

Packet #5

Week of May 18

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Due Date: Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Please also drop off with your packets the book: The Hunger Games by the due date of May 26, 2020.

Read

Excerpt from Book I: The Shimerdas

Chapter VII

- 1 Much as I liked *Ántonia*, I hated a superior tone that she sometimes took with me. She was four years older than I, to be sure, and had seen more of the world; but I was a boy and she was a girl, and I resented her protecting manner. Before the autumn was over, she began to treat me more like an equal and to **defer** to me in other things than reading lessons. This change came about from an adventure we had together.
- 2 One day when I rode over to the Shimerdas' I found *Ántonia* starting off on foot for Russian Peter's house, to borrow a spade *Ambrosch* needed. I offered to take her on the pony, and she got up behind me. There had been another black frost the night before, and the air was clear and heady as wine. Within a week all the blooming roads had been despoiled, hundreds of miles of yellow sunflowers had been transformed into brown, rattling, burry stalks.
- 3 We found Russian Peter digging his potatoes. We were glad to go in and get warm by his kitchen stove and to see his squashes and Christmas melons, heaped in the storeroom for winter. As we rode away with the spade, *Ántonia* suggested that we stop at the prairie-dog-town and dig into one of the holes. We could find out whether they ran straight down, or were horizontal, like mole-holes; whether they had underground connections; whether the owls had nests down there, lined with feathers. We might get some puppies, or owl eggs, or snakeskins.
- 4 The dog-town was spread out over perhaps ten acres. The grass had been nibbled short and even, so this stretch was not shaggy and red like the surrounding country, but grey and velvety. The holes were several yards apart, and were disposed with a good deal of regularity, almost as if the town had been laid out in streets and avenues. One always felt that an orderly and very sociable kind of life was going on there. I picketed *Dude* down in a draw, and we went wandering about, looking for a hole that would be easy to dig. The dogs were out, as usual, dozens of them, sitting up on their hind legs over the doors of their houses. As we approached, they barked, shook their tails at us, and scurried underground. Before the mouths of the holes were little patches of sand and gravel, scratched up, we supposed, from a long way below the surface. Here and there, in the town, we came on larger gravel patches, several yards away from any hole. If the dogs had scratched the sand up in excavating, how had they carried it so far? It was on one of these gravel beds that I met my adventure.
- 5 We were examining a big hole with two entrances. The burrow sloped into the ground at a gentle angle, so that we could see where the two corridors united, and the floor was dusty from use, like a little highway over which much travel went. I was walking backward, in a crouching position, when I heard *Ántonia*

scream. She was standing opposite me, pointing behind me and shouting something in Bohemian. I whirled round, and there, on one of those dry gravel beds, was the biggest snake I had ever seen. He was sunning himself, after the cold night, and he must have been asleep when *Ántonia* screamed. When I turned, he was lying in long loose waves, like a letter 'W.' He twitched and began to coil slowly. He was not merely a big snake, I thought—he was a circus monstrosity. His **abominable** muscularity, his **loathsome**, fluid motion, somehow made me sick. He was as thick as my leg, and looked as if millstones couldn't crush the disgusting vitality out of him. He lifted his hideous little head, and rattled. I didn't run because I didn't think of it—if my back had been against a stone wall I couldn't have felt more cornered. I saw his coils tighten—now he would spring, spring his length, I remembered. I ran up and drove at his head with my spade, struck him fairly across the neck, and in a minute he was all about my feet in wavy loops. I struck now from hate. *Ántonia*, barefooted as she was, ran up behind me. Even after I had pounded his ugly head flat, his body kept on coiling and winding, doubling and falling back on itself. I walked away and turned my back. I felt seasick.

6 *Ántonia* came after me, crying, 'O Jimmy, he not bite you? You sure? Why you not run when I say?'

7 'What did you jabber Bohunk for? You might have told me there was a snake behind me!' I said petulantly.

8 'I know I am just awful, Jim, I was so scared.' She took my handkerchief from my pocket and tried to wipe my face with it, but I snatched it away from her. I suppose I looked as sick as I felt.

9 'I never know you was so brave, Jim,' she went on comfortingly. '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 kawntree so big snake like you kill.'

10 She went on in this strain until I began to think that I had longed for this opportunity, and had hailed it with joy. Cautiously we went back to the snake; he was still groping with his tail, turning up his ugly belly in the light. A faint, fetid smell came from him, and a thread of green liquid oozed from his crushed head.

11 'Look, Tony, that's his poison,' I said.

12 I took a long piece of string from my pocket, and she lifted his head with the spade while I tied a noose around it. We pulled him out straight and measured him by my riding-quirt; he was about five and a half feet long. He had twelve rattles, but they were broken off before they began to taper, so I insisted that he must once have had twenty-four. I explained to *Ántonia* how this meant that he was twenty-four years old, that he must have been there when white men first came, left on from buffalo and Indian times. As I turned him over, I began to feel proud of him, to have a kind of respect for his age and size. He seemed like the ancient, eldest Evil. Certainly his kind have left horrible unconscious memories in all warm-blooded life. When we dragged him down into the draw, Dude sprang off to the end of his tether and shivered all over—wouldn't let us come near him.

13 We decided that *Ántonia* should ride Dude home, and I would walk. As she rode along slowly, her bare legs

swinging against the pony's sides, she kept shouting back to me about how astonished everybody would be. I followed with the spade over my shoulder, dragging my snake. Her exultation was contagious. The great land had never looked to me so big and free. If the red grass were full of rattlers, I was equal to them all. Nevertheless, I stole furtive glances behind me now and then to see that no avenging mate, older and bigger than my quarry, was racing up from the rear.

14 The sun had set when we reached our garden and went down the draw toward the house. Otto Fuchs was the first one we met. He was sitting on the edge of the cattle-pond, having a quiet pipe before supper. *Ántonia* called him to come quick and look. He did not say anything for a minute, but scratched his head and turned the snake over with his boot.

15 'Where did you run onto that beauty, Jim?'

16 'Up at the dog-town,' I answered **laconically**.

17 'Kill him yourself? How come you to have a weepoon?'

18 'We'd been up to Russian Peter's, to borrow a spade for Ambrosch.'

19 Otto shook the ashes out of his pipe and squatted down to count the rattles. 'It was just luck you had a tool,' he said cautiously. 'Gosh! I wouldn't want to do any business with that fellow myself, unless I had a fence-post along. Your grandmother's snake-cane wouldn't more than tickle him. He could stand right up and talk to you, he could. Did he fight hard?'

20 *Ántonia* broke in: 'He fight something awful! He is all over Jimmy's boots. I scream for him to run, but he just hit and hit that snake like he was crazy.'

21 Otto winked at me. After *Ántonia* rode on he said: 'Got him in the head first crack, didn't you? That was just as well.'

22 We hung him up to the windmill, and when I went down to the kitchen, I found *Ántonia* standing in the middle of the floor, telling the story with a great deal of color.

23 Subsequent experiences with rattlesnakes taught me that my first encounter was fortunate in circumstance. My big rattler was old, and had led too easy a life; there was not much fight in him. He had probably lived there for years, with a fat prairie-dog for breakfast whenever he felt like it, a sheltered home, even an owl-feather bed, perhaps, and he had forgot that the world doesn't owe rattlers a living. A snake of his size, in fighting trim, would be more than any boy could handle. So in reality it was a mock adventure; the game was fixed for me by chance, as it probably was for many a dragon-slayer. I had been adequately armed by Russian Peter; the snake was old and lazy; and I had *Ántonia* beside me, to appreciate and admire.

24 That snake hung on our corral fence for several days; some of the neighbors came to see it and agreed that it was the biggest rattler ever killed in those parts. This was enough for *Ántonia*. She liked me better from that time on, and she never took a **supercilious** air with me again. I had killed a big snake—I was now a big fellow.

Annotations

Name:

Date:

Think Questions: My Antonia

Instructions: Remember to use complete sentences and evidence from the text.

1. Refer to one or more details from the text to describe Jim and Antonia's relationship before the incident with the rattlesnake. Use evidence that is directly stated and inferences that you draw from clues in the text.

2. Use details from the text to write two or three sentences to describe Jim's reaction to the rattlesnake he encounters in the prairie-dog-town.

3. Write several sentences explaining how the incident with the rattlesnake changes the relationship between Jim and Ántonia. Support your answer with specific evidence from the text.

4. Use context to determine the meaning of the word **laconically** as it is used in paragraph 16 of My Ántonia. Write your definition of “laconically” and tell how you figured out the meaning of the word. Then verify the meaning you inferred in a print or digital dictionary.

5. Determine the meaning of **supercilious** in the last paragraph. Write your definition of “supercilious” and tell how you determined the meaning of the word.



Sketch of Atonia:



The world is a crazy time right now and I know that you all must be feeling a multitude of emotions. On the next page I have given you questions to get you started. Answer the questions or just write about how you are feeling/ how you were feeling during this pandemic.

1. How has the virus disrupted your daily life? What are you missing? School, sports, competitions, extracurricular activities, social plans, vacations or anything else?
2. What effect has this crisis had on your own mental and emotional health?
3. What changes, big or small, are you noticing in the world around you?

