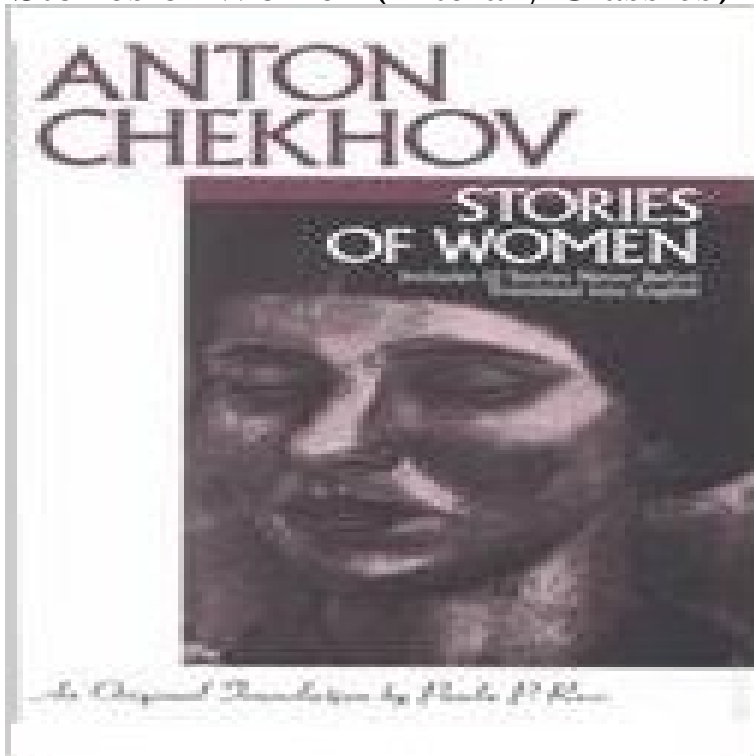


Stories of Women (Literary Classics)



Anton Chekhov drew inspiration for these powerful vignettes from the teeming world of nineteenth-century Russia, a time in which women were considered little more than possessions of their male masters, with nothing to call their own. *Stories of Women* contains examples of Chekhov's finest work written between 1882 and 1903, including twelve stories that appear in English for the first time. This collection focuses on the plight of women - privileged and peasant - and shows Chekhov's eloquent compassion for their unenviable social position. The evolution of women's awareness in Russia began primarily with the emancipation of the serfs by Alexander in 1861 and the granting of permission for women to attend university lectures. Before this important change in social policy, a woman's education was limited to practical domestic duties for the less well off, or finishing schools for those of the gentry. At this time, women of means began to travel abroad to schools where they were introduced to liberal ideas. Upon their return to Russia, these women began to participate in protests, which led to a reactionary movement in the 1880s and the closing of university doors to women until 1897. Education did become a means to achieve independence, but the traditional employment of educated women remained limited. They were typists, sales clerks, librarians, elementary school teachers, governesses, and the like. Peasant women labored in the homes, fields, and factories. But women of character and breeding found ways of overcoming their second class status. The particular stories of Chekhov that Ms. Ross has selected and carefully translated describe Russian women in all their complexity. Weak or strong, simple or complex, dominating or self-effacing, the women in these deeply moving stories determine their own destinies - carving out their own identities - in less than desirable circumstances. The

powerful influences of tradition and prejudice shape the decisions of each woman and speaks to the soul of contemporary women as well.

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