



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

My *Á*ntonia

based on the book by
Willa Cather

Written by
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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR WILLA CATHER

CATHER, Willa (1873-1947). In such classic American novels as 'O Pioneers!' Willa Cather wrote of people she had known as a girl in Nebraska. Her friends were both native Americans and European immigrants and their children. She showed how these pioneers were able to adapt themselves to the rugged prairie life in the western area of America. For her depictions of this valiant spirit, Willa Cather won wide acclaim as a novelist.

Willa Cather was born on Dec. 7, 1873, in Winchester, Va. Her family had been Virginians for four generations. When Willa was 9 years old her father bought a ranch that was located near Red Cloud, Neb. The child was excited by the change from a settled, eastern community to a semi-frontier area where she was free to roam outdoors. Often she would ride her pony to a neighbor's farm and listen to old immigrant women tell stories of their childhood experiences and adventures in Sweden or Bohemia.

There were no schools near the ranch, so she studied at home. A neighbor taught her Latin, and Willa read English classics aloud to her grandmother. When Willa was in her teens the family moved into the village. She attended Red Cloud High School and the University of Nebraska. After graduation in 1895 she worked on a Pittsburgh newspaper for six years, then taught high school for a time. On vacations she traveled to Europe and the American Southwest.

Meanwhile, she contributed stories to McClure's Magazine. She also accepted a post on the magazine, and in 1908 she became its managing editor. But editing left her little time for creative writing, and in 1912 she resigned to devote full time to writing her own stories.

Her first novel was unsuccessful, but when she turned to frontier themes she won a wide audience. 'O Pioneers!', published in 1913, was followed by 'Song of the Lark' (1915) and 'My Antonia' (1918). 'One of Ours', which won the Pulitzer prize in 1923, and 'A Lost Lady' (1923) mourned the passing of the pioneer spirit in the Middle West. Also popular were 'Death Comes for the Archbishop' (1927), a study of Roman Catholic missionaries in New Mexico, and 'Shadows on the Rock' (1931), a story of early Quebec. She described her clean, meticulous writing style as "d meuble" (unfurnished).

Cather never married. She lived quietly in New York City or traveled in Europe, avoiding public appearances whenever possible. She remained loyal to childhood friends and visited them often. She died in New York City on April 24, 1947.

---- Courtesy of Compton's Learning Company

INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *My Antonia* by Willa Cather. It includes nineteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the idea of immigration (since many of the characters in the novel are immigrants). Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. If your school has the appropriate machinery, it might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

A lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is a **group activity** in which students work in small groups to discuss symbolism and characterization in the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion** session in which the groups share their ideas about the themes with the entire class; thus, the entire class is exposed to information about all of the themes and the entire class can discuss each theme based on the nucleus of information brought forth by each of the groups.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to express personal opinions: students give their opinions as to whether the United States should continue with an open door policy towards immigrants or should impose some kind of restrictions on the number of immigrants the country will accept. The second assignment is to inform: students write a composition in preparation for the oral presentations they will make about the pioneers they have researched. The third assignment is to persuade: students pretend to be pioneers who have moved west and are writing back east to a cousin, persuading the cousin to come west, too.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *My Antonia*. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer test for students who need more of a challenge.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

UNIT OBJECTIVES - *My Antonia*

1. Students will follow the main characters as they progress from childhood to maturity, studying the Coming of Age theme.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will study immigration, pioneers and the Midwest (specifically Nebraska).
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *My Antonia* as they relate to the author's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
 - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
 - d. To encourage logical thinking
 - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *My Antonia*

Date Assigned	Chapters Assigned	Completion Date
	I: 1-3	
	I: 4-6	
	I: 7-9	
	I: 10-14	
	I: 15-19	
	II: 1-5	
	II: 6-15	
	III	
	IV & V	

UNIT OUTLINE - *My Antonia*

1	2	3	4	5
Introduction Speaker: Immigration	PVR I:1-5	Study ?s I:1-5 Follow-up Activity PVR I:6-9	Writing Assignment 1	Study ?s I:6-9 PVR I:10-14
6	7	8	9	10
Study?s I:10-14 Pioneers Activity PVR I:15-19	Study ?s I:15-19 Library PVR II:1-5	Study ?s II:1-5 Writing Assignment 2 PVR II:6-15	Study ?s II:6-15 Reports PVR III	Reports
11	12	13	14	15
Study ?s III Travelogue Nebraska PVR IV & V	Writing Assignment 3	Study ?s IV-V Extra ?s	Vocabulary	Language Worksheet
16	17	18	19	
Group Activity	Reports	Review	Test	

Key: P=Preview Study Questions V=Prereading Vocabulary Worksheet R=Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To introduce the unit
2. To give students background information about immigrants in America
3. To make students more aware of what it means to be an immigrant

NOTE: Prior to this lesson, you need to have contacted and made arrangements for a guest speaker to come to your class to talk with students about immigration. Your speaker should tell students what immigration is, why people have traditionally come to America, some history about immigration in America, and the process by which immigrants can become citizens of the United States.

Activity

Introduce your speaker and give the speaker ample time to make his/her presentation. Be sure to allow time for students to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

LESSON TWO

Objectives

1. To distribute books and other related materials
2. To preview the study questions for Book I, Chapters 1-5
3. To familiarize students with the vocabulary for Book I, Chapters 1-5
4. To evaluate students reading skills

Activity #1

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *My Antonia*

PROMPT

In the last several class meetings, you have heard and read many things about immigration. One of the problems with immigration is that if too many people immigrate into one area at one time, the "system" has a hard time absorbing the people. There are many serious problems caused by floods of immigrants. Some people think we have enough of our own troubles now, that our doors should be closed to immigrants. Other people are of the opinion that all Americans are immigrants at their roots, and closing our doors to immigrants would be hypocritical and against the very principles upon which our country was founded.

Your assignment is to write a composition in which you tell what you think relating to the issue of immigration in America. Should we close our doors? Should we leave them wide open? Should there be some regulation? If so, what kind? Who should decide which immigrants will be accepted if there are limitations?

PREWRITING

Make a few notes about what you think. Write down one sentence that states your position on this issue of immigration. Why do you think that? Jot down your reasons. Next to your reasons, make a few notes of explanations or examples that support your reasons.

DRAFTING

Write a paragraph in which you introduce your main idea, your position on the issue of immigration.

In the body of your composition, write a paragraph for each of your reasons that you hold the opinion you do. Fill out the body of each paragraph with explanations and/or examples that support your points.

Write a paragraph in which you conclude your composition and give your final thoughts on the issue.

PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.