

Teaching Pack: *The Cherry Orchard*

Cambridge IGCSE™

World Literature 0408

For examination from 2025



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Introduction

This *Teaching Pack* supports teachers and learners when studying Cambridge IGCSE World Literature set texts.

Set texts regularly rotate on the syllabus and may change from one year of examination to the next. Before you begin teaching, check the set text list for the year in which your candidates will take their examinations.

Teachers may use this teaching pack to engage their learners when introducing a set text, or as a revision tool.

The content of these set text resources will need to be expanded on to cover what candidates are expected to know and be able to comment on in an examination.

To increase learners’ understanding and appreciation of the set text we recommend learners to set up a **reading log**, which could include:

* brief synopses of chapters/acts (in no more than a couple of sentences in their own words)
* a timeline of events (useful when a narrative is arranged non-chronologically)
* a list or diagram of characters and their relationships with each other
* first impressions of main characters
* initial thoughts about the main themes or ideas in the text.

The key words we use for the themes in this *Teaching Pack* are not exhaustive.

We suggest teachers discuss synonyms and alternative key words for themes that are identified for a text. Create key major theme mind maps and then from each of those key themes map connected and subsidiary/minor themes.

Animation videos

This *Teaching Pack* can be used with the videos which were produced using the software *Video Scribe* [www.videoscribe.co/en/](http://www.videoscribe.co/en/), but a range of other alternative animation and storyboarding tools may equally be used:

* [www.storyboardthat.com](http://www.storyboardthat.com)  
  Online digital storytelling tool – free and pay for subscriptions available
* <https://wonderunit.com/storyboarder/>

Storyboarding software – free to download, but has to be installed

* [www.powtoon.com/edu-home/](https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home/)  
  Online video and animation creation – free and pay for subscriptions
* [www.animaker.com](http://www.animaker.com)  
  Online animated video creator – free and pay for subscriptions
* <https://goanimate4schools.com/public_index>  
  Online storyboard, scene and video creation tool – pay for subscription
* <http://plasq.com/apps/comiclife/macwin/>

Downloadable and app-based tools for creating comic books

* [www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html](https://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html)

A tool for creating multimedia presentations

* <https://products.office.com/en-gb/powerpoint>

Microsoft PowerPoint for simple presentations as well as more complex multimedia presentations.

The teaching pack and videos aim to help learners to understand and think about the key events and themes of the text, key quotations and their meanings, the significance of character behaviour, relationships and actions and how characters are depicted in the set text being studied.

****Lesson resources

Included in this pack are some resources to use with your learners. You may ask your learners to create their own worksheets similar to these, around another text, which they are studying:

**Character summaries and quotations** – learners create their own character summaries including quotation.

**Character animations** – after watching the animation, leaners can work in pairs to fill in the blank worksheet.

**Reflection** – after reading the text / watching the videos, learners reflect, consider and explore.

**Quiz –** a fun quiz to test the learners’ knowledge of the text before or after watching the videos.

**Please note:**

The spellings of the character names in *The Cherry Orchard* may vary depending on the edition of the text.

The quotes in the video were sourced from <https://www.owleyes.org/text/cherry-orchard/read/act>

1. Themes and text summary

Some themes Anton Chekhov explores include:

* social change
* the past
* loss
* the complexity of relationships.

*The Cherry Orchard* is a tragic comedy, set in Russia in the early 20th century.

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| **Act 1** | The play opens on the estate of Madame Lyubov Ranevsky. The cherry trees are in bloom in the orchard, but it is cold, and frost can be seen.  In the nursery, Dunyasha (a maid) and Lopahin (a merchant) discuss the imminent arrival of the mistress Lyubov and her seventeen-year-old daughter Anya who have been abroad. Lyubov has been in Paris for five years and Anya, having joined her at Easter, has returned home with her. Varya, Lyubov’s adopted daughter is delighted to have her sister and mother home, and they discuss the poor state of affairs Anya found her mother in, in Paris.  Lyubov, her brother Gaev and Pishtchik (a landowner) join the scene as the daughters leave and they discuss the financial crisis the estate is in. Lopahin reveals that on the fixed date of the twenty-second of August, the cherry orchard and estate is to be sold to pay for Lyubov’s debts. Lopahin encourages Lyubov to rest easy as he has a proposal as to how she might resolve the debts and keep the estate in the family. He suggests that the cherry orchard is divided into building plots and then dwellings constructed for summer visitors to lease. The money from this three-acre plot could be enough for Lyubov to resolve the debts and bring the family back from the verge of financial ruin.  Lyubov is both confused and shocked by the proposal and suggests to Lopahin that the cherry orchard is the only thing of interest in the whole province. It is also her ancestral home and holds a great deal of sentimental value to her and her family. Much to Lopahin’s frustration, Lyubov refuses the proposal and instead suggests other ways of securing the money such as marrying Anya to a rich man or asking her aunt, the countess, for the funds. |

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| **Act 2** | The act starts in the open countryside on the edge of the cherry orchard, near sunset. The estate’s servants are gathered chatting whilst Epihodov (a clerk) plays mournful guitar and Charlotta performs tricks.  The servants leave and Lyubov, Gaev and Lopahin enter. Lopahin asks Lyubov to reconsider his proposal because time is short and he knows that Deriganov, a millionaire, intends to attend the auction and buy the estate. Lopahin, in frustration, demands a one word ‘yes or no’ answer from Lyubov as she chats to Yasha and Gaev.  Gaev informs Lopahin that they are still relying on their aunt, the countess in Yaroslavl, to give them the money and save the estate and the cherry orchard. Lopahin is frustrated by Lyubov and calls her reckless, queer and unbusinesslike in her management of money. Their attitudes drive Lopahin mad; he wants to make changes and they want to live in the past.  Lyubov reveals she has had a tragic past and has been reckless with money. She first married a man with nothing but debts, who died of alcoholism. She then fell in love with another man, but misery followed when her son drowned in the river. She then went abroad and bought a villa at Mentone. The man followed her there and fell ill. For three years she nursed him and finally she sold her villa to pay her debts. She moved to Paris where he stole everything and abandoned her for another woman. In betrayal and grief Lyubov tried to end her life by drinking poison.  Lyubov changes the subject by suggesting that Lopahin marries Varya as she is a good girl, and he is not against the match. Lopahin agrees that she is a good girl, but they are interrupted by the entrance of Firs (the old valet).  Following Firs, the daughters enter with Trofimov (the student) and they sit with their mother who is excited to see them. During a discussion, led by Trofimov about the nature of man and intellectuals, a traveller enters and asks for thirty kopeks to ease his hunger. The audience sees Lyubov’s excess when she gives the traveller gold because she has no silver. Varya is most upset by this action as at home they do not have enough money to feed the servants.  Before they all leave, Lopahin acts as the voice of realism and reminds them of the impending sale of the estate if they do not take their situation and his proposal seriously.  Anya and Trofimov are left alone on the stage. In their conversation Anya suggests she has moved on from the past and doesn’t love the cherry orchard as she used to. It is clear to the audience that Anya is in love with Trofimov. They go to the riverside for privacy as Varya is calling Anya’s name. |

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| **Act 3** | It is evening in the drawing room of the house. There is music from a Jewish orchestra and the guests enter in couples. Varya is upset and wipes away her tears as she dances.  Trofimov is teasing Varya about her relationship with Lopahin by calling her Madame Lopahin and she is visibly angry and upset; there is an air of foreboding and tensions as Charlotta performs tricks and Pishtchik complains about money.  The family are waiting for Gaev and Lopahin to return with news of the auction. Lyubov still thinks that her aunt will have bought the estate and the cherry orchard.  Varya reveals that she is indecisive about a future with Lopahin. He has not actually asked her to marry him yet, and he seems too busy with his business and money making to think of Varya. Lyubov reminisces about the house and her years spent growing up on the estate. She also reminds everyone that she lost her son in the river there and she asks for pity for her sentimental attachment to the place. In this meandering conversation Lyubov also talks about returning to Paris and to the man who robbed her; she recognises that it is madness, but he is ill and she loves him. Trofimov is horrified that Lyubov could repeat such a mistake and they argue. The drama is brought to a halt when Anya runs in to bring news that a man in the kitchen says the orchard has sold.  Lopahin appears and reveals that he has bought the estate that his father and grandfather were slaves to. He is the wealthy man that now owns it, and he intends to divide it up for leasable dwellings for new life to spring up where old life once was.  Lyubov weeps and Anya consoles her mother by saying they will start afresh. |

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| **Act 4** | Time has moved on some months and at the estate there is a sense of desolation; the peasants have come to say goodbye to the family.  Lopahin offers to toast his investment and the family’s departure, but they are not interested, and the champagne is left. They will all be departing by train in forty-seven minutes. Lopahin will be leaving on the same train as he is going to Harkov.  Before their departure Lopahin offers Trofimov a loan from his (poppy selling success) to ease his passage, but Trofimov refuses the charity. The two men discuss money and humanity to the sound of an axe striking a tree in the background. When she hears the axe, Anya asks that they do not chop down the orchard until Lyubov has left the estate.  Dunyasha cries for the loss of her love Yasha to Paris and requests a gentle look from him and a letter when he arrives. There is a great sense of things ending, yet Anya appears to be excited by the new opportunities.  Lyubov is leaving for Paris on her aunt’s loan of fifteen thousand yet acknowledges that this amount will not last long; she does not appear to have learned anything from this experience and the loss of the cherry orchard.  Before her departure Lyubov asks why Lopahin hasn’t married Varya. He admits that he is not actually sure, but that they should settle it now. Varya enters, but the moment passes and before he can ask for her hand in marriage, Lopahin is called away and leaves Varya crying.  Led by Anya and Trofimov, they all say goodbye to their old life and the cherry orchard and depart to the sound of doors being locked.  Firs then appears. It seems they have left the old valet behind with the memories of the cherry orchard.  The sound of the axe is heard. |

2. Character summaries and quotations

Lyubov (Madam Ranevsky)

Lyubov Ranevsky is introduced via Lopahin’s memory of her as ‘…a splendid woman. A good-natured, kind-hearted woman.’ Who as a girl of fifteen, showed him kindness and affection after his father had punched him. Her flaws are exposed as the play develops, yet her genuine kindness and affection for the people she loves remains constant and it is this quality that allows her to be a sympathetic character for the audience.

At the start of the play the servants of the estate are waiting for the return of their mistress, who has been in Paris for the last five years. It is at this very point that the audience understands that Lyubov is a character who is marked by tragedy and is continually running from something. She left the estate five years ago after the tragic loss of her husband and son, seeking refuge in Paris and the arms of another man. When we meet her in Act 1, she is running from Paris, seeking refuge in her family home where she hopes to find safety again following her mistreatment and tragic suicide attempt. At the close of the play, she is forced to move on again, this time the audience hopes, to find a more hopeful path with her daughter Anya.

As an adult, Lyubov has experienced a great deal of loss and tragedy. This is perhaps why she chooses to live in the past of her childhood, symbolised by the references to the ‘nursery’ at the play’s opening. Her first husband died of alcoholism and then very shortly after her son downed in the river. The next man in her life used her, cheated her and then left her for another woman. On her return to Russia and her estate, she finds that it is to be sold to clear her debts. As soon as the audience hears of the sale date, it is inevitable that the cherry orchard will be lost; Lyubov’s does not have the capacity to recognise the present and how it impacts on the future, to be able to act to save the estate.

Lyubov is frustrating to Lopahin, and between the two of them there exists a contrast between in-action and action, unreality and reality, the past and the present. Ultimately, it is shown that hiding in the past, not taking action and not acknowledging reality will not end well as Lyubov, despite her class status, ends the play virtually penniless whereas Lopahin, despite his peasant upbringing, now owns the ‘best estate in the world.’ In Act 4 Lopahin asks Lyubov ‘reproachfully’, ‘Why, why didn’t you listen to me?’ To which, Lyubov cannot answer and remains ‘weeping’ as Lopahin is led away.

At the play’s close there is a sympathy around Lyubov’s departure as she calls, ‘Oh, my orchard!’ suggesting that forever part of her will remain tied to this place. She lists ‘My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye!’ suggesting that her only happy times were of her childhood, when she saw her mother walking about the nursery. Her adult life has been destroyed by tragedy. Possibly the destruction of the cherry orchard will allow Lyubov to step out of the past an into a more hopeful future; Anya sees ‘a new life is beginning’ for her ‘mamma’.

| **Quotation** | **This suggests…** |
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| Act 1 – ‘This is the nursery where I slept and I used to look out at the orchard from here! Look, Mother's walking in the orchard. In a white dress.’ | Lyubov’s opening reference to the ‘nursery’ of her childhood suggests that she is hiding in the past, unable to connect with the present and so is barred from a future. The hallucination further establishes that the protagonist is disconnected from reality. |
| Act 2 - ‘Cottages, summer people – forgive me, but it is so vulgar.’ | That despite her financial crisis and weakened position as landed aristocracy, Lyubov is still prejudiced against those of the middle and lower classes. These ‘summer people’ could save her estate and her precious cherry orchard, yet she is too blinded by her prejudice to see this. |
| Act 3 - ‘I was born here… without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning for me.’ | That the past is everything to Lyubov and she sees absolutely no future beyond the hold of the cherry orchard. It represents a time of security, happiness and luxury. The audience may criticise this blindness, yet there is a genuine affection in the way that Lyubov speaks about the orchard and its meaning to her. |

Lopahin (Yermolay Alexeyevitch)

Lopahin is a very wealthy middle-aged merchant who describes himself as ‘a rich man’ yet one who remembers the ‘peasant I was’. He was raised on the estate of the Ranevskys, and his grandparents were slaves of the family, until their freedom was given. Despite being rich, Lopahin is very aware of his humble background and upbringing, and it clearly bothers him around the Ranevsky family. He is often heard making reference to his past, despite his assurance ‘that I’ve forgotten all that’, he clearly hasn’t, and it appears to trouble him.

It is Lopahin that offers Lyubov a sensible escape from her debts. It is his business plan that the cherry orchard be cut down and divided into plots for the building of leasable dwellings. In his Act 1 speeches with Lyubov he demonstrates a business-like awareness of the financial situation that the Ranevskys are in. He knows about and speaks in terms of dates, times and numbers to demonstrate his ‘real’ way of looking at this situation. Lopahin often speaks in short statements and frequently looks ‘at his watch’ to create a sense of urgency as he grapples with the family and their unbusinesslike ways. As the play progresses through Act 1 and 2, Lopahin becomes increasingly agitated and frustrated by the family and their inability to appreciate their financial situation. He eventually loses all patience with them, beseeching, ‘Give me an answer!’. Lopahin is a man of action in the way he communicates and the way he acts, and this is juxtaposed by the inaction of the Ranevskys.

Throughout the play there is the unspoken assumption that Lopahin will marry Varya, Lyubov’s adopted daughter. He agrees that she is ‘a good girl’, but he has no idea why he hasn’t asked for her hand in marriage formally. Varya agrees that he could be a match, but that she cannot ask herself to marry him. Given that Lopahin is a man of action and is the character that drives the narrative, it is interesting that he cannot drive himself forwards in this romantic action. In marrying Varya, Lopahin would tie himself back to the Ranevsky family, the family he has worked to emancipate himself from in buying and then destroying the cherry orchard; it’s not a coincidence that these two do not formally agree to marry.

In Act 4 it is revealed that Lopahin has bought the estate and cherry orchard. He is proud that he is now the owner of the finest estate in the world and the estate where his ‘father and grandfather were slaves’. Through his emancipation speech Lopahin ‘laughs’, ‘chuckles’ and then ‘stamps with his feet’ as the orchestra tunes up to signal celebration. Lopahin makes it clear that he intends to cut down the orchard to make way for new life to spring up for future ‘grandsons and great-grandsons’.

Lopahin symbolises progress and the future.

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| **Quotation** | **This suggests…** |
| Act 1 – ‘I may be rich… but… I’m a peasant through and through.’ | Lopahin has risen in status to be a rich man of means and business, yet he often reminds himself of his humble origins. He appears proud of his origins, yet his frequent referencing of his background hints at an inner turmoil that he cannot reconcile. Lopahin’s rise in status contrasts with Lyubov’s fall in status as she faces financial ruin, and it suggests that his progressive attitude is what has secured his success. |
| Act 1 – ‘There’s no time to talk… I’ll say it in a couple of words.’ | Lopahin is a man of action, and this action is juxtaposed by the inaction the audience sees in the family. It can be assumed that this action and desire to move forwards is how he has risen from the son of slaves to a wealthy landowner and businessman. The difference between his action and Lyubov’s inaction is a source of great frustration to Lopahin who exclaims in Act 2 that the family ‘drive’ him ‘mad’. |
| Act 3 – ‘Lopahin will take the axe to the cherry orchard, how the trees will fall to the ground!’ | Lopahin sees the beauty of the cherry orchard but is willing to sacrifice beauty for progress. In this way he differs from the family, who also see the beauty, but cannot move past it. His exclamatory tone suggests he is excited by the prospect of destroying the orchard to create new lives and prosperity. |

Anya Ranevsky

Seventeen-year-old Anya is Lyubov Ranevsky’s biological daughter. Unlike her mother, Anya is excited by the prospect of a new life. She is presented as bright-eyed and excitable when speaking with her mother and her friend Trofimov, about the destruction of the cherry orchard and what it signals for their future.

At the start of the play, Anya returns home from Paris with her mother, where she has been since Easter. She talks with her sister Varya about the terrible ‘comfortless’ conditions that she found her mother living in in Paris. She is genuinely sad and ‘so sorry’ for her mother, yet unsurprised that she was found in such an awful state. Anya is pleased to return to Russia and her family.

Anya is an interesting character for the audience because despite her youth and childish innocence she also appears to understand her mother's flaws. One of the first questions that Anya asks Varya is ‘have you paid the arrears on the mortgage?’ suggesting that she is more pragmatic than the rest of the family. She also understands that the time has come for them to move on, rather than hiding in the past that the cherry orchard symbolises. She talks with excitement and eyes ‘sparkling like diamonds’ about looking forward to a future time and to a new life with her mother. The audience can see that like Lopahin, she is a character that can be moved to forward action.

Anya often appears in the company of the student Trofimov, and the audience soon understands there is some admiration verging on love affair between the two of them. Anya is excited by his philosophical conversations about humanity and mankind, and she seems impressed by his intellectual persona.

At the end of the play, it is Anya that literally says ‘Good-bye to the old life!’ and leads her mother towards a ‘new life’, away from the cherry orchard.

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| **Quotation** | **This suggests…** |
| Act 1 – ‘We only just had enough to get here. And mamma doesn’t understand!’ | That despite being young, sheltered and somewhat childish, Anya understands the relationship between money and responsibility better than her mother does. In fact, her short exclamatory sentence suggests that her mother's lack of understanding is a source of frustration to her. |
| Act 2 – ‘The house we live in has long ceased to be out own, and I shall leave it, I give you my word!’ | That Anya is confident about a better future for herself and possibly for the rest of her family. She doesn't hide in the past of the cherry orchard like her mother and her uncle, in fact she tells Trofimov that it has been some time since she has thought about the house and the estate as anything of importance to her and her life. |
| Act 4 – ‘Very glad! A new life is beginning, mamma.’ | Unlike her mother, uncle and some of the servants, Anya does not want to hide in the past. She is excited and ‘very glad’ that they are destroying the cherry orchard. She sees this as signalling a new beginning and a fresh start for her and her mother. Anya is the voice of hope for the future at the close of the play. |

Create your own character summaries including quotation tables:

[Character name]

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| **Quotation** | **This suggests…** |
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3. Character animations

Can you identify the names of the different characters in the videos?

| **Character name** | **Character image** |
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Here are the answers.

| **Character name** | **Character image** |
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| Lyubov (Madam Ranevsky) |  |
| Lopahin (Yermolay Alexeyevitch) |  |
| Lyubov |  |
| Anya Ranevsky |  |
| Varya |  |
| Pishtchik |  |
| Gaev |  |
| Yasha |  |
| The Countess in Yaroslavl, |  |

4. Reflection

Now you have read the text, reflect on your thoughts:

**Consider the relationship between the ending and the rest of the play.**

Did you find the ending surprising or shocking?

Were you able to predict the ending, and at what stage did the ending become clear?

Did you find the ending satisfying?

Did the characters get the ending they deserved?

What dramatic contribution did the ending make to the play as a whole?

To what extent does [author] make this a satisfying ending to the play?

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**Explore the dramatic impact of a key moment from the play**

Read the extract you have selected and consider the points below:

* Explore the use of particular words or lines spoken by character.
* Were there any shifts in topic, tone and mood? Is it a moment of quiet pathos or one of dramatic intensity?
* How does the writer convey the mood at this moment in the play?
* What is the dramatic impact on the audience?

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**Explore the characters in the play**

Create practice questions around the characters of the play, for example:

* + Explore how [author] portrays the relationship between [character] and [character]?
  + How does the writer memorably depict the life of [character]?
  + Explore how [character] makes this moment in the play so memorable/entertaining/dramatic?
  + Explore how the writer vividly portrays characters from different backgrounds.

Choose **one** of your questions and complete the following activities:

Compile a QUOTATION + COMMENT table to record your ideas about specific characters.

Add notes to each quotation about what it reveals about the character and their relevant contexts.

Learn some key quotations.

Answer the question. Peer-evaluate each other’s answers.

Note examples of:

* + irrelevant points (which perhaps narrate or describe)
  + repeated points (where no more credit can be given)
  + unsupported assertions (which do not constitute analysis)
  + long quotations (which indicate a lack of clear focus).

Tick:

* + points that are valid and thoughtful
  + quotations that are concise and relevant
  + critical comments on key words or aspects of structure and form.

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**Explore the themes of the play**

Create practice questions around a theme (listed in section 1), for example:

* + How does [author] portray [theme] in the play?
  + In what ways does [author] convey [theme] in the play?
  + How does [author] present his ideas about [theme] in the play?

Choose **one** of your questions and complete the following activities:

* Compile a QUOTATION + COMMENT table to record your ideas about specific characters.
* Add notes to each quotation about what it reveals about the character and their relevant contexts.
* Learn some key quotations.
* Answer the question. Peer-evaluate each other’s answers.

Note examples of:

* + irrelevant points (which perhaps narrate or describe)
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5. Quiz

**1. Why is the cherry orchard in danger of being sold?**

A) The family no long need the land.

B) It is associated with bad memories.

C) To repay for the family debts.

D) To make the estate more manageable.

**2. Which of these statements is false?**

A) Lopahin tells Lyubov to rest easy.

B) Lopahin has a proposal to resolve Lyubov’s debts.

C) Lopahin wants to increase the size of the cherry orchard.

D) Lopahin proposes to divide the cherry orchard into building plots.

**3. Lyubov rejects Lopahin’s proposal because**

A) she has been sent money by her aunt.

B) she feels nobody would lease the plots.

C) the cherry orchard is of historical significance.

D) the cherry orchard is of great sentimental value.

**4. Who does Lopahin reveal intends to buy the cherry orchard?**

A) Pishtchik, the landowner.

B) Deriganov, the millionaire.

C) Trofimov, the student.

D) Lyubov’s aunt, the countess.

**5. In frustration, which three adjectives does Lopahin use to describe Lyubov?**

A) Selfish, reckless and wasteful.

B) Ignorant, queer and silly.

C) Wasteful, odd and silly.

D) Reckless, queer and unbusinesslike.

**6. Lyubov has a tragic past; what happened to her son?**

A) He ran away.

B) He drowned.

C) He died at birth.

D) He became sick.

**7. How does Lopahin feel about marrying Varya?**

A) Happy and excited.

B) Fearful that she is his social superior.

C) Worried that she does not love him.

D) Indifferent, but not against the match.

**8. Why is Lopahin proud to have bought the estate?**

A) Because he now owns the place where his father and grandfather were slaves.

B) Because he can save the cherry orchard from destruction.

C) Because he now owns a place of great interest in the province.

D) Because he can help the family with their debts.

**9. What has Lyubov learned from the loss of the cherry orchard?**

A) To be more careful with her money and assets.

B) That she needs to move on in life.

C) Nothing and will likely make similar mistakes.

D) To be more business minded.

**10. Who is left behind after the family and servants depart?**

A) Yasha

B) Trofimov

C) Dunyasha

D) Firs

Quiz answers

**1. Why is the cherry orchard in danger of being sold?**

C) To repay for the family debts.

**2. Which of these statements is false?**

C) Lopahin wants to increase the size of the cherry orchard.

**3. Lyubov rejects Lopahin’s proposal because:**

D) The cherry orchard is of great sentimental value.

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D) Firs

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