

Ivan Ivanich and Nicholi Ivanich - A Comparison

Ivan is the central character of the story 'Gooseberries'. He is a veterinary surgeon who tells his friends Bourkin and Aliokhin the story of his brother Nicholai. Nicholai is the younger brother of Ivan. He is a govt servant. He is not able to reconcile with the city life. He makes plans to buy an estate where he can grow gooseberries and he dreams of a peaceful life. For this he struggles hard and saves all his money. Both the brothers are presented in good contrast. Ivan is not able to accept his brother's dream. To him, it is an escape from reality. He believes that instead of retreating to the country estate, one should dedicate one's lives to good works. Chekhov presents a clash between illusion and reality through Nicholai and Ivan. Ivan is quite practical in his approach. He has social consciousness whereas his brother Nicholai dreams for comfort and personal happiness. While Ivan visits Nicholai's house after he has realized his dream, he finds him happy. The gooseberries taste hard and sour to Ivan whereas it is delicious to Nicholai. To him it is a symbol of gracious living in the country side. It appears that Nicholai is completely self-centred and symbolizes the void bourgeois existence. Thus in the story, we find Ivan, a man of upright sense of justice and who believes and lives in reality and Ivan's brother Nicholai, an arrogant, selfish and miserly who dreams of happy and quite life.