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# CHEKHOV PLAYS





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CHEKHOV  
LADY WITH LAPDOG AND  
OTHER STORIES

*Translated by David Magarshack*

Introducing his new translation of a selection of short stories by the Russian master of the form, David Magarshack writes: 'The eleven stories in this volume were written between 1885 and 1899 . . . and reading them one gets the impression of holding life itself, like a fluttering bird, in one's cupped hands.'

This collection includes such famous small masterpieces as *A Boring Story*, *Ward 6*, *Ariadne*, *Ionych*, and *The Darling*. They typify Chekhov's extraordinary ability to compress, as it seems, a whole life into a few pages, and that blend of comedy and tragedy with which he portrays the world.

## DOSTOYEVSKY

### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

When he began, in 1865, to write *Crime and Punishment*, the great novel which extended his reputation outside Russia, Dostoyevsky himself was as embarrassed with debts as Raskolnikov, the young student who, in the book, murders a stupid and grasping old woman for gain. In Raskolnikov's inability to tolerate his growing sense of guilt the author handles a universal theme on which he had brooded during his imprisonment in Siberia.

The reader of David Magarshack's fluent translation can appreciate both a magnificent gallery of characters and that piercing insight which makes Dostoyevsky the most terrifying of all writers.

### THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

(Two volumes)

Dostoyevsky completed *The Brothers Karamazov*, the culmination of his work, in 1880 shortly before his death. This profound story of parricide and fraternal jealousy involves the questions of anarchism, atheism and the existence of God.

### THE DEVILS

This political drama, the most controversial of his masterpieces, has been both hailed as a grim prophecy of the Russian Revolution and denounced as the work of a reactionary. It is a penetrating commentary on men and affairs as well as a work of tragic intensity in which the recesses of the mind and the dark passions of men are probed.

## DOSTOYEVSKY

### THE IDIOT

*The Idiot*, which Dostoyevsky wrote after *Crime and Punishment*, is his most absorbing and structurally perfect masterpiece. In it he deals brilliantly with the position of the good, saintly man in modern society and the question whether such a man can survive in a world torn by human passions. Love, the main theme of the novel, is considered in three different ways: love based on passion, love from vanity, and Christian love. The hero of the novel, Prince Myshkin, a Christ-like figure, becomes deeply involved in the clash of contending passions, and his attempts to reconcile them end in disaster and tragedy.

Dostoyevsky's uncanny insight into the motives of human behaviour, his wonderful artistic integration of idea and character, and his uncompromising truth to life combine to make *The Idiot* one of the finest examples of the psychological novel in European literature.

### THE GAMBLER/BOBOK/A NASTY STORY

These stories illustrate the morbid strands in Dostoyevsky's genius. No great writer has been so obsessed with the despairing possibilities of roulette and the details of *The Gambler* are entirely authentic. *Bobok* is a macabre, satirical conversation-piece in a graveyard and *A Nasty Story* is a nightmare of good intentions gone bad.

*Also available*

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND and THE DOUBLE

GOGOL

DEAD SOULS

*Translated by David Magarshack*

Gogol spent eight years writing the first part of *Dead Souls*, which was published in 1842. Then his conception of the novel changed. In line with his mission to save Russia he now saw it as an epic narrative in three parts: the 'colossal figures' of his imagination would uplift the Russian people and extricate them from their predicament. He completed the second part, but in despair destroyed it just before his death: only fragments of it remain. Though his creative dream was never realized, its superb gallery of characters make *Dead Souls* his greatest masterpiece.

*Also available*

DIARY OF A MADMAN

## TURGENEV

### FATHERS AND SONS

*Translated by Rosemary Edmonds*

*Fathers and Sons* (first published in 1861) is generally agreed to be Turgenev's masterpiece, and its hero, Bazarov, is one of the most remarkable figures in Russian literature. Turgenev's creation of the first literary nihilist and his demonstration of the failure of communication between generations succeeded in enraging both fathers and sons in the Russia of his time; they also help to explain the appeal of this work to Europeans today. Yet *Fathers and Sons* also contains some of the most moving scenes in the literature of any language.

### SKETCHES FROM A HUNTER'S ALBUM

*Translated by Richard Freeborn*

For most of its present-day readers Turgenev's early masterpiece is quite simply one of the most beautiful books in any language: a lyrical, almost magical account of wanderings in the Russian countryside, to read which is an unforgettable experience. Yet when it was published in 1852 it was regarded by Tsarist officialdom as a subversive work which appeared to denounce the whole Russian social system. Perhaps the secret behind this apparent contradiction lies in that combination of urbanity, compassion and intellect which is Turgenev's special genius. Condemning nothing, he reveals the peasants of his beloved country as individual human beings, suffering and oppressed in what might have been a paradise.

*Also available*

HOME OF THE GENTRY

ON THE EVE

## TOLSTOY

### ANNA KARENIN

Tolstoy began to write *Anna Karenin* in 1875, six years after he had finished *War and Peace*, and it is considered by many to be the greater of the two. It is the story of Anna, one of the most admired women of fashionable Moscow and St Petersburg society, who gives up her husband, her son, and her position for a passion which finally drives her to suicide. And in contrast there is the story of Levin, which reflects the apparent peace of Tolstoy's own marriage. On the surface he lives a happy and contented country existence, and yet within is tormented by an intense need to discover the meaning of life. In the end this is revealed to him by the simple words of a peasant – a conclusion which mitigates the horror of Anna's death.

### WAR AND PEACE

#### *Vols 1 and 2*

Few would dispute the claim of *War and Peace* to be regarded as the greatest novel in any language. This massive chronicle, to which Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) devoted five whole years shortly after his marriage, portrays Russian family life during and after the Napoleonic War. Tolstoy's faith in life and his piercing insight lend universality to a work which holds the mirror up to nature as truly as Shakespeare or Homer.

The first volume of Rosemary Edmond's modern translation takes the story as far as the appearance of the celebrated comet before Napoleon's crossing of the Niemen.

The second volume describes Napoleon's Russian campaign of 1812 and the retreat from Moscow.

#### *Also available:*

CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, YOUTH  
THE COSSACKS  
RESURRECTION



## FLAUBERT

### SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION

*Translated by Robert Baldick*

'I know nothing more noble', wrote Flaubert, 'than the contemplation of the world.' His acceptance of all the realities of life (rather than his remorseless exposure of its illusions) principally recommends what many regard as a more mature work than *Madame Bovary*, if not the greatest French novel of the last century. In Robert Baldick's translation of this story of a young man's romantic attachment to an older woman, the modern English reader can appreciate the accuracy, the artistry and the insight with which Flaubert (1821-80) reconstructed in one masterpiece the very fibre of his times.

### MADAME BOVARY

*Translated by Alan Russell*

With *Madame Bovary* (1857) Flaubert established the realistic novel in France. Yet he always refused to ally himself with any literary movement, devoting himself in splendid isolation to his art, with that intense concern for stylistic perfection which has made him a legendary figure among novelists.

The central character of *Madame Bovary* is the bored wife of a provincial doctor, whose desires and illusions are inevitably shattered when reality catches up with her. Flaubert vents his profound contempt for the *bourgeois* mentality, but betrays a certain sympathy for the human frailty of Emma Bovary. She remains one of the great creations of modern literature.

*Also available*

THREE TALES

*Translated by Robert Baldick*

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THE PENGUIN CLASSICS

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ANTON PAVLOVICH CHEKHOV was born in 1860 at Tanganrog in south Russia. After a harsh childhood he went to Moscow in 1879 and entered the medical faculty of the university, graduating in 1884. During his university years he supported his family by contributing stories and sketches to magazines. In 1885 he met Soovorin, editor of *Novoye Vremya*, in St Petersburg, who encouraged him to write, and in 1886 Chekhov published a volume of stories. In 1887 his first full-length play, *Ivanov*, was produced in Moscow. For five years he lived in the country near Moscow, practising medicine and writing many of his best stories; but when his health began to fail he moved to the Crimea, and after 1900 most of his life was spent at Yalta where he met Tolstoy and Gorky. He wrote his best-known plays in the last years of his life; in 1898 Stanislavsky produced *The Seagull* at his newly founded Moscow Art theatre, and it was for him that Chekhov wrote *Uncle Vania* (1900), *Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903). In 1901 Chekhov married Olga Knipper, one of the Art theatre's leading actresses. He died in 1904.

ELISAVETA FEN is the pseudonym of Lydia Jiburtovich-Jackson, who was born in western Russia of Russian parents. She studied Russian language and literature at Leningrad University, then came to England in 1925. She married a British citizen in 1929 and since that time has lived in England. She took up psychology in the nineteen-thirties, gaining her D.Phil. in psychology from Oxford University in 1949. Since then she has lectured on psychology, practised child psychotherapy, and published three psychological works. As Elisaveta Fen her books include *A Russian Childhood* (an autobiography), and translations of works by Zoshchenko, Bondaryev, and other authors. Her second volume of reminiscences, *A Girl Grew Up in Russia* was published by André Deutsch in 1970 and her third, *Remember Russia*, by Hamish Hamilton in 1973. A selection of Chekhov stories translated and prefaced by her was published in The Folio Society edition, in 1974.



PLAYS  
ANTON CHEKHOV

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IVANOV  
THE SEAGULL  
UNCLE VANIA  
THREE SISTERS  
THE CHERRY ORCHARD  
THE BEAR  
THE PROPOSAL  
A JUBILEE

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*Translated and with an Introduction by*

ELISAVETA FEN



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## INTRODUCTION

‘THE poetic power of Chekhov’s plays does not manifest itself at the first reading. After having read them, you say to yourself: This is good, but . . . it’s nothing special, nothing to stun you with admiration. Everything is as it should be. Familiar . . . truthful . . . nothing new. . .

‘Not infrequently, the first reading of his plays is even disappointing. You feel you have nothing to say about them. The plot? The subject? You can explain them in a couple of words. Acting parts? Many are good, but none are striking enough to stimulate an ambitious actor.

‘Yet, as you recollect some phrases and scenes, you feel you want to think about them more, think about them longer. In your mind, you go over other phrases and scenes, over the whole of the play. . . . You want to re-read it – and then you realize the depths hidden under the surface. . . .’

Thus Stanislavsky<sup>1</sup> in *My Life in Art*.

‘Chekhov is inexhaustible because, despite the everyday life which he appears to depict in his plays, he is really talking all the time not of the accidental and specific, but of the Human, with the capital “h”. That is his basic spiritual *Leitmotif*.

‘His plays are full of action, not in their external but in their inner development. In the very inactivity of his characters a complex inner activity is concealed.’

Just as the artistic effect of Chekhov’s plays remains elusive, difficult to describe and to explain, so his own place among the schools of dramatists is not easy to define.

‘His dramatic effects are most varied and often unconsciously employed,’ writes Stanislavsky. ‘At times he is an impressionist, at times a symbolist; he is a “realist” where it is necessary, and occasionally almost a “naturalist”.

‘A purblind eye would see only that Chekhov lightly traces the outward lines of the plot, that he is engaged in representing everyday life, the minute details of ordinary living. He certainly does these

1. The famous Russian actor and producer; the founder of the Moscow Art Theatre.