

Humane Letters 9: The American Tradition

March 23-27

Time Allotment: 80 minutes per day

Packet Overview

Date	Objective(s)	Page Number
Monday, March 23	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Briefly describe the Great Depression.2. Outline President Hoover's response to the Great Depression.	2
Tuesday, March 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Compare Hoover's and Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression	7
Wednesday, March 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outline Roosevelt's economic guarantees.2. Briefly describe how those economic guarantees change the relationship between the national government and the market.	12
Thursday, March 26	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recall the plot of the scene at the river from <i>My Ántonia</i> and identify crucial details using all your senses	15
Friday, March 27	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Write insightful questions and practice deep reading of a single passage from <i>My Ántonia</i>	21

Additional Notes: None

Academic Honesty

I certify that I completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Student signature:

I certify that my student completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Parent signature:

Monday, March 23

History Unit: The Great Depression 1929-1941

Lesson 1: The First Presidential Response to the Great Depression

Unit Overview: The Great Depression

In our next unit of history, we will study the most significant economic downturn (or contraction) of the twentieth century; we know it as the Great Depression. Two 1929 stock market crashes marked the beginning of this economic downturn. The first occurred on the London Stock Exchange in September 1929; the second, on the New York Stock Exchange in October. By November 1929, stocks lost over half of their value (meaning a dollar of stock was now worth only \$0.50), consumer confidence in stock market investments disappeared, and the world entered a global economic crisis. In the United States, the Great Depression wreaked havoc on everyday life – inflation soared (meaning the dollar bought less and less), wages declined, manufacturing came to a screeching halt, and unemployment peaked at nearly 25% of the working population.¹ The economic devastation was global. The value of international trade exchanges dropped roughly 65% by 1933. And perhaps the most devastating human impact of the Great Depression came with the bank crises from 1930 to 1933. During these runs on the bank, people found that a lifetime of savings evaporated in a matter of days. When everyday folks went to withdraw their money (let's say, \$1,500 in 1930, which would be roughly \$23,200 in 2020), the bank couldn't give it to them because the bank no longer had it. No one had it. In many instances, banks made poor investment choices with their customers' money. Take a moment to let that sink in - you've saved \$23,000 and in a matter of days that money is gone. Gone. Contrast that feeling with the exuberance and frivolity of the Jazz Age we recently studied. You should keep that contrast in mind as we move through the 1930s and, eventually, World War II.

Before continuing, please read the Chapter Review in *America: A Narrative History* on pages 910-911.

¹ To give you a comparative idea, economists recommend keeping unemployment around 4-5% of the working population. To learn more, here's brief explanation by the Federal Reserve: https://www.federalreserve.gov/faqs/economy_14424.htm.

Lesson 1 Socratic Question: Keep this question in mind as you study this lesson!

What is the ideal relationship between a nation's government and its economy?

Objectives: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Briefly describe the Great Depression as a historical event.
2. Outline Hoover's policy response to the Great Depression and the political ideals underlying his response.

Introduction to Lesson 1

The presidential responses to the Great Depression differed widely. President Herbert Hoover, elected in 1928, understood the 1929 downturn as one temporary dip in a cyclical market – if the 1920s saw nothing but increases in stock value, the 1930s were a natural reaction to that upward trend. Even as part of the ebb and flow of a market cycle, President Hoover did not ignore 1929 crash and losses it perpetuated. President Hoover's response combined efforts from private industry and the government. President Hoover secured promises from industry leaders (e.g., CEOs of major corporations) to keep wages stable; he exhorted them to cut from profits first, not worker benefits or employment. Hoover also worked to begin new construction projects nationwide. State governors lead the charge here by facilitating public works projects in their respective states. To give you an idea, Garner State Park (about two hours south of San Antonio) was funded as a public works project. President Hoover asked Congress to double public building spending and approve a \$160 million tax cut. Finally, President Hoover implored Americans to reduce their personal spending, work more hours and wait out the market cycle. As unemployment climbed, Hoover created relief agencies for unemployment, asked the Federal Reserve to loosen its restrictions for loaning money, and encouraged partnerships between industry and government to transfer things like farm surpluses to private charities for distribution to needy families. 1932 marked Hoover's most successful efforts to curtail the effects of economic depression. With the help of Congress, Hoover created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Emergency Relief Construction Act, and Federal Home Loan Banks. In their own areas, each of these organizations helped prevent foreclosure on banks, railroads, farms, and homes. By July 1932, these last efforts by Hoover seemed to be making a significant, positive impact on the economy. Between September and November of 1932, however, these positive effects evaporated, leaving Hoover to defend a depressed economy and his challenger, Franklin Roosevelt, with the opportunity to capitalize on the crisis by promising a "New Deal" to struggling Americans and depict Hoover as a callous, ineffective politician.

Memorize

Memorize the following terms from *America: A Narrative History: The Great Engineer* (p. 914), Congress Revenue Act of 1932 (p. 915), Hoovervilles (p. 916), Reconstruction Finance Corporation (p. 917), and Bonus Expeditionary Force (p. 917).

Read and Annotate

Read and annotate the excerpt from President Hoover's *Address to the Nation on Lincoln's Birthday delivered* via radio on February 12, 1931.

Herbert Hoover's *Address to the Nation on Lincoln's Birthday* -- February 12, 1931

...In Lincoln's day the dominant problem in our form of government turned upon the issue of States rights. Though less pregnant with disaster, the dominant problem today in our form of government turns in large degree upon the issue of the relationship of Federal, State, and local government responsibilities. We are faced with unceasing agitation that the Federal Government shall assume new financial burdens...The Federal Government has assumed many new responsibilities since Lincoln's time, and will probably assume more in the future when the States and local communities cannot alone cure abuse or bear the entire cost of national programs, but there is an essential principle that should be maintained in these matters. I am convinced that where Federal action is essential then in most cases it should limit its responsibilities to supplement the States and local communities, and that it should not assume the major role or the entire responsibility, in replacement of the States or local government. To do otherwise threatens the whole foundations of local government, which is the very basis of self-government.

The moment responsibilities of any community, particularly in economic and social questions, are shifted from any part of the Nation to Washington, then that community has subjected itself to a remote bureaucracy with its minimum of understanding and of sympathy. It has lost a large part of its voice and its control of its own destiny....

And buried in this problem lies something even deeper. The whole of our governmental machinery was devised for the purpose that through ordered liberty we give incentive and equality of opportunity to every individual to rise to that highest achievement of which he is capable. At once when government is centralized there arises a limitation upon the liberty of the individual and a restriction of individual opportunity. The true growth of the Nation is the growth of character in its citizens. The spread of government destroys initiative and thus destroys character. Character is made in the community as well as in the individual by assuming responsibilities, not by escape from them. Carried to its logical extreme, all this shouldering of individual and community responsibility upon the Government can lead but to the superstate where every man becomes the servant of the State and real liberty is lost....

There is an entirely different avenue by which we may both resist this drift to centralized government and at the same time meet a multitude of problems. That is to strengthen in the Nation a sense and an organization of self-help and cooperation to solve as many problems as possible outside of government. We are today passing through a critical test in such a problem arising from the economic depression.

Herbert Hoover's *Address to the Nation on Lincoln's Birthday*, continued

Due to lack of caution in business and to the impact of forces from an outside world, one-half of which is involved in social and political revolution, the march of our prosperity has been retarded. We are projected into temporary unemployment, losses, and hardships. In a nation rich in resources, many people were faced with hunger and cold through no fault of their own. Our national resources are not only material supplies and material wealth but a spiritual and moral wealth in kindness, in compassion, in a sense of obligation of neighbor to neighbor and a realization of responsibility by industry, by business, and the community for its social security and its social welfare.

The evidence of our ability to solve great problems outside of Government action and the degree of moral strength with which we emerge from this period will be determined by whether the individuals and the local communities continue to meet their responsibilities.

Throughout this depression I have insisted upon organization of these forces through industry, through local government and through charity, that they should meet this crisis by their own initiative, by the assumption of their own responsibilities. The Federal Government has sought to do its part by example in the expansion of employment, by affording credit to drought sufferers for rehabilitation, and by cooperation with the community, and thus to avoid the opiates of government charity and the stifling of our national spirit of mutual self-help.

We can take courage and pride in the effective work of thousands of voluntary organizations for provision of employment, for relief of distress, that have sprung up over the entire Nation. Industry and business have recognized a social obligation to their employees as never before. The State and local governments are being helpful. The people are themselves succeeding in this task. Never before in a great depression has there been so systematic a protection against distress. Never before has there been so little social disorder. Never before has there been such an outpouring of the spirit of self-sacrifice and of service.

The ever-growing complexity of modern life, with its train of evermore perplexing and difficult problems, is a challenge to our individual characters and to our devotion to our ideals. The resourcefulness of America when challenged has never failed. Success is not gained by leaning upon government to solve all the problems before us. That way leads to enervation of will and destruction of character. Victory over this depression and over our other difficulties will be won by the resolution of our people to fight their own battles in their own communities, by stimulating their ingenuity to solve their own problems, by taking new courage to be masters of their own destiny in the struggle of life. This is not the easy way, but it is the American way. And it was Lincoln's way.

The ultimate goal of the American social ideal is equality of opportunity and individual initiative. These are not born of bureaucracy. This ideal is the expression of the spirit of our people. This ideal obtained at the birth of the Republic. It was the ideal of Lincoln. It is the ideal upon which the Nation has risen to unparalleled greatness.

Tuesday, March 24

History Unit: The Great Depression 1929-1941

Lesson 2: The Second Presidential Response to the Great Depression

Lesson 2 Socratic Question: Keep this question in mind as you study this lesson!

What is the ideal relationship between a nation's government and its economy?

Objectives: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Outline Roosevelt's policy response to the Great Depression and the political ideals underlying his response.
2. Compare the responses of Hoover and Roosevelt.

Introduction to Lesson 2

Again, the presidential responses to the Great Depression differed widely. While Hoover's response combined efforts from private industry and the government, President Roosevelt's efforts minimized the role of private industry. In November 1932, the American public demanded a different strategy. As such, President Franklin Roosevelt won the 1932 election with 472 electoral votes to Hoover's 59. The national government, Franklin argued, had a responsibility to restore and guarantee economic stability. According to Roosevelt, Hoover's emphasis on cooperation between industry and government did too little. In contrast, Roosevelt placed the federal government at the forefront of all efforts to assuage the effects of the Great Depression. In short, Roosevelt applied the full force of the national bureaucracy to the project of fixing the Great Depression. In two separate waves, called the First and Second New Deal, Roosevelt and his administration eliminated agricultural surplus, provided federal insurance on bank deposits to increase consumer confidence in financial institutions, created federal jobs on public works projects for the unemployed, created Social Security, and increased federal regulation on relief distribution. Roosevelt's efforts were so controversial, the Supreme Court declared several New Deal policies unconstitutional. Roosevelt, however, remained undeterred. In his infamous fireside chats delivered via radio, Roosevelt promised the American people a new set of constitutional guarantees, a second, economic bill of rights. This economic bill of rights empowered the federal government to manage the economy in the service of providing a minimum standard of living for every American. Immediately after his 1933 inauguration, President Roosevelt sought to stabilize the value of the dollar and prevent the collapse of the financial industry by declaring an indefinite National Bank Holiday. In short, all banks would close until further notice. Below, you'll read Roosevelt's defense of the banking holiday, his explanation of when and how banks would reopen, and a description of his first major policy effort to fix the Great Depression.

Memorize

Memorize the following terms from *America: A Narrative History*: The First New Deal (p. 921), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (p. 922), National Recovery Administration (p. 925), Agricultural Adjustment Act (p. 926), Dust Bowl (p. 926), Works Progress Administration (p. 936), and Second New Deal (p. 936).

Read and Annotate

Read and annotate President Roosevelt's First Fireside Chat delivered March 12, 1933.

President Franklin Roosevelt's First Fireside Chat – *On Banking*

I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking...particularly with the overwhelming majority who use banks for the making of deposits and the drawing of checks. I want to tell you what has been done in the last few days, why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be....

First of all let me state the simple fact that when you deposit money in a bank the bank does not put the money into a safe deposit vault. It invests your money in many different forms of credit-bonds, commercial paper, mortgages and many other kinds of loans. In other words, the bank puts your money to work to keep the wheels of industry and of agriculture turning around. A comparatively small part of the money you put into the bank is kept in currency—an amount which in normal times is wholly sufficient to cover the cash needs of the average citizen. In other words the total amount of all the currency in the country is only a small fraction of the total deposits in all of the banks.

What, then, happened during the last few days of February and the first few days of March? Because of undermined confidence on the part of the public, there was a general rush by a large portion of our population to turn bank deposits into currency or gold. A rush so great that the soundest banks could not get enough currency to meet the demand....By the afternoon of March 3 scarcely a bank in the country was open to do business. Proclamations temporarily closing them in whole or in part had been issued by the Governors in almost all the states.

It was then that I issued the proclamation providing for the nation-wide bank holiday, and this was the first step in the Government's reconstruction of our financial and economic fabric. The second step was the legislation promptly and patriotically passed by the Congress confirming my proclamation and broadening my powers so that it became possible in view of the requirement of time to intend the holiday and lift the ban of that holiday gradually. This law also gave authority to develop a program of rehabilitation of our banking facilities. I want to tell our citizens in every part of the Nation that the national Congress -- Republicans and Democrats alike -- showed by this action a devotion to public welfare and a realization of the emergency and the necessity for speed that it is difficult to match in our history.

The third stage has been the series of regulations permitting the banks to continue their functions to take care of the distribution of food and household necessities and the payment of payrolls.

This bank holiday while resulting in many cases in great inconvenience is affording us the opportunity to supply the currency necessary to meet the situation. No sound bank is a dollar worse off than it was when it closed its doors last Monday....

A question you will ask is this—why are all the banks not to be reopened at the same time? The answer is simple. Your Government does not intend that the history of the past few years shall be repeated. WE do not want and will not have another epidemic of bank failures. As a result we start tomorrow, Monday, with the opening of banks in the twelve Federal Reserve Bank cities—those banks which on first examination by the Treasury have already been found to be all right....

On Wednesday and succeeding days banks in smaller places all through the country will resume business, subject, of course, to the Government's physical ability to complete its survey. It is necessary that the reopening of banks be extended over a period in order to permit the banks to make applications for necessary loans, to obtain currency needed to meet their requirements and to enable the Government to make common sense checkups.

Let me make it clear to you that if your bank does not open the first day you are by no means justified in believing that it will not open. A bank that opens on one of the subsequent days is in exactly the same status as the bank that opens tomorrow.

I know that many people are worrying about State banks not members of the Federal Reserve System. These banks can and will receive assistance from member banks and from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. These state banks are following the same course as the national banks except that they get their licenses to resume business from the state authorities, and these authorities have been asked by the Secretary of the Treasury to permit their good banks to open up on the same schedule as the national banks. I am confident that the state banking departments will be as careful as the National Government in the policy relating to the opening of banks and will follow the same broad policy.

It is possible that when the banks resume a very few people who have not recovered from their fear may again begin withdrawals. Let me make it clear that the banks will take care of all needs—and it is my belief that hoarding during the past week has become an exceedingly unfashionable pastime. It needs no prophet to tell you that when the people find that they can get their money -- that they can get it when they want it for all legitimate purposes -- the phantom of fear will soon be laid. People will again be glad to have their money where it will be safely taken care of and where they can use it conveniently at any time. I can assure you that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress.

The success of our whole great national program depends, of course, upon the cooperation of the public -- on its intelligent support and use of a reliable system.

Remember that the essential accomplishment of the new legislation is that it makes it possible for banks more readily to convert their assets into cash than was the case before. More liberal provision has been made for banks to borrow on these assets at the Reserve Banks and more liberal provision has also been made for issuing currency on the security of those good assets. This currency is not fiat currency. It is issued only on adequate security -- and every good bank has an abundance of such security.

One more point before I close. There will be, of course, some banks unable to reopen without being reorganized. The new law allows the Government to assist in making these reorganizations quickly and effectively and even allows the Government to subscribe to at least a part of new capital which may be required.

I hope you can see from this elemental recital of what your government is doing that there is nothing complex, or radical in the process.

We had a bad banking situation. Some of our bankers had shown themselves either incompetent or dishonest in their handling of the people's funds. They had used the money entrusted to them in speculations and unwise loans. This was of course not true in the vast majority of our banks but it was true in enough of them to shock the people for a time into a sense of insecurity and to put them into a frame of mind where they did not differentiate, but seemed to assume that the acts of a comparative few had tainted them all. It was the Government's job to straighten out this situation and do it as quickly as possible -- and the job is being performed.

I do not promise you that every bank will be reopened or that individual losses will not be suffered, but there will be no losses that possibly could be avoided; and there would have been more and greater losses had we continued to drift. I can even promise you salvation for some at least of the sorely pressed banks. We shall be engaged not merely in reopening sound banks but in the creation of sound banks through reorganization. It has been wonderful to me to catch the note of confidence from all over the country. I can never be sufficiently grateful to the people for the loyal support they have given me in their acceptance of the judgment that has dictated our course, even though all of our processes may not have seemed clear to them.

After all there is an element in the readjustment of our financial system more important than currency, more important than gold, and that is the confidence of the people. Confidence and courage are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan. You people must have faith; you must not be stampeded by rumors or guesses. Let us unite in banishing fear. We have provided the machinery to restore our financial system; it is up to you to support and make it work. It is your problem no less than it is mine. Together we cannot fail.

3. Roosevelt is confident government intervention will fix the Great Depression. Why, according to Roosevelt, is the national government responsible for the economy?

Wednesday, March 25

History Unit: The Great Depression 1929-1941

Lesson 3: FDR's Second Bill of Rights

Lesson 3 Socratic Guiding Question: Keep this question in mind as you study!

What are a government's responsibilities to its people?

Objectives: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Briefly describe Roosevelt's economic guarantees.
2. Outline the responsibilities of citizens, local government, and the national government under FDR's new economic bill of rights.

Introduction to Lesson 3

In January 1944, President Roosevelt described a second set of economic liberties in his State of the Union Address to a joint session of the US Congress. In his speech, FDR claimed the US Constitution guaranteed political liberty, but that this political liberty was meaningless without basic economic guarantees to a livable wage, safe employment, and a stable national economy. As you read and annotate Roosevelt's Second Bill of Rights, keep the lesson's guiding question in mind: what are a government's responsibilities to its people?

Read and Annotate

Read and annotate President Roosevelt's *A Second Bill of Rights* delivered on January 11, 1944. You are required to read Roosevelt's work, but you may also listen to it here: <https://fdrfoundation.org/a-second-bill-of-rights-video/>.

Franklin Roosevelt's *A Second Bill of Rights*

It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one third or one fifth or one tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty. As our Nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. 'Necessitous men are not free men.' People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these [proposed new rights] are:

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;

The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;

The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

The right of every family to a decent home;

The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;

The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being. America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens. For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world.

Thursday, March 26

Unit: *My Ántonia* Writing

Lesson 4 Socratic Guiding Question: Keep this question in mind as you study!

How do the past and the present illuminate one another during the summer after Jim graduates?

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Recall the plot of the scene at the river and identify crucial details using all your senses.

Introduction to Lesson 4

Today we will be rereading a chapter from *My Ántonia* in preparation for a writing exercise tomorrow. There will be a chance to answer reading questions and reflect on the significances of certain details, such as the plow. Since this is a second reading, aim for depth of comprehension and insight.

Read and Annotate

Read and annotate the text below. Pay careful attention to details and note the many natural phenomena that strike the senses.

Book II, Chapter XIV

THE DAY AFTER COMMENCEMENT I moved my books and desk upstairs, to an empty room where I should be undisturbed, and I fell to studying in earnest. I worked off a year's trigonometry that summer, and began Virgil alone. Morning after morning I used to pace up and down my sunny little room, looking off at the distant river bluffs and the roll of the blond pastures between, scanning the 'Aeneid' aloud and committing long passages to memory. Sometimes in the evening Mrs. Harling called to me as I passed her gate, and asked me to come in and let her play for me. She was lonely for Charley, she said, and liked to have a boy about. Whenever my grandparents had misgivings, and began to wonder whether I was not too young to go off to college alone, Mrs. Harling took up my cause vigorously. Grandfather had such respect for her judgment that I knew he would not go against her.

I had only one holiday that summer. It was in July. I met Antonia downtown on Saturday afternoon, and learned that she and Tiny and Lena were going to the river next day with Anna Hansen—the elder was all in bloom now, and Anna wanted to make elderblow wine.

'Anna's to drive us down in the Marshalls' delivery wagon, and we'll take a nice lunch and have a picnic. Just us; nobody else. Couldn't you happen along, Jim? It would be like old times.'

I considered a moment. 'Maybe I can, if I won't be in the way.'

On Sunday morning I rose early and got out of Black Hawk while the dew was still heavy on the long meadow grasses. It was the high season for summer flowers. The pink bee-bush stood tall

along the sandy roadsides, and the cone-flowers and rose mallow grew everywhere. Across the wire fence, in the long grass, I saw a clump of flaming orange-coloured milkweed, rare in that part of the state. I left the road and went around through a stretch of pasture that was always cropped short in summer, where the gaillardia came up year after year and matted over the ground with the deep, velvety red that is in Bokhara carpets. The country was empty and solitary except for the larks that Sunday morning, and it seemed to lift itself up to me and to come very close.

The river was running strong for midsummer; heavy rains to the west of us had kept it full. I crossed the bridge and went upstream along the wooded shore to a pleasant dressing-room I knew among the dogwood bushes, all overgrown with wild grapevines. I began to undress for a swim. The girls would not be along yet. For the first time it occurred to me that I should be homesick for that river after I left it. The sandbars, with their clean white beaches and their little groves of willows and cottonwood seedlings, were a sort of No Man's Land, little newly created worlds that belonged to the Black Hawk boys. Charley Harling and I had hunted through these woods, fished from the fallen logs, until I knew every inch of the river shores and had a friendly feeling for every bar and shallow.

After my swim, while I was playing about indolently in the water, I heard the sound of hoofs and wheels on the bridge. I struck downstream and shouted, as the open spring wagon came into view on the middle span. They stopped the horse, and the two girls in the bottom of the cart stood up, steadying themselves by the shoulders of the two in front, so that they could see me better. They were charming up there, huddled together in the cart and peering down at me like curious deer when they come out of the thicket to drink. I found bottom near the bridge and stood up, waving to them.

'How pretty you look!' I called.

'So do you!' they shouted altogether, and broke into peals of laughter. Anna Hansen shook the reins and they drove on, while I zigzagged back to my inlet and clambered up behind an overhanging elm. I dried myself in the sun, and dressed slowly, reluctant to leave that green enclosure where the sunlight flickered so bright through the grapevine leaves and the woodpecker hammered away in the crooked elm that trailed out over the water. As I went along the road back to the bridge, I kept picking off little pieces of scaly chalk from the dried water gullies, and breaking them up in my hands.

When I came upon the Marshalls' delivery horse, tied in the shade, the girls had already taken their baskets and gone down the east road which wound through the sand and scrub. I could hear them calling to each other. The elder bushes did not grow back in the shady ravines between the bluffs, but in the hot, sandy bottoms along the stream, where their roots were always in moisture and their tops in the sun. The blossoms were unusually luxuriant and beautiful that summer.

I followed a cattle path through the thick under-brush until I came to a slope that fell away abruptly to the water's edge. A great chunk of the shore had been bitten out by some spring freshet, and the scar was masked by elder bushes, growing down to the water in flowery terraces. I did not touch them. I was overcome by content and drowsiness and by the warm silence about me. There was no sound but the high, singsong buzz of wild bees and the sunny gurgle of the water underneath. I peeped over the edge of the bank to see the little stream that made the noise; it flowed along perfectly clear over the sand and gravel, cut off from the muddy main current by a long sandbar. Down there, on the lower shelf of the bank, I saw Antonia, seated alone under the pagoda-like elders. She looked up when she heard me, and smiled, but I saw that she had been crying. I slid down into the soft sand beside her and asked her what was the matter.

‘It makes me homesick, Jimmy, this flower, this smell,’ she said softly. ‘We have this flower very much at home, in the old country. It always grew in our yard and my papa had a green bench and a table under the bushes. In summer, when they were in bloom, he used to sit there with his friend that played the trombone. When I was little I used to go down there to hear them talk—beautiful talk, like what I never hear in this country.’

‘What did they talk about?’ I asked her.

She sighed and shook her head. ‘Oh, I don’t know! About music, and the woods, and about God, and when they were young.’ She turned to me suddenly and looked into my eyes. ‘You think, Jimmy, that maybe my father’s spirit can go back to those old places?’

I told her about the feeling of her father’s presence I had on that winter day when my grandparents had gone over to see his dead body and I was left alone in the house. I said I felt sure then that he was on his way back to his own country, and that even now, when I passed his grave, I always thought of him as being among the woods and fields that were so dear to him. Antonia had the most trusting, responsive eyes in the world; love and credulousness seemed to look out of them with open faces.

‘Why didn’t you ever tell me that before? It makes me feel more sure for him.’ After a while she said: ‘You know, Jim, my father was different from my mother. He did not have to marry my mother, and all his brothers quarrelled with him because he did. I used to hear the old people at home whisper about it. They said he could have paid my mother money, and not married her. But he was older than she was, and he was too kind to treat her like that. He lived in his mother’s house, and she was a poor girl come in to do the work. After my father married her, my grandmother never let my mother come into her house again. When I went to my grandmother’s funeral was the only time I was ever in my grandmother’s house. Don’t that seem strange?’

While she talked, I lay back in the hot sand and looked up at the blue sky between the flat bouquets of elder. I could hear the bees humming and singing, but they stayed up in the sun above the flowers and did not come down into the shadow of the leaves. Antonia seemed to me that day exactly like the little girl who used to come to our house with Mr. Shimerda.

‘Some day, Tony, I am going over to your country, and I am going to the little town where you lived. Do you remember all about it?’

‘Jim,’ she said earnestly, ‘if I was put down there in the middle of the night, I could find my way all over that little town; and along the river to the next town, where my grandmother lived. My feet remember all the little paths through the woods, and where the big roots stick out to trip you. I ain’t never forgot my own country.’

There was a crackling in the branches above us, and Lena Lingard peered down over the edge of the bank.

‘You lazy things!’ she cried. ‘All this elder, and you two lying there! Didn’t you hear us calling you?’ Almost as flushed as she had been in my dream, she leaned over the edge of the bank and began to demolish our flowery pagoda. I had never seen her so energetic; she was panting with zeal, and the perspiration stood in drops on her short, yielding upper lip. I sprang to my feet and ran up the bank.

It was noon now, and so hot that the dogwoods and scrub-oaks began to turn up the silvery underside of their leaves, and all the foliage looked soft and wilted. I carried the lunch-basket to the top of one of the chalk bluffs, where even on the calmest days there was always a breeze.

The flat-topped, twisted little oaks threw light shadows on the grass. Below us we could see the windings of the river, and Black Hawk, grouped among its trees, and, beyond, the rolling country, swelling gently until it met the sky. We could recognize familiar farm-houses and

windmills. Each of the girls pointed out to me the direction in which her father's farm lay, and told me how many acres were in wheat that year and how many in corn.

'My old folks,' said Tiny Soderball, 'have put in twenty acres of rye. They get it ground at the mill, and it makes nice bread. It seems like my mother ain't been so homesick, ever since father's raised rye flour for her.'

'It must have been a trial for our mothers,' said Lena, 'coming out here and having to do everything different. My mother had always lived in town. She says she started behind in farm-work, and never has caught up.'

'Yes, a new country's hard on the old ones, sometimes,' said Anna thoughtfully. 'My grandmother's getting feeble now, and her mind wanders. She's forgot about this country, and thinks she's at home in Norway. She keeps asking mother to take her down to the waterside and the fish market. She craves fish all the time. Whenever I go home I take her canned salmon and mackerel.'

'Mercy, it's hot!' Lena yawned. She was supine under a little oak, resting after the fury of her elder-hunting, and had taken off the high-heeled slippers she had been silly enough to wear.

'Come here, Jim. You never got the sand out of your hair.' She began to draw her fingers slowly through my hair.

Antonia pushed her away. 'You'll never get it out like that,' she said sharply. She gave my head a rough touzling and finished me off with something like a box on the ear. 'Lena, you oughtn't to try to wear those slippers any more. They're too small for your feet. You'd better give them to me for Yulka.'

'All right,' said Lena good-naturedly, tucking her white stockings under her skirt. 'You get all Yulka's things, don't you? I wish father didn't have such bad luck with his farm machinery; then I could buy more things for my sisters. I'm going to get Mary a new coat this fall, if the sulky plough's never paid for!'

Tiny asked her why she didn't wait until after Christmas, when coats would be cheaper. 'What do you think of poor me?' she added; 'with six at home, younger than I am? And they all think I'm rich, because when I go back to the country I'm dressed so fine!' She shrugged her shoulders. 'But, you know, my weakness is playthings. I like to buy them playthings better than what they need.'

'I know how that is,' said Anna. 'When we first came here, and I was little, we were too poor to buy toys. I never got over the loss of a doll somebody gave me before we left Norway. A boy on the boat broke her and I still hate him for it.'

'I guess after you got here you had plenty of live dolls to nurse, like me!' Lena remarked cynically.

'Yes, the babies came along pretty fast, to be sure. But I never minded. I was fond of them all. The youngest one, that we didn't any of us want, is the one we love best now.'

Lena sighed. 'Oh, the babies are all right; if only they don't come in winter. Ours nearly always did. I don't see how mother stood it. I tell you what, girls'—she sat up with sudden energy—'I'm going to get my mother out of that old sod house where she's lived so many years. The men will never do it. Johnnie, that's my oldest brother, he's wanting to get married now, and build a house for his girl instead of his mother. Mrs. Thomas says she thinks I can move to some other town pretty soon, and go into business for myself. If I don't get into business, I'll maybe marry a rich gambler.'

‘That would be a poor way to get on,’ said Anna sarcastically. ‘I wish I could teach school, like Selma Kronn. Just think! She’ll be the first Scandinavian girl to get a position in the high school. We ought to be proud of her.’

Selma was a studious girl, who had not much tolerance for giddy things like Tiny and Lena; but they always spoke of her with admiration.

Tiny moved about restlessly, fanning herself with her straw hat. ‘If I was smart like her, I’d be at my books day and night. But she was born smart—and look how her father’s trained her! He was something high up in the old country.’

‘So was my mother’s father,’ murmured Lena, ‘but that’s all the good it does us! My father’s father was smart, too, but he was wild. He married a Lapp. I guess that’s what’s the matter with me; they say Lapp blood will out.’

‘A real Lapp, Lena?’ I exclaimed. ‘The kind that wear skins?’

‘I don’t know if she wore skins, but she was a Lapps all right, and his folks felt dreadful about it. He was sent up North on some government job he had, and fell in with her. He would marry her.’

‘But I thought Lapland women were fat and ugly, and had squint eyes, like Chinese?’ I objected.

‘I don’t know, maybe. There must be something mighty taking about the Lapp girls, though; mother says the Norwegians up North are always afraid their boys will run after them.’

In the afternoon, when the heat was less oppressive, we had a lively game of ‘Pussy Wants a Corner,’ on the flat bluff-top, with the little trees for bases. Lena was Pussy so often that she finally said she wouldn’t play any more. We threw ourselves down on the grass, out of breath.

‘Jim,’ Antonia said dreamily, ‘I want you to tell the girls about how the Spanish first came here, like you and Charley Harling used to talk about. I’ve tried to tell them, but I leave out so much.’

They sat under a little oak, Tony resting against the trunk and the other girls leaning against her and each other, and listened to the little I was able to tell them about Coronado and his search for the Seven Golden Cities. At school we were taught that he had not got so far north as Nebraska, but had given up his quest and turned back somewhere in Kansas. But Charley Harling and I had a strong belief that he had been along this very river. A farmer in the county north of ours, when he was breaking sod, had turned up a metal stirrup of fine workmanship, and a sword with a Spanish inscription on the blade. He lent these relics to Mr. Harling, who brought them home with him. Charley and I scoured them, and they were on exhibition in the Harling office all summer. Father Kelly, the priest, had found the name of the Spanish maker on the sword and an abbreviation that stood for the city of Cordova.

‘And that I saw with my own eyes,’ Antonia put in triumphantly. ‘So Jim and Charley were right, and the teachers were wrong!’

The girls began to wonder among themselves. Why had the Spaniards come so far? What must this country have been like, then? Why had Coronado never gone back to Spain, to his riches and his castles and his king? I couldn’t tell them. I only knew the schoolbooks said he ‘died in the wilderness, of a broken heart.’

‘More than him has done that,’ said Antonia sadly, and the girls murmured assent.

We sat looking off across the country, watching the sun go down. The curly grass about us was on fire now. The bark of the oaks turned red as copper. There was a shimmer of gold on the brown river. Out in the stream the sandbars glittered like glass, and the light trembled in the willow thickets as if little flames were leaping among them. The breeze sank to stillness. In the ravine a ringdove mourned plaintively, and somewhere off in the bushes an owl hooted. The girls sat listless, leaning against each other. The long fingers of the sun touched their foreheads.

Presently we saw a curious thing: There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. We sprang to our feet, straining our eyes toward it. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing in the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share—black against the molten red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun.

Even while we whispered about it, our vision disappeared; the ball dropped and dropped until the red tip went beneath the earth. The fields below us were dark, the sky was growing pale, and that forgotten plough had sunk back to its own littleness somewhere on the prairie.

Using the text above, answer the following questions:

1. Who is going to the river? Why?

2. Where does Jim first see them?

3. Why does Antonia cry?

4. Describe the weather.

5. What kind of girl is Selma?

6. What relic was found by a local farmer? How does Jim interpret it?

7. Describe the final scene of the chapter. What happens? Why? What is its significance for Jim? What effect does it have on your understanding of the book?

Friday, March 27

Unit: *My Ántonia* by Willa Cather

Lesson 5 Socratic Guiding Question: Keep this question in mind as you study!

What is the significance of the vision of the plow against the sun for Jim? What is it for the book as a whole?

Objectives: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Write insightful questions and practice deep reading of a single passage.

Introduction to Lesson 5

Today we will be practicing deep reading of a single excerpt from *My Ántonia*. You will be noting as many things as possible about a small piece of text and tying your observations into a larger whole in the form of questions that can serve to illuminate the novel. This is a chance to demonstrate your mastery of the text.

Read and Formulate Questions:

Read the following paragraph carefully:

Presently we saw a curious thing: There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. We sprang to our feet, straining our eyes toward it. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing in the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within

the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share—black against the molten red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun. Even while we whispered about it, our vision disappeared; the ball dropped and dropped until the red tip went beneath the earth. The fields below us were dark, the sky was growing pale, and that forgotten plough had sunk back to its own littleness somewhere on the prairie.

The last paragraph is 48 words long. I want you to come up with 48 questions about the above text that illustrate your understanding of the text as a whole!

Here's an example of what you're expected to do using a different paragraph:

“As I sat down to my book at last, my old dream about Lena coming across the harvest-field in her short skirt seemed to me like the memory of an actual experience. It floated before me on the page like a picture, and underneath it stood the mournful line: ‘Optima dies... prima fugit.’”

1. Why is the line from Virgil associated with Lena in Jim's memory?
2. What is the significance of the curved harvesting tool in the dream?
3. Why does Jim dream of Lena at all?
4. Does Jim love Lena?
5. How is his love for her different from the love he feels for others?
6. Why does the dream take place on a harvest field?
7. Are dreams and memories as distinct as we would like to believe?
8. Why does the dream come back to Jim as he sits down to his book?
9. Is Jim's reflection a scholarly one?
10. Does the dream affect the way Jim sees Lena?
11. Why do “the best days flee first?”
12. Did Virgil have in mind a similar memory when he wrote this line?
13. 14. Does literature illuminate life or does life illuminate literature?
15. What makes certain days “best”?
16. Why does Jim see the line as “mournful”?
17. Why is the Latin line which is so clearly linked with Lena used as an epigraph for *My Antonia*?
18. Why do the best days “flee”?
19. Why is Lena wearing a short skirt?
20. Why didn't Jim ever dream of Antonia in this way?
21. There were many hardships in the lives of Antonia, Lena and Jim when they were young. Did this change the way Jim sees the past?
22. Does Jim love Lena or merely lust after her?
23. Does Jim love Lena or the memory of their past?
24. Jim says that the dream “seemed to me like the memory of an actual experience.” Is he a trustworthy narrator?
25. Why is the scythe not mentioned here but the skirt is?
26. What significance does clothing have for Lena?
27. Why is the memory is described as floating?
28. Does it have anything to do with it originally being a fantasy?
29. Does Gaston Cleric's influence change how Jim experiences his past, including this memory?
30. Does Jim's interest in this line from Virgil lead us to a deeper understanding of his character?
31. What makes the dream like a memory?
32. Does Jim always firmly distinguish between fact and fantasy?
33. Are Jim's memories of Antonia dreamlike?
34. Does this passage point towards Jim's change of attitude towards his capacity for becoming a scholar?
35. What is the significance of Jim equating memory with image?
36. Are images less trustworthy than words?
37. How does poetry shape Jim's memories?
38. Is this consistent with how Jim experiences memory in other parts of the book?
39. Why does Jim need European literature to illuminate his American experience?
40. Is Jim blinded to who Lena has become by memories from their childhood and adolescence?
41. Does this help the reader understand how Jim see the

difference between country and city life? 42. Does Jim expect Lena’s character to be consistent in the country and the city? 43. If so, is this justified? 44. Do our memories reflect the truth of the past or are they largely composed of fantasy? 45. How has Jim’s interpretation and memory of the dream been influenced by his present circumstances? 46. Is Jim viewing Lena in a positive or negative light in this dream? 47. What does this dream reveal about the forces that shape what Jim values? 48. What were Jim’s best days? 49. Does Jim think Virgil is right? 50. Jim claims moments before that if it weren’t for girls such as Lena, poetry would not exist. Does the above passage try to justify this claim? 51. What conclusions, if any, can we draw about Jim’s purpose in writing the book if this is true? 52. Is the book a kind of heroic American poetry in prose? 53. Did Jim ever see Lena accurately? 54. Does this dream foreshadow the way Lena will distract Jim from his studies?

Your questions should demonstrate a strong grasp of the book and should be approached with the attention you would devote to writing an essay. Avoid silliness; be concise. Make connections we have *not* made in class. Remember, you only need to write 48 questions. The passage is included again below. Good luck!

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