

dramatic interlude 5

Dreams

Featured plays:

The Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov
(1901)

Bitter Cane by Genny Lim (1989)

(NOTE: The scripts for these plays, along with additional background information, are available in the companion anthology to this text, *Life Themes: An Anthology of Plays for the Theatre*

What we dream for ourselves may barely resemble the lives for which we settle. But even if none of them come true, dreams get us out of bed and into the world, suffering what Shakespeare calls “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” each day. If we did not believe things could get better (and dream that they will get way, way better), many of us could (and do) sink into stagnancy and despair. In both of these plays, people are stuck someplace they do not want to be, doing jobs they do not want to do, and tolerating people they do not want to see, but holding on to the possibility that if they try harder, they will free themselves of these deadly circumstances. In *The Three Sisters*, the dream is to leave a dead-end town for the bright lights of the big city, where magic and opportunity awaits. In *Bitter Cane*, it is to make money in a faraway country and return home secure. If the nature of drama is conflict, watching these characters take their dreams and bump them up against their realities is the stuff of theatre—occasionally inspiring, more often heartbreaking, and always compelling.

The Three Sisters (1901)

Setting: A remote small town in Russia, around the turn of the century

Characters

The Prozorov family, brother and sisters:
Andrey, male heir, in charge of the family property
Olga, eldest, unmarried, teaching
Irina, youngest, still open to possibility
Masha, middle sister, caught in a loveless marriage
Anfisa and Ferapont, faithful old family servants



T. Charles Erickson

FIGURE D5.1 The realistic style of Chekhov’s *The Three Sisters* asks only that the audience accept the fourth-wall convention and doesn’t venture into more unconventional territory.

Natasha, Andrey’s girlfriend, later his wife
Kulygin, Masha’s husband and teacher at the same school as Olga

Army officers stationed at the local outpost:

Baron Tusenbach

Tchebutykin

Solyony

Fedotik

Roday

Vershinin