

QUICK CARD: ANNA KARENINA



<p><i>Reference</i></p>	<p><i>Anna Karenina</i>. Leo Tolstoy. (1877) Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, trans. ISBN: 978-0143035008</p>
<p><i>Plot</i></p>	<p>Darya Alexandrova discovers that her husband has cheated on her, but her sister-in-law Anna persuades her to not break up the marriage. Meanwhile Dolly's sister Kitty is courted by the reserved farmer Levin, but rejects his proposal when she believes another proposal is on the way from the dashing soldier Vronsky. Vronsky, however, falls in love with the married Anna and makes advances on her. Discontented with her marriage to the dry and scholarly Alexei, Anna gives in to these advances and begins an affair. When she finds out she is pregnant with Vronsky's child, she informs her husband of the affair, but in his prideful rage he refuses her a divorce. The birth of the child almost leads to Anna's death, and in this moment Alexei miraculously softens toward mother, child, and father, and forgives all. He finds he loves the child that is not his, and still refuses Anna a divorce – this time because of the shame and devastation it would bring to her position. Kitty, in the meantime, mourns her foolishness and goes abroad with her family to try to become a better person while Levin throws himself into his farm work hoping to produce an agricultural plan for the Greater Good of the Russian people. Both fail at their projects. Levin returns to the city and this time Kitty accepts his proposal. Anna leaves St. Petersburg to wander Europe with Vronsky, but the couple slowly grows apart as Anna becomes jealous and Vronsky becomes bored. Kitty and Levin are married, and although they experience the normal quarrels of marriage, they fight out their differences and remain in love. Kitty gives birth to a son, but Levin still struggles to find meaning in the world as he cannot rationalize the Christian faith. Anna's story ends when a misunderstanding between herself and Vronsky causes her to throw herself in front of a train (notice her moment of repentance at the end). Levin on the other hand, as a result of his relationships and the simple faith of a peasant, unexpectedly realizes the miraculous truth of Christianity and, through no effort of his own, is given the gift of seeing the meaning in the world.</p>
<p><i>Setting</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late 19th century Russia. • Largely a dichotomy between the urban center of St. Petersburg and the simple agricultural lifestyle of the Russian countryside. • A time of industrial revolution and a move toward modern life in Russia. Economics, politics, and education are all under debate. Russian culture is being influenced by European culture.

Characters

- Anna Arkadyevna Karenina: sister of Stiva and wife of Alexei Karenin, her affair with Vronsky begins the major conflicts of the story as she struggles to find and understand love in a lonely aristocratic world.
- Stepan Arkadyich Oblonsky (Stiva): Brother to Anna and husband of Dolly, he cheats on his wife with his family's governess at the beginning of the story. He is good-natured and apt to love indiscriminately with almost animal-like simplicity.
- Darya Alexandrovna Oblonsky (Dolly): Wife of Stiva and sister to Kitty, she chooses to forgive her husband in favor of a consistent family life, but remains sympathetic toward Anna.
- Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin: Anna's husband, a distant and unaffectionate scholar, who comes to experience an empathy he does not understand.
- Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky (Alyosha): The object of Kitty's early affections and Anna's lover. He unsuccessfully, though sincerely, struggles to demonstrate genuine love toward Anna once their passion is over.
- Konstantin Dmitrich Levin (Kostya): Kitty's suitor. Once he is rejected, he seeks to give meaning to his life through charitable work, but is unsuccessful. Throughout the story he struggles with his "unbelief" even after eventually marrying Kitty, and finally comes to realize that faith is not attainable through reason or any act of the will.
- Nikolai Dmitrich Levin (Nikolenka): Levin's dissolute brother and activist for the Communist cause. He is too proud to seek Levin's help, but when his health fails he ends up the subject of Kitty's undeserved care.
- Sergei Ivanovich Koznyshev: Levin's more urban and scholarly half brother.
- Princess Betsy Tverskoy: Vronsky's first cousin who encourages his libertine behavior and affair with Anna.
- Agafya Mikhailovna: Levin's longtime housekeeper and confidant.
- Countess Lydia Ivanovna: "Friend" of Karenin, she encourages him in exacting justice from his wife in the name of Christianity.
- Varvara Andreevna (Varenka): Kitty's traveling acquaintance whose example inspires her to live unselfishly. Kitty cannot find the strength in herself to live like Varenka, and Varenka too is unhappy with her life.

<p><i>Conflict</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man vs. Self: All major characters struggle with their identities and their capacity to love well. • Man vs. Society: Levin struggles against the current of modern thought and urbanization. Anna struggles with her reputation. • Man vs. Man: Tensions exist between Anna and Karenin, Karenin and Vronsky, Levin and Vronsky, Anna and Vronsky, etc. • Man vs. God: Levin cannot rationalize the Christian faith and struggles to find the meaning of human life. In the end the meaning is given to him from outside himself; he cannot make it with his own hands.
<p><i>Theme</i></p>	<p>Grace and love as unearned gifts; identity, meaning, and purpose as gifts Life as a mystery and a wonder Incurable human weakness The meaning of good love The roots of human nature in an industrialized society The preservation of Russian/Slavic culture in a Westernized world</p>
<p><i>Literary Devices</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolism: notice, for example, the preoccupation with industrial trains • Imagery: descriptions of the city vs. the country • Translation • Russian names: first name, patronymic, family name, and diminutives