

Antonia shimerda in my antonia essay



**ASSIGN
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My Antonia, written by Willa Cather, is a novel about the main character, Jim Burden's, childhood in Nebraska and his relationship with his dear friend, Antonia Shimerda, who was a Bohemian immigrant. Their friendship was tested by the various events that occurred through their lives and the different paths their lives took them down. After so many years, Jim looked back on his childhood with Antonia and tried to remember everything they shared together. He had trouble remembering but recalled how Antonia was an independent, hard-working, and believable character that dealt with many issues as an immigrant.

Antonia Shimerda shows how the experience of an immigrant was hard for her through the loss of her father and the betrayal of her fiancé. Through Antonia's hardships, she dealt with much distress and depression, however she was able to get through them all and keep true to herself. First of all, Antonia showed the hardship of being an immigrant after her beloved father, Mr. Shimerda, committed suicide. The news of his death was a surprise to the Burdens family, the neighbors, and the grandfather states, "Old Mr. Shimerda is dead, and his family are in great distress" (p. 69).

The diction of "great distress" emphasizes how dramatic Mr. Shimerda's death was to his family. It caused unhappiness and sorrow in the Shimerda family because they were now without a husband and a father. Cather emphasizes how painful Mr. Shimerda's death was to Antonia when the main character, Jim Burden, came to visit: "When she saw me she ran out of her dark corner and threw her arms around me...It seemed to me that I could feel her heart breaking as she clung to me" (p. 83). The image portrayed

from how Antonia “ran out of her dark corner” to Jim represents how Antonia’s father’s death had caused her extreme grief.

Antonia metaphorically escaped the deep depths of sadness this death had put her in by the comfort of seeing, her good friend, Jim. The diction of the “dark corner” represents the deep misery Antonia was in because of the death of her father. This is one type of distress Antonia learns to deal with as being an immigrant. The fact that Jim “could feel her heart breaking” as Antonia held onto him emphasizes how hurt she was inside. The detail of “heart breaking” figuratively represents that Antonia was falling apart inside from the misery and agony of her father’s death.

It had such a great impact on her that his death was overtaking her emotions. Later, after Mr. Shimerda’s coffin was nailed shut, Jim Burden states, “I was afraid to look at Antonia” (p. 84). The diction in this sentence represents how Jim did not want to look at Antonia from the fear of seeing terrible pain and grief in her face. The fact that Jim did not want to see this sadness exhibited by Antonia shows how upset she was by her father’s death. Her expression and body language might have made Jim extremely unhappy and miserable as well.

Even though Antonia experienced grief and suffering, her father’s death remained with her throughout her life. Many years later, while talking to Jim before he departed she told him, But that doesn’t mean I’ll lose you. Look at my papa here; he’s been dead all these years, and yet he is more real to me than almost anybody else. He never goes out of my life. I talk to him and consult him all the time. The older I grow, the better I know him and the

more I understand him. (p. 233) Cather's detail and diction in this exert represent Antonia's acceptance of her father's death and how she had learned to live above the misery and pain.

The phrase " he never goes out of my life" represents that even though Mr. Shimerda was no longer alive, his spirit and soul still lived among Antonia. Despite being like many Americans who move on and forget about their dead relatives, Antonia shows she was above Americans as an immigrant. She turned her father's death into a method of better understanding his life. She never loses the memory of her father because of how significant his death was to her. Antonia shows that the death of her father was very dramatic and hard for her to deal with, but she was able to overcome the suffering after many years.

Lastly Antonia emphasizes how tough living in Nebraska was when her fiance abandons her with a child to raise on her own. After the incident had occurred, a friend of Antonia's, named Frances, described Antonia as, "' she lives at home, on the farm, and almost never comes to town...I'm afraid she's settled down to be Ambroshe's drudge for good'" (pp. 215-216). The detail in the sentence: "' she lives at home on the farm, and almost never comes to town,'" emphasizes how isolated Antonia has made herself become from the misery her fiance has caused her.

When someone isolates him/herself, he/she usually is very upset and do not have the courage and strength to face other people. By Antonia isolating herself from society, she is emphasizing how miserable and hurt she was from her fiance betraying her and leaving her to care for their baby all alone.

She had caused grief and sadness for not only herself, but for the people who cared about her. After hearing the news about Antonia, Jim became annoyed with her: “ I tried to shut Antonia out of my mind. I was bitterly disappointed in her” (p. 216).

The imagery in the phrase “ tried to shut Antonia out of my mind” paints the picture that Jim, one of Antonia’s closest friends, wanted to forget about Antonia and her problems. He was so upset with what she had gone through with her fiancé that he did not want to think about her at all. The diction in the phrase “ bitterly disappointed” represents how upset Jim was for Antonia. He never expected a good girl like her to end up having people feel sorry for her, rather than happy for her. Even Mrs. Harling expressed her unhappiness for Antonia: “‘ My Antonia, that had so much good in her, had come home disgraced’” (p. 28).

She was extremely unhappy that such a well-mannered, helpful, and happy woman like Antonia would come home shamed and mortified by not getting married. The fact that so many people that Antonia knows feel sorry for her emphasize how Antonia’s image and ego were dramatically changed when her fiancé betrayed her. However, she was able to get through her mourning and pain by loving her baby: She loved it from the first as dearly as if she’d had a ring on her finger, and was never ashamed of it. It’s a year and eight months old now, and no baby was ever better cared-for.

Antonia is a natural-born mother. I wish she could marry and raise a family, but I don’t know as there’s much chance now. (p. 231) The detail of how much Antonia loved her baby “‘ as if she’d had a ring on her finger’”

represents that this baby is going to be Antonia's first love and will be the way she will forget about her fiancé. Antonia will love her baby as much as if she were married because the baby is so precious. On the other hand, Mrs. Harling's doubts of Antonia ever getting married and raising a family are ironic because towards the end of the novel, she becomes married with ten children.

Altogether, Antonia exhibits misery and sadness after being abandoned by her fiancé with their baby, but she learns to love her baby and move on with her life to better things. Finally, to conclude, Antonia Shimerda was a strong-hearted and happy immigrant from Bohemia that went through various hardships. The ones that impacted how hard living as immigrant was in Nebraska were the death of Antonia's father and the abandonment of her fiancé. Antonia represents the everyday person we should all be who goes through different difficulties, but can get through them all and stay genuine to their self.