



ANNA KARENINA

BY LEO TOLSTOY, ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY HELEN
EDMUNDSON

**This play script is approved by the UIL One Act Play contest and is on the long list of plays approved for production/performance by Texas High Schools.*

SYNOPSIS

Based on Leo Tolstoy's story of an adulterous affair between the wife of a St Petersburg bureaucrat and a Cavalry officer, this stage version pares the plot down to its essentials. It focuses on the contrasting experiences of Anna, the doomed heroine, and Konstantin Levin, the questing male conscience of the piece.

In the play, Anna and Levin are constantly present – maintaining an abstract dialogue with each other as their parallel stories unfold. Events of the plot are juxtaposed and intertwined.

Anna, tormented by jealousy, ostracized by society and forcibly estranged from her son, is unable to live and love freely and eventually ends in despair.

Levin, troubled by his own desires - eventually learns to accept the realities of life, helped by the example of his practical wife.

This play is on the UIL One Act Play Approved list of long plays

CONCEPT

This production needs: fearless performers who are in it for the long haul and willing to try and fail and try again as this production is symbolic, expressionistic.

Ensemble

The piece demands real “teamwork” and imagination from the ensemble; actors, some taking more than one role will need to play various “types” in terms of personality, status, and age. They will also “create” features of the setting – eg the railway stations, the racecourse, even the train which is ever present and ever threatening.

Several characters will embrace as it is a play about love. There will be some dancing and singing involved. The dancing is limited – one ball scene with a waltz and one sequence which might better be described as “stylized movement”. The ensemble will also sing a folk song – which is intended to sound rough and ready.

Theatrical Scenic – Costume – Movement

We’re aiming for abstract and “suggestive” sets, props, and costumes – using a simple theatrical – rather than period furniture and realistic walls: Lights, Sound, Theatrical effects: This will be developed in rehearsal process.

The focus should be on the actors’ performances, and especially on the intense dialogue between Anna and Levin, so we’ll be avoiding “historical” clutter – though we’re hoping to find ingenious ways of alluding to the late 19th century setting of the novel. This will require an imaginative and inventive ensemble.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HELEN EDMUNDSON

Helen Edmundson is a British playwright and screenwriter who has worked extensively with the touring theatre company, Shared Experience. Born in Liverpool, she studied drama at the University of Manchester. She began her acting career in the north-west of England, before turning her hand to writing. Her first play, *Flying*, was produced at the National Theatre Studio in 1990. Subsequent plays include *The Clearing* (Bush Theatre, 1993), *Mother Teresa is Dead* (Royal Court, 2006), *Mary Shelley* (Shared Experience UK Tour, 2012), and *The Heresy of Love* (RSC, 2012).

She has also adapted several novels for the stage. Her adaptations include *Thérèse Raquin* (Theatre Royal Bath, 2014), *Mephisto*, (Altonaer Theatre, Hamburg, 2013), *Swallows and Amazons* (Bristol Old Vic, 2010), *Life is a Dream* (Donmar Warehouse, 2009), *Coram Boy* (National Theatre, 2005), and *Anna Karenina* (Shared Experience, 1992). In 2019, she adapted Andrea Levy's *Small Island* for the National Theatre.

Helen Edmundson has also written extensively for television and radio, including a feature-length adaptation of *An Inspector Calls*, which won the 2016 Broadcasting Press Guild Award for Best Single Drama and was nominated for two British Academy Television Craft Awards