

INTRODUCTION

Depuis la session de juin 1995, le baccalauréat en série littéraire comporte une épreuve orale de spécialité dite "langue de complément LV1".

I. ŒUVRES AU PROGRAMME

La liste des œuvres étant en partie renouvelée tous les deux ans, le programme de lecture retenu pour les sessions 2009 et 2010 est le suivant :

- **Anciennes œuvres** (de juin 2007 à juin 2010)

Auster P., *The Brooklyn Follies*

Gaines E.J., *A Lesson Before Dying*

Johnston J., *How Many Miles to Babylon?*

Keats J., *Selected Poems* (édition Aubier)

Pinter H., *The Caretaker*

- **Nouvelles œuvres** (de juin 2009 à juin 2012)

Cather W., *My Ántonia*

Lessing D., *The Fifth Child*

Martel Y., *Life of Pi*

Melville H., *Billy Budd*

Naidoo B., *The Other Side of Truth*

Shakespeare W., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Woolf V., *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories*

II. MODALITÉS DE L'ÉPREUVE

Les modalités de l'épreuve sont précisées comme suit dans le *Bulletin Officiel* n° 18 du 1^{er} mai 2008 :

"Il est rappelé que la première partie de l'épreuve comprend le compte rendu, par le candidat, d'un des passages les plus significatifs de l'œuvre complète étudiée et un

échange, entre l'examineur et le candidat, portant sur l'ensemble de cette œuvre. Pour cela, le candidat présente une liste d'extraits représentant un volume global d'environ vingt pages.

La seconde partie de l'épreuve est un entretien prenant appui sur un document non étudié en classe.

Pour l'anglais, langue de complément LV2 en série littéraire, LV1 ou LV2 en série économique et sociale, les professeurs sont libres d'utiliser ou non le programme de lecture prévu ici.

Lorsque les professeurs ont procédé à l'étude d'une œuvre complète en classe, l'épreuve est identique à celle de la langue de complément LV1 en série littéraire. Dans le cas contraire, la première partie de l'épreuve, compte rendu et échange avec l'examineur, porte sur un des textes étudiés en classe ; la seconde partie demeure un entretien prenant appui sur un document non étudié en classe."

Pour le ministre de l'éducation nationale et par délégation

Le directeur général de l'enseignement scolaire Jean-Louis NEMBRINI

III. LE PRÉSENT OUVRAGE

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, Dover Thrift Editions, 1994.

L'objectif principal de cet ouvrage est de permettre à l'élève d'acquérir une bonne connaissance de l'œuvre en l'étudiant efficacement selon une méthode d'approche en quatre parties.

- ➔ **General Background** : Cette première partie propose une biographie de l'auteur, ainsi qu'une présentation du contexte historique et géographique.
- ➔ **A Study of the Novel** : Cette deuxième partie concerne l'étude des aspects fondamentaux du roman. Elle contient un résumé de l'intrigue, une étude de la structure du roman et des personnages ainsi qu'une présentation des principaux thèmes.
- ➔ **Worksheets** : Ces fiches, au nombre de douze, permettent une lecture active, progressive et détaillée de la totalité de l'œuvre. Chaque worksheet comporte une aide lexicale (**Vocabulary**), des exercices de compréhension (**Landmarks**) et des questions de réflexion (**Main Points**). Certaines fiches se concluent par des

exercices permettant une analyse détaillée d'un extrait plus court correspondant aux modalités de l'épreuve du Baccalauréat (**Closer Analysis**).

→ **Test Sheets** : Ces fiches, au nombre de quatre, permettent à l'élève d'effectuer un travail de synthèse en vérifiant et approfondissant quelques aspects du roman : structure du roman, références littéraires, personnages, symboles, images et principaux thèmes.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

I. A BIOGRAPHY OF WILLA CATHER

Read the author's biography whilst memorising as much information as you can.

- Dec. 7 1873 Willa Cather was born in Black Creek Valley near Winchester in Virginia. Her parents were Charles and Mary Virginia Cather and she was the eldest of seven children. Her nickname was Willie and she later adopted the name Willa for herself.
- 1883 Charles Cather decided to move to Nebraska to join his father and brother who were farming in the region. Ten-year-old Willa was thus forced to leave the landscape she loved and move to an area where the landscape was "as bare as a piece of sheet iron." It was here that she got to know many immigrant families who were also going through the difficult process of adapting to a new environment. Willa spent much of her time listening to the stories of these immigrant pioneer women; women who came from diverse countries including Scandinavia, France, Russia, Germany and Bohemia.
- 1884 Willa's father decided to give up farming. The family moved to the small prairie town of Red Cloud and Willa's father opened up a real-estate (*agence immobilière*) and insurance office. It was during her time here that Willa became friends with many of the daughters of these different immigrant women—girls like Annie Sadilek. Willa also befriended native-born Americans, in particular the Miner family which included Mrs Miner and her daughters Irene and Carrie. This family was used as the basis for the Harling family in *My Ántonia*. She also heard the black pianist Blind Boone, who was an occasional visitor to the town of Red Cloud.

- 1886 For six years Willa challenged the norms for girls at that time: she cut her hair short and started wearing boys' clothing. She also called herself William Cather.
- 1890 Willa graduated from Red Cloud High School. She then went on to enrol in the Latin School in the state capitol Lincoln—this was in preparation for further studies at the University of Nebraska.
- 1891 Started studying at the University of Nebraska.
- 1892 Her first fiction "Peter" was published in a Boston magazine. This short story later became part of the novel *My Ántonia*.
- 1895 She graduated from university and a year later she began to edit 'Home Monthly' in Pittsburgh. During this time she also wrote many short stories which were published in the magazine.
- 1903 She published a collection of poetry called *April Twilights*.
1906-1912 She worked in New York for McClure's magazine and became its managing editor. In 1912 she decided to leave the magazine and devoted her time to writing novels.
- 1912 *Alexander's Bridge* was serialised (*publié en feuilleton*) in McClure's and then published later that year by Houghton Mifflin.
- 1913 *O Pioneers* was published.
- 1916 In this year, Willa's closest friend and love of her life Isabelle McClung decided to get married to the violinist Jim Hambourg. This was a difficult moment for Willa who suffered terribly from this separation.
That summer she returned to Red Cloud and once again met up with Annie Pavelka (formerly Annie Sadilek).
When she returned to New York she started writing the novel *My Ántonia*, which was eventually published in 1918 by Houghton Mifflin.

- 1923 *A Lost Lady* was published. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Literature for *One of Ours* which was published in 1922.
- 1926 *My Ántonia* was reissued but with a new introduction by Willa Cather.
- 1927 *Cather's Death Comes for the Archbishop* was published.
- 1930s -1940s During this time Cather's literary reputation came under attack. Many critics felt that her work did not deal with the social problems of the times; problems which other works such as *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck did deal with.
- 1947 Cather continued to write and publish novels and short stories until her death on April 24, 1947. She ordered that all her letters be burned when she died although many do remain. Willa Cather was buried in New Hampshire. The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation was later set up in Red Cloud to honour her memory.

Main Points: Autobiographical Elements

Making links between Cather's own life and *My Ántonia*: True or False?

1. The character of Ántonia was based on an immigrant girl Cather met in Nebraska.
2. Like Ántonia, Willa Cather also dressed as a boy and she even changed her name to Willie.
3. Willer Cather's family moved from Virginia to the town of Black Hawk in Nebraska just like Jim at the beginning of the story.
4. Willa Cather's parents died when she was ten years old just like Jim's.
5. During her childhood Willa Cather spent time with many immigrant families and listened to their stories.
6. The Harling family is based on the Miner family who Cather met whilst living in Nebraska.
7. One similarity shared by Cather and Jim is that they both attended university.
8. In later life, Cather also made an unhappy marriage similar to Jim's.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: LIFE ON THE PLAINS

The novel *My Ántonia* takes place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the story takes place in Nebraska and deals with life on the plains at that time (see Map p. 16).

1. The Plains

Prior to the American Civil War in the 1840s and 1850s, many white settlers had crossed the Great Plains on their way to California, where they hoped to make their fortune in the gold mines. This vast grassland area seemed uninviting to them, and as a result they were more than happy to leave it to wandering Native American tribes like the Sioux.

In 1865 when the American Civil War ended, the area known as the Great Plains was still largely uninhabited (*inhabité*) by white settlers (*colons*), most of whom had only gone as far west as the Mississippi River. The Great Plains which stretched (*s'étendaient*) west from the Mississippi as far as the Rocky Mountains remained the home of wandering Native American tribes, whose survival depended on the buffaloes (*bisons*) they followed and hunted.

By 1890, however, things had very much changed and the Great Plains had nearly all been divided up into states and territories. Instead of tribes of Native Americans, it was now home to cattle (*bétail*) ranchers, shepherds (*bergers*) and wheat (*blé*) farmers. In fact, the Native Americans were being increasingly pushed off the land and onto reservations.

2. Rail Travel

The building of railroads across America also encouraged more settlers as it was now much easier to gain access to the plains than before. Transcontinental railroad companies such as Union Pacific also offered cheap land to settlers. They advertised as far away as Europe for immigrants to come to the plains and set up homesteads (*propriétés, fermes*). Cather depicts this reality by populating her novel *My Ántonia* with characters from all over Europe: the Austrian Otto Fuchs works on Jim's grandparents' farm; the Bohemian Shimerda family are his neighbours; Jim also meets the two Russians, Peter and Pavel; and finally in Black Hawk he is introduced to many different Scandinavian girls such as Tiny Soderball and Lena Lingard.

NB: Bohemia is now part of the western region of the Czech Republic in Eastern Europe.

By 1869, the first railroad which crossed the American continent had been completed. By 1884, there were four major railroads going from east to west. The journey now only took days rather than weeks and so even more settlers were encouraged to move westwards. At the beginning of the story Jim Burden is described travelling from Virginia to Nebraska by train, although for him it still seems an “interminable journey across the great midland plain of North America.” (Book I, ch I, p. 5)

3. The Homestead Act

Another major cause of the increase in settlers to the plains area was the 1862 Homestead Act. The aim of this law was indeed to encourage families to move westwards and populate the deserted plains area of America. It stated that any American citizen, or immigrant who wished to become a citizen, could settle on a piece of public land. If they stayed on that piece of land for five years it would become theirs. Each of these pieces of land consisted of 160 acres (\approx demi-hectares).

4. Statistics

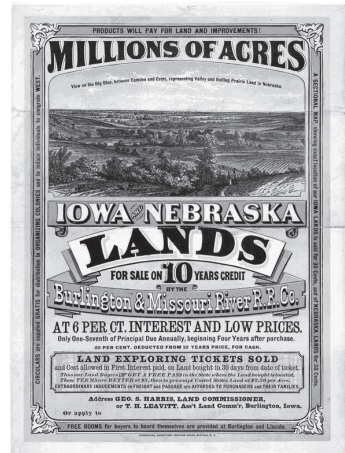
In the 1870s and 1880s 4½ million people moved westwards and nearly half of that number settled on the Great Plains. For many European immigrants, veterans from the American Civil War (1861-1865) and poor farmers from the East, the plains offered a new hope for the future.

5. Difficulties

Whilst the Homestead Act seemed to offer any man or woman a chance to partake in the American Dream, the reality of life on the plains was far different and these new settlers faced many hardships (*difficultés*).

a. Isolation

One of the major problems was that of isolation and remoteness (*éloignement*) with people living miles from any towns. Cather depicts this in her novel through the character of Mr Shimerda who finds it very difficult to adjust to his new life in such a hostile environment.



A railroad company poster advertising land for settlers.

b. Weather

New settlers were also forced to deal with the weather in this area. Firstly, low rainfall throughout the year made it hard to grow crops (*cultures*). Secondly, in the summer it became extremely hot, and farmers had to toil in the fields in what Jim calls the “breathless brilliant heat” (Book I, ch XIX, p. 67). The heat was sometimes so powerful that it even burnt up crops and there was a constant danger of prairie fires throughout the long dry periods. Prairie winds would also sometimes blow away the top soil (*terre*) leaving behind infertile land. The summer months brought with them the danger of fierce storms and destructive floods (*inondations*).

Settlers faced cold winters when temperatures sometimes dropped to -40°F . Violent and windy snowstorms could also wreak havoc (*causer des dégâts*). Surviving the winter in such a harsh place was a great test for all new settlers as illustrated by the Shimerda family for whom “the snow and the bitter weather had disheartened them all.” (Book I, ch X, p. 39)

Between 1874 and 1877 a plague of grasshoppers (*sauterelles*) swarmed across the plains eating everything in their way.

c. Housing

Another difficulty faced by new arrivals to the plains was the lack of available timber (*bois de construction*). Trees were found near rivers and this type of land was of course quickly snapped up (*on se les arrachait*). Most prairies were treeless and so homes had to be built from what was available. The Shimerdas arrive to find that they will have to make do (*se débrouiller*) in an ill-kept sod house (*sorte de maison en terre*). These houses were built out of sods—thick pieces of earth and grass roots which were used to build both the roof and the walls. Wood was only used for the door and window frames. If well-built they could prove to be warm in the winter and cool in the summer; however, in the Shimerdas’ case the house proves to be too cold to withstand (*résister à*) the harsh winter. When the Burdens go to visit, the description of the spare and cold house contrasts strongly with the fine wooden house owned by Jim’s grandparents.

6. Improvements

Faced with so many difficulties some homesteaders gave up and decided to move back east. Others stayed on and their lives were made easier by new inventions: first of all, the use of ploughs [*plauz*] (*charrues*) with steel blades (*lames en acier*) made it easier to cut through the hard prairie sod and cultivate the soil underneath; secondly mechanical thrashing (*battre*) and reaping machines meant that wheat crops could be harvested at a much quicker pace; thirdly, wind-driven pumps allowed water to be

raised from the dry surface of the prairie lands; and finally, barbed wire (*fil barbelé*), which was invented in 1874 by Joseph Gidden, was used to create fences (*clôtures*) and therefore prevent cattle from wandering on to fields and destroying crops.

NB: plough (GB) = plow (US)/thrash = thresh

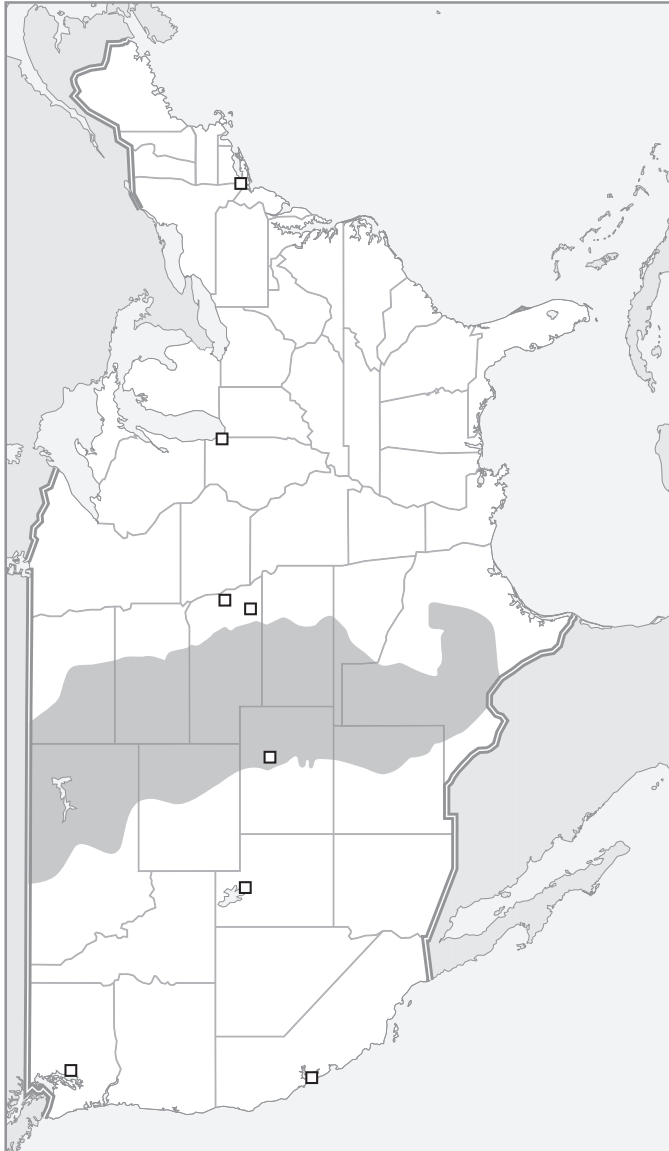
Main Points: The Plains

1. In the novel *My Ántonia*, does Willa Cather explore the above-mentioned difficulties, or does she paint a more idyllic picture of life on the plains?
2. Which of these difficulties do you think would have been the most serious?

MAP EXERCISE

- a. Colour the plains area in green on the map (page 16).
- b. Label the states which make up the plains: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North and South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming.
- c. Label the following places which are mentioned in the novel:

Places	Events	Where in story?
New York	This is where Jim works as a lawyer.	Introduction
Chicago	Otto Fuchs accompanies a woman here.	Book I Ch. IX
Virginia	Jim's parents' farm. Jake Marpole also works here.	Book I Ch. I
Guston, Colorado	Otto and Jake work in the Yankee Girl mine.	Book II Ch. I
Omaha	Mr Gardener runs the hotel when his wife goes here. Wick Cutter sets up (<i>installer</i>) a Swedish girl here as a prostitute. The Cutters leave Ántonia in charge of their house.	Book II Ch. VII Book II Ch. XI Book II Ch. XV
Lincoln [ˈlɪŋkən]	Jim goes to university in Nebraska. Lena works here.	Book III
Harvard College, Massachusetts	Gaston Cleric is offered an instructorship (post as a teacher) here. Jim studies here after leaving Lincoln.	Book III Ch. IV
Seattle [siˈætl]	Tiny Soderball runs a lodging house here.	Book IV Ch. I
San Francisco	At the end of the novel Tiny and Lena live here.	Book IV Ch. I
Salt Lake City	Jim meets Tiny here. She tells him about Ántonia.	Book V Ch. I
Denver	Ántonia goes to Denver to marry Larry Donovan.	Book IV Ch. III
Florida	Anton Cuzak raises oranges in a grove.	Book V Ch. II



KEY (légende) : ■ plains □ cities

Map : The US states which make up the Great Plains.

A STUDY OF THE NOVEL

I. SUMMARY OF THE PLOT

- a. Read the summary whilst memorising the information.
- b. Answer the main points.

Introduction

The novel starts with an unnamed frame narrator meeting **Jim Burden**, a childhood friend on a train. Jim is a successful lawyer living in New York but his marriage seems to be an unhappy one. He is haunted by memories of **Ántonia**, the Bohemian girl he met as a child whilst living on the **Nebraska plains**. A few months later, Jim hands (*remet*) a manuscript of his memories to the narrator. He calls it *My Ántonia*.

Book I: The Shimerdas

Jim's tale starts when he is ten years old and both his parents have just passed away (1). Consequently, he leaves his Virginia home and travels to **Black Hawk** Nebraska to live with his grandparents on their farm. A farmhand, Jake Marpole, accompanies him on his journey. During the seemingly never-ending train journey, he first hears about a **Bohemian family** called the **Shimerdas**.

Jim settles into life with his simple but caring **grandparents** on their farm. He enjoys the sense of freedom which prairie life allows. The Burden family also get to know (2) their neighbours, the Shimerdas. Jim befriends (3) their daughter Ántonia and together they enjoy exploring the natural world around them.

The Shimerda family find it difficult to adapt to their new life, and during the harsh winter Mr Shimerda commits suicide. Ántonia gives up her education and starts working in the fields in order to help her family. A feud (4) takes place between the two families but at the end of the first book Jim and Ántonia are reconciled.

Book II: The Hired Girls

At the age of thirteen, Jim and his grandparents move to the town of Black Hawk so that he can continue his education. Ántonia also moves to town and starts working for the **Harling family**. At the same time other immigrant country girls move to Black Hawk in order to find work and they become known as the **hired girls**. Their behaviour is frowned upon (5) by the rest of the townspeople but Jim delights (6) in their company.

Dancing becomes very popular, especially with *Ántonia*. One day, Mr Harling gives *Ántonia* an ultimatum: give up dancing or find another job. She decides to move out of the Harlings' and goes to work for **Wick Cutter**, a disreputable (7) man. After being assaulted (8) by Wick Cutter, Jim lays the blame on (9) *Ántonia* and becomes eager (10) to leave Black Hawk.

Book III: Lena Lingard

At college in **Lincoln**, Jim throws himself into his studies with the help of his instructor, **Gaston Cleric**. However, in his second year he meets up with one of the hired girls from Black Hawk, Lena Lingard, who is now a successful seamstress (11). Jim neglects his studies and devotes his time to (12) theatregoing with the flirtatious Lena. The two of them become very close and Jim finds it increasingly (13) difficult to keep his mind on his studies.

Gaston Cleric persuades Jim to give up Lena and follow him to **Harvard College in Boston**.

Book IV: The Pioneer Woman's story

Two years later and before starting law school, Jim returns to Black Hawk during his summer holidays. Once there he encounters Frances Harling and is disappointed to learn that *Ántonia's* life seems to have turned out so tragically. He heads out to his grandparents' old farm where Widow Steavens recounts *Ántonia's* story to him: how she went to Denver to marry **Larry Donovan**, a train conductor who then deserted her. Despite being compelled to (14) return home as an unmarried pregnant woman, *Ántonia* refuses to live in shame and welcomes her baby with pride. Jim decides to go and see her. He tells her how much she means to him and promises to visit her again soon.

Book V: Cuzak's Boys

In fact, Jim only returns to see *Ántonia* twenty years later. She is now married to **Anton Cuzak** and is the mother of many children. Jim is pleased to see that *Ántonia* is fulfilled (15) and that her children are well brought up (16). Moreover, he is struck by how much her farm seems to be brimming with (17) life. Jim also meets her husband Cuzak with whom he gets on well (18). The next day Jim leaves but he promises to come back in order to go hunting with Cuzak's sons. Later in the day Jim comes across the old track leading to his grandparents' farm: it reminds him of old times and he has the feeling that his life has come full circle.

Notes:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| (1) <i>viennent de mourir</i> | (10) <i>a hâte de</i> |
| (2) <i>apprennent à connaître</i> | (11) <i>couturière</i> |
| (3) <i>devient l'ami de</i> | (12) <i>consacre son temps à</i> |
| (4) <i>querelle</i> | (13) <i>de plus en plus</i> |
| (5) <i>est mal accepté(e)</i> | (14) <i>obligée de</i> |
| (6) <i>prend plaisir</i> | (15) <i>épanouie</i> |
| (7) <i>peu recommandable</i> | (16) <i>bien élevés</i> |
| (8) <i>agressé</i> | (17) <i>débordant de</i> |
| (9) <i>rejette la responsabilité sur</i> | (18) <i>s'entend bien avec</i> |

Main Points

1. Who is the narrator at the beginning of the story? What is the function of this narrator?
2. Who is the main narrator in the rest of the novel?
3. List the main events in Jim's life.
4. List the main events in *Ántonia's* life.
5. What do we learn about the Shimerdas?
6. Indicate the moments in the story when the paths of Jim and *Ántonia* cross and diverge.
7. In what way is the novel circular in structure?
8. Who seems to have had a more fulfilling life: *Ántonia* or Jim?

II. NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**1. The Structure**

The novel is divided into an introduction followed by five separate books. These five stages correspond to different parts of Jim Burden's life, from his childhood when he first met *Ántonia*, to adulthood. Book I starts in the 1880s and the novel covers a thirty-year period.

When the novel was first published in 1918, its **modernist structure**, which broke away from traditional ideas of plot (*intrigue*)—it has no real sense of climax or resolution, it is neither linear nor focused on an individual protagonist—caused some consternation. For some critics the novel seemed to be too episodic and made up of loosely connected (*mal reliées*) stories which failed to make a coherent whole. Some critics also pointed to a loss of focus with Cather seeming to lose sight of her heroine at times in the novel. Indeed it seems strange that a novel entitled *My Ántonia* allows its heroine to slowly disappear from Book II and be completely missing from

Book III. Furthermore, René Rapin argues that moving *Ántonia* to Black Hawk weakens (*affaiblir*) the novel as “only in her own natural habitat can she hold our attention and capture our emotion”.

Critics have also been confused by the introduction of seemingly irrelevant (*mal à propos*) stories which they argue add nothing to the plot nor to our understanding of the characters; stories such as that of Blind d’Arnault in Book II or Peter and Pavel’s chilling wolf story in Book I.

Finally, if the story is really about Jim Burden rather than *Ántonia*, which would explain her disappearance from parts of the novel, why the insistence in the introduction on the naming of the manuscript *My Ántonia* ?

Main Points

1. Before going on to read some suggestions about the structure of *My Ántonia*, what are your own reactions to this structure? Does it seem loose (*peu rigoureuse*) and haphazard (*désordonné*) to you or can you find any unity in the different parts?
2. Is the title of the novel appropriate? Explain your answer.

2. Interpreting the structure

a. *The novel as memory*

In the introduction, the character Jim says: “I simply wrote down pretty much all that her name recalls to me.” This sentence gives some clue as to the structure of the novel—things are included which remind Jim of *Ántonia* or which have an emotional attachment to the memory of *Ántonia*. Just like memory, the story is made up of separate episodes which do not always seem to be connected in a logical fashion, but which are held together by emotional ties (*liens*). This also helps to explain why different sections of the novel are of unequal length: Book I is longer as it is a defining moment for Jim; a time when he became close to *Ántonia* and therefore a memory that he cherishes and holds dear. In contrast, his time spent at university is described in less detail as it is a less important memory for him.

b. *The art of storytelling*

Another aspect of the novel’s structure which can seem disconcerting at first is the inclusion of short tales or anecdotes which seem to bear little connection to the main story and which seem to interrupt the flow of events. On closer inspection these do indeed fulfil a purpose. In many ways they add to the importance of the **oral tradition**, which is emphasised in the novel. Willa Cather included many stories she had heard

as a child from the immigrant women she met at Red Cloud. In her novel she thus pays homage (*rendre hommage à*) to such story-telling. In addition, these stories and anecdotes often play the role of illustrating a point or are linked to the broader themes of the novel. In Book II the story of the tramp (*clochard*) who commits suicide by throwing himself into the thrashing machine (*batteuse*) seems at first to be just an interesting and shocking anecdote, but on closer inspection it does have relevance (*pertinence*). In the tramp's pocket they find a poem 'The Old Oaken Bucket' which underlines the theme of nostalgia and pining for a lost past. Peter and Pavel's story may also be a symbol for the way in which women, and *Ántonia* in particular, are treated in the story.

c. The novel as a cycle

The novel does indeed have a structure, but one which is cyclical. This cyclical structure complements one of the main themes of the novel: the idea of the passing of time and the transience (*caractère éphémère*) of life. Indeed, in Book I Jim and *Ántonia* meet on the prairies and explore the landscape together, and at the end of the novel in Book V they are once again reunited in the same environment. Moreover, the final paragraph of the novel reinforces this sense of Jim returning home as he remembers that first journey and says: "I had the sense of coming home to myself, and of having found out what a little circle man's experience is." (Book V, ch. III, p. 175)

This sense of a cyclical structure is also strengthened by the references to nature throughout the novel. In Book I, for example, a whole year on the prairie is described: the story moves from Jim's arrival in autumn, through the cold winter and on to spring and the blazing heat of summer. The natural world dominates this first book and the reader is constantly reminded of the cycle of life—death—and new life again. At the end of the novel *Ántonia's* farm is depicted as brimming with new life; an image reinforced by the description of her many children pouring out of the fruit cave: "a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight." (Book V, ch I, p. 160)

d. A musical structure

Another way of looking at the structure of the novel is from a musical perspective. Elizabeth Ammons argues that Willa Cather loved music and saw it as the highest art form. In particular, she was passionate about African-American ragtime music which flourished at that time. Ammons claims that this music can be seen as having had a creative effect on Cather's structuring of her novel. According to her, black music contains: "the concepts of arrhythmic patches of melody, of being 'out of time', of developing song through cross-rhythms, and of creating lines that break away from a