

# [Critical school](https://assignbuster.com/critical-school/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Literature](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/)

Full & Submitted The Art of Defamiliarization in Tolstoy’s Kholstomer Defamiliarization, also known as ostranenie – meaning “ making strange” is an artistic technique first introduced in 1917 by Victor Shklovsky of the Russian Formalist literary critics. This technique is used to illustrate a familiar world or concept using familiar words from the point of view of another (the writer or the artist) in order to force the reader to perceive or to think about the familiar world or concept in a different perspective and oftentimes in more complex terms (Bjørhovde 129). To Kharbe’s words: “ Its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create special perception of it, to create a vision of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it” (307). Such technique is effective in bringing about new consciousness without having to sound a propagandist. Perhaps, this is the reason why such technique had been Leo Tolstoy’s favorite device, as used in his Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse, which he wrote in 1863. This is a story wherein a horse narrates how different the life of a noblehorse is with his selfish owner.   
In Kholstomer (Strider in English), Tolstoy effectively used defamiliarization by using strange characters (horses), which acted their familiar world; but their familiar world was presented not from how we usually see them but from the way they see it. His use of a horse to narrate a story is in itself strange, because horses cannot talk, much less narrate. His use of horses to characterize themselves is also strange because horses, as they were characterized in the story, think, feel and understand – something that is unfamiliar; yet what they were doing in the story was what they do and what they experience almost every day.   
In this story Tolstoy used a horse to introduce an unfamiliar concept in the 17th century, which today has become a noble concept – That, animals just like human beings have the right to fair treatment. In the story, the horse narrator forces the reader to perceive the familiar relationship of man with horses (man’s best means of transportation during this time) from a totally different angle – That man’s common practice of maltreating horses, and even other animals, believing that such is the natural order of things, is wrong, because horses and other animals, just like men, needed care, compassion and understanding – a strange concept during this time.   
As such, through the story, horses seemingly appeal to man that as man’s best servant, horses should be treated fairly, just like how good deeds should be repaid. In effect, the more reason to treat servants fairly – during that time servants (mostly women) were treated no different from animals. More than this, by employing the animal theme as a literary device, Tolstoy was also able to attack the concept of private property: “… men strive in life not to do what they think right but to call as many things as possible \*their own\*… There are people who call land theirs, though they have never seen that land… people who call other people theirs… and the whole relationship of the owners to the owned is that they do them harm. (14) Essentially in his Kholstomer, Tolstoy argues for equality and fairness between and among men and between man and animals, and disagrees against violence and abuse. And that, what makes man higher than animals are his deeds and not his biological make-up.   
Works Cited   
Bjørhovde, Gerd. “ When Foreignness and Familiarity Become One.” The Art Of Brevity: Excursions In Short Fiction Theory And Analysis. Ed. Per Winther, Jakob Lothe, Hans H. Skei Columbia, South Carolina: University of Carolina Press, 2004. 128-137.   
Kharbe, A. S. English Language and Literary Criticism. New Delhi, India: Discovery Publishing House PVT, 2009.   
Tolstoy, Leo. Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse. The Long Riders Guild Academic Foundation. 2001-2012. 9 May 2012 .