




The Jungle by Upton Sinclair

GT Novel Guide

Four Big Essential Questions:

(We'll always talk about these during class discussions! Come to class with ideas for answers!)

-  What is the significance of the title of this book? How many different ways can you apply the symbol or metaphor of *a jungle* to the story's plot or its characters?
- **???** Sinclair's novel was an attempt to change the world, but what specifically do you believe was he trying to change? Could he have pushed his changes in better ways than in novel form?
-  How has achieving the "American Dream" changed since Jurgis' time and modern times? Do you believe there are still Americans today caught in situations similar to Jurgis and his family?
- **???** A "coming of age" novel usually features a youthful protagonist learning a life lesson as a plot unfolds. Why do you suppose some have labeled The Jungle a "coming of age" novel?
-  **Thinking like a writer:** Sinclair purposely establishes and maintains a tone in his writing that is oppressive, intense, and unsettling. What specific words and phrases can you cite in his descriptive passages that contribute to this tone? Which passages do you believe had the strongest impact on his audience?

High-Level Vocabulary Challenges:

(To what scenes or characters in this novel could you apply these words or phrases?)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| • Squalor | • Idealism |
| • Naivety (or naïveté) | • Avarice |
| • "Catch 22" | • Penury |
| • Automation/automaton | • |

Academic Vocabulary:

(To what scenes or characters in this novel could you apply these terms?)

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| • Allegory | • Omniscient narrator |
| • Symbolism | • Tone |
| • Realism | • Journalistic writing style |
| • Allusion | • Internal conflict |

Quotes to apply to this novel:

- "Give me your tired, your poor,/ Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,/ The wretched refuse of your teeming shore./ Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,/ I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" -- Emma Lazarus (from poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty)
- "The Industrial Revolution was another of those extraordinary jumps forward in the story of civilization." -- Stephen Gardiner
- "The industrial revolution has tended to produce everywhere great urban masses that seem to be increasingly careless of ethical standards." --Irving Babbitt
- "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." --Winston Churchill
- "Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires." --John Steinbeck
- "As time goes on we get closer to that American Dream of there being a pie cut up and shared. Usually greed and selfishness prevent that and there is always one bad apple in every barrel."
--Rick Danko

Chapter 1

1. Explain Ona and Jurgis's relationship that is portrayed during their wedding.
2. Summarize and discuss why we, the readers, must understand the extent of the food prepared and served at the wedding.
3. Interpret why Sinclair spends so many of the pages in chapter one discussing the violin player Tamoszius Kuszleika and his performance at the wedding.
4. Analyze how chapter one focuses on the theme of hospitality.
5. Describe what the end of the chapter foreshadows about the coming novel.
6. Define what is meant by "The American Dream."

Chapter 2

1. Explain why Jurgis is such sought after worker for the bosses at the stockyards.
2. Diagram Ona's family and Jurgis's family who travel to America.
3. Analyze the importance of using a Lithuanian family for the protagonists of the story.
4. Describe how "made" land was created and why we in present day would recoil in disgust at the description.

Chapter 3



1. This is a picture of the Chicago Stockyards in the 1900's when Jurgis and Ona arrive. Write about how you feel when seeing this and compare it with Jurgis's pride and excitement about working as "a cog in this marvelous machine."
2. Why do we need to take the tour of Durham's with Jurgis? How are his visit and our visit as readers different?

Chapter 4

1. What does the ease of finding jobs for all the family foreshadow?
2. Why does the family ignore the warning that Szedvilas tries to tell them about?
3. Describe how easy it was to swindle Jurgis and his family with the "purchase" of the house.
4. Why does Sinclair highlight this swindle?

Chapter 5

1. Why would Jurgis have been arrested moving his belongings in any other part of Chicago?
2. Ona and Jurgis are not yet married when they move into the house so why does the novel start with the wedding?
3. Describe why Jurgis doesn't understand why other are unhappy with their jobs and he is?
4. Compile a list of corruption that we've already seen in Packingtown.
5. Describe poor food conditions both Dede Antanas and Jurgis witness at their jobs.

Chapter 6

1. Explain the history that Grandmother Majauszkiene relates about the house and how it plays into the swindle of Jurgis's family.
2. Consider why successive immigrants groups have become the majority working groups in Packingtown.
3. How does the inclusion of interest in the house payment impact Ona and the rest of the family?

Chapter 7

1. Ona and Jurgis have had their *veselija* (wedding) and discuss what this added expense has done to the family and their situation.
2. Why does the food that Teta Elzbieta buys for the family harm the children?
3. In your answer, construct what leads up to the death of Dede Antanas.
4. Describe what winter does to life in Packingtown for Jurgis's family and the other poor families and workers.

Chapter 8

1. Explain the relationship between Marija and Tamoszius. Why must they be so patient?
2. Describe how Jurgis's family's American Dream is beginning to suffer and change.
3. Discuss the connection between the layoffs and Jurgis's interest in the unions.

Chapter 9

1. What influences Jurgis into learning English and becoming a US citizen?
2. Describe what type of fraud Jurgis commits and why he does it? Discuss if he understands that it was wrong.
3. Define how graft, corruption, and greed are the ruling themes of Packingtown.
4. Why are "Bubbly Creek" and "potted/deviled ham" so disturbing?
5. Analyze the connection between the working conditions and the workers' health.

Chapter 10

1. The swindle connected with the house continues. Compose a list of all the additional cost the family is charged on top of the "rent."
2. Explain how the saying "caught between a rock and a hard place," defines our characters' life through the winter.
3. Explain the hard lesson that Marija learns about work in Packingtown.
4. Write about how Ona and Jurgis's good news only complicates life even more.
5. Why is Ona being discriminated against by Mrs. Henderson? How does this impact her pregnancy and baby Antanas birth?

Chapter 11

1. Why does Marija miss two days of work? What caused the panic?
2. Why is travel to work so difficult during the winter?
3. Describe how Jurgis is injured.

Chapter 12

1. Describe all the incidents that lead to Jurgis having to beat Stanislovas to go to work.
2. How does little Antanas embody hope and keep the family looking forward rather than wallowing in despair?
3. Describe the adjustments the family has to make with Jurgis injured and the departure of Brother Jonas.

Chapter 13

1. Describe how Krisoforas died and what Teta Elzbeita must do to see him buried.
2. Why must Jurgis work in the fertilizer works? What does this do to him?
3. Why did the family decide that Nikalojus and Vilimas be sent back to school? Who will take their place in earning money for the family?

Chapter 14

1. The family has worked in all aspects of the slaughterhouse industry. What secrets have they seen that the narrator tells us about? What does this do to your ideas about the food in front of you?
2. Look back at your answer to the first question from chapter 1. Compare and contrast their relationship then and now.
3. Why have Jurgis and Ona changed? How does Antanas manage to thrive and survive?

Chapter 15

1. Describe where Ona disappears for two nights and why she lies to Jurgis?
2. Why does Ona's deception do more harm than good?

Chapter 16

1. Describe the results of Jurgis attempt on Connor's life.
2. "They put him in a place where the snow could not beat in, where the cold could not eat through his bones; they brought him food and drink—why, in the name of heaven, if they must punish him, did they not put his family in jail and leave him outside—why could they find no better way to punish him than to leave three weak women and six helpless children to starve and freeze?" Discuss the irony that can be inferred from this quote.

Chapter 17

1. Describe what kind of man Jack Duane is? How does he find himself in jail?
2. How is Jurgis's trial a mockery of "justice"?
3. Describe the news that Stanislovas brings to Jurgis at Bridewell Prison?

Chapter 18

1. Why must Jurgis spend an extra three days in prison?
2. Describe the ironic situation when Jurgis backs at "his" house?
3. What deplorable situations does Jurgis find when he finally locates his family? What is their living situation now?

Chapter 19

1. Who is Madame Haupt? Why does she agree to help for such a small amount of money?
2. Why do you think Marija would not let him stay at the boardinghouse?
3. What are the reasons for Ona's death - immediate and previous?
4. Why does Jurgis take Kotrina's money? Is this fair or justified?

Chapter 20

1. What is it that Teta Elzbeita uses to convince Jurgis not to abandon himself to alcohol and turn his back on the family?
2. How does Connor continue to harm Jurgis's family?

Chapter 21

1. Describe how Juozapas, Elzbeita's one-legged, becomes the savoir of the family.

2. Discuss what the steel mill reminds Jurgis of and what horrors he witnesses to make him more careful.
3. Describe what happened to Antanas.

Chapter 22

1. With Antanas' death, Jurgis walks away. Describe the life Jurgis has as a single man "hoboing".

Chapter 23

1. Why does Jurgis return to Chicago?
2. Describe how Jurgis ends up in the hospital and what this does to his ability to support himself.

Chapter 24

1. Describe the night that Jurgis and Freddie Jones have together. What amazes Jurgis?

Chapter 25

1. What happens to Jurgis and the hundred dollar bill?
2. Describe how Jack Duane saves Jurgis.
3. How does Jurgis's new life exemplify the graft, corruption and greed of Chicago?

Chapter 26

1. How does Jurgis end back up in Packingtown?
2. How does Connor impact Jurgis's life again?

Chapter 27

1. Why is being poor so much more difficult for Jurgis this time?
2. Where does he find Marija? What is wrong with her?

Chapter 28

1. How does Jurgis escape notice in jail?
2. What does Marija make Jurgis promise he'll do?

Chapter 29-31 - You could avoid reading these chapters. Mostly "diatribes" on socialism. Teacher's choice.

1. What is the significance of socialism and its connection to the remainder of our time with Jurgis?