

"I know it's sad for Anna, but I feel very sorry for poor little Sergey, having to live with such a cold and uncaring father." Eva, 13

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ANNA KARENINA

A guard had stepped back into the path of a train and been crushed beneath the wheels. He had been killed instantly.

When Anna Karenina arrives at the scene of a horrible accident, it is the beginning of a new and troubling time in her life. Will she ever find happiness with the man she loves?

Anna's sister-in-law, Darya Oblonsky, is threatening to leave her selfish husband. Is Anna able to save their marriage?

Anna's young son, Sergey, is sure that one day his mother will return to him. Can the pair ever be reunited?

Konstantin Levin is determined to marry Kitty, but she is dazzled by the lively and handsome Count Vronsky. Levin prefers a quiet life in the countryside to dinner parties and dances. Which of them will she finally choose?



ANNA KARENINA

Leo Tolstoy

LEO TOLSTOY



Retold by Tony Evans
Illustrated by Maxim Larin

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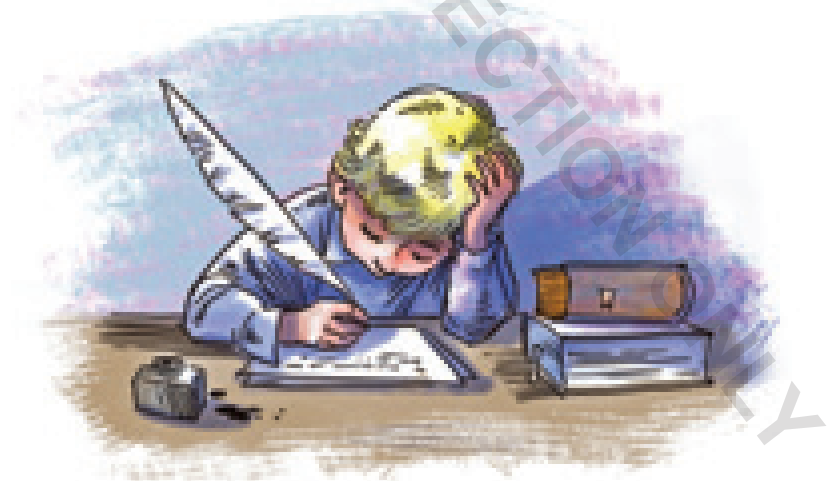
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THE CHARACTERS



Anna Karenina

Anna's life is changed forever when she meets Count Vronsky. Will he bring her happiness or disaster?

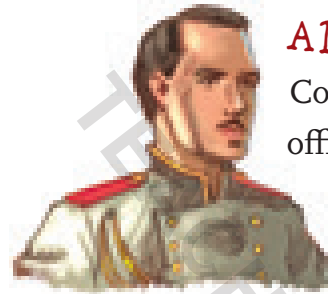
Alexey Karenin

Alexey is a very serious man and is much older than his wife Anna. His life revolves around his important job. How will he react when he finds out that his wife loves someone else and wants to divorce him?



Sergey Karenin

Sergey is Anna's son and is eight years old when she decides to leave her husband. Will he ever see his mother again?

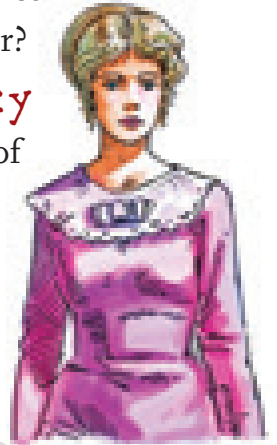


Alexey Vronsky

Count Vronsky is a young, rich army officer who has a wonderful career ahead of him. Does he love Anna enough to sacrifice his future career?

Kitty Shcherbatsky

Eighteen years old at the start of the story, Kitty is fascinated by Count Vronsky. Can she ever appreciate Levin's fine qualities, or is he too dull for her?



Konstantin Levin

Levin is a generous landowner who loves the countryside and feels out of place in big cities like Moscow and St Petersburg. Will he be able to persuade Kitty to be his wife?



Darya Oblonsky

Married to Anna's brother, Darya is thirty-three and already has five children. Will she forgive her extravagant and thoughtless husband?





ANNA KARENINA

At four o'clock Konstantin Levin stepped out of a hired sledge at the Moscow Zoological Gardens and walked along the path to the skating ground. He knew he would find Kitty Shcherbatsky there because he had noticed her carriage at the entrance. Levin felt both excited and nervous at the thought of seeing once more the young woman he loved and wished to marry. The more he tried to calm himself, the more anxious he became.

One of the attendants brought Levin some skates. He looked amongst the cheerful crowd – yes, there she was! He caught Kitty's eye and waved at her, startled at his own boldness. To his delight she waved back, and skated towards him. Kitty moved timidly across the ice, balancing herself carefully. She was just as Levin had remembered her from his last visit to Moscow; her delicate beauty and bright, happy smile were enchanting.

Clutching at Levin's arm to steady herself, Kitty looked up at him.

'Have you been here long?' she asked.

'Er ... I've only just ... yesterday ... I mean today, that is, I arrived,' answered Levin, blushing as he remembered the purpose of his visit.

Kitty looked at him intently, as if trying to make out the cause of his confusion.

'I've been told you are a wonderful skater!' she said. 'Can you help me to improve?'



Soon Levin was gliding across the ice next to Kitty, his arm steadying her as they crossed the skating ground. Although he was strongly built and broad-shouldered, he moved with lightness and skill.

Levin noticed Kitty's mother, Princess Shcherbatsky, and bowed his head towards her. The Princess nodded back at him. Was there some coldness in her expression, Levin thought. She could hardly object to his marrying her daughter. After all, he was a nobleman, young and healthy, and the owner of large country estate. Of course it was well known that he preferred living in the country and managing his farm to enjoying Moscow's high society – perhaps that was it.

As Kitty chatted merrily, waving to her friends as they passed, Levin realised that he would have to find the courage to ask the question that he had been thinking about for months. At last the opportunity came.

'Are you going to stay in Moscow long?' Kitty asked.

Back in Time

Anna Karenina appeared as a serial between 1873 and 1877, and was first published in book form in 1878. By that time Leo Tolstoy was fifty years old and was already a famous writer. His other best-known novel, *War and Peace*, had appeared in its final version in 1869.

Tolstoy made much use of his own life and experiences in his work. Anna's suicide is based partly on a similar tragedy which occurred near his country estate, and which Tolstoy helped to investigate. Both Count Vronsky and Konstantin Levin – who seem to be such different characters – have things in common with the author. Like Vronsky, when Tolstoy was a young man he enjoyed the pleasures of high society; he also served as a soldier in the fierce battles of the Crimean War. Like Levin, Tolstoy was a rich landowner who in later life loved the countryside and was fascinated by agriculture. He shared Levin's interests in spiritual matters, ending his life as a very religious man.

The popularity of *Anna Karenina* is partly due to the very wide scope of the book. On one level it is a dramatic story of the tragic fate of a woman whose actions cause her to be rejected by society and her friends. However, Tolstoy also uses the novel to explore many ideas and questions about important subjects such as marriage, agriculture, politics, education and the position of women. For example, it is made clear that Stepan Oblonsky behaves badly towards his wife and almost destroys his marriage; yet because he is a man the society of the time treats him very differently from Anna.

Tolstoy's detailed, realistic style is another of the attractions of *Anna Karenina*. In the early 1860s he travelled to Europe and met Victor Hugo, whose novel *Les Misérables* had just been published. The French writer was a great influence on Tolstoy, who fills *Anna Karenina* with a large cast of vivid characters. They live on as memorable creations long after the society in which they were set has vanished into history.