

My Antonia Book Notes

My Antonia by Willa Cather

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

[My Antonia Book Notes.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Author/Context.....4](#)

[Plot Summary.....6](#)

[Major Characters.....9](#)

[Objects/Places.....14](#)

[Quotes.....16](#)

[Topic Tracking: Antonia.....20](#)

[Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality.....22](#)

[Topic Tracking: Isolationism.....24](#)

[Topic Tracking: Landscape.....26](#)

[Introduction.....28](#)

[Book 1: The Shimerdas, Chapters 1 and 2.....29](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 3 and 4.....30](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 5 and 6.....31](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 7 and 8.....32](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 9 and 10.....34](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 11 and 12.....36](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 13 and 14.....37](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 15 and 16.....39](#)

[Book 1, Chapters 17 - 19.....40](#)

[Book 2: The Hired Girls, Chapters 1 and 2.....42](#)

[Book 2, Chapters 3 - 5.....43](#)

[Book 2, Chapters 6 and 7.....45](#)

[Book 2, Chapters 8 and 9.....46](#)



[Book 2, Chapters 10 and 11.....47](#)

[Book 2, Chapters 12 and 13.....48](#)

[Book 2, Chapter 14 and 15.....50](#)

[Book 3: Lena Lingard, Chapters 1 and 2.....52](#)

[Book 3, Chapters 3 and 4.....53](#)

[Book 4: The Pioneer Woman's Story, Chapters 1 and 2.....54](#)

[Book 4, Chapters 3 and 4.....55](#)

[Book 5: Cuzak's Boys, Chapters 1 - 3.....57](#)



Author/Context

Willa Cather was born in 1873 to William and Virginia Cather. At the age of nine, she moved to the Nebraska prairie, near the Divide, where her grandfather had already moved some years before. Later, her family moved to the town of Red Cloud. When she first saw the wide Nebraska prairie, Cather hated it. She felt as if there was no end to the land, and that there was no sign of human activity anywhere. However, she enjoyed listening to stories told by her immigrant neighbors on the Divide. Many were Swedish, Bohemian, German, and Danish, among others. These stories would provide Cather material for her best novels.

Cather also enjoyed learning and school very much; she was one of the top students in her graduating class at Red Cloud High School. That she graduated at all was considered a big accomplishment at that time, for the number of kids who actually attended school was very small. It was even more rare for a woman to graduate high school. Cather had always been different from her family members and peers ever since she was a child. She favored men's activities and even planned to go into medicine once at college. Cather even called herself "William Cather, Jr.," disliked dresses and skirts, and showed strong abilities in learning, reading, and writing early on in her academic career.

When she graduated from high school, she was enthusiastic and eager about starting her college career. Fellow classmates at college recalled that she carried herself with a masculine air, both in voice and body. Although she rejected the traditional women's sphere, Cather did form strong relationships with several women that lasted her entire life: Dorothy Canfield, Louise Pound, Edith Lewis, and Isabelle McClung. Cather's friendship with McClung was one of the closest and fondest relationships of her life; they took frequent trips together and shared many similar interests in the arts and in traveling.

In 1906, Cather was hired as an editor for the hugely popular and successful *McClure's Magazine*. She soon tired of reading and writing journalism, choosing to focus on writing fiction, which she loved. She had already published her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge* (1911). Cather's trip to Arizona in 1912 inspired and motivated her to quit journalism and to write fiction novels. The desert landscape had a profound effect on Cather. She would later describe her feelings for the desert in her novels *The Song of the Lark* (1915) and *The Professor's House* (1925).

Cather's world shattered when her dear friend Isabelle McClung married Jan Hambourg, a short time after Isabelle's father, Mr. McClung's died. Cather was saddened and depressed after Isabelle left to marry Jan. She turned to her novels for comfort. She wrote a number of novels, including *O Pioneers!* (1913), *My Antonia* (1918), *One of Ours* (1922), and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). Cather became famous through the success of her novels, especially *One of Ours*, which won her a Pulitzer Prize. She disliked the publicity that came along with fame, and valued her privacy, avoiding public appearances. Cather died in 1947, and was buried in Jaffrey, New



Hampshire, a place where she vacationed in her later years. Willa Cather, through her novels, left a legacy of the unbreakable and irrepressible spirit of the American pioneers.

Bibliography

Cather, Willa. *My Antonia*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Lee, Hermione. *Willa Cather: Double Lives*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1990.

O'Brien, Sharon. *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Woodress, James. *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.



Plot Summary

An orphaned ten-year-old Jim Burden is sent to live with his grandparents on their farm in the country, just outside the town of Black Hawk, Nebraska. He is not the only one to discover and explore the country; early on, he meets the immigrant Bohemian family, the Shimerdas, who have come to Nebraska at the same time as Jim's arrival. They are the Burdens' nearest neighbors. Antonia Shimerda, the elder daughter, becomes his good friend and pupil. Antonia's father, Mr. Shimerda, who Jim finds to be intelligent and genteel, asks Jim to teach Antonia English. The Shimerdas have a hard life on the farm; they are very poor and live in a shabby dugout, but Antonia remains dedicated and determined to improve the conditions of her life and her family's.

From the first time Jim meets Mr. Shimerda, Jim feels his sadness and exhaustion. Antonia's father takes his family's poverty hard, and he is very homesick for his native land. It was Mrs. Shimerda, Antonia's mother, who had made the family immigrate to America so that Ambrosch, the Shimerdas' eldest son, would have the chance to become a wealthy farmer. Despite the Shimerdas' hard conditions, Antonia finds much comfort and happiness in the land. Together, Jim and Antonia, who is a few years older than Jim, explore the prairie - the animals, the river, and the hunting-grounds. During one of their many adventures, Jim kills a snake. Antonia suddenly views Jim with more respect, admiring his strength and courage. After the loss of Mr. Shimerda's only friends, Pavel and Peter, Mr. Shimerda becomes even more heartbroken and unhappy. At Christmas time, Mr. Shimerda comes to visit the Burden household to thank them for their kindness to his family. Jim notices how happy Mr. Shimerda is to feel the warmth and friendship in the Burden kitchen.

The New Year begins with terrible news - Mr. Shimerda has killed himself. Jim knows that Mr. Shimerda had been terribly unhappy with his life and felt homesick for his life in Bohemia. Mr. Shimerda felt he could never be happy again, and tired of putting up with the constant demands and complaints of his wife and eldest son, Ambrosch. Mr. Shimerda is buried in a corner of the Shimerda property. One day, this corner will be the intersection of two roads. After Mr. Shimerda's death, Antonia must work in the fields, helping to herd the cattle and tend the crops. She does not have time for English lessons anymore. When Jim asks her to go to school with him, she scoffs and replies that she must work like a man. Jim, knowing Antonia, can see how much Antonia wants to learn, but she does not have the freedom to take time off from farming. Jim witnesses with a sinking heart how Antonia is beginning to lose the genteel ways her father had taught her. Seeing Antonia working in the fields and doing heavy, male farm work does not seem proper.

The Burdens move to the town of Black Hawk. Jim's grandparents are getting too old for farm work and they want to become involved with town activities. The Burden's next-door neighbors, the Harlings, become good friends with the Burden household. Mrs. Burden, Jim's grandmother, suggests that Mrs. Harling hire Antonia as their cook; the Burdens fear that Antonia might be completely under her brother Ambrosch's harsh control and want her in town, where she will no longer have to do heavy farm work.



Once the Harlings hire Antonia, Jim is happy to see her and spend time with her again. The Harlings and Antonia get along very well, until the Vannis' dancing tent comes to town. The young men of Black Hawk are attracted to the "hired girls" - immigrant girls (like Antonia and Lena) who have come to town to earn money for their family in the country and are viewed as free and promiscuous. Social custom separates the hired girls from the young men at all times, except for the evenings when the dancing tent is open. At the dancing tent, the hired girls and the young men all come together. Mr. Harling forbids Antonia to go to the dances because, to Black Hawk citizens, she now has developed a reputation as free and easy. Antonia, unwilling to give up her love for dancing or her freedom, quits. She goes to work for Wick Cutter, the shady and evil Black Hawk money-lender, and his wife. Jim graduates from high school with top honors. He and some of the hired girls: Antonia, Lena Lingard, and Tiny Soderball, all whom Jim had known from the country, have a picnic on the prairie. They are moved by the spectacular sight of a plough against the sunset in the horizon. One night, a troubled Antonia visits the Burdens. She suspects that Wick Cutter might have a scheme in mind, for he and his wife have gone off on a trip and he made specific instructions for Antonia to stay in the house alone at all times. Mrs. Burden suggests that Jim switch places with Antonia to watch the Cutters' house. On the third night that Jim stays at the Cutters', Wick Cutter comes home, apparently to rape Antonia, but finds Jim instead, and beats him up. Jim escapes, seriously bruised. He blames much of his ordeal on Antonia, and vows to stay away from her from now on.

Jim enters the University of Lincoln as the protege of Gaston Cleric, his Latin advisor. While in Lincoln, Jim is visited by Lena Lingard, who has also come to Lincoln. She has her own dressmaking shop. The two of them begin a relationship. Cleric finds out about Jim's relationship and warns Jim against Lena, for he can see that Jim is becoming distracted by Lena's attention. Also, Cleric wants Jim to follow him to Harvard, where he has accepted a job offer, and finish his education there. Jim accepts the offer. He finishes college and visits his grandparents' on his summer vacation before he enters Harvard Law School.

When Jim returns home, he learns what happened to Antonia while he had been in school. She had been engaged to Larry Donovan, but he deserted her and their unborn baby. Jim learns that she is living on her family's farm. He is disappointed in Antonia, and saddened that she let herself get taken in by Donovan. He is even more disgusted at the Black Hawk citizens who now view Antonia with pity and Lena with regard because she is successful in her job. Jim learns that the town looks down upon Tiny Soderball as well; however, this disdain is most likely jealousy. Tiny has become even more wealthy than Lena. She had been deeded a claim out West and invested her money wisely. When Jim wants to know more of Larry's desertion, Widow Steavens tells him the whole story. Mrs. Steavens also recalls the night Antonia gave birth to her baby. She remembers the happiness Antonia felt at that moment, and regrets that Antonia might never have a chance to be married and raise a real family. Jim goes to visit the Shimerdas' the next day. A tearful, happy Antonia greets him, and Jim is struck by Antonia's appearance. Antonia looks tired, but Jim sees that her will is extremely strong and confident. He and Antonia talk about the events that have occurred in the past few months. Antonia tells him that she is happy that she is back in the country; she knows



she could never be happy living in a city. Jim admits that he thinks of her more than he thinks of anybody else, and that she will always be an important part of his life. Antonia agrees; she believes that Jim and her father will always be a part of her.

Jim promises to see her again, but twenty years pass before he is convinced by Lena Lingard to visit her. By now, Antonia is married to Anton Cuzak, Anton Jelinek's cousin, and has a number of children. His visit to the Cuzaks' farm turns out to be one of the happiest times of his life. He sees that Antonia is truly, genuinely happy, and she and her family are thriving on their farm. She is a rough-looking woman, big and worn, but extremely vibrant and lively. Jim is touched by how loving and caring everyone in the family are toward each other. Jim gets along well with two of Antonia's sons, Leo and Ambrosch, as he does with Antonia's husband, Anton Cuzak. Antonia and her eldest son, Rudolph, tell Jim the story of Wick Cutter's murder. Jim is extremely proud of Antonia and the way she has turned her life around to fit her vision of success and destiny. When he leaves the Cuzaks' farm to return to Black Hawk, Jim feels sad at the number of changes in town, but the sight of the unmarked, pure prairie erases his sadness. Highways and roads have destroyed the country, but Jim can still see the very first roads deeply imbedded in the land, the roads he and Antonia walked and ran upon as children. Jim knows that he can never forget the past between him and Antonia, and looks forward to the future that lies before them.



Major Characters

Jim Burden: The narrator of the novel. He and Antonia are childhood friends. After Jim leaves Black Hawk to attend college in Lincoln, and later Boston, he loses contact with Antonia. Jim starts a relationship with Lena (another girl from his childhood) in Lincoln, but leaves for Boston to pursue his studies at Harvard, knowing that Lena distracts him from his academic life. Jim returns one summer and hears news of Antonia. Initially, he is disappointed in her for getting jilted by her fiance and having her baby out of wedlock. He pays her a long-overdue visit and they reminisce about their childhood days together. Twenty years pass before Jim visits her again. Antonia lives a happy life with a large brood of ten or eleven children, a loving husband, and a large farm. Jim ends up in a loveless, passionless marriage with no children and a job in law. The novel begins with Jim's story of his adolescence.

Antonia Shimerda: The immigrant Bohemian girl who comes to America with her family. Despite the many hardships she must face, Antonia remains dedicated to her family and to improving their life. She is trusting and fiercely loyal to her family and friends. She knows what she wants in life and is determined to reach her goals of success. Antonia's greatest loss is the death of her father, Mr. Shimerda. She knows she will never forget all that he has taught her about him and the traditions of their native Bohemia. When Antonia arrives in town to work for the Harlings, she and the Harlings have a major dispute over her promiscuous dancing. Mr. Harling forbids Antonia to attend the dances, and threatens to fire her. Antonia immediately chooses freedom over employment and quits. The attempted rape of Antonia by Wick Cutter leads to the estrangement of Jim and Antonia's friendship. Later, Antonia, now pregnant, is deserted at the altar by her fiance, Larry Donovan. Bearing a child out of wedlock and raising it alone is shameful according to Black Hawk standards, but Antonia is able to rise above the humiliation. She meets and marries Anton Cuzak. She and Cuzak have ten or eleven children together, and own a large farm. Antonia rules the household with a gentle, loving hand. She loves her life on the country and is dedicated to the land.

Mrs. Burden: Jim's paternal grandmother, who Jim describes as a woman of energy and liveliness. She is very kind to the Shimerdas when they first arrive and she is the one who convinces Mrs. Harling to hire Antonia, in an effort to get her away from heavy farm work. Later, Mrs. Burden is disappointed in Jim when she learns that he has sneaked out of the house to attend dances.

Mr. Burden: Jim's paternal grandfather, who is dignified and quiet. He is strong and respected; even Mrs. Shimerda and Ambrosch agree to his peaceful terms when Jake gets into a fight with Ambrosch. Mr. Burden is made a deacon of the Black Hawk church when the Burdens move to town.

Mrs. Shimerda: The nosy, complaining, and rude mother of Ambrosch, Antonia, Yulka, and Marek and wife of Mr. Shimerda. It is Mrs. Shimerda who makes her family move to America to give Ambrosch the chance to become a wealthy farmer.



Ambrosch Shimerda: The Shimerdas' eldest son. He is exactly like his mother, boastful and indifferent. Despite his stiff and cruel exterior, Ambrosch does have a kind heart, especially when his family is concerned. When Antonia goes to marry Donovan, Ambrosch gives her the money he had been saving for her.

Mr. Shimerda: The father of Ambrosch, Antonia, Yulka, and Marek, and wife of Mrs. Shimerda. He is a genteel, intelligent man, who loved his life in Bohemia and is heartbroken and heartsick with his new life in America. He can never adjust to the hard life on the farm; from the first time Jim meets Mr. Shimerda, he sees the sadness and exhaustion in Mr. Shimerda's face. Mr. Shimerda feels alone in the world, despite his love for his daughter, Antonia. He especially finds content and happiness in the Burdens' kitchen during Christmas. Mr. Shimerda finally shoots himself because he cannot be happy in his new world. After his death, Jim finds himself thinking about how disappointed and ashamed Mr. Shimerda would be if he were to see Antonia losing the genteel ways he has taught her. His grave lies between the intersection of two roads.

Russian Peter: Mr. Shimerda's friends. Peter and Pavel are Russian, and Mr. Shimerda talks with them about their countries. Peter is a jolly man, ready to entertain Antonia and Jim, and very caring toward his friends and cow.

Russian Pavel: Pavel is a thin, frail man, the opposite of Peter. He is skeptical of people and quick to suspect others. Pavel has severe coughs and nightmares of the incident that forced him and Peter out of Russia. Pavel's death saddens Mr. Shimerda greatly.

Wick Cutter: The shady and evil Black Hawk money-lender. Russian Peter owes him and has to sell his beloved cow and home to pay Cutter off. Later, Antonia goes to work for the Cutters when she leaves the Harlings'. Cutter plans to rape Antonia, but finds Jim in her place instead. Cutter shoots his wife and then himself.

Widow Steavens: The elderly and kind woman who rents the Burdens' farm when they move to Black Hawk. She tells Jim the story of Antonia's jilted marriage and the birth of her baby.

Mrs. Harling: The mother of the family who are the Burdens' neighbors in Black Hawk. Jim describes Mrs. Harling as a warm, giving, happy woman, who truly dotes on her family and friends. She expects those she cares about to trust her judgement and not to disappoint her. Jim sees many similar qualities between Mrs. Harling and Antonia. Mrs. Harling is upset and disappointed when Antonia leaves the Harlings'. Later, she and Antonia reconcile.

Nina Harling: The youngest Harling child. Antonia loves Nina so much, that she later names one of her daughters after her. Nina brings her mother and Antonia back together after their dispute over Antonia's dancing. She is known for her big eyes.

Mr. Harling: The domineering and controlling father of Frances, Charley, Julia, Sally, and Nina, and husband to Mrs. Harling. He is the one to give Antonia the ultimatum - either to stop going to the dances or leave the Harlings'.



Lena Lingard: The Norwegian immigrant girl who has grown up in the country with Jim and Antonia. As another hired girl, she comes to Black Hawk as well, to earn money working for the local dressmaker. Lena is a sexual figure in this novel. Jim remarks on Lena's sleepy eyes, her attractive features and figure, and her seductive charms. Lena has somewhat of a reputation in Black Hawk, as the girl who made crazy Ole Benson lose his mind. She starts a relationship with Jim when they are both in Lincoln, knowing full well that she will not commit to him. Jim has dreams of Lena running across a field to him, carrying a corn-knife and kissing him. Later, Lena earns the respect of Black Hawk when she becomes wealthy from her dressmaking.

The Vannis: An Italian family, the Vannis bring the dancing tent to Black Hawk. They abide by town council rules when running the dancing tent. The Vannis remark on Antonia's extraordinary talent for dancing.

Blind d'Arnault: The black, blind musician who plays the piano. Jim is fascinated by the way Blind d'Arnault can feel the music he is playing, even with his disability.

Larry Donovan: The young train conductor who fancies Antonia. He and Antonia are engaged to be married. He asks her to come to Denver, where he is on a run, so that they can be married there. However, he deserts her, leaving her unmarried and pregnant. Antonia bears the shame and humiliation proudly, returning to town unmarried, planning to raise her child alone.

Gaston Cleric: Jim's advisor at the University. He is an intelligent, brilliant young man, who shares many of Jim's thoughts and opinions, but is more worldly, having traveled to Italy and other places. He hears about Jim's involvement with Lena and warns Jim against her. Later, Cleric accepts a job at Harvard and advises Jim to follow him to Harvard to finish his education there.

Anton Cuzak: Antonia's husband. He is a frail, small man, but warm and kind. He and Antonia do not seem to have a passionate relationship, but share in an affectionate, caring marriage. Cuzak has had many jobs before settling in the Nebraska country with Antonia. Jim remarks that Cuzak is the 'instrument' of Antonia's art and destiny. He and Antonia have many children together and own a large, prosperous farm. Jim likes Cuzak and enjoys his company.

Leo Cuzak: One of Antonia's sons. He is described as the child whom Antonia loves the best, because he is very similar to her as a child. Leo plays Mr. Shimerda's fiddle, preserving and continuing the tradition of music in the family.

Minor Characters

Jake Marpole: Jim's immediate family's hired hand who accompanies young Jim to Nebraska, where he also works for the Burdens, Jim's grandparents. Jake has a soft heart. Both he and Otto Fuchs are role models for Jim. He admires them for their absolute dedication to their work.



Otto Fuchs: The Burdens' hired hand, an Austrian immigrant whom a young Jim declares looks like someone out of his book, Jesse James. Otto is a good worker; Jim admires him for being such a focused, responsible worker for his grandparents. Otto convinces Jake to go West with him when the Burdens move to town and leave their farm.

Yulka Shimerda: The Shimerdas' younger daughter. She is a sweet child. She loves to explore the country with Antonia and Jim. When Antonia has to help Ambrosch with tending the fields, Jim gives Yulka English lessons. Later, when Antonia starts working for the Harlings, she sends money and things for Yulka.

Marek Shimerda: The Shimerdas' crazy son.

Peter Krajiek: The Shimerdas buy their farm from Krajiek. He is their translator when they first arrive; he can therefore tell them anything not be caught.

Widow Steavens: The elderly and kind woman who rents the Burdens' farm when they move to Black Hawk. She tells Jim the story of Antonia's jilted marriage and the birth of her baby.

Anton Jelinek: The Christian Bohemian who helps the Shimerdas during Mr. Shimerda's death and burial. He lives in town and later owns a saloon. His cousin, Anton Cuzak, marries Antonia in the end.

Frances Harling: The Harlings' eldest child, already a woman when the Burdens move to town. She helps run her father's business when he is away. Frances knows everything and everyone in Black Hawk.

Charley, Sally, and Julia Harling: The Harling children who are close to Jim's age when he moves to Black Hawk. He and the Harlings are good friends.

Tiny Soderball: The immigrant girl who comes to town as a hired girl along with Antonia and Lena. Jim remembers Tiny as always tripping along to her job. Tiny later becomes wealthy herself, after she is deeded a claim out West and invests the money.

The Gardeners: The Gardeners run The Boys' Home, the best hotel in the area. Blind d'Arnault stays here when he comes to town for a concert. Tiny works for them as does Antonia, after she leaves the Cutters'.

Mrs. Cutter: The wife of the mad and evil Wick Cutter. She and Cutter actually enjoy insulting and fighting with each other. Cutter deliberately puts her on a train to Kansas City so that he can have time to rape Antonia. Cutter shoots his wife and then himself in the end.

Chris Lingard: One of Lena's younger brothers. Jim sees Lena and Chris shopping together one day in Black Hawk. When Chris visits, Lena is reminded of the farm life she left behind to work in town.



Ole Benson: A crazy Norwegian man who likes watching Lena herd cattle. The townspeople are in shock over Ole's public declaration of his lust for Lena, when he takes her home after church.

Crazy Mary: Ole Benson's crazy wife. She chases Lena around the prairie with a corn-knife when she learns that her husband lusts after her.

Anna: One of the hired girls. She goes with Antonia, Lena, Tiny, and Jim on a picnic where they see the image of the plough against the horizon.

Colonel Raleigh: Lena's landlord in Lincoln. He fancies her.

Mr. Ordinsky: Lena's neighbor in Lincoln. He is also Lena's suitor. He has proposed to her often, but Lena always turns him down.



Objects/Places

Country/Prairie: The country where the novel begins. Jim moves to the country, where his grandparents live. He meets Antonia and her family, who are their nearest neighbors. Jim and Antonia share many adventures discovering and exploring the prairie.

Snake: The snake Jim kills is old and lazy. Jim is lucky that he was armed at the moment Antonia spots the snake behind Jim. Jim's killing of the snake wins Antonia's approval and respect.

Mrs. Burden's garden: The garden where Jim finds happiness and contentment when he first arrives in the country. The different varieties of plants and vegetables surround Jim in a happy haven.

Grasshopper: The insect in which Antonia and Mr. Shimerda seem to find something special. Antonia takes care of a grasshopper, placing it in her hair to show her father. Mr. Shimerda finds its music enchanting.

Kitchen: The Burdens' kitchen is where Jim believes the warmth and soul of the household is located. Later, he believes that Mr. Shimerda's soul lies in the kitchen on its way back to Bohemia.

Mr. Shimerda's fiddle: The fiddle that Mr. Shimerda brings with him to America from Bohemia but has never played. He had been too unhappy to play music. Later, Antonia's son, Leo, plays Mr. Shimerda's fiddle.

The Shimerdas' mushrooms: Mrs. Shimerda gives the Burdens a package of tiny brown shavings that they cannot identify and throw away. The Shimerdas use them in their cooking, and they treasure these unidentifiable objects. Jim later learns that the shavings are dried mushrooms.

Mr. Shimerda's gun: Mr. Shimerda promises Jim that he will give him his gun. Later, Mr. Shimerda kills himself with his gun.

Plough: The heavy farm machinery that threshes and cuts the wheat crops. Antonia uses this machine when Jim sees her helping her brother tend their fields. The image of the plough against the sunset has a profound effect on Jim, Antonia, Lena, and Tiny during their picnic.

Black Hawk: The town where the Burdens move and the hired girls come to work. The town is symbolic of typical small-town values of the time. There is a defined social order and hierarchy.

Corn-knife: The knife used to cut shucks of corn and associated with Lena Lingard. Crazy Mary chases Lena with this after Ole Benson publicly declares his desire for



Lena. Also, Jim dreams that Lena comes up to him, carrying the corn-knife and kissing him.

Dancing Tent: The Vannis' dancing tent disrupts the Black Hawk social order. The young men all want to dance with the hired girls. The Harlings fire Antonia when she will not stop attending the dances.

School: Jim attends the local elementary and high schools, but the hired girls do not. Antonia regrets not going to school because she had wanted to be educated like her father. Later, Jim attends the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and then transfers to Harvard.

Lena's dressmaking shop: Lena has become a very successful dressmaker. The citizens of Black Hawk now regard her with respect, rather than contempt and disapproval, as they had before.

Theater: Jim and Lena attend the theater many times in Lincoln. Jim is glad to take Lena instead of the Lincoln girls who are more concerned with the social scene than the play itself.

Cuzaks' farm: By the close of the novel, Antonia has a large and prosperous farm, with several orchards, a barn, a windmill, a fruit cellar, crops, and a garden.

Mr. Shimerda's grave: Mrs. Shimerda and Ambrosch want Mr. Shimerda to be buried on a corner of their property, which will ultimately be the intersection between two roads. The exact spot does become an intersection, but the roads bend to form a little island where the grave is. Jim believes that there is not a driver that passes by the grave who does not wish well to Mr. Shimerda's soul.



Quotes

Quote 1: When talking about their childhood, the two men frequently mention their old friend, Antonia Shimerda, "who seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood". Introduction, pg. 2

Quote 2: The well-preserved garden, full of flowers and vegetables, assures him that humans, when they die, "become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge". Book 1, Chapter 2, pg. 14

Quote 3: Antonia, the eldest daughter, is a striking-looking girl, with eyes that were "big and warm and full of light, like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood". Book 1, Chapter 3, pg. 17

Quote 4: Jim finds that Mr. Shimerda is "calm" and "skilled", but also he realizes with a sinking heart, that Mr. Shimerda "looked like ashes", as if "something from which all the warmth and light had died out". Book 1, Chapter 3, pg. 18

Quote 5: The country that Jim first found anxious now "seemed to [him] the roads to freedom". Book 1, Chapter 4, pg. 21

Quote 6: Jim realizes that Antonia is "most comfortable only when we were tucked down on the baked earth, in the full blaze of the sun". Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 27

Quote 7: He and Antonia believe that the "miles of copper-red grass were drenched in sunlight that was stronger and fiercer than at any other time of day", for "that hour always had the exultation of victory, of triumphant ending, like a hero's death". Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 28

Quote 8: The "old man's smile...was so full of sadness, of pity for things, that [Jim] never afterward forgot it". Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 29

Quote 9: Jim remarks proudly that afterwards Antonia "began to treat [him] more like an equal and to defer to [him] in other things than reading lessons". Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 30

Quote 10: Antonia says to Jim, "I never know you was so brave...You is just like big mans; you wait for him lift his head and then you go for him. Ain't you feel scared a bit? Now we take that snake home and show everybody. Nobody ain't seen in this kawn-tree so big snake like you kill". Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 32.

Quote 11: Jim remarks that his life now "centred around warmth and food", and that "next to getting warm and keeping warm, dinner and supper were the most interesting things". Book 1, Chapter 9, pg. 44



Quote 12: It would be years before Jim learns that the little brown shavings the Shimerdas "had brought so far and treasured so jealously" are dried mushrooms. Book 1, Chapter 10, pg. 52

Quote 13: Jim realizes with sadness that the hard life on the farm and the "crowded clutter of their cave" have obliterated all the "peace and order...from the earth" and "in the old world he had left so far behind". Book 1, Chapter 12, pg. 57

Quote 14: Antonia speaks feelingly about her father and how sad she knows he is: "My papa sad for the old country. He not look good. He never make music any more. At home he play violin all the time; for weddings and for dance. Here never. When I beg him for play, he shake his head no. Some days he take his violin out of his box and make with his fingers on the strings, like this, but never he make the music". Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 59

Quote 15: "[My papa] not want to come, nev-er!...But my mama, she want Ambrosch for to be rich, with many cattle". Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 59

Quote 16: Mrs. Burden decides to go see the Shimerdas anyway, to make sure the children are all right, especially Antonia: "The oldest one was his darling, and was like a right hand to him. He might have thought of her. He's left her alone in a hard world". Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 64

Quote 17: Jim realizes that "if Mr. Shimerda's soul were lingering about in this world at all, it would be here, in our house, which had been more to his liking than any other in the neighborhood". Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 66

Quote 18: "His exhausted spirit, so tired of cold and crowding and the struggle with the ever-falling snow" must be in the Burdens' home. Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 66

Quote 19: Jim "never came upon the place without emotion", and he is sure that "never a tired driver passed the wooden cross...without wishing well to the sleeper". Book 1, Chapter 16, pg. 77

Quote 20: Jim laments how "she had come to [them] as a child, and now she was a tall, strong young girl". Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 79

Quote 21: Antonia boasts, "I can work like mans now...I can work as much as [Ambrosch]. School is all right for little boys. I can help make this land one good farm". Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 80

Quote 22: As he says with uneasiness, Antonia is "too proud of her own strength". Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 81

Quote 23: Antonia replies practically, "Things will be easy for you. But they will be hard for us". Book 1, Chapter 19, pg. 90



Quote 24: Lena has changed her appearance, for she looks "demure and pretty", and Jim is surprised to see her "brushed and smoothed and dressed like a town girl, smiling at us with perfect composure". Book 2, Chapter 4, pg. 103

Quote 25: "I'm done with the farm", Lena tells them. Book 2, Chapter 4, pg.

Quote 26: "I get awful homesick for them, all the same", Lena says. Book 2, Chapter 5, pg. 111

Quote 27: To Jim, Antonia and Mrs. Harling have a "hearty joviality, a relish of life, not overdiligent, but very invigorating". Book 2, Chapter 6, pg. 116

Quote 28: The country girls are considered a "menace to the social order" in Black Hawk. Book 2, Chapter 9, pg. 129

Quote 29: "Now, don't you go and be a fool like some of these town boys. You're not going to sit around here and whittle store-boxes and tell stories all your life. You are going away to school and make something of yourself. I'm just awful proud of you". Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 143

Quote 30: Lena running to sit by him, saying, "Now they are all gone, and I can kiss you as much as I like". Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 144

Quote 31: Antonia says, "I ain't never forgot my own country". Book 2, Chapter 14, pg. 151

Quote 32: Jim "could never lose [himself] for so long among impersonal things". Book 3, Chapter 1, pg. 168

Quote 33: Lena has been "so quietly conventionalized by city clothes". Book 3, Chapter 2, pg. 170

Quote 34: Tiny is "satisfied with her success, but not elated". Book 4, Chapter 1, pg. 194

Quote 35: Antonia knew in her heart that she is meant to live the country: "I'm a country girl...and I doubt if I'll be able to manage so well for him in a city. I was counting on keeping chickens, and maybe a cow". Book 4, Chapter 3, pg. 199

Quote 36: Antonia knows her destiny; she says, "[E]verybody's put into this world for something, and I know what I've got to do". Book 4, Chapter 4, pg. 206

Quote 37: Jim admits that he did not want to see Antonia "aged and broken". Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 211

Quote 38: Antonia stands before him, older and more tired-looking, but "in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished". Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 214



Quote 39: Jim realizes that Antonia "has not lost the fire of life. Her skin, so brown and hardened, had not that look of flabbiness, as if the sap beneath it had been secretly drawn away". Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 216

Quote 40: "Antonia lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. I had not been mistaken. She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things. She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things of her heart came out in her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions...It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races".
Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 226-227



Topic Tracking: Antonia

Antonia 1: Antonia Shimerda's life is hard and difficult; her family is poor and the Shimerdas are disheartened. She must sacrifice her own happiness to help her family survive the tough seasons on the wild Nebraska prairie. Antonia willingly devotes her life to helping her family's farm succeed. She remains optimistic about her future despite many hardships. Antonia knows that she is destined for a life greater than the dreary life she leads.

Antonia 2: Antonia indeed has had a hard life, but the harsh conditions have made her experience more than other girls her age. She has left a country where her family had been respected and successful, for a new place unfamiliar to her. The Shimerdas have had a streak of bad luck from the moment they arrived in America. Antonia continues to hold on to the Bohemian traditions she learned from her father. Her family brings tokens of their country, but her other family members are quick to integrate modern American ways with their own.

Antonia 3: Antonia speaks about how much her father yearns for their native country. She sees the change in her father, and attributes the change to the move. Antonia knows that her father is homesick for the old country. It was her mother who wanted to move, so that Ambrosch could have the chance to become a wealthy farmer. Mrs. Shimerda cares only for her eldest son. Antonia's worries about her father foreshadow Mr. Shimerda's death. His death signifies the difference between the two of them. Antonia and her father are both homesick, but only Antonia is able to survive the hard prairie conditions. Mr. Shimerda, the gifted, intelligent man that he is, cannot live to fulfill his destiny.

Antonia 4: Mrs. Burden, with regret, says that Mr. Shimerda has left Antonia alone and alienated in a hard world with his suicide. Antonia must face yet another terrible heartache and struggle, but Mrs. Burden's words ring true. Antonia does not love the rest of her family the way she loved her father. Her life is full of disappointment and frustration.

Antonia 5: Jim asks Antonia to attend school with him, but Antonia cannot make the time to go. She has to help thresh wheat crops for her family. Antonia boasts that she can handle men's work. Jim notices that Antonia still wishes she could go to school, because she wants to be as intelligent and educated as her father had been. Antonia must sacrifice the opportunity to become educated to help her family's farm survive.

Antonia 6: Antonia is realistic in her vision of the future. Her ultimate dream of owning her own farm and raising a family is simple. Antonia enjoys the country immensely. Her love and understanding of the country connects her to the land and foreshadows her future. She admits "things will be hard" for her family, but her own happiness is not completely sacrificed.



Antonia 7: Mrs. Burden, Frances, and Mrs. Harling all agree that Antonia can be taught new ways, and recapture the old values her father had instilled in her. Mrs. Burden repeats that Antonia would have turned out differently, had her father lived. Their words show how much Antonia has given up for her family. Later, an adult Antonia admits to herself that her time spent with the Harlings' taught her ways that reformed her from the tough-talking, impetuous girl she once was.

Antonia 8: Jim and the hired girls' picnic remind all of them of the hard lives they spent on the farm. Memories of Mr. Shimerda and their country make Antonia cry, wishing that someday, in some way, she can be with her father and their country. Antonia has never forgotten her roots, despite the many changes in her life brought on by her family's move to America.

Antonia 9: Antonia vows not to settle for anything until she reaches her goal of motherhood. She holds on to her vision of success, unlike Tiny Soderball, who is satisfied with her wealth but not truly happy. Antonia knows that she will achieve her destiny, and she will not let anything get in her way. The hard life she has led has taught her to never give up what she wants most.

Antonia 10: Antonia does not feel ashamed or humiliated by the baby she bore out of wedlock; she is proud of her baby. As Mrs. Steavens tells Jim, Antonia has loved that baby since the moment it was born. Antonia's baby signifies that she is on her way to achieving her destiny. Antonia's pride in her baby shows that she is not like other town girls; her dignity is not class-dependent or socially driven.

Antonia 11: Antonia knows that she was meant for a life in the country. Her dream may not be as public as Tiny's or Lena's, but her dream is simple, and enough to satisfy her needs and wants. All Antonia desires is a warm and happy farm in the country with animals and people. She knows in her heart what she wants, from her admittance that she is a "country girl," and she is determined to get it. Antonia is unlike rich and snobby town girls who crave money and status.

Antonia 12: Again, Antonia knows her destiny: she knows that she was borne into this world to create a healthy, happy community where all can learn from each other and be proud of each other. The birth of her baby shows that she is heading for her destiny.

Antonia 13: The Cuzaks' farm is everything Antonia dreamed of and wanted. Antonia glows with happiness and content as her children, animals, and trees surround her. She always felt she belonged to the country.

Antonia 14: Jim fully recognizes Antonia's destiny: to raise a healthy brood of children and farm successful orchards. In creating a farm that is home to many healthy and happy children and plentiful orchards and crops, Antonia provides a secure community for the future.



Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality

Gender and Sexuality 1: The incident when Jim kills the snake signifies the beginning of sexual and gender tensions of Jim and Antonia's relationship. Jim had been feeling annoyed with Antonia for putting on airs as an older and wiser figure. When he kills the snake, Antonia looks at Jim in a whole new way - as a "big mans". She regards him with a new level of respect.

Gender and Sexuality 2: After Antonia's father's death, Jim notices that Antonia is losing all the genteel ways her father taught her. Antonia somewhat enters the men's sphere by doing heavy farm work. She boasts that she can work just as much as her older brother, Ambrosch. Jim and his grandmother are concerned about Antonia, for she seems not to care much about anything other than farming and ploughing.

Gender and Sexuality 3: Jim is annoyed and dismayed at Antonia's manners. She is losing everything her father taught her, and Jim is ashamed of how disappointed her father would have been if he had lived. That Antonia is becoming as surly and skeptical as Ambrosch gives Jim more reason to dislike the change in Antonia. The more she loses her femininity, the more Jim finds her appalling.

Gender and Sexuality 4: Mrs. Burden saves Antonia from another season of heavy farm work of ploughing and threshing by getting her a job at the Harlings', the Burdens' neighbors. Jim's grandmother had been concerned about Antonia's manners just as much as Jim had been. She asks the Harlings to try Antonia as their hired help, for she does not want Antonia to be exposed any longer to the brutal, difficult life of farming, which is normally done by men.

Gender and Sexuality 5: Lena Lingard is the epitome of sexuality and sensuality in the novel. She is described as having "sleepy eyes" that seem to hypnotize men. Lena does not care about consequences when it comes to her view toward relationships. She is also very carefree and open about her sensuality. Men cannot help being entranced by her beauty.

Gender and Sexuality 6: Jim scorns the Black Hawk view toward society. The young men in town are all attracted to the hired girls, but they will not date them. Respect is not given to town men who date hired girls instead of the girls who are daughters of leading Black Hawk citizens. However, the dancing tent brings everyone together, both sexes and both social classes.

Gender and Sexuality 7: Mr. Harling fires Antonia for having a reputation of being free and easy with the young men of town. Jim has noticed that many men find Antonia attractive and pretty. Her stay in town has made her aware of social propriety. Antonia no longer acts like a man, to Jim's relief, but she is growing up and entering the world of sexuality, to his chagrin.



Gender and Sexuality 8: The dances make Antonia very aware of social activities and image. She cares a great deal about her appearance; this is the girl who threshed her family's crops with a heavy plough and wore her father's boots and jacket. Jim, too, becomes involved with Black Hawk social activities as well: he attends every dance and thinks Antonia the most beautiful out of all the hired girls. He is growing up as well.

Gender and Sexuality 9: Jim has a very erotic dream of Lena Lingard running up to him across a field and carrying a corn-knife. He imagines Lena kissing him passionately many times. No matter how much he wants to have this dream of Antonia, he never does. In a way, he protects his vision of Antonia's innocence by not dreaming of her in the sexual way he does with Lena.

Gender and Sexuality 10: Wick Cutter's scheme to rape Antonia backfires, with Jim in Antonia's bed instead. Jim is humiliated and angered at Antonia for allowing Wick's brutal attack to happen to him. Cutter's scheme to rape Antonia is the climactic moment of the theme of sexuality in this novel, for it shows that Antonia and Jim are indeed adults now, living in a world with adult situations.

Gender and Sexuality 11: Jim forms a relationship with Lena in Lincoln. Their relationship becomes serious when Cleric feels he has to intervene by asking Jim to follow him East. As Lena is very sensual and passionate in her feelings, Jim cannot help but be swept away by Lena's words and kisses. Jim and Lena both admit that they have had feelings for the other since childhood.

Gender and Sexuality 12: Antonia's disgrace leads her back to her family's farm, where Frances Harling fears that she will fall under Mrs. Shimerda's and Ambrosch's hard, harsh ways again. As long as Antonia lives with her mother and brother, she will again lose the nice ways she learned, Jim implies. The heavy farm work they will make her do will undoubtedly bring out the harshness in her.

Gender and Sexuality 13: Mrs. Steavens tells Jim the story of Antonia's desertion. Antonia's baby, not surprisingly, returns Antonia to her warm, motherly and caring side. Antonia always had the mother instinct in her--the birth of her baby solidifies Antonia's femininity.

Gender and Sexuality 14: Cuzak and Antonia have a good, friendly, affectionate relationship, but it is not a passionate and intense relationship that brings about destruction and turmoil in those around them. Their relationship is clearly not sexual or sensual. Jim admits that Cuzak is merely an instrument in Antonia's destiny, but he is a good man who truly appreciates and loves Antonia for her generous and understanding heart.



Topic Tracking: Isolationism

Isolationism 1: An adult Jim Burden travels often on business. He feels lonely and isolated, as he has a rather unhappy and loveless marriage and a busy job that takes him away on business often. Jim's life is very different from his friend Antonia Shimerda Cuzak's life; Antonia is surrounded by her large family and farm.

Isolationism 2: When Jim first arrives in the tiny but flat and wide prairie town of Black Hawk, he is not the only one to feel as if he is a mere figure in a large world. The Shimerdas, the Bohemian family who has immigrated to America, also feel even more confused and scared in a world and place so different from the country they had left behind.

Isolationism 3: Jim is terribly frightened by the wideness of the land. He feels as if he is the only person for miles and miles around. The absence of human life on the prairie discombobulates him. Jim feels isolated from those around him as he looks around his surroundings on the prairie.

Isolationism 4: Like Mr. Shimerda, Russian Peter and Pavel also feel isolated. The three of them miss their native countries and they ache to return there. Their friendship cannot bring them back to the rich language and culture of the countries they had left behind.

Isolationism 5: Ever since the very first moment Jim met Mr. Shimerda, he sees that the old man aches to return to Bohemia. Antonia's father is sad about the hard life he and his family must endure. Jim recognizes the sadness and the heartache in Mr. Shimerda, who is the only one of the Shimerdas to feel as such. Mr. Shimerda feels alone in this new world.

Isolationism 6: After Pavel dies and Peter moves away, Mr. Shimerda feels even more isolated. He takes the loss of his two friends hard. Without the Russians to talk to, he feels as if he has no one to turn to. His Antonia may be the light of his life, but not even Antonia can bring him back to Bohemia.

Isolationism 7: The Shimerdas' hard life on the farm disheartens them all, but their poverty especially affects Mr. Shimerda. When Antonia's father visits the Burdens' at Christmas, Jim notices that he had not seen Mr. Shimerda look so content and happy until he was sitting with them in the kitchen. Jim feels sad that Mr. Shimerda does not get the peace and happiness he so rightfully deserves.

Isolationism 8: Antonia tells Jim that she knows her father is terribly sad and alone in the new country. It was her mother who made the family move, so that Ambrosch could become wealthy. Mr. Shimerda feels so isolated in America that he cannot bring himself to play music on his beloved fiddle, which he had loved playing in Bohemia.



Isolationism 9: Mr. Shimerda's death hits Antonia hard. Mrs. Burden says in dismay and sadness, "He's left her alone in a hard world". Now that her father has killed himself, Antonia herself must feel alone. With her complaining and surly mother and brother, Antonia has no one in the family whom she loved as much as she loved her father.

Isolationism 10: Jim feels that Mr. Shimerda's spirit is probably with the Burdens in their kitchen, as it is the only place where he ever felt happy and content. He knows that homesickness is what killed Mr. Shimerda; the old man simply could not live in isolation any longer.

Isolationism 11: Mr. Shimerda is buried on a corner of the Shimerdas' property, where one day two roads will cross in an intersection. Later, an adult Jim finds that there are two roads now crossing each other, but Mr. Shimerda's grave is made into a little island between the two roads. Even in death, the poor old man is isolated from others.

Isolationism 12: While in town, Lena helps her younger brother, Chris, shop for presents for the family. As she and Jim watch Chris leave town for the Lingards' farm in the country, Lena cries. She misses her family and the life she left behind for the chance to work in town. As with the other hired girls, Lena finds that she feels alone in town, with no family to turn to or no farm to live on.

Isolationism 13: A beaming and glowing Antonia tells Jim that she can never be lonely on the farm she lovingly created with the help of her husband and children. Now that she has achieved her dream, she finds that she has everything she wanted and more: a large farm, animals, a barn, orchards and gardens.

Isolationism 14: Antonia's husband, Cuzak, admits that he feared isolation and loneliness on the farm, but Antonia's caring, understanding heart made him happier than he could have ever thought he would be. Their brood of children and their large farm have made Cuzak a blessed man, a man who could never be lonely as long as he has Antonia by his side.

Topic Tracking: Landscape

Landscape 1: The introduction of the novel foreshadows the connection between the characters and the country. As adults, Jim Burden and Antonia Shimerda are reminded of their childhood days when walking about the prairie. Jim immediately connects Antonia to the land. He recounts his life with Antonia in a portfolio.

Landscape 2: The sight of the wide, rolling prairie frightens Jim. He feels as if he can be suffocated in the land. Having only known the land of his parents' home in Virginia, he cannot imagine the expansive land stretching out for miles and miles with no sign of people or activity.

Landscape 3: Although the prairie scares him at first, Jim soon enjoys playing in it after he spends time in his grandmother's garden. The garden, to Jim, is a haven; he experiences feelings of happiness and content in the garden that he had never felt before. For the first time, Jim feels connected to the land which he had abhorred so much. The well-preserved garden, full of flowers and vegetables, assures him that humans, when they die, become a part of something whole - Nature.

Landscape 4: Jim enjoys spending time in the country even more when he is with Antonia. The two children spend glorious autumn afternoons playing together. The autumn season affects the land, giving it a warmer, a more loving feel to the land, and the two of them especially enjoy playing in the late afternoon sun. Jim and Antonia feel the same way about the country as the season and sun do.

Landscape 5: The summer season lifts Antonia's depressed and saddened spirits. After the death of her father last winter, Antonia is cheered by the land reworking itself for the threshing of crops and harvesting. Antonia truly is connected to the land; she is never happier than when she is outside, in the country. Jim and his grandmother are happy to see a joyful and blissful Antonia enjoying herself on the prairie after the hard winter she had just survived.

Landscape 6: Jim spends an afternoon with the hired girls, picnicking on the countryside. Antonia sees plants that were grown in her native Bohemia by the river bank, and starts to cry, remembering her old life and country. Jim and Antonia remember how much her father missed his old country, and Antonia declares that she can never forget her native country or her father, no matter how much she changes. Antonia and her father are connected to the land, which they loved so much.

Landscape 7: The image of the plough against the sunset is magnificent to Jim and the hired girls. They are totally mesmerized and spellbound by the sight of the plough in the field nearby. What the plough represents touches each one of them, even Jim, but most of all the hired girls. A plough is the old, hand-held machine farm families used for threshing wheat. Looking at the plough against the horizon brings back memories of the lives spent on their families' farms, which they had all left to work in town.



Landscape 8: Jim visits the Widow Steavens, who rents the Burdens' farm when they move to town, to learn the story of Antonia's desertion and the birth of her baby. The country which had been wild and undisturbed is now an orderly, healthy, and vital community. What used to be small dugouts are wooden houses, the wild fields have turned into fields plentiful with crops, and farms and orchards permeate the land. Jim is genuinely happy about the change in the land since he left. To him, an orderly, healthy land means happy people.

Landscape 9: Jim visits Antonia after he talks with Widow Steavens. They are both reminded of their childhood by the landscape that has become so familiar to them, the land in which they played as children. The trees, the river, the shucks of wheat, and the fields immediately bring their state of minds to a time of friendship and innocence. The land will always remind them of each other, no matter how far apart they are.

Landscape 10: Antonia and Cuzak's farm is large and plentiful. The farm boasts several orchards, a barn, a windmill, and a fruit cellar. Continuing the idea that a healthy, orderly farm means a healthy, happy community, Antonia shows the goodness of her family and her farm. Jim is extremely proud of Antonia for overcoming public shame and humiliation to fulfill her destiny of motherhood. She lovingly cares for the land as if it is her child. In turn, the land rewards her with all that it can. Antonia knows she can never be as happy anywhere outside of the country.

Landscape 11: Jim returns to Black Hawk. The familiar landscape again draws him to remember his childhood spent on the prairie. He knows that the land will always connect him to Antonia, even though they lead different lives and are miles apart. The land had brought him and Antonia together, and it will continue to bring them together in the future.

Introduction

The narrator of the novel, Jim Burden, along with an unnamed friend, reminisce on the train ride back to Nebraska, where they had both grown up. As the two talk, they pass by the country of wide fields and wooden houses and are reminded of their childhood spent in the tiny prairie town of Black Hawk. When talking about their childhood, the two men frequently mention their old friend, Antonia Shimerda, "who seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood." Introduction, pg. 2. Stuck in a passionless, loveless marriage, Jim does not seem to care for his wife much; he certainly does not admire and revere her as much as he does Antonia. Jim recounts the life he shared with Antonia, and the life Antonia carved for herself, in the book he calls, *My Antonia*.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 1

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 1



Book 1: The Shimerdas, Chapters 1 and 2

Ten-year-old Jim Burden is sent to live with his grandparents in rural Nebraska when his parents die. Jim and Jake Marpole, one of the Burdens' farm-hands, travel to Nebraska on the railroad together from the hills of Virginia. An immigrant family, the Shimerdas, is traveling to their destination as well. Like most other immigrants, the Shimerdas left their native Bohemia and moved to America for a better life. Like Jim, the Shimerdas have no one to turn to in a new, frightening place.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 2

Jim sees the Shimerdas for the first time when they all get off at the Black Hawk station. Otto Fuchs, Jim's grandfather's hired hand, picks them up at the station and drives them home to the farm. Otto looks like a cowboy from Jim's book, *Jesse James*. Jim experiences feelings of anxiety and trepidation when he sees the wide prairie for the first time. The expanse of land frightens him; he sees nothing but land for miles and miles around.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 2

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 3

Jim's grandparents make Jim and Jake feel welcome in their home. Mrs. Burden, Jim's grandmother, is a strong, energetic woman, intelligent and lively. In contrast, Jim's grandfather, Mr. Burden, is quiet and dignified. Jim finds happiness and contentment in his grandmother's garden. For the first time, Jim feels connected to the land he had abhorred so much. The well-preserved garden, full of flowers and vegetables, assures him that humans, when they die, "become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge." Book 1, Chapter 2, pg. 14.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 3

Book 1, Chapters 3 and 4

Jim and his family meet their new Bohemian neighbors. The Shimerdas bought their farm and homestead from a fellow Bohemian, Peter Krajiek. Knowing the family could not speak English, he was able to manipulate his prices and rates without the Shimerdas' knowing and without a chance of getting caught. The Shimerdas live in a dugout, which is much too small for their large family. The Burdens meet Mrs. Shimerda, a woman of extreme temperament, susceptible to jealousy and anger. Ambrosch, the eldest son, looks arrogant and like he has a bad temper. Antonia, the eldest daughter, is a striking-looking girl, with eyes that were "big and warm and full of light, like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood." Book 1, Chapter 3, pg. 17. Yulka, the younger daughter, is a good child, and Marek is the crazy son. Jim immediately likes Mr. Shimerda, who is a contrast to his family; he is as genteel and dignified as Mrs. Shimerda and Ambrosch are not. Jim finds that Mr. Shimerda is "calm" and "skilled," but also realizes with a sinking heart, that Mr. Shimerda "looked like ashes," as if "something from which all the warmth and light had died out." Book 1, Chapter 3, pg. 18. When Mr. Shimerda asks Jim to teach Antonia English, Jim swears he will never forget the fervent look on Mr. Shimerda's face.

As the autumn season goes on, Antonia and Jim's relationship turns into friendship. The country that Jim first found anxious now "seemed to [him] the roads to freedom." Book 1, Chapter 4, pg. 21. Jim becomes intimately acquainted with the country: the animals, the vegetation, the weather, and the conditions. Antonia shares Jim's feelings about the country and his experiences of learning about the country. Antonia is eager and enthusiastic about learning to speak English. Jim and his grandparents are saddened for the Shimerdas, whose life on the farm is undoubtedly difficult.

Despite the many hardships, Antonia remains cheerful and optimistic. She knows that she and her family must sacrifice much of their happiness to make do in a new, unfamiliar country.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 1



Book 1, Chapters 5 and 6

Antonia and her father are thrilled by the discovery of their Russian neighbors, Peter and Pavel. Mr. Shimerda has been lonely since he and his family immigrated to America, and his newfound friends brighten his spirits. Jim learns from Antonia that the Russian language is very similar to Bohemian, and that Mr. Shimerda, Peter, and Pavel reminisce about the Old World they had left behind. While Pavel is quick to pin suspicion on people, Peter is friendly and courteous. Yet they have been friends for so long, they work well together despite their differences.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 4

When Jim visits Peter with Antonia, he has a pleasant time spending time with him. The farm Peter and Pavel own is a good size for them. Both men work hard in tending their crops and caring for the animals, especially their cow. Peter is eager to entertain and feed the children; he gives them fresh, ripe watermelons to eat and plays his harmonica for them. Jim overhears Peter sigh that he and Pavel were forced to leave their beloved country.

Jim realizes that Antonia is "most comfortable only when we were tucked down on the baked earth, in the full blaze of the sun." Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 27 The two of them spend hours playing and running around the prairie after Jim finishes teaching Antonia her lesson. Antonia often tells Jim stories about her life back in Bohemia. During one of these times, Antonia finds and treasures a frail grasshopper and lays it on top of her hair to keep it safe. Jim can never get used to the glorious autumn afternoons he spends with Antonia in the country. He and Antonia believe that the "miles of copper-red grass were drenched in sunlight that was stronger and fiercer than at any other time of day," for "that hour always had the exultation of victory, of triumphant ending, like a hero's death." Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 28.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 4

For all of the glorious afternoons Jim spends, even he cannot miss the sadness and the sorrow in Mr. Shimerda's eyes. Jim notes that Antonia is the only one of the family who could cheer him up. When Antonia shows her father the grasshopper, he is also enchanted by the insect. Mr. Shimerda promises Jim that he will give him his beloved gun. Jim long ago recognized the Shimerdas' willingness to give things away to others for the future, but the "old man's smile...was so full of sadness, of pity for things, that [Jim] never afterward forgot it." Book 1, Chapter 6, pg. 29.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 5



Book 1, Chapters 7 and 8

Antonia, older and having seen more of the world than Jim, naturally acts superior to him. Jim resents this; he is a boy, and Antonia is a girl. However, after they share an adventure, Antonia's view of him changes; Jim remarks proudly that afterwards Antonia, "began to treat [him] more like an equal and to defer to [him] in other things than reading lessons." Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 30.

On their way back from borrowing a spade, Jim and Antonia decide to check out some prairie dog holes in the ground. Suddenly, Antonia screams. A large snake is lying on the ground behind Jim. He runs up to the snake and strikes its head with the spade. The snake coils its body around Jim's feet until it dies. Jim feels somewhat sickened by what happened, but Antonia feels awe and respect for him. Antonia says to Jim, "I never know you was so brave...You is just like big mans; you wait for him lift his head and then you go for him. Ain't you feel scared a bit? Now we take that snake home and show everybody. Nobody ain't seen in this kawn-tree so big snake like you kill." Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 32. Jim feels important and proud, but he comes to realize that he had been lucky in his encounter with the snake. He was armed, the snake was old and lazy, and Antonia was there to witness the event. After Jim hangs the dead snake on the fence, the admiration of the neighbors enhances Antonia's adulation.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 1

Bad luck befalls the Russians, Pavel and Peter. Peter owes a large amount of money to a creditor, Wick Cutter. Pavel is ill from exhaustion after having strained himself lifting lumber. One evening, when Mr. Shimerda and Antonia are visiting the Burdens, Peter comes to fetch Mr. Shimerda. Pavel had been asking to speak to him and Antonia. Jim goes along with the Shimerdas to Peter and Pavel's home.

When they arrive, Pavel becomes agitated from the howling of the coyotes out in the distance. Between coughs and heavy breathing, Pavel tells Mr. Shimerda a story about wolves before coughing up blood. After Pavel's coughs subside, Mr. Shimerda leads his daughter and Jim to Peter's team of horses to take them home. Antonia translates Pavel's story to Jim during the ride home.

When Peter and Pavel were young men back in Russia, they were asked to be groomsmen for a friend. They also drove the sledge that carried the newlywed couple. During that winter season, there were many wolves in the area. Hundreds of wolves set out after the six sledges of the wedding party. Peter and Pavel, the drivers of the first sledge, did not notice that the sledges in the rear had fallen to the wolves already. The wolves overturned the sledge directly behind the newlyweds in the lead sledge, and were now gaining on them. Pavel told the groom they needed to lighten the weight of their sledge, and pointed to the bride. The groom refused to give his new bride to the wolves; Pavel and the groom began to fight. He knocked the groom off the sledge and threw his bride off after him. Peter and Pavel quickly made it to their village safely, but the village people realized what had happened when they saw that the bride and groom



were not with them. Peter and Pavel were ostracized from their village and forced to move. Whenever they moved in Russia, their reputation as the men who fed a bride to the wolves banned them from the town. With nowhere to go, they immigrated to America. From city to city, things were rough for the two of them.

Pavel dies a few days after he told the story to Mr. Shimerda. Peter then sells all of his belongings, and leaves to earn a living on the railroad construction camps. Peter looked terribly sad and devastated after selling his cow; he sat by himself in the empty log cabin, eating the watermelon that was left. Mr. Shimerda takes the loss of his two friends harder than anyone else. He would sit in the Russians' empty house by himself, thinking.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 6



Book 1, Chapters 9 and 10

Winter has arrived to the prairie. Jim is now able to drive around the country by himself in a little sledge Otto Fuchs made for him. He takes Yulka and Antonia out for a ride one winter afternoon. Jim and Antonia remark how different familiar landmarks look when covered with snow. The Shimerda girls beg Jim to take them as far as Peter and Pavel's home; they are glad to escape their little, ugly home and their mother's constant scolding.

Jim enjoys staying at home in the winter; he especially likes being in the kitchen. Jim remarks that his life now, "centered around warmth and food", and that "next to getting warm and keeping warm, dinner and supper were the most interesting things." Book 1, Chapter 9, pg. 44. Jim is fond of everyone in the Burden household. He learns that over the years, Otto Fuchs had been a cowboy, a stage-driver, a bartender, and a miner before settling as Mr. Burden's hired hand. Jake, whom Jim also admires, cannot read or write well and he has a violent temper, but has a huge heart. Jim admires both of them, despite their differences, for being able to work under such hard and arduous conditions.

It is painfully obvious to the Burden household that the Shimerdas are taking the winter very hard. The Burdens feel sorry for the Shimerdas, especially Antonia, whom they have come to regard highly. The Shimerdas have one coat to share among them. Jake recalls the previous day, when Ambrosch had showed him the prairie dogs he had shot and asked if they were good enough to eat. The family hopes that Krajiek will not go as far as to allow the Shimerdas to eat prairie dogs. Mrs. Burden makes up her mind to visit the Shimerdas the next day, to see how they are coping with the winter days.

Mrs. Shimerda immediately starts to cry when she sees them, gesturing about the poor condition of their home and pointing to their poor supply of food. Mrs. Burden brings them a basket of food and Antonia helps her unpack. Antonia begs them to excuse her mother, who is still crying. Mr. Shimerda then shows them a little hole in the back of the living area that is Antonia and Yulka's bed. Mrs. Burden is horrified by where the girls must sleep.

Mr. Shimerda talks to Mrs. Burden as Antonia translates. Mr. Shimerda wants the Burdens to know that back home in Bohemia, he and his family were highly respected. He made a good wage as a trader. When they left Bohemia, they had more than a thousand dollars, but the poor exchange rate in New York, and the cost of railroad transportation to Nebraska, added up to more than they had expected. By the time they had paid Krajiek for his farm, his machinery, and his animals, they had very little money left. Mr. Shimerda explains that once they get through winter, things should be fine. They will buy farm animals in the spring, and both Ambrosch and Antonia are willing to work in the fields.

Before the Burdens leave, Mrs. Shimerda gives them a package of little brown shavings that they cannot identify, but that the Shimerdas use daily in their cooking. Mrs. Burden



refuses to eat them and throws them away. Jim manages to eat a tiny shaving. It would be years before Jim learns that the little brown shavings the Shimerdas "had brought so far and treasured so jealously" are dried mushrooms. Book 1, Chapter 10, pg. 52.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 2



Book 1, Chapters 11 and 12

The Christmas season is wonderful for Jim and the rest of the Burden household. Even though the amount of snowfall has prevented Jake from going into town to do the Burdens' Christmas shopping, everyone is content and happy. Mr. Burden thanks the Lord for providing them with food and a comfortable home and prays for those whose life in the country is a constant struggle. At breakfast, Jake informs everyone how much the Shimerdas enjoyed their presents.

Later that day, Mr. Shimerda comes by to thank them for the presents and for Mrs. Burden's kindness to his family. As Mr. Shimerda absorbs the scene around him from his place on a chair, Jim sadly realizes the hard life the Shimerdas lead. Life on the farm and the "crowded clutter of their cave" obliterated all the "peace and order...from the earth," and "the old world he had left so far behind." Book 1, Chapter 12, pg. 57. The warmth, the food, the drink, and the people contribute to the deep sense of pleasure and content Mr. Shimerda feels. After Jim lights the candles on the tree, Mr. Shimerda kneels before it, his body forming the letter "S". When Mr. Shimerda leaves, he shakes hands with everyone.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 7



Book 1, Chapters 13 and 14

The New Year brings warmer weather. One morning, Antonia and her mother visit the Burden household. Mrs. Shimerda is immediately envious and jealous of the Burdens' home. Jim finds Antonia's mother to be such a nuisance, that he ignores Antonia's worries about her father. Antonia speaks with feeling about her father; she knows how sad he is, because he does not play his beloved fiddle: "My papa sad for the old country. He not look good. He never make music any more. At home he play violin all the time; for weddings and for dance. Here never. When I beg him for play, he shake his head no. Some days he take his violin out of his box and make with his fingers on the strings, like this, but never he make the music." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 59. Jim replies that maybe they should not have come to America if he had not wanted to move. At Jim's stinging remark, Antonia bursts out that it was her mother who made the family move: "[My papa] not want to come, nev-er!...But my mama, she want Ambrosch for to be rich, with many cattle." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 59.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 3

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 8

To Mrs. Shimerda and Antonia, Ambrosch, the eldest son, is considered the most important person in their family.

One morning, Jim wakes to noises in the kitchen. Instinctively knowing that something has happened, he goes to the kitchen, and sees Jake and Otto looking exhausted and Ambrosch Shimerda sleeping on a bench. Mr. Burden informs Jim gravely that Mr. Shimerda is dead. Jim learns the story of Mr. Shimerda's death from Otto and Jake. Mr. Shimerda had shaved and washed himself after dinner, dressed in clean clothes, kissed Antonia and Yulka, and said he was going to hunt rabbits. He then went to the barn and shot himself. No one heard the shot and Ambrosch did not discover his father's body in the barn until the next day.

Mr. Burden tells his wife that there is nothing they can do until the coroner is able to come, which will not happen for a few days because of the blizzard. Mrs. Burden decides to go see the Shimerdas anyway, to make sure the children are all right, especially Antonia: "The oldest one was his darling, and was like a right hand to him. He might have thought of her. He's left her alone in a hard world." Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 64.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 9

Topic Tracking: Antonia 4

Alone in the house for the first time, Jim realizes, "if Mr. Shimerda's soul were lingering about in this world at all, it would be here, in our house, which had been more to his liking than any other in the neighborhood." Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 66. He knows that it was homesickness, a longing for his past life in Bohemia, that led to Mr. Shimerda's

death. "His exhausted spirit, so tired of cold and crowding and the struggle with the ever-falling snow" must be in the Burdens' home. Book 1, Chapter 14, pg. 66.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 10



Book 1, Chapters 15 and 16

Otto Fuchs returns from town with news: the coroner will be at the Shimerdas later that day, but the priest is out of town. Otto brings with him a young Bohemian man named Anton Jelinek, a devout Christian. The Burdens approve of Jelinek's frankness and beliefs in Christianity.

As the only cabinet-maker in the neighborhood, Otto makes Mr. Shimerda's coffin. Jim notes the ease and the pleasure Otto takes in cabinet-making. Neighbors visit the Burden household to discuss Mr. Shimerda's death and his burial. They wonder where Mr. Shimerda will be laid; the Catholic graveyard would not accept a suicide, and the Norwegian graveyard refuses to take him. Jim learns that Mrs. Shimerda and Ambrosch want Mr. Shimerda to be buried on a corner of their own land, a place where Mr. Burden had explained to them time and time again, that some day in the future, two roads would cross exactly on that spot.

On the fifth day after his death, Mr. Shimerda is buried on the corner of the Shimerdas' property. The Burden household arrives at the Shimerdas' for the burial ceremony. Jim sees how much Mr. Shimerda's death is hurting Antonia. The Shimerdas perform the burial rites. They all touch his bandaged head except Yulka, who is frightened by the sight of her father; his body is wrapped in a black shawl and his head is bandaged. They nail the lid of the coffin and lower the coffin into the plot of ground. Mrs. Shimerda asks Mr. Burden to say prayers.

Years later, Mr. Burden's prediction comes true. The land has changed throughout the years, but Mr. Shimerda's grave is still there, with an unmarked wooden cross and a wire fence surrounding it. The grave is like a little island, Jim sees, because the two roads crossing each other curve to avoid the grave. Jim "never came upon the place without emotion," and he is sure that "never a tired driver passed the wooden cross...without wishing well to the sleeper." Book 1, Chapter 16, pg. 77.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 11



Book 1, Chapters 17 - 19

Spring comes to Nebraska, and Jim finds the warm weather inviting and invigorating. The Shimerdas have a new log house, built in front of their old cave. Now Jim teaches Yulka English, for Antonia is too busy helping her family. Antonia helps Ambrosch in the fields. Jim laments how "she had come to [them] as a child, and now she was a tall, strong young girl." Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 79. Antonia wears her father's old boots and hat over her outgrown dress and rolls up her sleeves all day long, threshing crops with a plough. She does not have time to go to school when Jim asks her (on behalf of his grandmother). Antonia boasts, "I can work like mans now...I can work as much as [Ambrosch]. School is all right for little boys. I can help make this land one good farm." Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 80. Despite her boasting, Jim sees that Antonia misses learning English. She had enjoyed learning so much because she wanted to be like her father, who had been educated in school. Antonia begs him to tell her all about school and not to forget about her father. Jim promises that he will never forget about Mr. Shimerda.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 2

Topic Tracking: Antonia 5

Mrs. Shimerda actually enjoys watching Ambrosch and Antonia argue over who worked more that day. Jim is annoyed at the Shimerda family, but he is especially dismayed with Antonia's manners. As he says with uneasiness, Antonia is "too proud of her own strength." Book 1, Chapter 17, pg. 81. All Antonia talks or thinks about is ploughing, farming, and tending the fields. Jim feels that Antonia has lost the genteel manners and behavior that Mr. Shimerda had taught her, and is ashamed for her.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 3

Jim and Antonia's relationship becomes more estranged later that spring. Antonia's indifference to school and her admiration for Ambrosch, add to the tension in their relationship. Jake and Jim go to the Shimerdas' to ask Ambrosch for a horse-collar that he had borrowed from Mr. Burden, but had not returned. Ambrosch and Jake fight; Antonia takes her brother's side and Jim takes Jake's. Mr. Burden does not participate in the feud. In fact, he negotiates a reconciliation between the two households. He takes Jim to the Shimerdas' to ask Antonia to help Mrs. Burden in the kitchen, and to enlist Ambrosch for cutting and threshing his crops. The Shimerdas are glad to make peace with Jim and Jake again.

The summer season means threshing and cutting wheat. All in the Burden household are kept busy: the men in the fields, Jim carrying water to them, Antonia and Mrs. Burden in the kitchen. Antonia walks to the garden every morning with Jim to pick the vegetables for dinner. Jim sees how happy Antonia is in the country. Antonia admits to herself how she prefers working outside to working in the house. During a thundershower one night, Jim and Antonia talk. Antonia regrets that her father missed the chance to see the summer in America and that he had to die in the bleakness of the winter. When Jim asks her why she must act like Ambrosch, and toil in the fields,



Antonia replies practically, "Things will be easy for you. But they will be hard for us."
Book 1, Chapter 19, pg. 90.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 5

Topic Tracking: Antonia 6



Book 2: The Hired Girls, Chapters 1 and 2

Three years have passed since Jim came to live with his grandparents. Now that Jim is thirteen, and ought to be attending school regularly, Jim's grandparents decide to move into town, Black Hawk. They rent their farm to Widow Steavens and her brother. Otto decides to return to the West to try his hand elsewhere; Jake follows him, despite the Burdens' pleas and worries. Jim is sad to see the two of them leave.

The Burdens adjust to Black Hawk easily. Mr. Burden is made a deacon of the church, Mrs. Burden is kept busy with church activities, and Jim finds himself getting caught up with the activities and attitude of the schoolboys. They continue to see their country neighbors. The Burdens' new home is a convenient place to stop, as it is situated on the way to or from town. They see their old neighbors, except for the Shimerdas. Through Mrs. Steavens, the widow who rents the Burdens' farm, Jim and his grandmother learn of the Shimerdas' news. Mrs. Steavens tells them that Ambrosch has hired Antonia out "like a man;" she goes from farm to farm, cutting, threshing, and binding wheat. In response to the news, Mrs. Burden decides she must save Antonia from another season of heavy ploughing (in the autumn) by getting her a place to work in town for their neighbors, the Harlings.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 4

The Harlings are Norwegian, and a farming family, like the Burdens. Mr. Harling works as a grain merchant and cattle-buyer; as a result of his job, he is often away from home, leaving Mrs. Harling in charge of the household. Mrs. Harling, as Jim describes, is full of energy and good spirits. She makes every chore seem interesting, instead of tedious.

Mrs. Burden asks the Harlings to try Antonia as their hired help when their Danish cook has to leave. Mrs. Harling and Frances, the eldest Harling child and an adult, go to the Shimerdas to see if Antonia is right for them. They are absolutely enchanted with Antonia, and they find Mrs. Shimerda's shenanigans to be amusing. Antonia is to start working for the Harlings next week. Jim's grandmother worries that with the hard life Antonia has had in the country, she may have forgotten her nice ways, but Mrs. Harling and Frances assure her that Antonia is not too old to learn new ways and that she is perfectly capable. Mrs. Burden agrees wholeheartedly with them, and laments how different Antonia would have been if her father had lived.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 7



Book 2, Chapters 3 - 5

Antonia arrives in Black Hawk to work for the Harlings. Mrs. Burden and Jim are thrilled to have Antonia near them again. Antonia's greatest fault is that she would often stop work to play with the children. Jim is jealous of Antonia's admiration for Charley Harling, the eldest son, and annoyed by her deep affection for Nina Harling, the youngest child. Antonia would do anything to please Charley and Nina. The Harling house is never quiet unless Mr. Harling is home. During the few times he is actually home, the children always have to go to bed early, and he commands all of Mrs. Harling's attention. Jim finds Mr. Harling to be domineering and controlling.

Jim is at the Harlings' when a visitor drops by. The visitor is Lena Lingard, whom Antonia and Jim had known from their life in the country. Lena, like Antonia, has come to Black Hawk to work. Lena has changed her appearance; she looks "demure and pretty," and Jim is surprised to see her "brushed and smoothed and dressed like a town girl, smiling at us with perfect composure." Book 2, Chapter 4, pg. 103. Mrs. Harling, Frances, and Jim talk with Lena, while Antonia chooses to stay in the kitchen. Lena tells them that she is going to work for Mrs. Thomas, the dressmaker, and that Tiny Soderball, another country girl that they had known, is also coming to town to work for the Gardeners, who own the hotel, The Boys' Home. Privately, Lena tells Antonia and Jim that she is happy to have left the country. "I'm done with the farm," Lena tells them. Book 2, Chapter 4, pg. 106. After she leaves, Frances asks Antonia why she had not been nicer to Lena. Antonia answers that Mrs. Harling might not have wanted Lena to visit, because Lena has somewhat of a bad reputation.

Lena Lingard had lived in the Norwegian settlement. She used to herd her father's cattle in the country between her father's settlement and the Shimerdas'. Jim recalls that before he had gotten to know her, he thought of her as "something wild" because her clothes were in tatters and she didn't seem to care about her appearance. He also remembered that Lena had been accused of making Ole Benson lose his mind. Ole Benson would watch Lena while she was herding her cattle, even though he was a married man. One day at church, Lena showed up wearing a dress the minister's wife had given her, looking as pretty and grown-up as a young woman. Ole then lifted Lena onto her horse after church. That scene itself was shocking, but what happened afterward was even more impossible to comprehend. Crazy Mary, Ole's wife who had escaped the Lincoln asylum, chased after Lena with her corn-knife for making eyes at her husband.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 5

Whenever Jim sees Lena in town, she would tell him what she had heard from Tiny Soderball, who works at The Boys' Home, the best hotel on the Burlington railroad line in the area. One afternoon the week before Christmas, Jim sees Lena with her younger brother, Chris, in town. Chris had come to town with the Lingards' neighbor to buy Christmas presents for the family. Lena advises him with his gift to their mother - handkerchiefs with "B" on them for the first initial of her name, Berthe. Lena and Jim



watch Chris leave for home in the wagon; Lena's eyes fill with tears as she watches him go. "I get awful homesick for them, all the same," Lena says. Book 2, Chapter 5, pg. 111.

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 12



Book 2, Chapters 6 and 7

Winter has come to Black Hawk. Jim thinks that the weather makes the town seem even more bleak and dreary. He no longer lingers outside in the darkening shade unless he is with a group of people, or he is standing outside the church lamps. The color of the lamps brightens the dismal coldness of the winter.

Saturday evenings at the Harlings' cheer Jim up and provide much-needed entertainment. Mrs. Harling plays the piano and Frances teaches the younger children how to dance. Antonia would make cookies or taffy for them and then tell stories about her life on the country or what she remembered of Bohemia. One story she tells them is about a tramp who killed himself by jumping into the Iversons' threshing machine. Jim thinks that Antonia and Mrs. Harling are alike in many ways: they are independent, they love children and good food, and they are quick to defend those in poorer situations. To Jim, Antonia and Mrs. Harling have a "hearty joviality, a relish of life, not overdiligent, but very invigorating." Book 2, Chapter 6, pg. 116. He could not imagine Antonia living with anyone else in Black Hawk other than the Harlings.

Blind d'Arnault's arrival at Black Hawk also lifts Jim's feelings of depression and monotony during the dismal winter months. Blind d'Arnault, a black pianist, gives a concert at the Opera House and stays at The Boys' Home. Jim sneaks into the parlor of The Boys' Home to glimpse Blind d'Arnault. He recognizes important men of Black Hawk society in the parlor waiting for Blind d'Arnault to play for them. Jim's first thought of Blind d'Arnault is that he has the happiest face he has ever seen since Virginia. Blind d'Arnault is genuinely happy and content making music, and he had been since he was a child. Several teachers all found him to be extraordinary on the piano - he had perfect pitch and an amazing memory. He never forgot any song or note he heard. Whenever he would play, he would block out everything around him and keep on playing.

The men hear sounds coming from the room next door. The sounds turn out to be Lena, Tiny, Antonia, and their friend Mary, all dancing with each other to Blind d'Arnault's music. They try to flee, but the men persuade them to stay and dance with them. Antonia seems scared at first to dance, but soon gets caught up in the energy. Jim remarks that the country girls' beauty and their fresh vigor attract the men.

Book 2, Chapters 8 and 9

That spring, Jim has never felt so happy and secure. He has a feeling that the summer will undoubtedly change his life, and Antonia's. They are growing up and becoming adults. He thinks the new dancing tent may have partly caused the change. The Vannis have brought the dancing tent to town to teach dance lessons and to provide a place for dances during the evenings. Every evening, they close the dances at ten o'clock, but on Saturdays the dances close at midnight. Jim, like other young men and women, is pleased that there is something to do on long summer nights. He never misses a Saturday night dance, and neither do the "hired girls" - Antonia, Lena, Tiny, and their friends. The young men from town would always dance with the hired girls.

Jim scorns the Black Hawk view toward society. All the young men are attracted to the country girls who have come to town to earn a living for their parents and younger siblings. Jim admires the hired girls, who have all led hard lives, coming to America from their old countries, working on the farms, often living in poverty. Yet the daughters of Black Hawk socialites are the ones who are viewed as refined. The hired girls have a certain freedom, vigor, and strength that is attractive, yet the elder generation of Black Hawk look on them with disdain. Jim condemns the town people for their narrow-mindedness toward the hired girls. He says with conviction that there is not a man in town who rivals the gentility, the intelligence, and the manners of Antonia's father. The country girls are considered a "menace to the social order" in Black Hawk Book 2, Chapter 9, pg. 129; their unusual beauty distracts the young men of Black Hawk from the women they are supposed to marry. The Vannis' dancing tent brings town boys and country girls together, but Jim wishes that one of the town boys would marry one of the country girls, so that all the hired girls would be better looked upon.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 6



Book 2, Chapters 10 and 11

Antonia quickly becomes known for her dancing soon after the Vannis' set up their dancing tent. Before the tent had come to town, she had been so involved with the Harlings' home and garden that she never strayed. Jim knows that Antonia's dancing will be a subject the Harlings will have to deal with. The young men always talk about Antonia as they always did about Lena or Tiny. Antonia could only think about dancing. She becomes irresponsible with her chores; she is always the first to dance and the last to leave after the dance closes, and she soon becomes popular with the young men of Black Hawk.

When Mr. Harling catches Antonia outside with a young man, he is so enraged that he threatens her with an ultimatum. He forbids her to go to the dances, threatening to fire her if she develops a reputation of being sexually free. Antonia declares that she will never give up her love for dancing, and that she will not sacrifice her freedom for Mr. Harling. Frances and Mrs. Harling attempt to persuade her to stay, but Antonia ignores them. When she says that she will work for Wick Cutter, the evil Black Hawk creditor, Mrs. Harling forbids her from entering the Harling house ever again.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 7

Wick Cutter has a reputation of being notorious with gambling and money. He is also known for his numerous affairs, despite being a married man. He and his wife, Mrs. Cutter, as different as they are, quarrel with each other about anything and everything, from Cutter's unfaithfulness, to Mrs. Cutter's painted china dishes. Jim remarks that the main topic of dispute is usually their inheritance, and who will outlive the other.



Book 2, Chapters 12 and 13

Antonia moves to the Cutters' to work. She thinks about nothing but socializing and having a good time. She cares very much about her appearance now; Antonia wears gloves, high heels, hats, and pretty dresses she has sewn herself. Jim thinks Antonia is the most beautiful out of all the hired girls.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 8

Jim begins to develop somewhat of a reputation himself. The townspeople question why Jim takes such an interest in the hired girls, but not the Black Hawk girls. Once the Vannis' dance tent leaves, Jim has nothing to do during the evenings. He becomes restless, and walks around town at night by himself. The drugstore, the cigar factory, and the depot are the only places where Jim can hang out; he admits that these places do not satisfy his thirst for action, or cure his depression. He believes that the well-lit houses conceal the hidden jealousy and anger of the townspeople.

Jim is tired of seeing the same faces everywhere he goes. He decides to attend the Saturday night Firemen's Hall dances, where he sees most of the same faces from the Vannis' dance tent. In order for him to attend the Firemen's Hall dances, Jim must sneak out of the house. The hired girls are always at the dances; all the young men want to dance with Antonia and Lena.

Antonia often attends the dances with Larry Donovan, a train conductor. One night when Donovan is on a run, Jim walks Antonia home and asks to kiss her. Antonia is surprised when he kisses her more aggressively than she expects, and admonishes him. She tells Jim not turn out like the other town boys, free and aggressive, for she has high hopes of him doing something great with his life. Antonia is proud of his success at school and will not allow him to throw his academic success away. She also seems a little jealous at the fact that Lena allows Jim to kiss her aggressively. She says:

"Now, don't you go and be a fool like some of these town boys. You're not going to sit around here and whittle store-boxes and tell stories all your life. You are going away to school and make something of yourself. I'm just awful proud of you" Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 143.

Antonia and Lena are not only present in his daily activities, but also in his dreams. He has dreams of when he and Antonia were children, playing in the country. He has the same dream that is constantly repeated: the dream is of him sitting in a harvest field and Lena running to sit by him, saying, "Now they are all gone, and I can kiss you as much as I like." Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 144. As much as he tries, Jim does not have that dream of Antonia.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 9



Jim's grandparents learn of his sneaking out of the house to attend the Firemen's Hall dances. Jim promises not to attend any more dances so that his grandparents will not be disappointed in him. As a result, his spring nights are dull and monotonous. Jim studies at night so that he can enter his first year of college in the fall having already completed much of his college prerequisite work. He swears to himself that he is going to attend college, so that he can get away from Black Hawk.

Jim also makes up with Mrs. Harling, who, as one of the Black Hawk older generation, questions his interest in the country girls and his dislike of the town girls, and who still hurts from Antonia's decision to quit working for her. On his commencement day, Mrs. Harling congratulates him on such a fine commencement speech and gives him a graduation present. She is very surprised at the eloquence of Jim's speech and pleased with how he has turned out, despite her earlier misgivings. Later that day, Jim encounters Antonia, Lena, and their friend Anna, who had also seen the commencement. Antonia is glowing with pride at Jim's successful speech. Antonia swears that his speech made her think of her father, for some reason. When Jim tells her that he had thought of her father when he wrote it, and dedicated his speech to him, Antonia cries.



Book 2, Chapter 14 and 15

Jim studies more after his commencement to prepare for college. His grandparents are dubious about his going off to college, but Mrs. Harling assures them that Jim is ready for it. He works hard all summer long. He has one holiday, and Antonia invites him to spend it with her, Lena, Tiny, and Anna. They go to the river for a picnic.

Jim wanders around the river banks, reveling in the beauty and the stillness of the country. He sees Antonia sitting by herself, crying. She tells him that the flowers on the river bank remind her of Bohemia, for her family used to have a yard full of the same flowers. Antonia is homesick for her country and her father. Jim tells her of the theory he had had about her father's spirit; Mr. Shimerda's spirit somehow was with him when he was alone in the house on that winter day, on its way back home to Bohemia. Relieved by Jim's theory, Antonia recalls the story that her father had married her mother out of the kindness and goodness of his heart; he did not have to marry her, but he did. Watching Antonia reminisce about her father and her country, Jim is suddenly reminded of how very much Antonia looks like the little girl who visited the Burden household with her father back in the country. Antonia says, "I ain't never forgot my own country." Book 2, Chapter 14, pg. 151.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 6

Topic Tracking: Antonia 8

Antonia and Jim join the others. They all talk about their families' farms, having to work for their younger siblings' clothing and toys, their grandparents, and the hard lives of their mothers. Before they leave, they see a spectacular sight: the figure of a plough against the red horizon. Jim and the hired girls stare, mesmerized by the sight of the plough against the sunset. Jim calls the plough "heroic." The hired girls especially identify with the plough; they all had to help their families with the farms: herding cattle, growing crops, and threshing wheat. The image of the plough signifies the end of the pioneer era and the end of their adolescence.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 7

The Cutters go to Omaha for a few days, leaving Antonia in charge of the house. An anxious Antonia goes to see the Burdens the day after the Cutters leave. Mrs. Burden asks her what has happened to make her so distracted and upset. Antonia tells them that Wick Cutter had left explicit instructions for her to stay in the house by herself and guard the Cutters' silver and money. She also felt perturbed by the way Cutter kept looking at her. Mrs. Burden agrees with Antonia that she should feel apprehensive about Cutter, and suggests that Jim sleep in the Cutters' instead of Antonia. Jim is hesitant about the switch, but he agrees, because he cannot stand to see Antonia looking so troubled. The third night Jim sleeps at the Cutters', he hears a man (Cutter) enter the house and come into the bedroom. Cutter touches Jim, thinking he is Antonia, and Jim suddenly jumps up. Cutter then attacks him, beating his face up and screaming at him. Jim finally escapes Cutter's strong grasp by pulling on Cutter's thumb and runs all the



way home. His grandmother finds him in their parlor. Helping him to his room, she tries to make him feel more comfortable, but she starts crying when she sees the bruises on Jim's body. Jim begs his grandmother not to let Antonia and his grandfather see him in this state. He does not want to see Antonia, who is sobbing, because he feels he hates her. He hates her for exposing him to Cutter's evil ways.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 10

Mr. Burden goes to depot and learns that Cutter had returned to Black Hawk on the night express and had gone to Denver in the morning, looking beat-up. Antonia and Jim's grandmother go to the Cutters' to retrieve Antonia's things, but the house is locked up. They manage to get in the house by breaking a window. Her room is in a shocking state of disarray; her clothes are flung all over the room and everything in the room is trampled and broken. While they are at the Cutters', an angered Mrs. Cutter comes home, ringing the doorbell repeatedly. Because Cutter had installed a new lock and had purposely not given her the new key, she could not get in. Mrs. Burden lets her in, but does not allow her to see Antonia. She then proceeds to tell Mrs. Cutter of last night's events. Mrs. Cutter in turn tells her story: on their way home from Omaha, Cutter had given her a ticket for the Kansas City train, not the Black Hawk one. He had deliberately planned for his wife to be out of the way, so that he would have time to rape Antonia. Mrs. Cutter vows that her husband will pay for what he did to her.



Book 3: Lena Lingard, Chapters 1 and 2

Jim enters the university at Lincoln under the supervision of Gaston Cleric, his advisor and the head of the Latin Department. He and Cleric become good friends, both staying the summer in Lincoln instead of going home. That summer, Jim declares that Gaston's presence has awakened him to new ideas and thoughts. Jim works hard on his Latin and Greek. Cleric visits Jim during the evenings and they stay up late talking about Latin and English poetry, or Cleric's stay in Italy. Jim is fascinated at Cleric's speeches; there is no one like Cleric who generates so much liveliness and vitality from Latin antiquity. Although he admires Cleric's dedication to his academic and scholarly success, he admits that he can never become a scholar himself. Jim "could never lose [himself] for so long among impersonal things." Book 2, Chapter 1, pg. 168. Instead of the ancient life Cleric teaches him, Jim finds himself thinking about his own past - the people and places he knew as a child - and how those early memories he remembers so vividly accompany him through his new experiences. Those early friends and places he had loved so much are "alive" in him.

Now a sophomore at the university, Jim is studying in his room one March evening, when he is interrupted by a visitor, Lena Lingard. Jim does not recognize her, as Lena has been "so quietly conventionalized by city clothes." Book 3, Chapter 2, pg. 170. She tells him that she is living in Lincoln as well; she has her own dressmaking shop. She has been living in Lincoln all winter, but she did not go to see Jim because she had been afraid that he did not wish to see her. Back in town, Lena says that they all talk about how studious he has become. Her new job is going so well that she finally has the chance to buy her mother the house she always wanted. Jim is happy that Lena is doing so well and says that he fears he is not going to be as well off as she is. Lena informs him that Antonia is always bragging about him, how she believes he will be even richer than Mr. Harling. When Jim asks how Antonia is, Lena replies that Antonia works for Mrs. Gardener and that she is engaged to Larry Donovan. She adds that Larry does not care for the Harlings very much, although Antonia is fond of them again after she and Mrs. Harling made up. Lena then bids good-bye to Jim, promising to meet again soon, leaving Jim with the unmistakable feeling of attraction and desire. He thanks Lena for giving him the chance to remember the past again. His old dream of Lena in the field resurfaces.

Book 3, Chapters 3 and 4

Jim takes Lena to the theater often. Jim describes the time they see the play *Camille* and the effect it has on them both. He has never seen actors who truly make their lines become alive and vibrant. Every word coming from their mouths enchant him and he is aggravated and disappointed when he misses what they say. He finds the lead actress, who plays Marguerite, to be powerful and dazzling. Lena is so involved that she cries during the play. Jim is glad that he has taken Lena and not a Lincoln girl, who would be more concerned with social activities than with the play.

Jim visits Lena in her shop often. He is surprised that someone as laid-back and easy-going as she is could be so successful in a tough business. Remembering her as the girl who barely had enough clothing to cover her body, he is surprised at Lena's gift for dressingmaking. He now knows why Ole Benson took such an interest in Lena; he is attracted to Lena's beauty and charms. Jim discovers that he is not the only one interested in Lena; her landlord, Colonel Raleigh, visits her often, and her next-door neighbor, an older man named Mr. Ordinsky, has apparently proposed to her many times.

Lena distracts Jim so much, that his interest in his studies begin to wane. Cleric accepts a job offer at Harvard, and suggests that Jim follow him to complete his college education there. Although Jim does not tell him of his relationship with Lena, Cleric hears about Jim and Lena's relationship and warns Jim against her. He wants to take Jim east, so that he will not be distracted by Lena. When Jim goes to see Lena afterward, to tell her that he is leaving Lincoln, Jim confesses that he cannot think, much less study, when he is with her. Lena admits that she should not have gone to see Jim that day in March. She did not want to start a relationship with him then, although she had always liked him since childhood. Lena replies that she never intends to marry anyone, because she does not want a husband or a family. She has had enough of the hard times, living at home with many sisters and brothers and working on the farm. Jim leaves Lincoln to visit his grandparents in Black Hawk and his relatives in Virginia, before finally joining Cleric at Harvard.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 11



Book 4: The Pioneer Woman's Story, Chapters 1 and 2

Two years after Jim leaves Lincoln, he finishes his college education at Harvard. Before he enters Law School, he returns to Black Hawk for his summer vacation. Jim has heard that Antonia was going to marry Larry Donovan, but was abandoned and had given birth to a child out of wedlock. Frances fills in the missing pieces of information for him. Donovan never intended to marry Antonia, who now lives on her family's farm. Frances fears that Antonia will be under Ambrosch's control now.

Jim is sorely disappointed in Antonia. He could not forgive her for being an object of pity, while Lena is an object of success. The townspeople who had been so fond of Antonia now pity her, and the same townspeople who disdained Lena, exclaim over her good fortune. Jim also is surprised by the fate of Tiny Soderball, who has become wealthy from her investments. She had gone to the Klondike region of Alaska, where gold was found. She ran a hotel there and befriended a dying man, who deeded her his claim to gold. Tiny invested her share of the claim and became rich. When Jim sees Tiny years later in 1908, living in San Francisco with Lena, whom she'd persuaded to come to San Francisco, he sees that Tiny is "satisfied with her success, but not elated." Book 4, Chapter 1, pg. 194.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 9

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 12

Jim sees Antonia's baby's picture hanging in the photographer's shop. Most girls would have been too ashamed and humiliated to display their babies' pictures for people to see, but, as Jim remarks, Antonia is unlike the town girls. Antonia is rather proud of her baby, and that she can display her baby's picture with pride, shows that Antonia has risen above social criticism and judgement.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 10



Book 4, Chapters 3 and 4

On Mrs. Harling's suggestion, Jim visits the Widow Steavens, the woman who rents the Burdens' farm, to get a detailed account of Antonia's betrayal by Larry and the birth of her baby. Being back in the country delights him, especially since the country is changing. Jim feels that the wild land has been tamed for the better. The country no longer looks or feels alienated and cold; Jim views the fields and crops, the wooden houses instead of dugouts, and farms with orchards and barns with pleasure and happiness. To him, the tamed country means happy families, families who are able to maintain order and a healthy community.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 8

Mrs. Steavens recounts for Jim the events leading up to Antonia's desertion and birth of her child. She recalls how happy and excited Antonia had been when they were preparing for her wedding and marriage to Larry. Antonia had only been troubled by one thing: her anxiety over the idea of living in Denver, the location to which Larry had been rerouted. She knew she would not enjoy the city as much as the country. Antonia knew in her heart that she was meant to live the country: "I'm a country girl...and I doubt if I'll be able to manage so well for him in a city. I was counting on keeping chickens, and maybe a cow." Book 4, Chapter 3, pg. 199.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 11

Antonia left for Denver, but no one had heard from her in a month. She finally returned home, unmarried and pregnant. Larry had deserted her; apparently, he had never intended to marry her. A disgraced and humiliated Antonia returned to her family's farm to work. Mrs. Steavens recalls Antonia helping Ambrosch thresh wheat in the fields yet again, and herding the cattle. The Widow remembers how tired and sad Antonia looked after she had come home, until the birth of her baby. Antonia loved that baby from the very first moment, Mrs. Steavens tells Jim with conviction, and was never once ashamed of it.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 13

Jim visits the Shimerdas' the next day. Antonia is waiting for him, having heard that he went to see Widow Steavens. Jim is surprised to see Antonia physically tired, but mentally strong and vibrant. He sees that caring for her baby has rejuvenated her spirit and her mind, and she is stronger and livelier than ever before. Antonia and Jim catch up on each other's lives. She vows to Jim that life is going to be better for her baby. Antonia knows her destiny; she says, "[E]verybody's put into this world for something, and I know what I've got to do." Book 4, Chapter 4, pg. 206.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 12



Jim tells her that he has always thought about her and cherished her, even though he felt she had disappointed him. They both agree that their fond, happy childhoods spent with each other connect them, despite the many changes in their lives. They think about their childhood days as they walk across the country that has become so familiar to them. Everything Jim sees in the country recalls his childhood with Antonia.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 9



Book 5: Cuzak's Boys, Chapters 1 - 3

Jim does not see Antonia again until about twenty years later. By that time, Antonia is married to Anton Cuzak, a cousin of Anton Jelinek, and has many children. Jim admits that he did not want to see Antonia "aged and broken." Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 211. Lena Lingard convinces Jim to see Antonia and her family on their farm in Nebraska, not far from Black Hawk.

Jim finds the Cuzak farm easily. The Cuzaks thrive on their farm, which includes several orchards, a barn, a windmill, and a fruit cellar. When Jim sees Antonia, he is proud of her. Antonia stands before him, older and more tired-looking, but "in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished." Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 214. She introduces her children to him. All of the children genuinely care for each other and are proud of each other and their mother. Antonia's children have fired up her spirit and her will. Jim realizes that Antonia "has not lost the fire of life. Her skin, so brown and hardened, had not that look of flabbiness, as if the sap beneath it had been secretly drawn away." Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 216. Antonia tells Jim that she is content with her life with her family and farm. She loves her husband and their children dearly. She knows that she belongs on a farm, and that she can never be lonely as long as she is in the country.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 13

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 13

Topic Tracking: Landscape 10

Jim gets along well with Antonia's sons. One of the sons, Leo, plays Mr. Shimerda's fiddle, carrying the tradition of playing music. It is obvious that the children know everything about their mother and her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Thinking about Antonia and her children make Jim realize what he had said before is true. Jim says,

"Antonia lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. I had not been mistaken. She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things. She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things of her heart came out in her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions...It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races" Book 5, Chapter 1, pg. 226-227.

Topic Tracking: Antonia 14

Jim meets Antonia's husband, Anton Cuzak. Cuzak is a frail and hunched-over little man, but lively and kind. He and Antonia have a good relationship, friendly and caring, but not intensely passionate. The Cuzaks tell Jim the story of Wick Cutter's murder; he



had shot his wife and then himself. The children all cheer when they hear the part about Cutter shooting himself. Later, Jim and Cuzak talk. Jim asks him if he regrets giving up the city life for a life on the farm. Cuzak admits that he thought he would be terribly lonely on the farm, but Antonia's warm and generous heart makes him happy.

Topic Tracking: Gender and Sexuality 14

Topic Tracking: Isolationism 14

Jim leaves the Cuzak farm, promising to take Antonia's boys on a trip out West. He returns to Black Hawk and takes a walk in the familiar countryside, feeling as if he is home again. He feels that, with so many Cuzaks, the world as he knows it will be better. Jim sees the faint markings of the road he and Antonia had traveled upon so many times amidst the roads and highways of today. That road, he says, is the road of Destiny, for it brought Antonia and him together, and will always bring them together no matter what.

Topic Tracking: Landscape 11