

# The Features of Descriptive Details in Literary Texts

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**Abstract:** This article examines the expressive and narrative function of artistic and characterological detail in literary texts, focusing on works by Anton Chekhov and Uzbek authors such as H. Sultonov and Erkin Vohidov. The analysis shows how seemingly minor details –gestures, shifts in speech, symbolic objects, and spatial descriptions—serve to reveal deep emotional and psychological layers of character. Drawing on Chekhov’s “Sleepy,” “Fat and Thin,” and “The Chameleon,” as well as Vohidov’s poem “A Legend About Ignorance” and Sultonov’s short story “Yo Jamshid,” the study explores how details operate as subtle yet powerful devices of stylistic intensification, symbolic resonance, and character construction. The findings confirm that such details are not decorative, but structurally integral to the ideological, aesthetic, and psychological dimensions of the narrative.

**Keywords:** Artistic detail; characterological detail; Chekhov; Vohidov; stylistics; symbolic gesture; spatial description; speech characterization; short story; narrative psychology.

**Introduction:** Detail in literature is far more than ornamentation—it serves as a powerful lens through which characters, conflicts, and emotional undertones are revealed. From Aristotle’s conception of poetic pleasure derived from contemplation, to modern structuralist and psychological approaches, detail has remained a central tool in narrative construction.

This article investigates how descriptive, symbolic, and behavioral details operate in literary texts, focusing on Chekhov’s psychologically dense short stories and their resonance with Uzbek literary traditions. It asks: how do authors utilize small narrative elements to expose inner states, dramatize relationships, and guide reader perception?

## Literature Review

The role of detail in literary studies has been addressed by scholars such as Roland Barthes, Viktor Shklovsky, and Mikhail Bakhtin. In Russian formalism and structuralism, the device (*priyom*) is seen as a mechanism of meaning-making and defamiliarization. In Uzbek literary criticism, Ozod Sharafiddinov and D. Quronov highlight the role of speech detail and symbolic object as key tools of character revelation.

Chekhov’s stories have been widely analyzed for their

narrative economy and emotional subtlety, but this article further situates them in comparison with poetic and narrative strategies in Uzbek literature—revealing universal functions of emotive detail, while also acknowledging culturally specific motifs and symbols (such as the *nashtar* or the teapot in domestic settings).

## METHODS

The study employs a qualitative close-reading method, focusing on microstructural elements within selected literary texts. Key approaches include:

- Narrative stylistics, to trace how detail influences plot and characterization
- Discourse analysis, particularly of speech dynamics and shifts in tone
- Symbolic analysis, to identify how recurring objects (e.g., the teapot, the stinger) function metaphorically
- Comparative analysis, linking Russian and Uzbek literary traditions through the lens of expressive detail

Primary texts include:

- Anton Chekhov’s “Sleepy,” “Fat and Thin,” and “The Chameleon”

- H. Sultonov's "Yo Jamshid"
- Erkin Vohidov's poem "A Legend About Ignorance"

### The main part

In his treatise *Poetics*, Aristotle states: "A person takes pleasure in contemplating a representation—whether of an object or event—when it is imagined as a whole and viewed impartially, from a general or conceptual standpoint." When creating a literary work, the writer shapes the plot by revealing the characters' inner traits. Characterization is conveyed through speech, gestures, and other non-verbal means. Regardless of the method used, the central idea remains prominent, emerging through each expressive medium, and contributing to the revelation of the character's essence. Under the writer's skillful hand, objects and phenomena begin to "speak" through language. One such expressive tool is the artistic detail. Professor D. Quronov defines detail as a carrier of ideological and artistic significance, emphasizing its role as both an element and a medium in constructing artistic reality. He notes that detail concretizes the depicted phenomenon and enhances emotional perception.

The literary scholar Izzat Sulton, in his reflections, emphasizes the artistic and aesthetic functions of the detail as one of the key poetic units of a literary work. He explains: "The detail in a literary text is not an ordinary, real-life detail—it is a means that combines both typicality and individuality. In order to create a convincing character image, a writer must select and compile details that are specific both to the individual and to the environment that the individual represents. Only then will the character's actions and speech appear believable to the reader." To convey reality through imagery, a writer cannot rely solely on plain language. Even if the words used are not overtly poetic, without expressive elements that create an artistic atmosphere and resonate with the emotional and aesthetic tone of the narrative, character development, thematic expression, and plot formation remain incomplete. Thus, artistic detail serves as a crucial vehicle for conveying the writer's ideological and aesthetic intent. In some cases, a single detail, appropriately embedded into the structure of the narrative, can express profound layers of meaning. For instance, in H. Sultonov's short story "Yo Jamshid", one such detail appears in three or four places, revealing the emotional depression of an entire family. The story opens with the line: "First to arrive was Islomboy." This immediately raises questions: Who is Islomboy? Where did he come, and why? Who will come after him? The reader is instantly drawn in.

He paused briefly on the glazed, decorative veranda,

under the pretext of brushing the snow off his coat, and glanced through the window of the central room, illuminated by a flickering lamp. His mother was sitting motionless on the wooden platform, gazing into the brick stove. O'rinboy lay reclining, stroking his clean-shaven head, which glistened under the light. In the corner, on four neatly arranged mattresses, the heads of four children were visible.

It gradually becomes clear that the mother lives in this house with her younger son O'rinboy, and the four children are his. The author also informs the reader that O'rinboy is five years younger than his brother and has always addressed him informally ("sen"). Whether this habit stems from their closeness or perhaps some long-held resentment is not directly explained—the author deliberately leaves the interpretation to the reader.

The mother, smoothing out the hem of her brown dress with her wrinkled fingers, remains silent. Suddenly, a heavy silence descends. The blue teapot atop the brick stove begins to hiss gently.

The absence of dialogue and the sudden onset of silence subtly imply that this family has experienced some recent hardship or grief. The author carefully includes even the faint hissing of the teapot, allowing the reader to feel as if they are sitting inside the room with the characters. This sensory detail serves not only to intensify the atmosphere of silence, but also to suggest the emotional weight borne by the family members. It is through such precise and understated artistic detail that the writer evokes a sense of melancholy and inner tension.

"The door opened, and Anzirat – O'rinboy's wife – appeared, her head wrapped in a silk scarf tied beneath her chin..." Her swollen eyelids and reddened eyes reflect the emotional pain caused by the misfortune that has befallen the family. Instead of explaining to Islomboy why he had been summoned, both O'rinboy's mother and wife break into tears. Eventually, the mother reveals the event: "Our home is ruined, my son! Your brother O'rinboy has gambled everything away!" At this very moment, the hissing of the teapot on the stove is once again mentioned – subtly emphasizing that the family's tragedy is far from over and that the psychological weight of the loss will not subside quickly.

The reason why the author initially emphasizes the informal, "sen-form" style of address between the younger and older brother becomes clearer here. Instead of responding with empathy or reason, the brothers begin to argue, indicating that their relationship had long since become strained. The emotional tension affects the mother deeply. Through artistic detail, the writer conveys her grief: "The old

woman wept bitterly. The teapot continued to whistle.”

This emotionally charged scene, particularly the repetition of the teapot detail, acts as a non-verbal symbol of the mother’s inner turmoil. The boiling, whistling sound reflects her anguish and helplessness. As the brothers’ conflict escalates and Islomboy begins to lash out with accusations, the sound of the teapot changes – It no longer hisses softly, but boils with a bubbling noise, mirroring the intensifying emotional atmosphere. In Uzbek familial tradition, the daughter-in-law typically carries out the household responsibilities assigned by the mother-in-law. This tradition is echoed in the scene when, after the elderly mother tries to de-escalate the quarrel, the daughter-in-law silently takes action: “Stop this blaming and reproaching,” said the old woman after a long pause. “Stirring up old things leads to no good. Quarreling relatives never bring blessings. After all, the two of you –you bear each other’s burdens.” At that moment, Anzirat stood up and moved the boiling, whistling teapot aside.” This simple gesture, performed in silence, powerfully symbolizes the daughter-in-law’s acknowledgment of the need to diffuse the tension. By physically removing the boiling teapot, she symbolically shifts the boiling conflict out of the emotional space. The teapot, as a recurring artistic detail, reflects the psychological climate of the household and serves as a narrative tool that deepens the thematic resonance of family conflict and reconciliation.

To conclude, the artistic details in the text are employed purposefully and contextually, contributing to the clear and impactful depiction of events throughout the narrative.

Descriptive details also stand out distinctly in the poetic works of Erkin Vohidov. For instance, in his poem "Jaholat to'g'risida rivoyat (A Legend About Ignorance)", the poet makes effective use of subtle and concise details.

Unga ming bir mushkul dardning  
Ayon bo'lib da'vosi,  
Bora-bora  
Odamlarning  
Ortaverdi ixlosi.  
Tabobatga  
Qalban ruhan  
Fido qilib o'zini  
Hatto bir kun  
Nashtar bilan  
Ochmish ko'rning ko'zining.

Rivoj topmish

Sohib hikmat,

Donish mehnat madadkor.

In this poem, the detail of the stinger (nashtar) is used—a word which, in its literal biological sense, refers to the piercing organ of female venomous insects, serving as both a defensive and offensive tool. At rest, the stinger is tucked into the final segment of the insect’s abdomen, but when necessary, it is extended and used to inject venom. The stinger is connected to venom glands, and a canal is formed between its upper and lower groove-like blades, through which toxic fluid flows into the body of a target or enemy. In scorpions, the stinger consists of a needle-like tube situated at the terminal segment of the posterior abdomen, allowing venom to be delivered during an attack or defense. However, the poet introduces the term nashtar into the poetic text with a positive and symbolic connotation. Rather than signifying harm, the stinger here becomes a healing instrument. The poet describes how the eyes of a blind person are treated metaphorically through the “stinger” detail, suggesting a paradoxical transformation – a harmful organ reimagined as a source of vision and cure.

In Anton Chekhov’s short story “Sleepy”, spatial description plays a significant role and is closely intertwined with both the characterization and emotional state of the thirteen-year-old protagonist, Varka. The narrative begins with a nighttime setting, and the story also concludes at night with Varka’s horrific act. This structural framing – beginning and ending in the same temporal and spatial environment – Intensifies the psychological tension and foreshadows the tragic resolution. Chekhov places particular emphasis on the interior space – the room in which the action unfolds. If the spatial description were to be removed, a conceptual and emotional void would emerge in the portrayal of Varka’s inner world. The setting is not merely decorative; it is psychologically functional, mirroring and reinforcing the girl’s state of despair and exhaustion. The story opens with the following lines:

"Night. Thirteen-year-old maidservant Varka is rocking the cradle with the baby and murmuring almost inaudibly: Lullaby to you, my dear, Lullaby, my little one..."

This intimate, dimly lit space becomes a symbolic enclosure, one that confines both the physical and emotional suffering of the protagonist. The oppressive environment serves as a backdrop against which the unbearable demands placed upon the child and her descent into psychological breakdown are rendered

with devastating clarity.

Chekhov does not describe Varka as “murmuring” (ming’irlyaydi) without reason. In this context, the verb carries a negative connotation – it implies that the girl is not singing the lullaby willingly, but rather out of obligation, exhaustion, and a lack of choice. Varka is overcome by sleepiness, physically drained, her eyelids heavy and closing. The spatial description of the room reflects and reinforces this psychological state. Consider the following excerpt describing the room: “A small oil lamp burned before the icon; from one corner of the room to the other a rope was stretched, on which hung diapers and large black trousers. A bluish shadow, in the shape of a circle, was cast upon the ceiling by the flickering lamp. The trousers and cloth cast long shadows on the stove, the cradle, and Varka herself... When the lamp flickered, the shadow on the ceiling and the long silhouettes seemed to come to life, swaying gently in the breeze.” This setting does not elevate the mood – It amplifies the girl's weariness and mental collapse. Varka's desire to sleep becomes so overwhelming that it ultimately compels her to suffocate the infant, driven not by cruelty but by desperation. Naturally, this act evokes shock and condemnation in the reader. Yet Chekhov subtly challenges a purely negative perception of the girl by including a brief but powerful memory: Varka weeping quietly after losing her father. This image humanizes her and shows that her act is not born of inherent malice, but of the oppressive environment surrounding her. It is this environment – not the girl's nature – that has brought her to this point. To fully reveal Varka's character, Chekhov masterfully employs descriptive details. The characteristic detail often emerges within the speech or thought patterns of the protagonist. Literary scholar Ozod Sharafiddinov notes: “One of the most vivid markers of a writer's linguistic skill is speech characterization. The language of literary characters is a key tool in shaping individuality; it lends color to each persona and expresses their uniqueness. Through speech, one can reflect a character's national identity, age, profession, beliefs, and even their intellectual and emotional makeup.” In “Sleepy”, Chekhov's use of clarifying, sensory-laden details – especially those aligned with the protagonist's physical and emotional state – results in a nuanced, psychologically complex character, demonstrating how setting, speech, and detail are inseparably woven in character construction.

Anton Chekhov's short story “Fat and Thin” serves as a compelling example of how speech patterns and dialogue reveal character. The story begins with the unexpected reunion of two men who had grown up together—attending school and playing as childhood friends. In the initial part of their conversation, both

characters express joy at seeing each other again and reminisce about their youth, including the affectionate nicknames they once used. However, in the second half of the dialogue, the true character of the “Thin” man is fully revealed. Upon learning that his old friend has attained a high-ranking government position, the tone and structure of his speech change dramatically. He exclaims: “Your Excellency... How wonderful!... A childhood friend rising to such heights! Ha-ha!... Nay,” the Thin said, shrinking into himself even more, “Your Excellency's gaze and favor are like the elixir of life... Your Excellency...” This shift exposes multiple layers of transformation in the Thin man's speech:

1. Change in address: Initially, he greets his friend warmly using phrases like “Misha”, “my dear”, “brother”, and “old friend”. But once he learns of his friend's status, these are replaced by formal, obsequious titles such as “Your Excellency” (Janobi oliylari).
2. Introduction of pauses and exclamatory sentences: The Thin man's speech begins to include multiple abrupt pauses and interjections—four notable instances where the sentence breaks. These do not indicate careful thought, but rather his nervousness and excessive emotional agitation. As is known in linguistics, exclamatory sentences often reveal a speaker's emotional state or attitude toward a situation, which in this case is awe mixed with servility.
3. Syntactic reordering: His sentences deviate from standard word order. For example, “How wonderful!... A childhood friend rising to such heights!” would typically be structured as “It is wonderful that a childhood friend has risen to such heights.” The disruption of syntactic structure underscores his internal disarray and emotional subservience.
4. Forced laughter: The insincere laughter (“hi-hi”) evokes a negative impression, highlighting the lack of authenticity in his emotions. It reveals his flattery and sycophancy, which become prominent traits in his character.

Thus, Chekhov uses these linguistic and stylistic shifts – in address forms, punctuation, syntax, and tone – to reveal the Thin man's ingrained obsequiousness, social inferiority complex, and moral weakness. His transformation within a matter of seconds, as triggered by social hierarchy, exposes the hypocrisy and servility that Chekhov subtly critiques through dialogue.

Another vivid example of character revelation through detail can be found in Anton Chekhov's short story “The Chameleon”, in which the character Ochumelov embodies hypocrisy and status-based double standards. His character is primarily revealed through verbal and behavioral details, which reflect his



opportunistic and sycophantic tendencies. At first, upon learning that a man named Khryukin has been bitten by a dog, Ochumelov responds assertively and with great indignation: “Good... Whose dog is it? I won’t let this go unpunished! I’ll show you what it means to let dogs run loose! It’s time to teach a lesson to those gentlemen who don’t obey the rules. If this scoundrel gets fined, he’ll learn what it means to let animals roam free! I’ll show him!” This segment of dialogue creates an image of Ochumelov as a decisive and principled figure, someone who enforces order and disciplines violators of public conduct. His speech is confident, structured, and forceful – typical of an authority figure. However, the tone and structure of his speech change abruptly when someone suggests that the dog might belong to General Zhigalov: “General Zhigalov’s, perhaps,” someone says. “General Zhigalov’s? Hm... Hm... Eldirin, take off my coat – it’s too hot. Looks like it’s going to rain! But I don’t understand – how did he bite you?” Ochumelov turns to Khryukin. “How did he reach your finger? He’s so small, and you’re such a big man. Maybe you jabbed your finger with a nail and are now using the dog as a pretext to get compensation. Everyone knows what kind of man you are. I know you, scoundrel!” With this shift, Ochumelov suddenly defends the dog, accusing the victim instead. The change in his speech, tone, and even subject focus – from concern for public order to defending the general’s interests – exposes his two-faced nature and inability to confront those in power. The detail of putting on and taking off his coat, mentioned repeatedly, is not accidental. It carries symbolic weight and functions as a characterological marker. When the dog is thought to belong to the general, Ochumelov removes his coat, citing heat. When the dog’s ownership is questioned again, he starts shivering and asks to have the coat put back on: “Throw my coat over my shoulders... There’s a draft... I’ve caught a chill, Eldirin, my friend.” These physical actions, seemingly minor, reflect Ochumelov’s inner instability, moral inconsistency, and psychological servility. Chekhov assigns literary function to these behavioral details, using them to expose the character’s core traits without the need for explicit authorial commentary. Thus, through characterological detail, the reader perceives not just what Ochumelov says, but who he truly is.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that artistic and characterological details serve as central mechanisms of literary expression, particularly in emotionally driven short fiction. Whether in Chekhov’s psychologically charged spaces or Uzbek literature’s culturally specific metaphors, detail functions not as ornament, but as an

essential structure of meaning.

In “Sleepy”, Chekhov’s use of spatial and sensory detail constructs Varka’s psychological collapse. In “Fat and Thin”, the change in speech tone, syntactic structure, and address reveals the Thin man’s social subservience. “The Chameleon” uses physical gesture—putting on and removing a coat—as a symbol of Ochumelov’s moral inconsistency.

Similarly, in “Yo Jamshid”, Sultonov uses the hissing teapot as a recurring emotional and symbolic device, while Vohidov’s poem reinterprets the nashtar (stinger) as a paradoxical tool of healing. In all these texts, detail functions as a narrative core, offering insight into the emotional truth of the characters and reinforcing the text’s ideological and aesthetic message.

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