



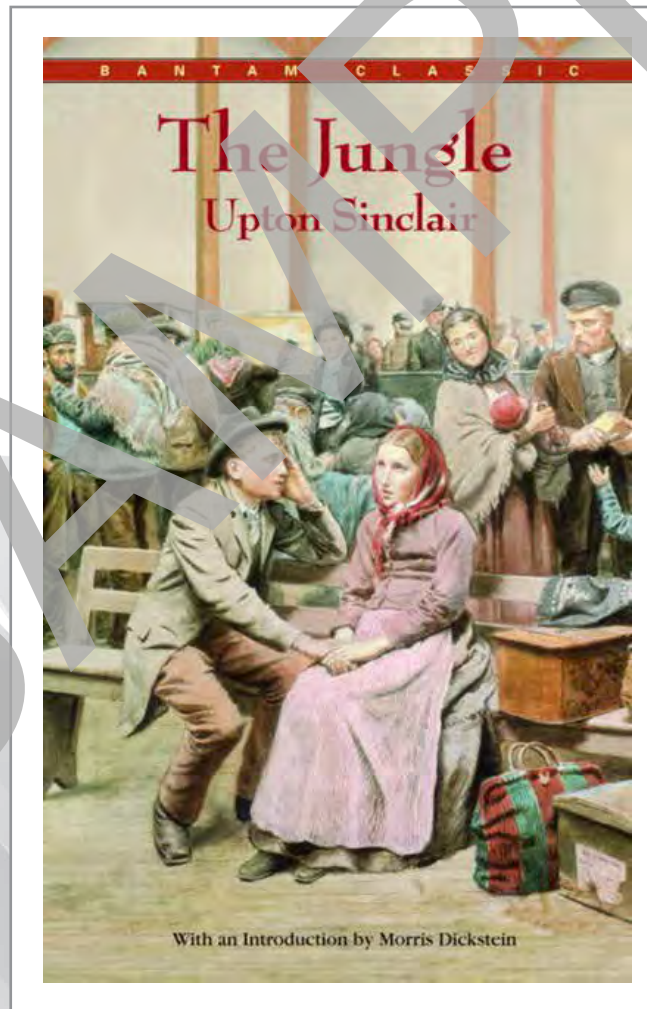
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Jungle

Upton Sinclair



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Jungle

Upton Sinclair

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Analysis, compare/contrast, brainstorming, research, critical thinking, evaluation

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, reports, speech

Comprehension

Cause/effect, predicting, inference, plot development, thematic development

Writing

Poetry, prose, TV script, critique, journal, letter to the editor, eulogy, sequel, lament

Vocabulary

Target words, definitions, applications

Literary Elements

Metaphor, simile, allusion, personification, symbolism, foreshadowing, irony, characterization, setting, theme, genre

Across the Curriculum

Music—ballad, appropriate selections; Art—collage, poster, caricature; Drama—TV script; Current Events—magazine and newspaper articles

Genre: fiction

Setting: primarily Chicago stockyards (Packingtown) in early 1900s

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Themes: immigration, the American Dream/Nightmare, living conditions of the working class, extreme poverty leading to crime and deceit, despair, greed, Socialism, graft, increased power of the working class

Conflict: person vs. society, person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. nature

Style: narrative; protest naturalistic novel featuring graphic portrayal of packing houses and poverty of the immigrants

Structure: primary plot involving the struggle for survival of Jurgis Rudkus and his extended family intermingles concurrently with the secondary plot exposing the filthy conditions of the meat-packing industry; primarily chronological with some flashbacks

Date of First Publication: 1905 as a serial in *Appeal to Reason*; 1906 in book form

Summary

Jurgis Rudkus, his fiancée Ona, and her extended family immigrate from Lithuania to America in pursuit of the “American Dream.” The couple must wait over a year before they have enough money to marry. The family is swindled into purchasing a shoddy house in Packingtown, and their dream turns to a nightmare as they struggle to keep up the house payments and confront the horrendous working conditions in the packing houses. Even with all the adults working, the family barely survives, and some of the children are forced to work. The family endures extreme deprivation, rampant crime and corruption, injuries, and unemployment. Jurgis watches the progressive deterioration of the family as his father, Ona and their premature baby, and his young son die. Despondent and hopeless, Jurgis briefly turns to crime but eventually finds hope when he discovers and joins the Socialist party.

Characters

Jurgis Rudkus: protagonist; strong, determined Lithuanian immigrant who believes in the “American Dream”; symbolizes Sinclair’s view of workers exploited by capitalism

Ona Lukoszaite: Jurgis’ wife; lovely, compassionate; works with her husband to pursue their dream; poverty, appalling working conditions, and eventual rape by her boss leave her demoralized and hopeless; dies at age 18

Antanas: Jurgis and Ona’s son; sturdy, bright; drowns in mud-mired street

Dede Antanas: Jurgis’ father; dies as a result of the terrible working conditions

Marija Berczynskas: Ona’s cousin; large, strong, straightforward; courageous spirit crushed by circumstances; becomes a prostitute

Teta Elzbieta: Ona’s stepmother; resilient, resolute; endures hardship with determination; symbolizes strength, hope, and the importance of family

Jonas: Elzbieta’s brother; first to encourage others to come to America; disappears after a few months, creating more hardship for others

Conflict

The **conflict** of a story is the struggle between two people or two forces. There are three main types of conflict: person vs. person, person vs. nature or society, and person vs. self.

Character:

Conflict	Resolution

Character:

Conflict	Resolution

Character:

Conflict	Resolution

Chapter I, pp. 1–21

Following their immigration to America from Lithuania, Jurgis and Ona are married. Wedding expenses leave them in debt. Poverty and fear overshadow Ona's joy, but Jurgis vows to work harder.

Vocabulary

precipitately (1)
incongruous (2)
lugubrious (6)
lamentation (8)
imprudent (13)
promiscuous (18)
maudlin (18)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the relevance of the initial setting and what this reveals about Jurgis, Ona, Marija, Teta Elzbieta, and Dede Antanas. *(Jurgis, strong and resolute, and Ona, delicate and apprehensive, have just married. Marija is powerfully built and works in a canning factory. Elzbieta, Ona's stepmother, adheres to the Lithuanian traditions and is a primary source of strength to the family throughout the novel. Antanas, Jurgis' father, appears much older than his 60 years because of his work in appalling conditions at the packing house. As the marriage celebration draws to a close, the newly married couple and the celebrants realize they can never get away from the drudgery of work and the impending disaster, i.e., a dock in pay or loss of their jobs, if they are late. Revelations about other immigrants [Mikolas' injuries, ensuing job loss, and lack of money to marry Jadvyga; Jokubas' inability to pay his rent] foreshadow the hazards that face Jurgis, Ona, and other family members. They, like the other immigrants, are only a step away from poverty. pp. 1–11)*
2. Analyze the importance of the *veselija* and discuss its impact on Jurgis, Ona, and the rest of the family. *(Elzbieta is determined to carry out the Lithuanian wedding tradition, even in the stockyards of Chicago. To give up the *veselija* would be to acknowledge defeat. The wedding celebration symbolizes the value the Lithuanian culture places on family and community and the significance of reciprocal charity. The family provides abundant food and beer, and no one is turned away. During the final dance, all the men have a chance to dance with the bride. When a man's turn ends, he is to place money into a hat to help pay for the celebration. Sinclair's portrayal of the failure of many of the men to do so indicates his belief that capitalism erodes the moral structure of the immigrant's culture. He infers that others will eventually succumb to the evils of capitalism. Ona's frailty and her fear of the overwhelming debt contrasts with Jurgis' strength and his confidence that he can overcome any problem by working harder. pp. 3–18)*
3. Examine Dede Antanas' speech and what this reveals about him. Note the foreshadowing of his death. *(Antanas, who was once a scholar, has prepared an original congratulatory speech for his son Jurgis and his bride. He looks 20 years older than his 60 years, and he suffers from intense coughing spells, caused by six months working in the pickling rooms at Durham's packing plant. The solemnity of his speech reflects his premonition of his impending death. pp. 8–9)*
4. Examine the cause and effect of Elzbieta and Antanas' anxiety. *([1] Cause: Crowds of people have come to partake of the abundant food and drink but are sneaking away without contributing to the cost. Effect: The family faces an enormous debt for which they have no money to pay. [2] Cause: They know the saloonkeeper is cheating them. Effect: They are helpless to protest because the saloonkeeper is aligned with corrupt politicians. pp. 15–16)*
5. Discuss revelations about working conditions at the packing plants. *(The rapid pace and dangerous working conditions on the assembly line cause numerous accidents, and the unsanitary surroundings often lead to blood poisoning. A worker may be out of work for months with serious injuries and infections and can lose his job. If a worker is one minute late, he is docked an hour's pay. If he is many minutes late, he will likely lose his job and must join other hungry job seekers*

outside the gates of the packing houses. No one is allowed a day off because so many others are anxious to fill that job. pp. 11, 20)

6. Analyze the personification of music, “It stretches out its arms to them...” (pp. 6–7). (*Tamoszius’ music reflects the lives and emotions of the Lithuanian immigrants. As the music reaches into their hearts and souls, they forget the Chicago slums and their poverty and find themselves in their beautiful native land.*)
7. **Prediction:** Will Jurgis be able to pay the debt?

Supplementary Activities

1. Identify and write a descriptive paragraph about a tradition that is important in your family.
2. Begin the Foreshadowing Chart on page 12 of this guide and continue this activity as you read the novel.
3. List one simile and one metaphor from this section. Continue this activity throughout the novel. Examples are given in each section. **Similes**—(Jurgis) “stood...frightened as a hunted animal” (p. 2); see also pp. 5, 7, 12, 17, 19; **Metaphor**—life: bubble (p. 13)

Chapters II–III, pp. 21–43

Background information reveals the family’s struggles in Lithuania and their belief in the “American Dream.” Con artists swindle the family out of much of their savings. Jurgis gets a job in a meat-packing plant in Packingtown.

Vocabulary
fetid (30)
felicitous (30)
homage (37)
ptomaines (38)
orthodox (41)

Discussion Questions

1. Examine the immigrant family’s rationale for coming to America. (*Jurgis, a peasant, had met Ona and wanted to marry her a year and a half earlier, but her father, who was rich, refused to allow the marriage. Ona’s family faces a reversal of their fortunes when her father dies and his estate is sold, leaving them with very little money. Ona will not marry Jurgis and leave her stepmother, Elzbieta, and the six younger children. Elzbieta’s brother Jonas convinces Jurgis and the others to go to America, where he believes they will make their fortune and be free. Ona’s cousin Marija joins them to escape consequences for almost murdering her cruel employer. Twelve people make the journey to America, hoping to find their “dream” in Chicago. pp. 21–24*)
2. Discuss Jurgis’ characteristics and how he adapts to work in the packing plants. (*He is steadfast, e.g., his pursuit of Ona. In preparation for the trip to America, he works hard, saves his money, and refuses to drink or gamble. He is young, strong, and energetic. He initially views the packing industry as a wonderful opportunity in which he has been given a place to achieve financially, and he is determined to do as he is told. pp. 21–24, 31, 43*)
3. Discuss the family’s “introduction” to the Chicago stockyards and their reaction. (*On the way to the stockyards, they travel through a ghetto filled with dirty houses and factories. As they approach the stockyards, the air becomes darker and the landscape more hideous and bare. A pungent odor and thick, oily smoke fill the air, seeming to come from the center of the world, i.e., hell. They hear a sound made up of thousands of little sounds, which emanates from multitudes of cattle and swine. The only place they can afford to stay is crowded, filthy, and vermin-infested. The streets are actually “made” land, i.e., dumping grounds for city garbage. They are littered with trash*)