

Anna Karenina – Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy's diaries and journals, which occupy thirteen of the ninety volumes of his collected works (*Polnoe sobranie*), clearly played an important role in his intellectual growth. Early in his career, Tolstoy discovered that writing in a journal can make one a better reader and writer. Students reading *Anna Karenina* may be inspired by his example. While reading Catherine the Great's *Instruction* in March 1847, he wrote, "since I've generally made it a rule when reading any serious work to think about it and copy out any remarkable thoughts from it, I'll write down my opinion here about the first six chapters of this remarkable work" (*Tolstoy's Diaries* 4). Within a month, he was convinced that this practice would help him develop as a thinker and a writer: "I have never kept a diary before, because I could never see the benefit of it. But now that I am concerned with the development of my own facilities, I shall be able to judge from a diary the progress of that development" (5). Tolstoy used his journals and notebooks as a place to write down ideas as they appeared, without concern for spelling, grammar, or structure. As Boris Eikhenbaum notes, Tolstoy's journals function as a creative laboratory, where his "devices are prepared and the general foundations of his poetics are thought out" (*Young Tolstoi* 46). – Jason Merril *Approaches to Anna Karenina* (2003)

The following are authentic AP Literature Free Response Prompts that listed Tolstoy's novel amongst its choices. You each are assigned to a prompt. *These are non-negotiable.*

In Tolstoy's tradition, you will keep an informal journal of your thoughts throughout as you consider your assigned prompt. I expect to see evidence of both your reading and your intellectual curiosity. This means that I should be able to see specific references to plot events and details as they prove relevant or interesting to you and your topic. These can be hand written on loose-leaf paper or typed; I will be collecting these according to the reading schedule to check for completion and comprehension. They will be returned to you on the following day for use on your final essay.

At the culmination of this unit, you will write a short paper (2-5 pages) answering your prompt. This will be due on Monday, April 2nd, at the beginning of class (typed with proper MLA formatting).

Kim D. - 1980. A recurring theme in literature is the classic war between a passion and responsibility. For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work.

Bryon A. - 1991. Many plays and novels use contrasting places (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and the sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. Choose a novel or play that contrasts two such places. Write an

essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

Stephanie S. - 1999. The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, “No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man’s mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.”

From a novel or play, choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or another novel or work of similar literary quality.

Jazmin A. - 2004. Critic Roland Barthes has said, “Literature is the question minus the answer.” Choose a novel, or play, and, considering Barthes’ observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers answers. Explain how the author’s treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Ruth C. - 2006. Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.

Jessica F. - 2008. In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of a minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil for the main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

Matt G. - 2009, Form B. Many works of literature deal with political or social issues. Choose a novel or play that focuses on a political or social issue. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses literary elements to explore this issue and explain how the issue contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.