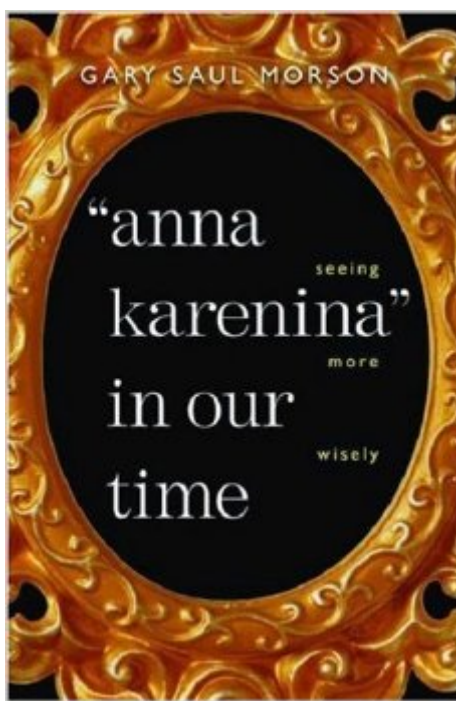


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Anna Karenina In Our Time



Synopsis

In this invigorating new assessment of *Anna Karenina*, Gary Saul Morson overturns traditional interpretations of the classic novel and shows why readers have misunderstood Tolstoy's characters and intentions. Morson argues that Tolstoy's ideas are far more radical than has been thought: his masterpiece challenges deeply held conceptions of romantic love, the process of social reform, modernization, and the nature of good and evil. By investigating the ethical, philosophical, and social issues with which Tolstoy grappled, Morson finds in *Anna Karenina* powerful connections with the concerns of today. He proposes that Tolstoy's effort to see the world more wisely can deeply inform our own search for wisdom in the present day. The book offers brilliant analyses of Anna, Karenin, Dolly, Levin, and other characters, with a particularly subtle portrait of Anna's extremism and self-deception. Morson probes Tolstoy's important insights (evil is often the result of negligence; goodness derives from small, everyday deeds) and completes the volume with an irresistible, original list of One Hundred and Sixty-Three Tolstoyan Conclusions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having earlier concentrated on French literature, I had not read *Anna Karenina* until recently. I was amazed at its beauty and the subtlety of its portrayal of character. I bought Morson's book to gain a deeper appreciation of the novel and was not disappointed. Morson takes an approach which seeks neither to judge the work in its own time nor as if it were written in ours but seeks to create a

dialogue between the work and issues relevant to our world. He shows that Tolstoy rejects the notion that great men and great events are decisive in history and emphasizes the importance of many, often insignificant, even unnoticed, events. He tentatively rejects the most common reading of AK, that all would be well if Anna had been able to divorce, blaming her situation on bad law and social prejudice. In his analysis, Anna comes across as a considerably less sympathetic character, self-centered and failing to see, much less weigh, the consequences of her acts. Morson is an extremely fine analyst of all the principal characters of the novel. His heroine is Dolly, Anna's sister-in-law, whose devotion to family and her work and role in life provide a model of the good life. Morson is unafraid to make moral judgments (good and evil) about the acts and character of Tolstoy's personalities, an important and much needed step beyond mere analytical criticism.

This book is phenomenal. It challenges the most common reading of Anna Karenina as a tragic hero by presenting evidence directly from the book that contradicts this, evidence that people seem to ignore in favor of making Anna the protagonist, which is precisely what Tolstoy was condemning. If you plan to read Anna Karenina, and if you already have, take a look at this book and be prepared to feel duped at not having seen what is plain in the book yet what so many scholars tend to ignore.

Having just read Anna Karenina in a class situation, I was given this reference. If you read this analysis, you will understand how complex a novel Anna Karenina is and how Tolstoy's philosophy on relationships, families, and political beliefs still remain valuable in this age of sexual freedom and health care reform. I learned a lot about my own beliefs in this book.

Professor Morson is a brilliant scholar and this book is a must-read for anyone interested in learning more, not just about Russian literature, but about life.

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