“The Lady with the Pet Dog” Discussion Questions

1.) Why does Gurov call women “an inferior race”?

2.) At the end of section I, Gurov thinks that there is “something pathetic” about Anna Sergeyevna. Is there? What is it?

3.) Why is Anna so distracted as she watches the steamer putting in?

4.) How does Anna differ from other women Gurov has known, as they are described in the paragraph that ends “the lace on their lingerie seemed to him to resemble scales”? Compare this passage with the paragraph that begins “His head was already beginning to turn gray.”

5.) What is the function of the paragraph that begins “At Oreanda they sat on a bench not far from the church”?

6.) What “complete change” does Gurov undergo during his affair with Anna at Yalta? Is it permanent?

7.) Explain Gurov’s remark at the end of section II: “High time!”

8.) Why is Gurov enraged at his companion’s remark about the sturgeon?

9.) Discuss the possible meanings of the objects Gurov encounters in S—: the broken figurine, the long gray fence, the cheap blanket, and so on.

10.) Seeing Anna enter the theater, Gurov “understood clearly that in the whole world there was no human being so near, so precious, and so important to him.” What is Chekhov’s tone in this statement?

11.) Explain Anna’s reaction to Gurov’s arrival. Why does she volunteer to come to Moscow?

12.) Discuss the implications of Gurov’s “two lives” as Chekhov explains them in section IV. Do you agree with the generalizations about the desire for privacy with which the paragraph ends? Relate these ideas to the story’s ending.

13.) What will life be life for Gurov and Anna? Anna has previously said, “I have never been happy; I am unhappy now, and I never, never shall be happy, never!” Is she right?

14.) Describe and discuss the meaning of the three geographical locales in the story.

15.) Describe and discuss Chekhov’s characterization of the wronged spouse in the story.