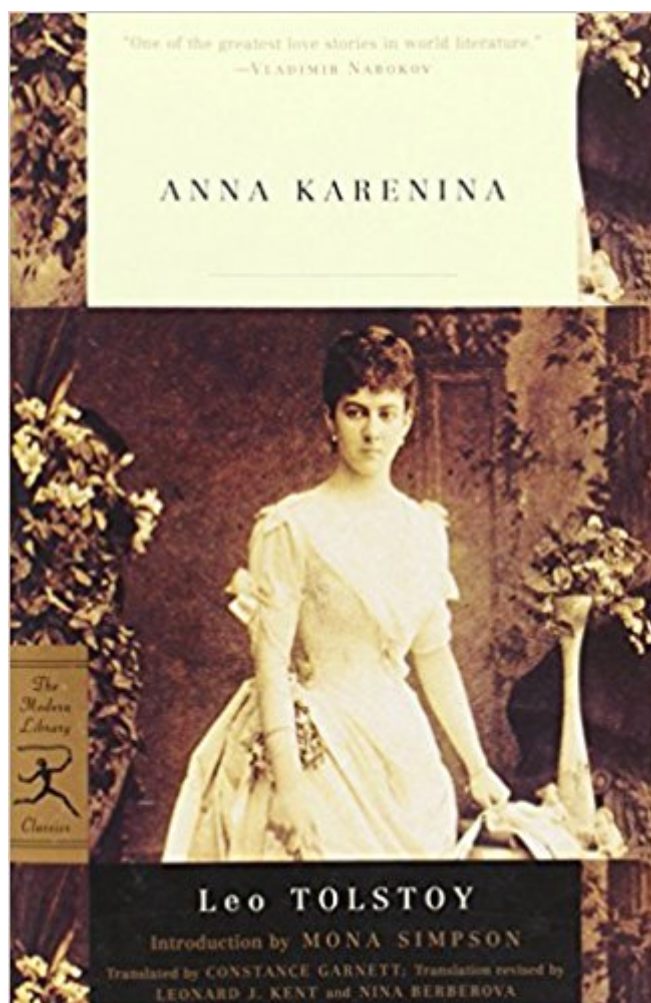


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Anna Karenina (Modern Library Classics)



Synopsis

Considered by some to be the greatest novel ever written, *Anna Karenina* is Tolstoy's classic tale of love and adultery set against the backdrop of high society in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. A rich and complex masterpiece, the novel charts the disastrous course of a love affair between Anna, a beautiful married woman, and Count Vronsky, a wealthy army officer. Tolstoy seamlessly weaves together the lives of dozens of characters, and in doing so captures a breathtaking tapestry of late-nineteenth-century Russian society. As Matthew Arnold wrote in his celebrated essay on Tolstoy, "We are not to take *Anna Karenina* as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"One of the greatest love stories in world literature."--Vladimir Nabokov

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Russian

I feel I'm not qualified to review this book. I'm just a regular guy, not a literature professor, but maybe my comments will be helpful to some. This book is really good. It's all about the characters. Many times while I was reading I wondered how all of this was going to end. It wasn't like a regular story where there's a pretty clear end goal, like get the bad guy, or solve the mystery. It was more like things are just happening and I wonder what's going to happen next. I thought maybe it's just

going to stop abruptly, as if Tolstoy would just suddenly be done writing about all these characters, but it really did have a solid ending to conclude everything. Thinking back on the story I remember many ups and downs and tense moments and light hearted moments, it was very enjoyable and pretty easy to read. One thing that really amazed me was how well Tolstoy could switch between different characters and settings. Everyone had distinct personalities and the way they were all portrayed was with so much compassion and understanding that as a reader I could really see parts of myself in everyone. There was no one character that I related to more than any other. I was able to relate to every single one of them differently. I believe this is the reason Tolstoy is considered a master. The pace of the book is a little slow for me because I'm a slow reader, but in retrospect I feel like the pace was actually pretty good and it only felt slow because I had absolutely no idea where the story was going. Every chapter had something new happening and the story just strolled right along. Probably like riding a tractor for 50 miles. You've got plenty of time to look at all the flowers and clouds and barns and animals along the way, it takes forever, but it never stops moving. It helped a lot to have this book on my kindle because towards the end there was more and more french that was easy to translate with the kindle. The port to the kindle was perfect. I saw no strange spacing or oddly misspelled words. Overall I recommend giving this book a shot. Don't be discouraged by the length. I realize a reader may feel compelled to read this particular book just so they can say that they did. It's got that trophy book status. I feel like that's a bad thing though. If you find yourself a few hundred pages in and are interested in what's going on, then keep going. If however after a few hundred pages you feel like it's a chore to read, then don't bother, it's not going to suddenly become more interesting after any point in the book. It's very consistent, you can trust this author and the translation, the ending won't let you down, there will be no long lulls. What you get in the beginning is what you get through the entire book, it's very steady and very high quality writing.

I have never enjoyed a book more than this one. From beginning to end, every part, every sentence, every word. It was surprisingly easy to read as well, although I suppose some credit should go to the translator for that aspect. The Russian names are a bit tricky, of course, I usually said them out loud to try and get them down. Actually I read most of the book aloud, just to slow me down and make sure I didn't miss anything, plus it sounds so good hearing the elegance of his writing. As a matter of fact, when I heard that they made this into a movie, my idea of the best way to appreciate this book in a movie was to have a microphone, a chair and an excellent reader just reading the words into the camera. Nothing else, because you don't NEED anything else. If you

looking for a thrilling story line with lots of twists and unexpected turns, this is probably not the book for you. I mean it's an interesting enough story, but it's involves things that happen all the time to ordinary people. What's so enjoyable is the way he DESCRIBES what's going on in each scene, each conversation, the thoughts and emotions of the characters as they deal with whatever unfolds in their lives. Especially I like the way he jumps around in his descriptions, what's going through her mind, what she says, what's her body language, what he sees, what he thinks, how it affects him, descriptions of the little physical clues to their feelings. He's moving around from character to character, from dialogue to thoughts to physical descriptions, and as you read, all of a sudden YOU'RE THERE! Actually you're more than there, because you see it from many different perspectives, and you just know exactly what they're feeling, thinking. It's really breathtaking is the best way to describe it as he's moving you around the scene seeing both the surface and deep into the character's thoughts and feelings. He even gets into the mind of the damn hunting dog, and after I got done rolling on the floor with laughter I got up and said "YES, YES, that's exactly how they think!" This was my first Russian novel (other than something on Crime and Punishment years ago that I never finished and can't really recall) but it won't be my last, I'll read this again at least once, then will explore whatever else is out there. In fact the only down side to reading this book is that it may have ruined me for less compelling writers. Charles Dickens has always been one of my favorite writers, but I can't seem to get through David Copperfield all of a sudden...maybe happy people ARE all pretty much the same.

I'm amazed how social issues in 19th century Russia are not that different from what many societies encounter today. I love how Tolstoy explored marriage, infidelity, religion, politics, philosophy, and psychological and emotional struggles in this one book. I wish I could read Russian, somehow the text in English can become dry at times. Also, there were a few chapters that I couldn't find interesting, like the one on the methods of agriculture. I wasn't a huge fan of Anna's character. She's too self-involved, erratic and emotionally distraught. Her final ramblings with herself were exhausting! I think Tolstoy should've named the book after Konstantin Dmitrich Levin. I thought the storyline mainly evolved around him. I do admit however that his name doesn't make a good title for a best seller. Overall, I enjoyed the humanism in each character, their triumphs and tragedies. Tolstoy is brilliant in writing up these characters that we can learn from centuries later.

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