

Good example of essay on anna karenina and the brothers karamazov: similarities a...

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In this work we are going to analyze novels by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky on the basis of the following criteria: the role of epigraph in a story, the description of minor characters, the reasons for committing suicide and symbols that appear in both novels.

- The role of epigraph in a story

Unfortunately, but many people underestimate the role of epigraphs in literary works. However, in many cases authors place them on purpose and in such a way make a foreshadowing, which helps the reader to develop his own expectations upon the plot, to better understand the characters and the essence of the story. Epigraph plays a great role in any literary work and helps the reader to understand the main problems that are going to be raised in the story.

It should be noted that the works of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were highly affected by Christianity. That is why their epigraphs have religious and philosophical nature. Let's describe them in details.

Epigraph from Anna Karenina " Vengeance is mine; I shall repay" is taken from New Testament. Through this citation Tolstoy tries to explain the readers the following truth: we are not here to judge. Thus, leaving her husband and son Anna faced the trial of the society. But the author didn't recognize the rights of people to judge and blame each other if only because most of them were unprincipled. Tolstoy states that Anna's " judges" were far more immoral than she was and only waited for a chance to show her their antipathy. Through his epigraph the author claims that only God has a prerogative to judge people. Anna understood that she violated the law of God when she left her husband and son and fell in love with Vronsky. So,

when she left Karenin it didn't bring her happiness and she decided that needed punishment. Thus, reading the epigraph we can understand that the author depicts not a loose women, but a woman who lost herself but still wasn't guilty.

Epigraph from The Brothers Karamazov " Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It should be noted that the introduction to the epigraph could be dropped. But the author left it on purpose. It is clear that the truth of moral values and moral bearings mean a lot to Dostoevsky. The theme of death is traced throughout the whole story, but the author speaks not about a physical but a spiritual death that will lead to rebirth. Each of the brothers experienced spiritual death but not all of them were ready for the new birth. The main problem of Ivan lies in the fact that he is atheist who couldn't accept the world and the people around him. He hates people and can't stand their imperfections. Smerdyakov dies physically and spiritually when he kills his father. Speaking about Dmitri, he managed to find ways for rebirth when he took the blame for his father's death upon himself. Thus the main idea of the epigraph and the whole story lays in the connection between death and possible rebirth.

Therefore, comparing these two epigraphs we can arrive at a conclusion that both authors paid attention to moral bearings. They didn't blame or judge their characters as they thought that it was the priority of God. And their epigraphs contribute to the idea that we shall always stay true to ourselves and never forget about moral aspects of our life.

2. The description of minor characters

It is obvious that the novel cannot be viewed as complete without minor characters, as they contribute a lot to the plot of story and through the prism of their personalities we can learn something new about the main characters.

One of the most remarkable characters in Anna Karenina is Stiva Obolonsky. Leo Tolstoy starts his story with a phrase: " Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." (Anna Karenina, part 1, chapter 1). So, we get acquainted with his family. Stiva is Anna's brother and a householder of the family. Stiva is amiable and cheerful person. It seems that he hasn't got any troubles as he never worries about anything and is always in a good mood. He never argues with people, never takes offence on them. But at the same time he is lazy and doesn't want to work. Most people like him because he is convivial person.

But Tolstoy describes his family as an unhappy one. The reason for that is simple. Stiva has a nice appearance and is popular with the ladies. That is why he is untrue to his wife. But it is not the main problem here. Worse still, when his wife Dolly learns about his cheating he doesn't regrets. Thus, he may be described as egoist. He speaks well of his wife but at the same time thinks that she is not as beautiful as she was and is untrue to her. He likes to spend time with his children but doesn't care about their upbringing. That is why his family is unhappy.

Mihail Ospovitch Rakitin also plays rather important role in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. Mihail Rakitin is a seminarian and a careerist. To a certain extent he is Ivan Karamazov's counterpart. He doesn't believe in God and moral values and is opposed to Alyosha Karamazov. Being a liberal and

envier, he advises Dmitri to think less about philosophy and other high-flown ideals, about morality and soul. Instead, he proposed him to think about the rights of man and about the prices for beef. Mihail Rakitin is presented by the author as a negative character without soul and morality.

3. The reasons for committing suicide in both novels

In both stories the main characters decided to commit suicide as a punishment for their immorality.

When you think about Anna's suicide act it seems that it was an unexpected decision. But then you understand that everything was heading in that direction from the moment she decided to sin against the laws of society and abandon her husband. She desperately needed love but her love for Vronsky ended in a tragedy. Anna Karenina couldn't get used to the hypocrisy of the people around. She was judged by those who made things even worse than she did. And she didn't feel true love for her second child, probably because she left her son. All this leaves an imprint on woman's relations with Vronsky. She thinks that his love is not the same anymore and that there is no more passion in their relations. It is interesting that when she thinks of suicide, she wants to do it as a sort of punishment. Moreover, she imagined with enjoyment on how he would suffer. But still, it is hard to say if she really planned to do it or not.

It is also significant that their meeting with Vronsky was already accompanied by death. So when suddenly Anna recalled the man crushed by the train, she understood what she wanted to do. Thus, she went down the steps. It was her choice. She chose to escape from everything – from the society, Vronsky, and especially from herself.

It is hard to say whether she did right choice or not, but when Vronsky being at a railway station and communicating with his friend recalled her, he thought: " And he tried to think of her as she was when he met her the first time, at a railway station too, mysterious, exquisite, loving, seeking and giving happiness, and not cruelly revengeful as he remembered her on that last moment. He tried to recall his best moments with her, but those moments were poisoned forever." (Anna Karenina, part 8, chapter 5).

Being a son of idiot woman Lizaveta and Fyodor Karamazov, and working as a servant in the household, it is not surprising that Smerdyakov hated his father and the world around. The way this boy was born (his mother died giving birth to him), the way he spend his childhood (goofing on and killing cats), everything shows that there is something evil in this boy.

However, the death of Fyodor didn't bring him happiness. Thus, he had a choice whether to tell the truth or to commit suicide. He preferred the second variant as he couldn't accept the fact that he was a murderer.

4. Symbols

Symbols play a great role in both novels. They make certain suspense in a story, some mystery. Each symbol helps the readers to get deeper into character's thoughts, to better understand them.

In Anna Karenina we may speak mainly about three symbols: railway, a man and light.

So, the main symbol in a story is a symbol of railway. It is significant that the beginning of the story and its end are connected with railway. In the first episode Anna sees the guard who was crushed by the train and this is mainly how she decided to end her life. The whole life of Anna Karenina was placed

between these two episodes.

Next symbol is a man, whom Anna always saw in her most important moments of life: just before her acquaintance with Vronsky, before her childbirth when she almost died and in a day of her death. Thus, this man may be viewed as a symbol of death, a symbol of tragedy.

We may also speak about the role of light in a novel. Light is a symbol of life, a symbol of strengths. For instance, when Vronsky saw Anna, he saw her sparkling eyes and her light smile. And, on the contrary, when woman decides to commit suicide, she sees nothing except darkness.

We can also mention some symbols in the brothers Karamazov as well. They are the following: devil, faith, wise man.

The symbol of devil may be associated with Ivan Karamazov. Within the story more and more often he started to see the devil. The appearance of devil is connected with double consciousness, it is a symbol of something nasty and cruel that exists in a person.

Faith is another symbol in the novel. Practically all the main characters may be divided according to their relation to the religion. Thus, Ivan who doesn't believe in God stands on one side and is opposed to Alyosha. Their third brother Dmitry couldn't choose for a long time whose side he wanted to take.

One more symbol that may be discussed is a symbol of young man. In the Brothers Karamazov practically all characters needed a wise man that will help them to understand the essence of life and accept their own drawbacks and failures. They needed someone who will explain them what is good and what is not. In a novel, Alyosha and Zocima played such a character.

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