

# Literary device symbolism

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Literary device — Symbolism Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities: symbolic meaning attributed to natural objects or facts. “ There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made" (10). “ In all that country it was the spot most dear to me" because when all of the land has been cleared for farming, this “ island" where two roads meet is the only place where the tall prairie grass still grows undisturbed" (62). “ 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" (50-51). Willa Cather My Antonia In the book, My Antonia, Jim Burden finds himself an orphan leaving his beloved home to a new, stranger place. When he first arrives he observes the country and how different the surroundings are. Throughout the story Jim finally settles in and has a new friend, Antonia. Many things happen and soon we are mourning over the death of Mr. Shimerda. His death was a big event and effected Antonia and her family. Her family was forced to work three times harder to keep themselves alive. As you transition into book two, more conflicts are invited and new symbols. There are three main types of symbolism that are appealing to the eye. The first quote uses the prairie as a symbol of Jim’s friendship with Antonia during his childhood. It may also symbolize the immigrants and the vast size of the prairie. Which may suggest both the opportunity for a new life and the overwhelming fear that goes with trying to

create a new life. The third quote is usually missed as a sign of symbolism. The gravesite is a remnant of the prairie in its purest form, and it symbolizes Antonia's and Jim's longing for the past. It is also unwelcoming and "the sky cries as if in sorrow, and the elements in the new land are not friendly, just as they have not been welcoming to Mr. Shimerda" (61). In the final quote the symbol is the plough. It symbolizes man's "beautiful and harmonious" connection to the land. The imagery suggests Jim's impending separation from Antonia and while Antonia remains on the prairie, Jim leaves for good. Willa Cather uses many examples of symbolism. The lighting is one that is seen in many books, such as *Of Mice and Men* and more. A vivid description of light shows every major change that occurs in the novel. For example, at the end of the novel, after Jim leaves Antonia for the last time, he stands alone on the prairie roads in "the slanting sunlight" and reflects on the "incommunicable" past he shared with Antonia. The light from the sun is setting and at this time Cather uses the light to show the ending to Jim and Antonia's relationship. Symbolism in this novel is important in deciding the lives, actions, and moods of the characters.