

Gooseberries by Anton Chekhov

Review of Chekhov's "Gooseberries"

"Gooseberries" written by Anton Chekhov is a 'story within a story'. It is mainly about a man who had a dream.

The story opens with a description of a country landscape on a rainy day. The two friends, Ivan Ivanich, a veterinary surgeon and Bourkin a school teacher take shelter at the house of a friend and land owner Aliokhin. Ivan tells his friends the story of his brother Nikolai Ivanich who went to work as a clerk in a city at the age of nineteen. But he is not reconciled with the city life and makes plan to buy an estate where he can grow gooseberries and have a peaceful life. To him it is a symbol of gracious living in the country side. He lives under extremely meager conditions to save money. Ivan is not able to accept his brother's dream. To him, it is an escape from reality. He visits Nikolai's house after he has finally achieved his dream and he finds his brother happy. Ivan is of the opinion that Nikolai has deceived himself and wasted his life in his happiness. He concludes with a lament at the loss of his own youth and thinks – instead of retreating to country estate, one should dedicate one's lives to good works.

Chekhov presents a clash between illusion and reality through Nikolai and Ivan. Ivan is quite practical in his approach and he has social consciousness. Nikolai symbolizes a happy and void bourgeois existence. He has dream for comfort and personal happiness. The rain and gooseberries represent the idea. Through the imagery of rain Chekhov hints at the gloomy atmosphere and the gooseberries are the great dreams one wants to realize. The story reveals the author's insight and understanding of human condition.