

Title: A Hierarchy of Hues: The Role of Color Imagery in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*
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Despite the minute descriptive details present in Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*, the use of color is surprisingly rare and often significant beyond realistic representation. This paper examines the specific hierarchy of colors as it relates to the presentation of moral attitudes and behaviors in *Anna Karenina*. As I argue, Tolstoy's development of color imagery culminates in *Anna Karenina*, a novel in which morality is, among other things, color-coded: organized and presented to readers according to the color-spectrum.

Many characters in *Anna Karenina* are associated with specific colors. Countess Lydia Ivanovna has "an unhealthy yellow complexion," (108) Varenka wears a "yellow cotton dress, with a white kerchief tied on her head," (552) Anna's daughter and baby Mitia are described as "saffron" (718) colored, whereas Kitty Shcherbatskaia is almost exclusively associated with pink hues. Tolstoy's elaborate color palette in the novel is not arbitrary; it is designed to bring out a character's true moral colors. He describes his most positive characters with hues of green and brown, linking them to descriptions of nature, while the most negative characters are described as yellow, a color traditionally associated with cowardice and other negative characteristics. The other colors in the novel (blue, white, black, red, and pink) can be situated between green and yellow on a moral scale.

The progression of color imagery correlates to the evolution of Tolstoy's realism, from the production of extraneous detail for the sake of authenticity, to a more deliberate foregrounding of symbolic detail to illustrate a certain moral philosophy. This progression demonstrates the evolution of Tolstoyan fiction and his move toward symbolism in his later years.

Tolstoy, Leo. Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky. *Anna Karenina: a Novel in Eight Parts*. New York, NY: Penguin. 2002.