their families. As higher status women pushed for education and work, their sense of independence from their families and the men in their lives grew.

In Uncle Vanya, Yelena marries Serebryakov, a widowed man and an older professor. She reveals to Sonya that she thought she had married him out of love, but realizes she was more infatuated with his image as a “famed scholar” than anything else. It is not clear what class Yelena married into, though it is doubtful she married lower given Serebryakov’s occupation and her upbringing in Petersburg. Though working women increasingly married by choice and interest, the option to choose did not necessarily promise a happy marriage.

Sonya, Yelena, Maria and Marina remain at home in different capacities and do not partake in any revolutionary movement. These women live in this country estate, isolated from the pace and rigor of city life, industrial work opportunities, and limited but present higher education. When it comes to a woman’s place in society, Yelena, Maria, and Marina do nothing to question it, short of Maria reading about women’s liberation. Sonya, on the other hand, may not question it, but she does works to help keep the house functioning. None of the characters ever complain about the patriarchy or how they legally cannot make decisions without a man’s approval, but none of them are particularly content with their humdrum country life either. Each remains loyal to the household, whether by being present in the house, following her husband or helping to manage the estate. While this loyalty contrasts with the fierce independence many elite women sought in the cities, it shows the more basic existence of the middle class’ country life.
The Economic Landscape Surrounding Anton Chekhov

Introduction: The Emergence of Industrialization

Anton Chekhov was born in 1860 during a time of great change for his homeland, Russia, and indeed the entire world. From the mid-1800s through 1860, society was entering an increasingly global economy. Improvements in transportation and communication resulted in more countries being able to sell their agricultural goods and raw materials at an international level. The industrial era was evolving quickly, and many countries sought to benefit immensely from it while others fell behind because of their inability to participate. Emerging philosophies of free trade and “international peace,” (influenced primarily by the prosperity that followed international trade,) only added to the economic situation that aided a number of western nations.

This is not to say that international peace served as the standard. There was, in fact, the same fancy for conquest as European nations in the past had exhibited. The focus of conquest, however, had changed dramatically. Differing from the many Napoleonic battles of the late 1700s and early 1800s, conquest battles of mid-to late 1800s were characterized by the overthrow of many less developed nations. Interstate battles still existed, as evidenced by the Franco-Austrian War of 1859, the German Wars of Unification in 1860, the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Crimean War (1853-1856), in which Russia was deeply rooted. These battles were shorter and more internally isolated than were conquest and territorial battles of prior decades.

Changes in international banking and the concept of “credit” gave advantages to certain nations during this period. The new practice of amassing resources in a short time and winning any given conflict quickly, moved the focus away from long-term military mobilization. Simply being a “wealthy nation” was not enough to ensure success. Instead, a country had to have a well-balanced economy with healthy credit, international trade and, most importantly, a national stake in industrialization. This put some countries, such as Britain, in a great position over other nations, while leaving the near-bankrupt Russia at a disadvantage during such conflicts as the Crimean War.

The Ascension of the Crimean War

The events preceding Chekhov’s birth greatly influenced the country he entered as an infant. In 1814, during the Napoleonic War, Russia entered Paris backed by 800,000 Cossacks (a notoriously strong and brutal example of the Russian military forces) to help defeat Napoleon I. From this, Russia gained a reputation for military dominance. At that point even the nations entering allegiance with Russia were said to be in fear of it. From 1815-1860 Russia experienced a growth in population and a boost in the production of iron and textiles. Imports of the steam engine arrived and a Russian railway system even emerged. The issue, however, was that Russia’s advances were insignificant compared to the rest of the western world. In the time that Russia doubled its iron production, Britain increased its iron production thirtyfold! In 1850, when Russia was up to 500 miles of railways, the United States already had 8,500 miles laid. Entrepreneurs from
other countries increasingly came to Russia for raw materials, while Russia’s own industrial expanse fell further and further behind. Russia’s international prowess continued to heavily rely on its military strength in numbers, as opposed to technological advances.

From 1853-1856 the Crimean War (also referred to as the “Russian War,” or the “Eastern War,”) was fought, pitting Russia against the French Empire, Ottoman Empire, British Empire, Kingdom of Sardinia (which unified with Italy in 1861) and the Duchy of Nassau (later annexed by the Kingdom of Prussia). The Crimean War was a conflict over the “Holy Land,” comprised of modern day Israel, Palestinian territories and parts of Jordan and Lebanon. France reclaimed this perpetually-in-dispute area in 1851, prompting Russia’s intervention. Russia began a series of movements along the Ottoman Empire-protected territories of the Danube River, inching ever closer to European lands. Britain and France declared war upon Russia to protect the Ottoman Empire. Russia eventually withdrew from the Danube territories, but it would not comply with the conditions France and Britain named regarding its safeguarding of the Danube areas, as well as its role as a Christian Orthodox protector of the “Holy Land.” And so the Crimean conflict continued.

The Crimean War brought to the forefront Russia’s failure in areas outside sheer soldier quantity. Despite Russia’s military masses, numerous inter-state conflicts preceding and occurring during the war spread even Russia’s sizable army too thin. Furthermore, Russia’s trailing score in the industrialization game meant that its troops were no longer as well armed as those in other countries. The Russians fought Crimean War battles with muskets that shot up to 200 yards, while the Allied troops used rifles that shot up to 1,000 yards! Ranking officers often were untrained or uneducated, resulting in poor leadership.

Finally, the country avoided calling in emergency, short-service reserve troops, because this would mean using serfs, and it was argued that men serving in battle should no longer be serfs when they returned. Russia, unwilling to give up serfdom at the time, quickly lost its soldiers and footing in the Crimean War.

As the war continued, Russia found its supplies running short. British blockades prevented the flow of new inventory to the frontlines. Even more crippling were the blockades which stopped Russia’s export flow, causing its national revenue to plummet. The only way to fund the war was to borrow. To compensate for the heavy deficit, Russia printed paper money, prompting a serious state of inflation. Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich put it best in saying “... we are both weaker and poorer than the first-class powers, and furthermore poorer not only in material but also in mental resources, especially in matters of administration.”

Peace negotiations finally began in 1856. The new czar, Alexander II (who took his position in 1855), was more liberal than those who preceded him, and as such, he was able to stir a new era of Russian reform. Alexander II put greater emphasis on railway building and industrial development, including investment in more coal, iron and steel production. His most notable goal, though, was the official abolishment of serfdom, which was signed and published on March 3rd, 1861. More than 23 million people were freed, and in 1866, serfs working on imperial (or state-owned) property also received their freedom. The details were far from perfect, but Alexander’s II movement toward a more modern Russia was apparent.
The Return of Russian Oppression

As Russia’s reform progressed, another country experienced similar changes. The United States shared a number of similarities with Russia in this time period: geographical size, population growth, expanding frontiers and a variety of natural resources yet to be fully allocated. Where Alexander II abolished serfdom, United States President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery. However, Russians did not enjoy the same standard of living as Americans did. As such, the period following the abolition of serfdom was one of great crisis for Russia, both economically and ideologically.

Despite Alexander II’s reign as a relatively liberal czar, many people did not agree with his leadership. Alexander II suffered numerous assassination attempts before a bomb eventually took his life in spring 1881. Following his death, the liberal reform movement Alexander II set in place turned around in a number of ways. His successor, Alexander III, immediately destroyed plans for an elected parliament that had been finished by him but not yet released. Anti-Jewish pogroms (a form of religious riot) broke out across Russia. Some claimed Russian Jews were to blame for the czar’s death; other scholars cite the economic issues among poor peasants who owed money to land-owning Russian Jews as the fodder for anti-Jewish pogroms. Anti-Jewish legislation, known as the May Laws, was enacted, restricting where Russian Jews could live and travel, how they could buy or collect revenue on property and when they could practice business. Police brutality increased as individual rights were taken away, causing Russia to quickly fall backward from the progress Alexander II attempted to enact.

Alexander III’s reign was short, but his motion to steer Russia away from liberal western tendencies remained. Taking his position in 1894, Alexander III’s successor, his son Nicholas II, sealed Russia’s short-term fate. At only 26, Nicholas II took reign holding strong to his father’s conservative tendencies. Peasantry and local assemblies (known as “zemstvos”) visited Nicholas II at the Winter Palace, at that time the home for Russian czars. Nicholas II made clear his view of Russia’s future and the role average people could play in government by proclaiming:

“... it has come to my knowledge that during the last months there have been heard in some assemblies of the zemstvos the voices of those who have indulged in a senseless dream that the zemstvos be called upon to participate in the government of the country. I want everyone to know that I will devote all my strength to maintain, for the good of the whole nation, the principle of absolute autocracy, as firmly and as strongly as did my late lamented father.”

Advancing Russia’s industrial, economic and military status proved difficult for Nicholas II. Russia’s population started growing rapidly after 1890, and the areas with the greatest population increases were generally villages, on the outskirts of mainstream Russia. Many families were still privy to the “communal” ownership of land, and the redistribution of land following the abolishment of serfdom meant the larger a family grew, the more land its members would be given. This encouraged families to have more sons, since making farms more efficient would not necessarily yield individual gain. All the while, the state needed to pay the immense debt left from the Crimean War, while also allocating capital to invest in industrial...
and military enterprises. To do so, the monarchy expected families to produce more agricultural goods for export (thus increasing state revenue), to pay extremely high taxes (to further support industrialization) and to consume less per family (allowing more to be exported) to pay off the remaining debt and still have enough to finance industrialization and the military. The result was a worn, hungry and poor peasantry and working force.

Unrest became palpable in 1903, as revolutionary meetings began. By 1904, The Moscow City Duma (a collection of homeowners, taxpayers and merchants with certain advisory and governing rights) passed a resolution calling for an elected legislature, freedom of the press and freedom of religion. Nicholas II made some attempts to meet the demands of this group’s revolution, but he was still attached to autocracy. December 1904 saw the strike of a major railway plant in St. Petersburg, with coinciding sympathetic strikes across the city. On January 22nd, 1905, a group of 300,000 unarmed protesters descended upon the Winter Palace to deliver a petition to the czar outlining their needs. The protesters were met by the fire of the Imperial Guard, causing hundreds of deaths and injuries. The massacre was referred to as “Blood Sunday,” a name that would, sadly, be used again later to describe a massacre in Ireland’s political history.

After Bloody Sunday, anger from the public grew, causing additional strikes. Nicholas II agreed to allow more municipal representation in government and created “The State Duma of the Russian Empire.” The limitations on power granted in this document, however, were infuriating, and the public only grew angrier. Fearing more strikes and hoping to prevent another massacre, Nicholas II begrudgingly signed the October Manifesto in fall 1905; the manifesto supported civil rights, political parties, wider suffrage and an elected legislative body. Though many were satisfied, more radical parties called for an armed overthrow of the government. Terrorism and strikes, quelled by police and military intervention, continued into 1906. All of this only led to increased imprisonment and execution of the laboring class, as well as the extended unrest of the citizenry.

Chekhov, who was born in 1860 and passed away in 1904, lived through an extremely tumultuous time in Russian history. The ground had only begun to rumble, though. After Chekhov’s death, unrest continued not just through 1906, but through 1917, when the czarist autocracy was completely overthrown and the communist Soviet Union was formed.
The Urban/Rural Divide in Chekhov’s Russia
by Angie Feak

The clash between city and country life is a major underlying source of conflict in *Uncle Vanya*. The professor and his wife, Yelena, have come to the country estate because they can no longer afford to live in the city. The attitudes and habits they bring from upper-class urban society upset the status quo on the rural estate.

Vanya, who has spent the last several decades tirelessly managing the estate (which is also a working farm), tells us at the beginning of the play that he has abandoned his work to indulge in their richer habits: “I sleep during the day, I eat Caucasian stews, I drink wine...It’s not healthy”. Meanwhile, the urbanites are bored, and at times even repulsed by the way that people in the country live. The professor goes so far as to say that it’s as though he’s “fallen off the earth onto some strange planet!”

The fundamental differences in the lifestyles the characters are accustomed to form the foundation of the conflict that we see onstage, and reflect very real differences that existed between urban and rural Russia in the late 19th century. The idea that city and country dwellers live in different, conflicting, worlds is not exclusive to 19th century Russia. The results of our most recent presidential race, for instance, reveal a growing rift in our country along urban/rural lines; historically, urban populations have voted more liberally, and rural populations more conservatively. In 2016, that trend became even stronger, leading many people to examine more closely how people’s experience of the world changes depending on where they live, and how these differing identities come into conflict. For much of our nation’s history, the population of the U.S. was primarily rural, with the majority of Americans living in small agricultural communities.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, however, America’s cities began to grow, and today about 80% of Americans live in cities and their surrounding areas, with only around 20% living in rural areas or small towns. This urbanization shows no sign of stopping, and many of America’s small towns face shrinking populations and economic stagnation as young people choose to leave for larger cities.

In 19th century Russia, cities were also growing at accelerated rates; however, on the whole, the country was still overwhelmingly rural, with as much as 85% of the population living in the countryside. A few wealthy landowners lived in country estate house like the one we see in *Uncle Vanya*, but the vast majority of those living on the Russian countryside were peasants – poor, often landless people who lived in humbler dwellings and small villages.

Peasant life in Russia was centered around farming, and peasants generally had to be self-sufficient, producing most of their own food (though local markets with food and household goods did exist and were available even to the very poor). During winter months, most peasant...
households also engaged in other trades and crafts to get by. Before 1861, Russia’s peasants were subject to the system of serfdom, in which they were bound to the land that they worked. Under serfdom, peasants were able to profit some from their labors, but they owed a large percentage of what they produced to their landlords, and had no legal rights to property. In Chekhov’s time - over three decades after serfdom was abolished - many peasants still did not own the land they farmed, and those that did often owed large debts to the government for its purchase. In Chekhov’s time, the family is barely scraping by; meanwhile, in cities like St. Petersburg and Moscow, the social elites were embracing the ideals of a modern Europe. Music, literature, and theatre were thriving. Fashionable socialites held salons for music recitals and poetry readings in their homes. Large institutions such as the St. Petersburg University were turning out world-renowned artists and scholars. For people such as the professor and Yelena, who come from these institutions, it is not surprising that they would have seen retreating to the estate as a major step backwards.

But just as those living on the estate are not representative of Russian country life as a whole, the haughty professor and Yelena only show one aspect of 19th century urban Russia. Russian society at this time was highly stratified, and sophistication existed side by side with squalor. The Industrial Revolution was transforming urban economies and creating a new working class. Now freed from serfdom, many peasants were leaving the land they in which they were born in order to take seasonal work elsewhere. As factory jobs became more abundant, cities swelled with migrant workers, and a growing number of people cut ties with their rural homes to permanently move there with their families. Though some could afford small apartments, most of these factory workers lived in large communal dwellings provided by their employers. These shabby spaces were unhygienic, cold, and extremely cramped, with multiple families living on top of each other; sometimes families lived in the factory itself. And yet, despite
these conditions, the workers felt that their prospects were better there than in the countryside they came from.

These new city-dwellers brought with them the values and traditions of their villages, but they were also transformed by the cities and began to develop a new identity as an urban working class, distinct from the rural peasantry. The creation of this new class made Russian cities hotbeds for radical political thought: many of the liberal, educated elites who sought to dismantle the current system saw this new class as the key to change, and worked to spread their ideas amongst them. Despite the awful living conditions, education for the urban poor was somewhat better than in the countryside: towards the end of the century, many had access to company-established schools.

Literacy, though still low by modern standards, was as much as twice as high in Moscow in 1897 than in rural regions, and that increase in literacy made it possible for the individual workers to read and understand the political pamphlets being circulated among them. While peasants in the countryside lived lives that looked like they could come from medieval times, the urban working classes represented a distinctly modern political force and were being introduced to ideas that would put them at the forefront of the political landscape throughout the 20th century.

There are certainly parallels to be found in the United States today. American cities are seen as centers of artistic activity and breeding grounds for new social ideas, and rural areas feel the effects of abandonment for these opportunities. But in many ways, the lifestyle differences between urban and rural people in the United States today are less extreme than they were in Chekhov’s time. Though we may think of agriculture as the backbone of rural life, the largest industry for both rural and urban America is the service industry. Only a small percentage (less than 6%) of rural Americans work in agriculture, and even fewer grow most of their own food. Furthermore, for us the differences between rural and urban life are mitigated by possibilities for mobility and communication that didn’t exist in Chekhov’s time. Though travel can be expensive, most Americans have relatively easy access to at least one major urban center. In contrast, many of the peasants in Chekhov’s time would never have visited a city. Russia’s territory is vast, and although the railroad made travel easier, journeying to a major city was a multi-day undertaking that was extremely taxing, if not impossible for some. For many of the characters in Uncle Vanya, their visits to St. Petersburg or Moscow would be few and far
between, and their only contact with people in the cities would be through letters. In the world of the internet and mass news media, it is difficult to imagine just how isolated the most remote regions of 19th century Russia actually felt.

But while we may not be as physically divided, America’s cultural divide is undeniable. Beyond our voting patterns, urban and rural Americans show definite trends that set them apart from one another. Statistically, rural areas tend to be less racially diverse - in 2010, the average for all rural areas was 78% white, compared with the national average of 63%. Cities, on the other hand, tend to reflect a minority-majority situation, with no group accounting for more than 50%. Rural Americans are also much more likely to be Christian, and earn lower incomes on average. However, despite higher average earnings, urban areas tend to have more poverty, which means that cities have more wealth disparity than small towns. Obviously, these statistics do not paint a full picture of the experience of living in either the country or the city, but they can help to illustrate how living in one versus the other might result in very different views of the world.

Statistics aside, we all have a personal connection to the place we come from: our homes shape us and give each of us an identity that we carry with us through our lives. The differing identities that arise from living in urban and rural environments—and the conflicts between them—are at the forefront of our minds in the United States today. We can use this framework to understand the way that the characters in Uncle Vanya relate to each other, and perhaps we can also look at this play as an opportunity to reflect on our own relationship to the divides within our own culture.
“Russia is presently the largest country in the world – almost twice as big as the next largest, Canada, and 70 times larger than the UK – and its size has always been the basis of its colossal potential strength.

Yet in fact Russia’s size created certain significant weaknesses. Governing large countries is still problematic in the age of instant mass communication, but Russian government developed at a time (under Peter the Great, 1689-1725) when there was little alternative to centralised authority. Poor roads, no railways and unfavourable climate meant that mid-seventeenth century Russian messengers could expect to travel a maximum of 50 miles in 24 hours. Delivery of messages to and from the empire’s extremities could thus take many days. Even improving communications did not alter Russian autocracy. In 1900 Italy and France spent more than twice as much per capita as Russia on policing the empire, and Russia possessed only four state officials for every 1,000 inhabitants. Lacking a network of state control, the government became reliant upon the Orthodox Church’s infrastructure.

Remoteness ensured that Russia’s government was not tempered by a European-style renaissance or a religious reformation in the early modern period. Russia was close enough to the industrial revolution to appreciate massive European developments, but sufficiently distant to question whether such change would be suitable for, or welcome in, Russia. Alexander III (1881-1894) and Nicholas II (1894-1917) allowed some limited industrial modernisation in Russia, but they attempted to create a permeable barrier along Russia’s European frontiers which could filter out the damaging westernising side-effects of these changes. Failure to achieve this contributed to the decline of the tsars’ power and the spread of revolutionary activity.”

Excerpt from John Etty’s essay “Russia’s Climate and Geography” Click here to read the full essay.

A size comparison of Russia and the United States. Courtesy of world Factbook.
**UNITED STATES**
- Capital: Washington D.C.
- 6 time zones across states, 9 total if you include America’s possessions
- Over 323 million people
- In 1867, America purchased Alaska from Russia.
- 9th deepest lake in the world: Lake Crater, located in Southern Oregon

**RUSSIA**
- Capital: Moscow
- 11 time zones
- Over 142 million people
- Siberia covers 5.2 million square miles, approximately 80% of the country.
- World’s deepest lake: Lake Baikal. It is estimated to hold one fifth of the world’s fresh water.

Russia dates back to the 9th century when a loose confederation of East Slavic tribes called Kievan Rus inhabited what is modern Ukraine.

Under the Treaty of Paris of 1763, France signed away most of its colonial land to Britain and Spain. The treaty followed the end of the Seven Years’ War, also known as the French and Indian War in the United States. The USA declared independence from Britain in 1776 with the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

**The Expansion of The United States**

**The Expansion of Russia**
In the earliest days of the Trump Administration, potentially strained international relations concern global governments, their agencies, and related humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). One such relation is our outstanding, complex history with Russia. During the 2016 campaign, Russian President Vladimir Putin became a centerpiece for debate among the candidates as allegations of election interference by Russian sources materialized. Since the election, there has been little doubt to whether or not the material published by WikiLeaks affected the electorate (ultimately costing the Democratic Party the presidency). What has yet to be fully determined is what role, if any, Putin’s government played in the “meddling,” and for greater speculation, the intent of the interference. By the end of December, former President Barack Obama’s administration had launched an investigation into the security breach, placing sanctions on Russian intelligence officials and companies. The Trump administration has since relieved some of those sanctions with the intent to better U.S./Russian relations.

If the allegation proves to be true, in any way, shape, or form, the public focus would rightfully be on President Trump and his administration. The next step in the White House’s relationship with the Kremlin would not only have significant impact on both nations’ citizens, but on their respective international operations elsewhere – thus the current tension. The U.S./Russia relationship, historically mired in conflict and mutual meddling, is the context for Putin’s rise to power and the current complex relationship between the two countries.

Our current political philosophies can be traced back to fall of the Russian Empire and subsequent exit from World War I (which allowed Germany to regain footing at certain battlefronts). Allied Powers maintained military and non-military operations in Russia in order to intervene in the Russian Civil War. After the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1922, the United States – like many countries who were indebted by the previous Russian government – would not recognize the formal establishment of the new communist government. However, these grudges would soon dissolve as a Second World War provided yet another opportunity for an alliance between the great nations. The end of World War II marked the beginning of the Cold War, resuming old divisions, this time along ideological lines. Both sides exercised force to expand their global political and economic influences, creating a tension that drew the two countries incredibly close to nuclear holocaust. The most notable meddling: The Cuban Missile Crisis. Russia’s reaction to U.S. engagement towards the newly established Castro regime...
in the island nation of Cuba led to the prospect of Russian missiles on Cuban soil – right off the coast of the US. Tensions grew so close to a breaking point that historians widely regard this moment as the closest the world has been to nuclear war.

During the Cold War, interventionist strategies and tactical espionage replaced traditional outright warfare, setting the stage for the current predicament with Vladimir Putin. A high ranking officer in the government’s intelligence agency, the KGB, Putin became a prime candidate for the new administration following the end of the USSR. Under President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), he rose to Prime Minister before taking over for Yeltsin. President Putin’s role in foreign affairs was heavily based in his Cold War rhetoric and ideology. Putin sought to maintain Russia’s sphere of control over the Eastern Bloc, countries beginning to establish individual national identities separate from Russian dogma. The U.S., now lead by President George W. Bush, publicly viewed Russian military pushback as undemocratic and an undermining of legitimate political process. Putin has made it known that he believes the revolutions in Eastern European countries (such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine) were U.S.-backed revolts organized by the CIA. However speculative this assessment, it demonstrates Putin’s propensity for distrust and certainly recalls his days in the KGB. Similarly to the Cuban Missile crisis, the U.S. pushed forward with plans to place missile defense systems in Poland in the spring of 2007. This move was intended to build up contingencies in case of a rogue state attack (such as from Iran or North Korea), but Putin saw this act as a part of the U.S.’s ongoing unilateral campaign to undermine his control in the region.

As his [first] presidency came to an end, it was clear that Putin’s willingness to utilize military force to maintain and expand Russian interests was controversial in the eyes of the world. But the global community’s sentiments had little to no affect in domestic Russia; Putin’s popularity among most Russian’s reflected a nostalgia for a feared and powerful government. That is why at the end of his maximum presidential term, Putin had no issue in becoming the Prime Minister for the incoming president, Dmitry Medvedev. His administration’s dominion remained practically intact during Medvedev’s tenure and Putin was seen as the governing puppet master. Whatever hopes of renewal of Russian and American relations between Medvedev and President Obama disappeared quickly as Putin regained the Russian presidency in 2012. His leadership, at this point longstanding and far reaching, is reasonably seen as authoritarian and reminiscent of a dictatorship by Obama’s administration as well as much of the current US leadership.

Putin’s unceasing campaigns in neighboring regions eventually crossed paths with the U.S. in Syria. Both nations diplomatically intervened in the civil war that had seen Syrian President Bashar Assad using chemical weapons Syrian citizens. Even while working cooperatively to put an end to the conflict, President Obama and President Putin signaled their mutual resentment of each other. This resentment was exacerbated when Russian authorities granted

Young Vladimir Putin as a KGB officer. Courtesy of Business Insider.
asylum to Edward Snowden, a wanted criminal in the U.S. Putin’s government offers no real reasoning for not extraditing Snowden other than to say that he is “a free man.” Putin, himself, took the moment to make a political statement, citing the lack of extradition law as his reason for not taking strides to aid the US in this challenging espionage, allowing for ongoing scrutiny.

Putin’s interest in maintaining Russian sway in neighboring countries came to the forefront during the annexation of Crimea. A questionable election process fomented discontent among the Ukrainian people, brewing a new civil war. Putin deployed military forces to support the pro-Russian insurgents. This aggression resulted in a total collapse of Ukraine’s economy. Rather than intervene militarily, Obama pushed for sanctions against Russia, identifying the U.S. as anti-Russian in the eastern European region. The U.S. took a similar stance as Russia began to support the Syrian government in their civil war with an air assault campaign.

Now with a drastic change in US leadership, our relationship with Vladimir Putin is yet again at a point where reformed relations are viable. However, considering Russia’s slew of unresolved conflicts around the world and immovable government, a positive affiliation is antithetical to progressive human rights. Aside from the divisive actions abroad, domestically, Russia confronts cultural changes very differently than most Americans. Russian authorities have had no problem in denying protective rights to LGBTQ communities, jailing those identifying as homosexual for inciting corruption. The face of these domestic and international quagmires: Vladimir Putin. Here at home, there are those who see his aggressive action and candid uncaring demeanor as assertive and an example of unwavering leadership in the face of contest. It is debatable whether or not the end of his current presidency will ultimately mark the end of his status as Russia’s ultimate leader, but there is no doubt in stating Putin is problematic for Russia, the eastern hemisphere, and for those in search of peace.
Uncle Vanya Glossary
Compiled by Neena Arndt

1. Nanny
Wealthy Russians used nannies to help raise children beginning in medieval times. By the 19th century the nanny held a significant role in Russian culture, because many children (and adults who had been raised by nannies) felt closer to their nannies than to their own parents. In some wealthy and even middle-class families, parents kept themselves at a distance from their children. Nannies were usually peasant women (formerly serfs) and some had their own husbands and children. Some became nannies after raising their own families. Most lived with the family that employed them. In 19th century literature, nannies were portrayed as salt-of-the-earth nurturers: uneducated, but wise, and knowledgeable about Russian folklore.

2. Lent
Lent in the Eastern Orthodox Church is similar to Lent in Western Christianity. The date that Easter falls on is calculated differently (and is sometimes as much as five weeks after the Western Easter), so Russians observe Lent on a different schedule. It last for 40 days, ending with a liturgy on Friday of the sixth week. The next week is Holy Week, which ends with Easter. The way that Russians observe Lent varies: some abstain from meat and dairy products, many engage in intense prayer, self-examination, and repentance from sins.

3. Typhus
"Typhus was a major health problem in late 19th and early 20th century Russia. Closely linked with poverty and overcrowded housing, this louse-born disease was endemic in both rural and urban areas, with scattered cases and small outbreaks occurring every year, mostly in the winter and early spring. Great epidemics flared up whenever war or famine produced hardship and massive population movements.... Typhus is ...transmitted by the body louse Pediculus humanus. ...Symptoms include high fever, prostration, mental confusion, and a characteristic rash. People of all ages are susceptible to typhus, although children tend to have milder cases....Case mortality rates range from 5 to 40 percent and even higher...War helped spread typhus throughout Europe during the 17th century, and the disease probably became established in Russia at this time.

4. Switchman
A switchman is a railroad employee who operates railroad switches. A switch consists of a pair of linked tapering rails, known as points (switch rails or point blades), lying between the diverging outer rails (the stock rails). These points can be moved laterally into one of two positions to direct a train coming from the point blades toward the straight path or the diverging path.

5. Caucasian stews
Caucasia is the region at the border of Europe and Asia, between the Black and Caspian seas. Caucasian stews can refer to the traditional cuisines of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Adjaria, and Adygea. Stews usually include lots of meat, vegetables, and spices.

6. Samovar
A samovar is a heated metal container traditionally used to heat and boil water. It is used in and around Russia as well as in other countries: Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Iran, Kashmir and the Middle-East. Since the heated water is typically used to make tea, many samovars have a ring-shaped attachment around the chimney to hold and heat a teapot filled with tea concentrate. In the middle of the samovar there is a vertical pipe in which a fire is lit. This is what heats the water. Once it boils,
each person takes a small amount of tea concentrate and dilutes it with water, thereby creating strong or weak tea depending on personal taste.

7. Maman
French for “mom”. During the 19th century, upper class and higher educated Russians were increasingly becoming francophiles, trying to emulate French culture.

8. Women’s liberation
Feminism in Russia dates back to the 18th century. It was partly a result of the European Enlightenment. Also, after the French Revolution, the ideals of democracy and freedom (including for women) spread to Russia. In the 19th century, women had access to education and increasing social freedoms. Women who fought for liberation were seen as the opposite of women who enjoyed the fineries of aristocratic life, and much of the liberation movement was focused on peasant women and the lower classes. For example, Anna Filosofova was a feminist who created organizations that gave housing and work (usually sewing) to women in need. She also was instrumental (in 1867) in getting women access to university courses, and eventually establishing an all-female university.

9. Gout
Gout is a form of inflammatory arthritis characterized by recurrent attacks of a red, tender, hot, and swollen joint. Because gout occurs more frequently in overweight people and those who eat a lot of meat, for many years it was considered a “rich man’s disease” or a “king’s disease.”

10. Sexton
A sexton is an officer of a church who maintains the building(s) and surrounding grounds and graveyard. He might clean, organize events, dig graves, etc.

11. Don Juan
The first written version of the Don Juan legend was Tirso de Molina’s El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra, or The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest. It was published in Spain around 1630. By the late 19th century it had been adapted in a variety of forms, most famously in Mozart’s opera Don Giovanni. The name Don Juan was synonymous with a womanizer, as it is today.

12. Versts
A verst is a Russian unit of length measurement. One verst is about 0.66 miles, 30 verstes = 19.8 miles. Almost twenty miles on horseback.

13. Quantum satis
A Latin term meaning “the amount that is needed.” Originating from quantity specifications in medicine, it is used to refer to the adding of ingredients. Informally, it means that one should add as much of the necessary ingredient to achieve the desired result, but no more than that. Latin entered the Russian vernacular in the 18th Century, during the Age of Enlightenment, along with German and Italian words.

14. Babushka
In Poland and Russia, this refers to one’s grandmother or an older woman. It is also the anglicized term referring to the type of headscarf often worn by Russian women.

15. Kharkov
Kharkov is a city in modern-day Ukraine. During the time of the play, this area would still have been part of the Russian Empire.

16. Perpetuum mobile
The Latin term for perpetual motion, meaning continuous movement. Also a tempo marking in music characterizing pieces with a fast pace and notes of consistent length.

17. Ostrovsky
Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky (1823-1886) was a 19th Century Russian playwright and is widely considered the patron of the Russian realistic period.
In 1874, Ostrovsky co-founded The Society of Russian Dramatic Art and Opera Composers, which published plays, organized and funded performances, and pulled for reform in the Russian theater. This also marked the beginning of private theater in Russia. Ostrovsky’s plays remain a hallmark of Russian theater, known for their skillful portrayal of the lives and morals of the rising merchant class.

Astrov refers to a type of character that is common throughout Ostrovsky’s works: older, educated but socially inept, often down on his luck. Five of Ostrovsky’s most well-known plays contain a character that more or less fits Astrov’s bill of “big mustache and zero aptitude.” The average theater-going Russian citizen watching Chekov’s play would have known this character type, the same way that we might know what someone is referring to when they say, “Shakespeare has a play with a character who is an easily misled young hero.”

18. State forest
Unlike in the United States, “state forest” does not refer to a protected land registered with the National Parks Service. In Russia, state forest simply refers to a forest that the State owns and may use for whatever purpose it deems necessary, from logging to conservation. The State could transfer or loan parcels of forest to companies, but retained ownership of them.

19. Peat
Found in specific areas called peatland, peat is a soil-like conglomerate of decayed vegetable matter used for gardening and fuel. It is rich in carbon, due to the process that creates it, with an emission intensity greater than both coal and natural gas. Russia has the world’s largest wetlands (1.8 million square kilometers), resulting in a seemingly endless supply of peat, which many in the 18th and 19th Centuries mistakenly saw as a renewable resource because of the volume.

20. Batyushkov
Konstantin Batyushkov (1787-1855) was a poet, essayist, translator in the late 18th to mid-19th century. Batyushkov began writing in 1802, but did not consider himself a worthy or mature poet until 1809, when he wrote Videnie na bregakh Lety (A Vision on the Shores of the Lethe), wherein all of the great Russian poets have died and are on the shores of Elysium.

21. Turgenev
Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883) was a Russian novelist and playwright. He wrote a short story collection called A Sportsman’s Sketches, a milestone of Russian realism, as well as Fathers and Sons, a major work of 19th Century fiction.

22. Angina
Most often a condition marked by severe chest pain, reaching to the shoulders, neck, and arms, due to inadequate blood supply to the heart. In addition, angina can refer to any number of conditions in which there is an intense localized pain. It is not a disease itself, but the
symptomatic display of an underlying condition. Anything that puts one at risk for a heart condition will put them at risk for angina: high blood pressure, obesity, unhealthy diet, old age, etc.

23. Kopeck
A kopeck is 1/100th of a ruble, the currency unit of Imperial Russia. In essence, Vanya is saying that they saved every penny.

24. Astrov’s song
Project Gutenberg eText translation, translated by anonymous and David Widger:
“The hut is cold, the fire is dead; Where shall the master lay his head?”

A version by Brian Friel:

A version by Peter Carson:
“No home, no stove for a bed, where’s a man to lay his head...”

25. Tula
Tula is a city in Western Russia.

26. “I don’t eat meat...”
Vegetarianism first came into the public consciousness in Russia in the mid-1860s when a vegetarian society “Neither Fish nor Fowl” was founded in St. Petersburg. By the late 19th century, “vegetarianism” could be found in the Russian dictionary. By 1894 Moscow had its first vegetarian café. Vegetarianism was most common among artists, writers, scientists, and other citizens with higher education.

27. Bruderschaft
An imported German white wine, perhaps a Riesling. Wine was drunk almost exclusively by the aristocracy. Vodka was considered a “people’s drink.”

28. “Hang your ears on the nail of attention”
A phrase coined by the famous Russian/Ukrainian author Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852).

29. “I have asked you all to come, gentlemen...”
This is the opening line of The Inspector-General (1836), a famous play by Nikolai Gogol satirizing the greed, idiocy, and corruption of Tsarist Russia.

30. “Manet omnes una nox”
The professor is misquoting Horace. The original quote is “omnes una manet nox” and comes from Horace’s Ode 1.28: a funerary epitaph for Archytas. Although Latin word order is often interchangeable, the order here is significant and crucial to the meter (dactylic tetrameter catalectic). The expression roughly translates to “the same night awaits us all.”

31. Dacha
A Russian country home, often a second residence and place of vacation. In the end of the 19th century, dachas were popular among upper-middle class Russian society. During Tsarist times they often featured superfluous gardens that were of purely aesthetic purpose and not used for growing food. At the left is the dacha of Russian painter Alexandre Benois, built in 1892.

32. Turkish law
In 19th century Russian society, fathers negotiated the financial arrangements of a dowry, bought for the bride and groom. The bride, however, kept control of the dowry, allowing her a strong sense of autonomy. Dowries were equivalent to...
about a quarter of the father’s worth and were passed down matrilineally. In contrast, Turkish dowries were traditionally granted from the bride’s family to the groom’s family, with only a portion of the dowry remaining with the couple after the marriage ceremony is complete. A Turkish wedding could not be completed without this exchange, and Turkish women were not provided the same independence (via ownership of the dowry) that Russia women enjoyed.

33. Schopenhauer
Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a renowned German philosopher. In his best known work The World as Will and Representation, Schopenhauer explicates the world of physical phenomenon as a creation of humankind’s “metaphysical will,” an insatiable desire and will to life that generates all suffering.

34. Dostoyevsky
Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) was a Russian novelist, essayist, journalist, and philosopher during the “Golden Age” of Russian literature. His work explores human psychology, religion, and existentialism. He is considered one of the preeminent psychologists in literature. Anton Chekhov cited him as an influence. Dostoyevsky was nationally renowned in his later years. His major works include Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, Demons, The Brothers Karamazov, and Notes from Underground.

35. Starling
A starling is a type of bird. Starlings, native to the Russian countryside, were a popular choice of pet because of their intelligence, their complex songs, and their ability to mimic the human voice (much like parrots).

36. Aivazovsky
Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky (1817-1900) was a Russian Romantic painter, most famous for his depictions of the sea: serene landscapes, glorious ships, and dramatic battles. At the right is Battle of Cesme at Night (1848), a famous rendering of the decisive Russian victory over the Ottoman fleet in the Cesme Bay in July 1770.

37. Kursk
Kursk is both a city and an oblast (administrative region) in Russia.

38. Finita la commedia!
In Italian, “End of the show.” Note that it does not necessarily mean “End of the comedy.” “He who dwells in the past shall have his eyes plucked out.” (104) This is a saying or idiom in Russia. It is a much more visceral way to say “let bygones be bygones.

40. Rozhdestveno
It does not appear that there was an actual town by this name, but there was/is an estate named Rozhdestveno that was owned by Vladimir Nabokov’s family. It is near the town of Siversky, which is about 50 miles south of St. Petersburg.

41. Buckwheat kasha
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Russian Empire had 6.5 million acres devoted to growing buckwheat, and it was a major staple food. In cereal form, the grain is referred to as kasha.
Theatre Etiquette
With Artistic Director Robert Falls

What should I wear?

Definitely dress nicely but comfortably; try business casual. No tank tops, ripped jeans, etc. Baseball caps or hats must be moved once you enter the theatre. The Goodman is air-conditioned so be sure to bring an extra sweater or dress warmly.

What should I bring?

Only what you really need. Electronic devices such as PSP, Nintendo DS, smart phones, and laser pointers are not permitted during the show. If it makes noise or is distracting, please refrain from having it out in the theatre. A purse, bag, or backpack is fine. School supplies are not necessary. Remember that you are here to sit back, watch and enjoy, so don’t bring anything you don’t need.

(Please remember):

**No smoking, and no eating or drinking**
while inside the theatre.

What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?

Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

Have respect for other audience members. This means **no talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking.**

(For your safety and others’!)
How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?

Honestly but appropriately. If you find something funny, then laugh—but don’t laugh for five minutes straight or laugh so hard that you need to leave the theatre. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most important, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feedback but might be extremely offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors for having given it a try.

What to do during Intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, walk, use the restroom, get water and discuss the play with your friends.

We do ask that if you are sitting on the main floor that you remain downstairs and if you are sitting in the mezzanine that you remain upstairs. There are restrooms on both floors. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby will flash several times; that is your cue to get back to your seat because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

What to do before the show:

When your class arrives, your teacher will let the Education staff know how many people are in your group. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance. If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program.

Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

And remember the Golden Rule of Theatre-going:

Theatre artists are paid professionals. When you enter a theatre, you are entering their work space. Respect their work as you would have them respect yours.

Enjoy the Show!
As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is a seating chart – a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater – and an explanation of how to read your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They're here for you!

---

Goodman’s Albert Theatre

---