

# Literature review on neighbour rosicky by willa cather

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



**Describe Polly and the nature of her awakening in the story.**

'Neighbour Rosicky' by Willa Cather was first published in 1928 and mainly concerns the impending death of Anton Rosicky, although Cather uses the story to tell the story of his life through flashback, inner reminiscences and anecdotes that Rosicky tells his six children. He is a recent immigrant, originally from Bohemia (now Slovakia in central Europe); he spent time in London as a child, but emigrated to the USA when he was twenty. He lived and worked in New York for fifteen years, but, feeling he was doing nothing constructive with his life, he moved to Nebraska to start farming. Much of the story consists of thoughts and memories about the past, but in the present his son Rudolph has recently married an American girl (that is to say, her family have lived in the United States for generations). As Anton Rosicky approaches death, Cather explores his relationship with Polly and they both change as a result.

Polly is not only American but also from the local town and Rosicky is concerned that she is not strong enough or not temperamentally suited to life on a farm. It is clear from his memories and anecdotes that he and his wife have struggled to keep going on the farm: the work is hard and the climate in winter very challenging. Rosicky suspects that Polly (who is very thin and pale) will become dissatisfied on the farm and will not be supportive enough of Rudolf in the challenges that farmers and their families have to face. Anton's biggest fear is that Rudolf will abandon life on the farm and seek work in the city to please Polly. On her part Polly seems a little intimidated by her father-in-law and addresses him as "Mister Rosicky." However, their relationship develops and Polly has what can be called an

awakening. The key passage occurs when, on Christmas Eve, Rosicky tells a story from his impoverished childhood in London involving secretly eating half a goose that is intended for Christmas lunch and his then desperate search for a replacement goose. He is saved by the kindness of strangers – some fellow central European immigrants who give him the cash to purchase a replacement goose. Polly is clearly moved by this story of childhood hardship and almost immediately she suggests to Rudolf that her parents-in-law should come to their house for a meal at New Year. Two things seem apparent: Polly starts to realize what a hard life Anton has had and how much he has achieved; she also realizes that her father-in-law is a kind and generous man.

Towards the end of the story in the following spring, Rosicky has a heart attack and Polly rushes to help him. When he asks her if she is pregnant she realizes that her father-in-law has real love and concern for her and that he has lived a fruitful and rewarding life – even though he has only been a farmer.

## **Works Cited**

Cather, Willa. 'Neighbour Rosicky.' In Perkins, George and Barbara. *The American Tradition in Literature*. Volume Two. 12th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. Print.