

**Joseph Luzzi • *The Tolstoy Seminar: Anna Karenina* • Class 2**  
**Virtual Book Club • April 13th, 2022 • Study Guide\* • © Joseph Luzzi**

*Please note: the below are only intended to help you “get inside” Tolstoy’s extremely complex, intricate work—please do not feel compelled to answer them in full, unless you wish to, and if there are questions or elements that you don’t understand, no worries, we will explain all when we meet for our upcoming seminar!*

1. What are the ways in which Parts 3–5 either *change course* from the earlier sections of the book or *develop new issues* and concerns?
2. Part 3 contains extended sections on Levin’s views of farming and the Russian peasantry. What do his agricultural beliefs reveal about his qualities as a main character in the book? More broadly, how is “Levin’s narrative” continuing to distinguish itself from the other main storyline of the book, “Anna’s narrative”?
3. Part 4 includes the dramatic scene in which Karenin forgives both Anna and Vronsky. What is the significance of that narrative development, especially in relation to (1) how *Anna Karenina* treats issues of religion; and (2) the actions of Karenin *after* this scene at the bedside of the dangerously ill Anna?
4. In Part 5, “newlywed” life turns out to be anything but straightforwardly simple for Levin and Kitty. What are the major sources of their struggles between happiness and dissatisfaction, and how do these tensions relate to Levin’s ongoing quest for life’s meaning?
5. Part 5 also contains key sections in which Russian aristocracy and high society react to Vronsky and Anna’s increasingly open affair. What do you think Tolstoy is trying to communicate about the social mores and standards of protocol in this high society? How are their “codes,” implicit and explicit, central to the development of the novel?
6. In Part 5, we also find Anna and Vronsky in Italy, on their version of a “Grand Tour,” an extended sojourn abroad that involves visiting the cultural treasures of Venice. How does their time in Italy anticipate what awaits them after their inevitable return to Russia? In what ways is their stay in Italy a microcosm of their larger relationship?
7. How does Tolstoy establish a tension between “romantic love” and its social instantiations, especially marriage? How does this relation between “passion” and “domesticity” inform the lives of not just Anna and Vronsky but other characters/couples in the novel as well?
8. How is Anna’s character changing the deeper she gets in her relationship with Vronsky? Is she the same “Anna” that we meet at the beginning of the book? How so or how not?
9. Is Vronsky’s character “changing” or “developing”? Why do you think that Tolstoy chose to construct him in the way that he did? What qualities of Vronsky are central to the novel’s arc and horizon of themes?
10. How do you think that Tolstoy wishes us to “judge”—or not judge—Anna’s behavior? Do you see or sense an overall moral position on her emerging from the novel?

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