



Quicklet on Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (CliffsNotes-like Book Summary)

Deena Shanker

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ABOUT THE BOOK

I first read Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina shortly after finishing Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment. The books, both set in Russia in that late 1800s, tell two very different stories, yet explore many similar themes. Anna Karenina is a tale of an adulterous upper class woman whose husband refuses to release her from the shackles of their legal marriage, even though she shares a home and a daughter with her new lover and repeatedly begs for a divorce. Crime and Punishment, on the other hand, depicts the psychological underpinnings of crime and the impact that committing those crimes has on both the criminal and the society he lives in. Both of these works of nineteenth-century Russian literature vividly portray the intense mental anguish suffered by those who society has cast out.

Anna Karenina, widely considered to be Tolstoy's masterpiece, is a penetrating depiction of human existence. Through the themes of love, society, wealth, and human emotion, it delves deeply into the psyches of its characters, whose positions the reader can still empathize with more than one hundred years after the work's original publication. Anyone who has experienced love in any of its forms will find a character in Anna Karenina whose thoughts, feelings, and predicaments, could be their own.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Deena Shanker is a San Francisco newbie, having just moved out here from New York City. She is a recovering lawyer excited to get back to doing work she loves, like writing. She enjoys taking advantage of California's great outdoors with her dog, Barley, reading fiction, and eating cheese.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

In Europe, Anna and Vronsky find that they are not as happy as they had expected. Vronsky begins to feel suffocated and look for other forms of entertainment, and Anna becomes increasingly aware of his decreasing affection for her. When they return to Russia, they discover that their social situation has drastically changed: Anna, once universally respected and admired, is no longer welcome at society events, though Vronsky may still move freely and without condemnation. Unable to fit in, they move to Vronsky's country estate.

Dolly visits with Anna and Vronsky and immediately notices both their lavish lifestyle and Anna's extreme despair. A combination of Vronsky's wishes, her social position, and increasing paranoia about Vronsky leaving lead Anna to request a divorce from Karenin so that she may marry Vronsky. Oblonsky also visits Karenin to request a divorce, but Karenin refuses.

Anna is so engulfed by despair that she throws herself into the tracks of an oncoming train. After her death, Vronsky leaves to volunteer for the army in the hopes of moving on. Levin, now a happy husband and father,

finds religion. Oblonsky gets the job promotion he wanted, and him and Dolly continue as usual...

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Quicklet On Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina

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