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Through the French Lens: Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and the Clash of Two Cultures

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**THROUGH THE FRENCH LENS: TOLSTOY'S *ANNA KARENINA* AND THE
CLASH OF TWO CULTURES**

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In his portraiture of Russian aristocratic society in his novel *Anna Karenina* (1877), Leo Tolstoy illustrates the world of two cultures, Russian and French. While Russian remains the language of intimacy and emotions, French represents the ritualized life of ignorance and falsehood. This linguistic anomaly differentiated aristocrats from the peasants, the “Russians”, and presented a dual identity for Russians of the upper crust, in particular reshaping the concept of sincerity of Tolstoy’s characters. Using French and Russian as separate readers, I intend to distinguish between where the languages and cultures intersect, interface, or contradict in order to form a moral comparison for human behavior of the novels’ protagonists.