

# Anna Karenina

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This article is about the novel by Tolstoy. For all adaptations in various media, see [Adaptations of Anna Karenina](#). For other uses, see [Anna Karenina \(disambiguation\)](#).

## *Anna Karenina*



Cover page of the first volume of *Anna Karenina*. Moscow, 1878.

<b>Author(s)</b>	<a href="#">Leo Tolstoy</a>
<b>Original title</b>	<i>Анна Каренина</i>
<b>Translator</b>	<a href="#">Constance Garnett</a> (initial)
<b>Country</b>	Russia
<b>Language</b>	Russian
<b>Genre(s)</b>	<a href="#">Novel</a>
<b>Publisher</b>	<a href="#">The Russian Messenger</a>
<b>Publication date</b>	<a href="#">1877</a>
<b>Media type</b>	Print ( <a href="#">Serial</a> )
<b>Pages</b>	864
<b><a href="#">ISBN</a></b>	<a href="#">978-1-84749-059-9</a>
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*Anna Karenina* ([Russian](#): Анна Каренина; Russian pronunciation: [ˈanə kɐˈrʲenʲinə]) (sometimes anglicised as *Anna Karenin*)<sup>[1]</sup> is a [novel](#) by the Russian writer [Leo Tolstoy](#), published in serial installments from 1873 to 1877 in the periodical [The Russian Messenger](#). Tolstoy clashed with its editor [Mikhail Katkov](#) over political issues that arose in the final

installment (Tolstoy's unpopular views of volunteers going to Serbia); therefore, the novel's first complete appearance was in book form.

Widely regarded as a pinnacle in [realist fiction](#), Tolstoy considered *Anna Karenina* his first true novel, when he came to consider [War and Peace](#) to be more than a novel. Soon after meeting her at dinner, Tolstoy began reading [Pushkin](#)'s prose and once had a fleeting daydream of "a bare exquisite aristocratic elbow", which proved to be the first indication of Anna's character.<sup>[2]</sup>

Although Russian critics dismissed the novel on its publication as a "trifling romance of high life",<sup>[3]</sup> [Fyodor Dostoevsky](#) declared it to be "flawless as a work of art". His opinion was shared by [Vladimir Nabokov](#), who especially admired "the flawless magic of Tolstoy's style", and by [William Faulkner](#), who described the novel as "the best ever written".<sup>[4]</sup> The novel is currently enjoying popularity as demonstrated by a recent poll of 125 contemporary authors by J. Peder Zane, published in 2007 in *The Top Ten*, which declared that *Anna Karenina* is the "greatest novel ever written".<sup>[5]</sup>


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**[[edit](#)] The title: *Anna Karenin* vs. *Anna Karenina***



 Portrait of Baroness Varvara Ivanovna Ikskul von Hildenbandt (1850–1928), by [Ilya Repin](#), in 1889. She was divorced and head of a literary salon in [Saint-Petersburg](#) at the time the portrait was painted. She is portrayed in her younger years as Anna Karenina. <sup>[citation needed](#)</sup>

The title has been translated as both *Anna Karenin* and *Anna Karenina*. The first instance "naturalizes" the Russian name into English, whereas the second is a direct [transliteration](#) of the actual Russian name. [Vladimir Nabokov](#) explains: "In Russian, a surname ending in a consonant acquires a final 'a' (except for the cases of such names that cannot be declined) when designating a woman". <sup>[\[1\]](#)</sup>

Nabokov favours the first convention—removing the Russian 'a' to naturalize the name into English—but subsequent translators mostly allow Anna's actual Russian name to stand. [Larissa Volokhonsky](#), herself a Russian, prefers the second option. Other translators, like [Constance Garnett](#) and [Rosemary Edmonds](#), prefer the first.

## [\[edit\]](#) Main characters

- Princess Anna Arkadyevna Karenina (Анна Аркадьевна Каренина): Stepan Oblonsky's sister, Karenin's wife and Vronsky's lover.
- Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky (Алексей Кириллович Вронский): Lover of Anna, a cavalry officer
- Prince Stepan "Stiva" Arkadyevich Oblonsky (Степан "Стива" Аркадьевич Облонский): a civil servant and Anna's brother, a man about town, 34.
- Princess Darya "Dolly" Alexandrovna Oblonskaya (Дарья "Долли" Александровна Облонская): Stepan's wife, 33
- Count Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin: a senior statesman and Anna's husband, twenty years her senior.
- Konstantin "Kostya" Dmitrievich Levin: Kitty's suitor and then husband, old friend of Stiva, a landowner, 32.
- Nikolai Dmitrievich Levin: Konstantin's elder brother, an impoverished alcoholic.
- Sergius Ivanovich Koznyshev: Konstantin's half-brother, a celebrated writer, 40.
- Princess Ekaterina "Kitty" Alexandrovna Shcherbatskaya: Dolly's younger sister and later Levin's wife, 18.
- Princess Elizaveta "Betsy": Anna's wealthy, morally loose society friend and Vronsky's cousin
- Countess Lidia Ivanovna: Leader of a high society circle that includes Karenin, and shuns Princess Betsy and her circle. She maintains an interest in the mystical and spiritual
- Countess Vronskaya: Vronsky's mother
- Sergei "Seryozha" Alexeyich Karenin: Anna and Karenin's son
- Anna "Annie": Anna and Vronsky's daughter
- Varenka: a young orphaned girl, semi-adopted by an ailing Russian noblewoman, whom Kitty befriends while abroad

## [\[edit\]](#) Plot introduction

*Anna Karenina* is the tragedy of married aristocrat and socialite Anna Karenina and her affair with the affluent Count Vronsky. The story starts when she arrives in the midst of a family broken up by her brother's unbridled womanizing—something that prefigures her own later situation, though with less tolerance for her by others.

A bachelor, Vronsky is willing to marry her if she would agree to leave her husband Karenin, a government official, but she is vulnerable to the pressures of Russian social norms, her own insecurities and Karenin's indecision. Although Vronsky eventually takes Anna to Europe where they can be together, they have trouble making friends. Back in Russia, she is shunned, becoming further isolated and anxious, while Vronsky pursues his social life. Despite Vronsky's reassurances she grows increasingly possessive and paranoid about his imagined infidelity, fears losing control and eventually takes her own life.

A parallel story within the novel is of Levin, a country landowner who desires to marry Kitty, sister to Dolly and sister-in-law to Anna's brother Oblonsky. Levin has to propose twice before Kitty accepts. The novel details Levin's difficulties managing his estate, his eventual marriage, and personal issues, until the birth of Levin's first child.

## [\[edit\]](#) Plot summary

The novel is divided into eight parts. Its [epigraph](#) is *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*, from [Romans](#) 12:19, which in turn is quoting from Deuteronomy 32:35.

The novel begins with one of its most quoted lines:

“ *Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.* ”

## [\[edit\]](#) Part 1

The novel opens with a scene introducing Prince Stepan Arkadyevitch Oblonsky, "Stiva", a [Moscow](#) aristocrat and civil servant who has been unfaithful to his wife Darya Alexandrovna, nicknamed "Dolly". Dolly has discovered his affair—with the family's governess—and the house and family are in turmoil. Stiva's affair and his reaction to his wife's distress show an amorous personality that he cannot seem to suppress.

In the midst of the turmoil, Stiva reminds the household that his married sister, Anna Arkadyevna Karenina is coming to visit from [Saint Petersburg](#).

Meanwhile, Stiva's childhood friend Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin ("Kostya") arrives in Moscow with the aim of proposing to Dolly's youngest sister Princess Katerina Alexandrovna Shcherbatskaya, "Kitty". Levin is a passionate, restless, but shy aristocratic landowner who, unlike his Moscow friends, chooses to live in the country on his large estate. He discovers that Kitty is also being pursued by Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky, an army officer.

At the railway station to meet Anna, Stiva bumps into Vronsky. Vronsky is there to meet his mother, the Countess Vronskaya. Anna and Vronskaya have traveled together in the same carriage and talked together. As the family members are reunited, and Vronsky sees Anna for the first time, a railway worker accidentally falls in front of a train and is killed. Anna interprets this as an "evil omen." Vronsky is infatuated with Anna. Anna, who is uneasy about leaving her young son, Seryozha, alone for the first time, talks openly and emotionally to Dolly about Stiva's affair and convinces Dolly that her husband still loves her, despite his infidelity. Dolly is moved by Anna's speeches and decides to forgive Stiva.

Dolly's youngest sister, Kitty, comes to visit her sister and Anna. Kitty, just 18, is in her first season as a [debutante](#) and is expected to make an excellent match with a man of her social standing. Vronsky has been paying her considerable attention, and she expects to dance with him at a ball that evening. Kitty is very struck by Vronsky's beauty and personality and is infatuated with her. When Levin proposes to Kitty at her home, she clumsily turns him down, because she believes she is in love with Vronsky and that he will propose to her.

At the ball, Vronsky pays Anna considerable attention, and dances with her, choosing her as a partner instead of Kitty, who is shocked and heartbroken. Kitty realises that Vronsky has fallen in love with Anna, and that despite his overt flirtations with her he has no intention of

marrying her and in fact views his attentions to her as mere amusement, believing that she does the same.

Anna, shaken by her emotional and physical response to Vronsky, returns at once to Saint Petersburg. Vronsky travels on the same train. During the overnight journey, the two meet and Vronsky confesses his love. Anna refuses him, although she is deeply affected by his attentions to her.

Levin, crushed by Kitty's refusal, returns to his estate farm, abandoning any hope of marriage, and Anna returns to her husband Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin, a senior government official, and their son Sergei ("Seryozha") in Saint Petersburg.



 [Tatiana Samoilova](#) as Anna in the 1967 Soviet screen version of Tolstoy's novel

On seeing her husband for the first time since her encounter with Vronsky, Anna realises that she finds him repulsive, noting the odd way that his ears press against his hat.

## **[\[edit\]](#) Part 2**

The Shcherbatskys consult doctors over Kitty's health, which has been failing since her realization that Vronsky does not love her and that he did not intend to propose marriage to her—and that she refused and hurt Levin, whom she cares for, in vain. A specialist doctor advises that Kitty should go abroad to a health [spa](#) to recover. Dolly speaks to Kitty and understands that she is suffering because of Vronsky and Levin. Kitty, humiliated by Vronsky and tormented by her rejection of Levin, upsets her sister by referring to Stiva's infidelity and says she could never love a man who betrayed her.



Stiva stays with Levin on his country estate when he makes a sale of a plot of land, to provide funds for his expensive city lifestyle. Levin is upset at the poor deal he makes with the buyer and his lack of understanding of the rural lifestyle.

In Saint Petersburg, Anna begins to spend more time with the fashionable socialite and gossip Princess Betsy and her circle, in order to meet Vronsky, Betsy's cousin. Vronsky continues to pursue Anna. Although Anna initially tries to reject him, she eventually succumbs to his attentions.

Karenin warns Anna of the impropriety of paying too much attention to Vronsky in public, which is becoming a subject of society gossip. He is concerned about his and his wife's public image, although he believes that Anna is above suspicion.

Vronsky, a keen horseman, takes part in a [steeplechase](#) event, during which he rides his [mare](#) Frou-Frou too hard and she falls and breaks her back. Vronsky escapes with minimal injuries but is devastated that his mare must be shot. Anna tells him that she is pregnant with his child, and is unable to hide her distress when Vronsky falls from the racehorse. Karenin is also present at the races and remarks to her that her behaviour is improper. Anna, in a state of extreme distress and emotion, confesses her affair to her husband. Karenin asks her to break off the affair to avoid society gossip and believes that their relationship can then continue as previously.

Kitty goes with her mother to a resort at a German [spa](#) to recover from her ill health. There they meet the [Pietist](#) Madame Stahl and the saintly Varenka, her adopted daughter. Influenced by Varenka, Kitty becomes extremely pious, but is disillusioned by her father's criticism. She then returns to Moscow.

### [\[edit\]](#) Part 3

Levin continues his work on his large country estate, a setting closely tied to his spiritual thoughts and struggles. Levin wrestles with the idea of falseness, wondering how he should go about ridding himself of it, and criticising what he feels is falseness in others. He develops ideas relating to agriculture and the unique relationship between the agricultural labourer and his native land and culture. He believes that the agricultural reforms of Europe will not work in Russia because of the unique culture and personality of the Russian peasant.

Levin pays Dolly a visit, and she attempts to understand what happened between him and Kitty and to explain Kitty's behaviour to him. Levin is very agitated by Dolly's talk about Kitty, and he begins to feel distant from her as he perceives her behaviour towards her children as false. Levin resolves to forget Kitty and contemplates the possibility of marriage to a [peasant](#) woman. However, a chance sighting of Kitty in her carriage as she travels to Dolly's house makes Levin realise he still loves her.

In St. Petersburg, Karenin crushes Anna by refusing to separate from her. He insists that their relationship remain as it was and threatens to take away their son Seryozha if she continues to pursue her affair with Vronsky.

### [\[edit\]](#) Part 4

Anna continues to pursue her affair with Vronsky. Karenin begins to find the situation intolerable. He talks with a lawyer about obtaining a divorce. In Russia at that time, divorce could only be requested by the innocent party in an affair, and required either that the guilty party confessed (which would ruin Anna's position in society and bar her from re-marrying) or that the guilty party be discovered in the act. Karenin forces Anna to give him some letters written to her by Vronsky which the lawyer finds insufficient as proof of the affair. However, Anna's brother Stiva argues against it and persuades Karenin to speak with Dolly first.

Dolly broaches the subject with Karenin and asks him to reconsider his plans to divorce Anna. She seems to be unsuccessful, but Karenin changes his plans after hearing that Anna is dying after a difficult [childbirth](#). At her bedside, Karenin forgives Vronsky. Vronsky, embarrassed by Karenin's magnanimity, attempts suicide by shooting himself. He fails in his attempt but wounds himself badly.

Anna recovers, having given birth to a daughter, Anna ("Annie"). Although her husband has forgiven her, and has become attached to the new baby, Anna cannot bear living with him. She hears that Vronsky is about to leave for a military posting in [Tashkent](#) and becomes desperate. Stiva finds himself pleading to Karenin on her behalf to free her by giving her a divorce. Vronsky is intent on leaving for [Tashkent](#), but changes his mind after seeing Anna.

The couple leave for Europe—leaving behind Anna's son Seryozha—without accepting Karenin's offer of divorce.

Much more straightforward is Stiva's matchmaking with Levin: he arranges a meeting between Levin and Kitty which results in their reconciliation and betrothal.

## [\[edit\]](#) Part 5

Levin and Kitty marry and immediately go to start their new life together on Levin's country estate. The couple are happy but undergo a bitter and stressful first three months of marriage. Levin feels dissatisfied at the amount of time Kitty wants to spend with him versus his ability to be productive as he was as a bachelor.

At around the end of that three month period, Levin learns that his brother Nikolai is dying of consumption. Levin wants to go to him and Kitty to his chagrin, offers to travel with him. Levin feels that Kitty, whom he has placed on a pedestal, should not come down to earth and should not mix with people from a lower class or experience the suffering to be seen. Levin assumes her insistence on coming must relate to a fear of boredom from being left alone; Kitty's true desire is to support her husband in a difficult time. Kitty persuades him to take her with him after much discussion. Kitty proves herself a great help in nursing Nikolai and addressing his moment to moment ailments when she sees him. Levin and Marya Nikolaevna are paralyzed by their own grief, initially not knowing what to do with Levin. Seeing his wife take charge of the situation in a way more infinitely capable than if he were without her, Levin's love for Kitty grows by bounds and Kitty reciprocates her husband's feeling. Kitty, initially diagnosed for stress from working so hard to nurse Nikolai, is told by the doctor towards the end of this episode that she is pregnant.

In Europe, Vronsky and Anna struggle to find friends who will accept their situation. Whilst Anna is happy to be finally alone with Vronsky, he feels suffocated. They cannot socialize with Russians of their own social set and find it difficult to amuse themselves. Vronsky, who



believed that being with Anna in freedom was the key to his happiness, finds himself increasingly bored and unsatisfied. He takes up painting, and makes an attempt to patronize an émigré Russian artist of genius. Vronsky cannot see that his own art lacks talent and passion, and that his clever conversation about art is really pretentious. Bored and restless, Anna and Vronsky decide to return to Russia.

In St. Petersburg, Anna and Vronsky stay in one of the best hotels but take separate suites. It becomes clear that whilst Vronsky is able to move in Society, Anna is barred from it. Even her old friend, Princess Betsy—who has had affairs herself—evades her company. Anna starts to become very jealous and anxious that Vronsky no longer loves her.

Karenin is comforted—and influenced—by the strong-willed Countess Lidia Ivanovna, an enthusiast of religious and mystic ideas fashionable with the upper classes. She counsels him to keep Seryozha away from Anna and to make him believe that his mother is dead. However, Seryozha refuses to believe that this is true. Anna manages to visit Seryozha unannounced and uninvited on his ninth birthday, but is discovered by Karenin.

Anna, desperate to resume at least in part her former position in Society, attends a show at the [theatre](#) at which all of Petersburg's high society are present. Vronsky begs her not to go, but is unable to bring himself to explain to her why she cannot go. At the theatre, Anna is openly snubbed by her former friends, one of whom makes a deliberate scene and leaves the theatre. Anna is devastated.

Unable to find a place for themselves in Petersburg, Anna and Vronsky leave for Vronsky's country estate.

## [\[edit\]](#) Part 6

Dolly, her mother the Princess Scherbatskaya, and Dolly's children spend the summer with Levin and Kitty on the Levins' country estate. The Levins' life is simple and unaffected, although Levin is uneasy at the "invasion" of so many Scherbatskys. He is able to cope until he is consumed with an intense jealousy when one of the visitors, Veslovsky, flirts openly with the pregnant Kitty. Levin tries to overcome his jealousy but eventually succumbs to it and in an embarrassing scene makes Veslovsky leave his house. Veslovsky immediately goes to stay with Anna and Vronsky at their nearby estate.

Dolly also pays a short visit to Anna at Vronsky's estate. The difference between the Levins' aristocratic but simple home life and Vronsky's overtly luxurious and lavish country estate strikes Dolly, who is unable to keep pace with Anna's fashionable dresses or Vronsky's extravagant spending on the [hospital](#) he is building. In addition, all is not quite well with Anna and Vronsky. Dolly notices Anna's anxious behaviour and new habit of half closing her eyes when she alludes to her difficult position. When Veslovsky flirts openly with Anna, she plays along with him even though she clearly feels uncomfortable. Vronsky makes an emotional request to Dolly, asking her to convince Anna to divorce her husband so that the two might marry and live normally. Dolly broaches the subject with Anna, who appears not to be convinced. However, Anna has become intensely jealous of Vronsky, and cannot bear it when he leaves her for short excursions. The two have started to quarrel about this and when Vronsky leaves for several days of provincial elections, a combination of boredom and suspicion convinces Anna she must marry him in order to prevent him from leaving her. She writes to Karenin, and she and Vronsky leave the countryside for Moscow.

## [\[edit\]](#) Part 7

The Levins are in Moscow for Kitty's confinement. Despite initial reservations, Levin quickly gets used to the fast-paced, expensive and frivolous Moscow society life. He starts to accompany Stiva to his Moscow gentleman's club, where drinking and gambling are popular pastimes. At the club, Levin meets Vronsky and Stiva introduces them. Levin and Stiva pay a visit to Anna, who is occupying her empty days by being a patroness to an orphaned English girl. Levin is uneasy about the visit and not sure it is the proper thing to do, but Anna easily puts Levin under her spell. When he confesses to Kitty where he has been, she accuses him falsely of falling in love with Anna. The couple are reconciled, realising that Moscow society life has had a negative, corrupting effect on Levin.

Anna, who has made a habit of inducing the young men who visit her to fall in love with her, cannot understand why she can attract a man like Levin, who has a young and beautiful new wife, but cannot attract Vronsky in the way she wants to. Anna's relationship with Vronsky is under increasing strain, as whilst he can move freely in Society—and continues to spend considerable time doing so to stress to Anna his independence as a man—she is excluded from all her previous social connections. Her increasing bitterness, boredom, jealousy and emotional strain cause the couple to argue. Anna uses [morphine](#) to help her sleep, a habit we learned she had begun during her time living with Vronsky at his country estate. Now she has become dependent on it.

After a long and difficult labour, Kitty gives birth to a son, Dmitri, nicknamed Mitya. Levin is both horrified and profoundly moved by the sight of the tiny, helpless baby.

Stiva visits Karenin to encourage his commendation for a new post he is seeking. During the visit he asks him to grant Anna a divorce (which would require him to confess to a non-existent affair), but Karenin's decisions are now governed by a French "clairvoyant"—recommended by Lidia Ivanovna—who apparently has a vision in his sleep during Stiva's visit, and gives Karenin a cryptic message that is interpreted as meaning that he must decline the request for divorce.

Anna becomes increasingly jealous and irrational towards Vronsky, whom she suspects of having love affairs with other women, and of giving in to his mother's plans to marry him off to a rich Society woman. There is a bitter row, and Anna believes that the relationship is over. She starts to think of suicide as an escape from her torments. In her mental and emotional confusion, she sends a telegram to Vronsky asking him to come home to her, and pays a visit to Dolly and Kitty. Anna's confusion and vengeful anger overcomes her, and in a parallel to the railway worker's accidental death in part 1, she commits suicide by throwing herself in the path of a train.

## [\[edit\]](#) Part 8

Levin brother's latest book is ignored by readers and critics, he joins the new pan-Slavic movement. Stiva gets the job he desired so much, and Karenin takes custody of baby Annie. A group of Russian volunteers, including the suicidal Vronsky, depart from Russia to fight in the Orthodox [Serbian](#) revolt that has broken out against the [Turks](#). Meanwhile, a lightning storm occurs at Levin's estate while his wife and newborn son are outside, causing him to fear for the safety of both of them, and to realize that he does indeed love his son similarly to how he loves Kitty. Kitty's family concerns, namely, that a man as altruistic as her husband does

not consider himself to be a Christian, are also addressed when Levin decides after talking to a peasant that devotion to living righteously is the only justifiable reason for living. After coming to this decision, but unable to tell anyone about it, he is initially displeased that this change of thought does not bring with it a complete transformation of his behaviour to be more righteous. However, at the end of the book he comes to the conclusion that this fact, and the fact that there are other religions with similar views on goodness that are not Christian, are acceptable and that neither of these things diminish the fact that now his life can be meaningfully oriented toward goodness.

## [\[edit\]](#) Style



This unreferenced section requires [citations](#) to ensure [verifiability](#).

Tolstoy's style in *Anna Karenina* is considered by many critics to be transitional, forming a bridge between the [realist](#) and [modernist](#) novel. The novel is narrated from a [third-person-omniscient perspective](#), shifting the narrator's attention to several major characters, though most frequently focusing on the opposing lifestyles and attitudes of its central protagonists of Anna and Levin. As such, each of the novel's eight sections contains internal variations in tone: it assumes a relaxed voice when following Stepan Oblonsky's thoughts and actions and a much more tense voice when describing Levin's social encounters. Much of the novel's seventh section depicts Anna's thoughts fluidly, following each one of her ruminations and free associations with its immediate successor. This groundbreaking use of [stream-of-consciousness](#) would be utilised by such later authors as [James Joyce](#), [Virginia Woolf](#), and [William Faulkner](#).

Also of significance is Tolstoy's use of real events in his narrative, to lend greater verisimilitude to the fictional events of his narrative. Characters debate significant sociopolitical issues affecting Russia in the latter half of the nineteenth century, such as the place and role of the Russian peasant in society, education reform, and women's rights. Tolstoy's depiction of the characters in these debates, and of their arguments, allows him to communicate his own political beliefs. Characters often attend similar social functions to those which Tolstoy attended, and he includes in these passages his own observations of the ideologies, behaviors, and ideas running through contemporary Russia through the thoughts of Levin. The broad array of situations and ideas depicted in *Anna Karenina* allows Tolstoy to present a treatise on his era's Russia, and, by virtue of its very breadth and depth, all of human society. This stylistic technique, as well as the novel's use of perspective, greatly contributes to the thematic structure of *Anna Karenina*.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Major themes

*Anna Karenina* is commonly thought to explore the themes of hypocrisy, jealousy, faith, fidelity, family, marriage, society, progress, carnal desire and passion, and the agrarian connection to land in contrast to the lifestyles of the city.<sup>[[6](#)]</sup> Translator [Rosemary Edmonds](#) wrote that Tolstoy doesn't explicitly moralise in the book, he allows his themes to emerge naturally from the "vast panorama of Russian life." She also says one of the novel's key messages is that "no one may build their happiness on another's pain."<sup>[[7](#)]</sup>

Levin is often considered as a semi-autobiographical portrayal of Tolstoy's own beliefs, struggles and life events.<sup>[7]</sup> Tolstoy's first name is "Lev", and the Russian surname "Levin" means "of Lev". According to footnotes in the Pevear/Volokhonsky translation, the viewpoints Levin supports throughout the novel in his arguments match Tolstoy's outspoken views on the same issues. Moreover, according to W. Gareth Jones, Levin proposed to Kitty in the same way as Tolstoy to [Sophia Behrs](#). Additionally, Levin's request that his fiancée read his diary as a way of disclosing his faults and previous sexual encounters, parallels Tolstoy's own requests to his fiancée Sophia Behrs.<sup>[8]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Divorce in Tsarist Russia

S. L. Tolstoy (son) wrote:

Divorce before the revolution was subject to complicated, humiliating and expensive procedures. By the law then in effect, the following three situations may serve as grounds for divorce: physical disability of spouses, a spouse who has been missing for five years, and adultery. When the first two conditions were not met one had to resort to the third. But for the legalization of a divorce, adultery was to be directly and legally proven. Then the innocent spouse was entitled to enter into a second marriage and to custody of their children, and the offender was deprived of these rights. The Karenins' divorce, therefore, required either proving the infidelity of Anna, who would then be deprived of the rights to her son and to a second marriage (to Vronsky), or Mr. Karenin admitting to a non-existent guilt. This admission of culpability had to be verified by diocese officials notorious for their corruption. The innocent Karenin had to participate in the charade of adultery with some hired woman, and bribed eyewitnesses were required to provide irrefutable testimony. Then he, and not Anna, would be deprived of the rights to his son and to a second marriage. This procedure was illegal, however, was often practiced.

## [\[edit\]](#) Film, television, and theatrical adaptations and references

For more details on this topic, see [Adaptations of Anna Karenina](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Anna Karenina in literature

- The novel is referenced in [Vladimir Nabokov](#)'s *[Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle](#)*.
- Repeated reference is made explicitly to Leo Tolstoy and Anna Karenina in [Muriel Barbery](#)'s *[Elegance of the Hedgehog](#)*
- Anna Karenina is also mentioned in [R. L. Stine](#)'s *[Goosebumps](#)* series *[Don't Go To Sleep](#)*.
- [Mikhail Bulgakov](#) makes reference to the Oblonsky household and Tolstoy in *[The Master and Margarita](#)*.
- In [Jasper Fforde](#)'s novel *[Lost in a Good Book](#)*, a recurring joke is two unnamed "crowd-scene" characters from *Anna Karenina* discussing its plot.
- In the short-story "Sleep" by [Haruki Murakami](#), the main character, an insomniac housewife, spends much time reading through and considering "Anna Karenina". Furthermore, in the short story "Super-Frog Saves Tokyo", by the same author, the character of Frog references "Anna Karenina" when discussing how to beat Worm.

- [Martin Amis](#)'s character Lev, in the novel [House of Meetings](#), compares the protagonist with *Anna Karenina*'s Vronsky.
- In the novel [The Unbearable Lightness of Being](#) *Anna Karenina* is compared with the novel-like beauty of life, and Tereza arrives at Tomas's apartment with a copy of the book under her arm. In addition, Tereza and Tomas have a pet dog named Karenin, after Anna's husband.
- *Anna Karenina* plays a central role in [Nilo Cruz](#)'s [Pulitzer Prize](#)-winning play [Anna in the Tropics](#) (2002), set in 1929, as a new lector, Juan Julian, reads the text as background for cigar rollers in the Ybor City section of Tampa, FL. As he reads the story of adultery, the workers' passions are inflamed, and end in tragedy like Anna's.
- In "[The Slippery Slope](#)", the 10th book in [A Series of Unfortunate Events](#) by [Lemony Snicket](#), the Baudelaire orphans, [Violet](#) and [Klaus](#), and the third Quagmire triplet, [Quigley](#), need to use the central theme of *Anna Karenina* as the final password to open the [Vernacularly Fastened Door](#) leading to the V.F.D. Headquarters. Klaus remembered how his mother had read it to him one summer when he was young as a summer reading book. Klaus summarized the theme with these words: "The central theme of *Anna Karenina* is that a rural life of moral simplicity, despite its monotony, is the preferable personal narrative to a daring life of impulsive passion, which only leads to tragedy." Esme Squalor later said she once was supposed to read the book over the summer, but she decided it would never help her in her life and threw it in the fireplace.
- [Guns, Germs, and Steel](#) (by [Jared Diamond](#)) has a chapter (#9) on the domestication of large mammals, titled "Zebras, Unhappy Marriages, and the [Anna Karenina Principle](#)." This chapter begins with a variation on the quote above.
- in [Nicholas Sparks](#)'s book *The Last Song*, the main character, Ronnie, reads *Anna Karenina* and other Tolstoy books throughout the story.
- in [Anton Chekhov](#)'s *The Duel*, there are two references. In Chapter II: "And he remembered that when Anna Karenin got tired of her husband, what she disliked most of all was his ears, and thought: 'How true it is, how true!'", and again in Chapter XII: "It's not for nothing they whistle. The fact that girls strangle their illegitimate children and go to prison for it, and that Anna Karenin flung herself under the train,..."
- in [Allison Bechdel](#)'s graphic-novel [Fun Home](#). Tolstoy's book is featured on the first page and is the first of many books mentioned throughout the narrative. Bechdel suggestively depicts father Bruce Bechdel reading the novel.

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1.  <sup>*a* *b*</sup> [Nabokov, Vladimir](#) (1980). *Lectures on Russian Literature*. New York: Harvest. pp. 137. [ISBN 0-15-649591-0](#).
2.  <sup>*a*</sup> [Times Online](#)
3.  <sup>*a*</sup> [The Best 100 Lists](#)
4.  <sup>*a*</sup> [Anna Karenina](#) by Leo Tolstoy. Penguin Publishing. [ISBN 9780140449174](#). [Faulkner's opinion is used as an advert on the inside cover]
5.  <sup>*a*</sup> [Lev Grossman](#). "[The 10 Greatest Books of All Time](#)". *Time*.
6.  <sup>*a*</sup> [Study Guides & Essay Editing | GradeSaver](#)
7.  <sup>*a* *b*</sup> [Tolstoy Anna Karneni](#), [Penguin](#), 1954, [ISBN 0-14-044041-0](#), see introduction by Rosemary Edmonds
8.  <sup>*a*</sup> [Feuer, Kathryn B.](#) *Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace*, [Cornell University Press](#), 1996, [ISBN 0-8014-1902-6](#)



## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

### [\[edit\]](#) Translations

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- *Anna Karenina*, Translated by [Louise and Aylmer Maude](#) ([Oxford University Press](#), Oxford, 1918)
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- [Full Russian text of Anna Karenina](#) at Alexey Komarov's Internet Library

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