

*The Bet* by Anton Chekhov

**Answer the question or questions assigned to you on a separate piece of paper. Use the SHORT ANSWER FORMAT SHEETS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.**

1. Do you agree with the lawyer that "To live anyhow is better than not at all?"
2. Why did the banker keep the note and lock it away?
3. What role do the books play in the story?
4. What is meant by "The State is not God"?
5. Why does the lawyer move from novels of "light character" to the "classics"? Is this a step up or a step down? Explain.
6. What are "classics"? How would they differ from novels of "light character"?
7. Why do you think the lawyer takes the bet? What do you think this says about this life?
8. What does the lawyer mean when he says that "desires are the worst foes of the prisoner"? Is this true?
9. Why, after reading over six-hundred volumes in four years would the lawyer spend one year reading the Bible?
10. Why does the banker characterize the Gospel as "one thick book easy of comprehension"? Is the Gospel easy to comprehend? Why or why not?
11. In the last two years the lawyer reads a little bit of everything. Why is this?
12. The narrator characterizes his reading as "a man swimming in the sea among the wreckage of his ship, and trying to save his life by greedily clutching first at one spar and then at another." What does this mean? Is this true?
13. The lawyer looks terrible, much older than his 40 years. Why?
14. Why does the banker fear being pitied by the lawyer?
15. The lawyer once saw the two millions as "paradise," but now he despises the money. Why?
16. In what ways is the lawyer a different man? In what ways is the banker a different man?

17. The lawyer writes in his letter, "The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all." What does he mean by this? Is this true?
18. How does Chekhov convey the banker's feeling of anxiety in the opening paragraph?
19. How does his use of flashbacks make this story more suspenseful?
20. How does the lawyer's behavior change from year to year during his imprisonment? Why?
21. After being imprisoned for 15 years. Would the lawyer still argue that, "Any sort of life's better than none at all."? Explain.
22. Considering the banker's assumption that the lawyer is "Probably asleep dreaming of all those millions," what is ironic, or surprising, about the lawyer's note?
23. Considering the description of the lawyer's behavior during his imprisonment, how would you explain the content of his note?
24. After reading the lawyer's note, why does the banker kiss the lawyer's head and leave, "The lodge weeping"?
25. Why does the banker feel contempt (dislike) for himself?
26. Answer the Banker's question: "Which executioner is the more humane, he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?"

**Everybody will answer these questions as well:**

1. Was the young man better off at the end of the story?
2. Who won the bet? Think about it first...
3. What is the theme or main point of this story?
4. Wouldn't it have been better to take the money? Why or why not?