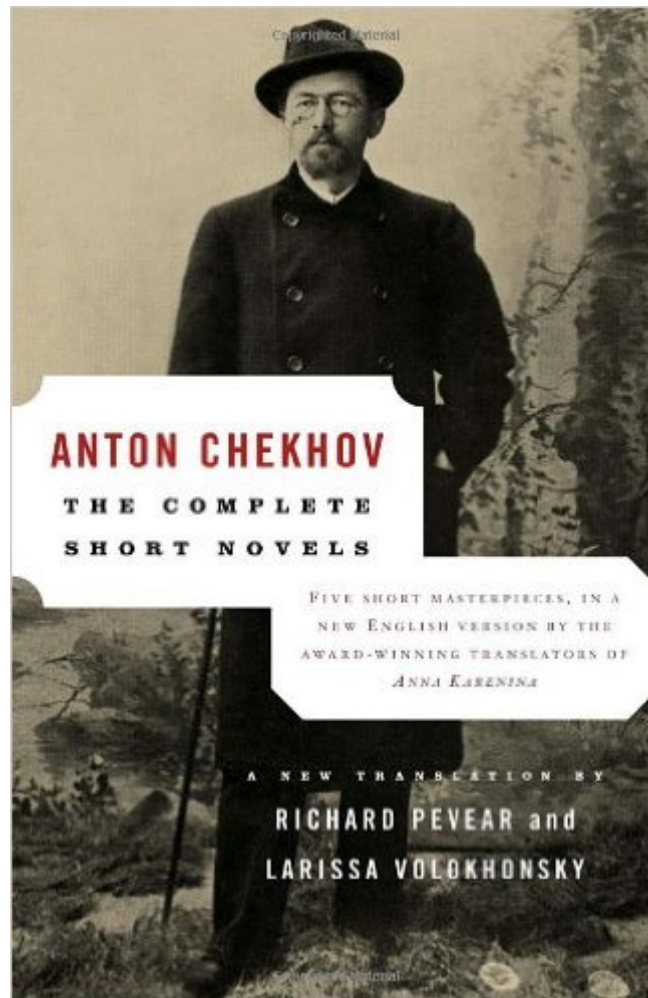


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The Complete Short Novels



Synopsis

Anton Chekhov, widely hailed as the supreme master of the short story, also wrote five works long enough to be called short novels—here brought together in one volume for the first time, in a masterly new translation by the award-winning translators Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. *The Steppe*—the most lyrical of the five—is an account of a nine-year-old boy's terrifying journey by wagon train across the steppe of southern Russia. *The Duel* sets two decadent figures—a fanatical rationalist and a man of literary sensibility—on a collision course that ends in a series of surprising reversals. In *The Story of an Unknown Man*, a political radical spying on an important official by serving as valet to his son gradually discovers that his own terminal illness has changed his long-held priorities in startling ways. *Three Years* recounts a complex series of ironies in the personal life of a rich but passive Moscow merchant. In *My Life*, a man renounces wealth and social position for a life of manual labor. The resulting conflict between the moral simplicity of his ideals and the complex realities of human nature culminates in a brief apocalyptic vision that is unique in Chekhov's work. (Book Jacket Status: Jacketed) From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

There is nothing more aesthetically pleasing than to surrender to the artifice of a master. One is deeply comforted in reading this collection of well-translated works. Chekhov reproduces human perception and experience with brilliant precision and insight. His deeply felt compassion and

empathy lead him to an art that captures the consciousness of the most refined and the most tortured of souls. In "The Steppe," for instance, he almost cinematically creates the image of the Russian plains as a living being that casts its life force on a humble wagon train and a young boy crossing its great distances. This truly brilliant artist also compellingly and dramatically describes a mighty thunderstorm in such powerful strokes that one is utterly spellbound and engrossed in its fearsome energy. In "The Story of an Unknown Man," a consumptive servant narrates the events of his weak nihilistic upper-class master who is incapable of love. His master willfully torments a beautiful young woman who has sacrificed her marriage to come live with him, but in doing so, has condemned herself to his cynical disrespect. Before the age of tape recorders, Chekhov has recorded dialog in this work that is thoroughly authentic and captures underlying psychological motives and unconscious forces that push these people to the breaking point. But the narrator too is an intimate character in this work and finds himself drawn into the life of his employer. This subtle change is handled with such skill that one is completely convinced of its reality. Here's where Chekhov's artifice produces magic. Its choice of detail, its dialog, its plot, its events all combine to sculpt a living experience, one that will never die. Chekhov's art is immortal. I invite every reader to partake of this satisfying feast that has been created for us.

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