Importance Of Opinions And Impressions In Chekhov's The Lady With The Little Dog

People meeting their future wife or husband in the most unpredictable places have always been the subject of many stories. These stories assume the readers to believe that love, at first sight, is possible and that a special someone is waiting for the reader's arrival. In this story, it gives the reader hope that anyone can find love whether you are looking for it or not. Chekhov's "The Lady with the Little Dog" is the story of a forty-year-old man whose perspective of love has changed for the better after meeting a beautiful lady with a dog. The story begins in Yalta with Gurov, a known womanizer, meeting the lady with the little dog. At first, he thought that she is just like another woman with whom he will have an affair with. His interest in the lady starts to pique and he begins to understand that Anna is different, in a good way than any other woman he has ever been with. While spending more time with each other they start to fall for each other even though they both know that their married. After this whole little fling plays out, it starts to change Gurov after they go their separate ways. Onto their own separate lives, Gurov starts to feel empty and unrewarded at home and is haunted by the memory of his time with Anna. Gurov, then goes off to see Anna with the task of confessing his true feelings towards Anna. Anna then reciprocates her love toward Gurov and then they both decide to be with one another which starts the beginning of their journey toward a new life. In "The Lady with the Little Dog", we learn that opinions and impressions reveal a great deal about a person, good or bad. Throughout the story, Gurov's opinions and impressions revealed a large amount about him and in turn he concludes and has a realization that he never would have ever thought about before meeting Anna.

Chekhov's "The Lady with the Little Dog" is a great example of learning one of the elements of fiction: character. Characters are the people who drive the plot and keep the readers interested. It is one of the most important elements of fiction because they are the foundation for the entire story. Characters are the people through whom the reader experiences the tale. In the textbook it says, "In all successful fiction the characters come alive as individuals. They must materialize on the page through the accumulation of details about their appearance, actions, and responses as seen, heard, and felt physical realities" (1682). In "The Lady with the Little Dog", Gurov's character is learned through the many opinions and impressions he has and throughout the story his character goes through a development that drives the plot. Understanding what the characters do and say and how other characters respond to them helps to paint the fullest possible picture of the fiction story.

One of the opinions that Gurov had was that he always thought that women were an inferior race. In the story Chekhov wrote, "almost always spoke ill of women, and when they were discussed in his presence, he would say of them. It seemed to him that he had been taught enough by bitter experience to call them anything he liked, and yet he could not have lived without the 'inferior race' even for two days" (Chekhov 271). This opinion of Gurov described him as a judgmental close-minded person whose actions contradicts his thinking. It is a bit of an irony that he secretly admits that he cannot live without women even though he sees them as inferior people. He admitted, "In the company of men he was bored, ill at ease, with them he was taciturn and cold, but when he was among women, he felt himself free and knew what to talk about with them and how to behave;" (Gurov 271). From these quotes, the reader gets a

general idea of who Gurov is and what kind of person he is.

Another opinion that Gurov had was that he saw women as a way to savor his pleasure. While married, he did not see his wife as someone he loved. He considers himself as a product and victim of Russian social mores. It seemed more a marriage of convenience. In “The Lady with the Little Dog”, Gurov says, “but he secretly considered her none too bright, narrow-minded, graceless, was afraid of her, and disliked being at home. He had begun to be unfaithful to her long ago, was unfaithful often…” (Chekhov 271). Knowing about this showed that Gurov was not a loyal person to their marriage despite having kids. It also showed that Gurov was just a womanizer. When he first started seeing Anna, he saw it as a way to not be bored.

These opinions then lead to the conclusions he has. The conclusions he has is that he recognizes that he has misrepresented himself to women and with that recognition show a deeper sense of need and fulfillment in his life. Despite the many years of unfaithfulness to his wife, it was not until he met Anna that not only his life changed, but so did his heart and mind. In the story, “And only know, when his head was gray, had he really fallen in love as one ought to for the first time in his life…Formally, in sad moments, he had calmed himself with all sorts of arguments, whatever had come into his head, but now he did not care about any arguments, he felt deep compassion, he wanted to be sincere, tender…”(Chekhov 282). From this, we see a new Gurov and not the old Gurov from the beginning. He does not see this as just an affair, but an actual love.

What started as a simple affair turned into love between two people. Both characters were not happy in their respective marriages and as the reader we sympathize with the characters and hope they have a happy ending together. Through all these opinions and conclusions that Gurov had throughout “The Lady with the Little Dog”, we see a character develop through massive changes from going as a philanderer who looks down on women as an “inferior race” but at the same time be someone who can not live without the “inferior race” for two days to a person pursuing a genuine connection with a woman who feels the same way toward him. As the reader, it seemed at first, we were supposed to despise Gurov, but as we went further into the story that was not the case. We see the changes effected by a man falling in love and then forced to reexamine his views on the world. What was previously thought of as a story of moral corruption was in truth an accurate picture of the realities of life. Chekhov wanted to tell the readers that the things that happened to Gurov and Anna may happen to us. The things that the characters went through like engaging in adultery were things that we must deal with in life. The characters that Chekhov had made were depicted in a very realistic manner which made them real. Even though the future for them was uncertain, they both willingly accepted the situation. They knew that they may not have a happy ending, but as long as they have each other that was what truly mattered. Chekhov teaches the readers the realities of life.