



# Examine The Realism Theory In The Novel Of Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina

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## Abstract:

Realists believe that there are no universal principles with which all states may guide their actions. Instead, a state must always be aware of the actions of the states around it and must use a pragmatic approach to resolve problems as they arise. Realism focused on the truthful treatment of the common, average, everyday life. Realism brought fame to Russian literature. The novels of Goncharov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy became part of world literature. In this article discuss about Russian Realism through the novel of Anna Karenina.

**Keywords:** Realism, Russian Realism, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy

### **Introduction:**

Realism rejects imaginative idealization in favour of a close observation of outward appearances. As such, realism in its broad sense has comprised many artistic currents in different civilizations. Literary realism is a literary movement that represents reality by portraying mundane, everyday experiences as they are in real life. It depicts familiar people, places, and stories, primarily about the middle and lower classes of society. Literary realism seeks to tell a story as truthfully as possible instead of dramatizing or romanticizing it. In this article discuss about how Tolstoy apply realism in the novel of Anna Karenina.

### **Realism in Literature:**

Literary realism is part of the realist art movement that started in nineteenth-century France and lasted until the early twentieth century. It began as a reaction to eighteenth-century Romanticism and the rise of the bourgeois in Europe. Works of Romanticism were thought to be too exotic and to have lost touch with the real world.

The roots of literary realism lie in France, where realist writers published works of realism in novels and in serial form in newspapers. The earliest realist writers include Honoré de Balzac, who infused his writing with complex characters and detailed observations about society, and Gustave Flaubert, who established realist narration as we know it today.

Realism brought fame to Russian literature. The novels of Goncharov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy became part of world literature. The achievements of contemporary children's literature are not as remarkable, even though it showed the same turn towards Realism during the second half of the nineteenth century.

### **Russian Realism:**

The general characteristics of 19th-century Russian realism include the urge to explore the human condition in a spirit of serious enquiry, although without excluding humor and satire; the tendency to set works of fiction in the Russia of the writer's own day; the cultivation of a straightforward style, but one also involving factual detail; an emphasis on character and atmosphere rather than on plot and action; and an underlying tolerance of human weakness and wickedness. The leading realists began to be published in the late 1840s: the novelists Ivan Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Count Leo Tolstoy; the playwright Aleksandr Ostrovsky; the poet Nikolai Nekrasov; and the novelist and political thinker Aleksandr Herzen.

**Plot of Anna Karenina:**

Anna Karenina follows two main plot tracks, both fairly superficial love stories; while there are many philosophical and social issues tackled by various sub-plots in the story these two relationships are the core of the book. In one, Anna Karenina embarks on an affair with a passionate young cavalry officer. In the second, Anna's sister-in-law Kitty initially rejects, then later embraces the advances of an awkward young man named Levin.

The story opens in the home of Stepan "Stiva" Oblonsky, whose wife Dolly has discovered his infidelity. Stiva has been carrying on an affair with a former governess to their children and has been pretty open about it, scandalizing society and humiliating Dolly, who threatens to leave him. Stiva is paralyzed by this turn of events; his sister, Princess Anna Karenina, arrives to try and calm the situation down. Anna is beautiful, intelligent, and married to the prominent government minister Count Alexei Karenin, and she is able to mediate between Dolly and Stiva and get Dolly to agree to stay in the marriage.

Dolly has a younger sister, Princess Ekaterina "Kitty" Shcherbatskaya, who is being courted by two men: Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin, a socially-awkward landowner, and Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky, a handsome, passionate military officer. As you might expect, Kitty is enamored of the dashing officer and chooses Vronsky over Levin, which devastates the earnest man. However, things take an immediate gossip turn when Vronsky encounters Anna Karenina and falls deeply for her on first sight, which in turn devastates Kitty. Kitty is so hurt by this turn of events she actually becomes sick. For her part, Anna finds Vronsky attractive and compelling, but she dismisses her feelings as a temporary infatuation and returns home to Moscow.

Vronsky, however, pursues Anna there and tells her that he loves her. When her husband becomes suspicious, Anna fiercely denies any involvement with Vronsky, but when he's involved in a terrible accident during a horse race, Anna can't hide her feelings for Vronsky and confesses that she loves him. Her husband, Karenin, is mainly concerned with his public image. He refuses her a divorce, and she moves to their country estate and begins a torrid affair with Vronsky that soon finds her pregnant with his child. Anna is tortured by her decisions, wracked with guilt over betraying her marriage and abandoning her son with Karenin and gripped by powerful jealousy in relation to Vronsky.

Anna has a difficult childbirth while her husband visits her in the country; upon seeing Vronsky there he has a moment of grace and agrees to divorce her if she wishes, but leaves the final decision with her after forgiving her for her infidelity. Anna is outraged by this, resenting his ability to suddenly take the high road, and she and Vronsky travel with the baby, going to Italy. Anna is restless and lonely, however, so they eventually return to Russia, where Anna finds herself increasingly isolated. The scandal of her affair leaves her unwanted

in the social circles she once traveled in, while Vronsky enjoys a double standard and is free to do as he likes. Anna begins to suspect and fear that Vronsky has fallen out of love with her and has become unfaithful, and she grows increasingly angry and unhappy. As her mental and emotional state deteriorates, she goes to the local train station and impulsively throws herself in front of an oncoming train, killing herself. Her husband, Karenin, takes in her and Vronsky's child.

Meanwhile, Kitty and Levin meet again. Levin has been at his estate, trying unsuccessfully to convince his tenants to modernize their farming techniques, while Kitty has been recovering at a spa. The passage of time and their own bitter experiences have changed them, and they quickly fall in love and marry. Levin chafes under the restrictions of married life and feels little affection for his son when he's born. He has a crisis of faith that leads him back to the church, becoming suddenly fervent in his belief. A near-tragedy that threatens his child's life also sparks in him the first sense of true love for the boy.

### **Realism in Anna Karenina:**

Tolstoy broke new ground in "Anna Karenina" with the use of two innovative techniques: A Realist approach and Stream of Consciousness. Anna Karenina wasn't the first Realist novel, but it is regarded as a nearly-perfect example of the literary movement. A Realist novel attempts to depict everyday things without artifice, as opposed to the more flowery and idealist traditions that most novels pursue. Realist novels tell grounded stories and avoid any sort of embellishment. The events in "Anna Karenina" are set out simply; people behave in realistic, believable ways, and events are always explicable and their causes and consequences can be traced from one to the next.

As a result, "Anna Karenina" remains relatable to modern audiences because there are no artistic flourishes that mark it in a certain moment of the literary tradition, and the novel is also a time capsule of what life was like for a certain class of people in 19th-century Russia because Tolstoy took pains to make his descriptions accurate and factual instead of pretty and poetic. It also means that while characters in "Anna Karenina" represent segments of society or prevailing attitudes, they aren't symbols — they are offered as people, with layered and sometimes contradictory beliefs.

### **Stream of Consciousness**

Stream of Consciousness is most often associated with the groundbreaking postmodern works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and other 20th century writers, but Tolstoy pioneered the technique in "Anna Karenina". For Tolstoy, it was used in service of his Realist goals his peek into the thoughts of his characters reinforces the realism by showing that the physical aspects of his fictional world are consistent different characters see the same things the same way while perceptions about people shift and change from

character to character because each person has only a sliver of the truth. For example, characters think differently of Anna when they learn of her affair, but the portrait artist Mikhailov, unaware of the affair, never changes his superficial opinion of the Karenins.

Tolstoy's use of stream of consciousness also allows him to depict the crushing weight of opinion and gossip against Anna. Every time a character judges her negatively because of her affair with Vronsky, Tolstoy adds a bit of weight to the social judgment that eventually drives Anna to suicide.

### **Social Status as Prison**

Throughout the novel, Tolstoy demonstrates that people's reactions to crises and changes are dictated not so much by their individual personalities or willpower, but by their background and social status. Karenin is initially stunned by his wife's infidelity and has no idea what to do because the concept of his wife pursuing her own passions is foreign to a man of his position. Vronsky cannot conceive of a life where he does not consistently put himself and his desires first, even if he truly cares for someone else, because that is how he has been raised. Kitty desires to be a selfless person who does for others, but she cannot make the transformation because that is not who she is — because that is not how she has been defined her whole life.

### **Conclusion:**

Tolstoy handled realism in Anna Karenina in the clear manner. He never use imaginary plot in the novel. Anna Karenina shows Russian Upper class people list style and lower class people list style in clear manner. The novel Anna Karenina is a good example to understand the life of the Russian people in a simple way and Tolstoy's writing also describes the Russian life in a detailed way.

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