

Memories in my antonia novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Flashbacks in My *Antonia*

In the first half of *My Antonia*, by Willa Cather, the reader is introduced to James "Jim" Burden, who is shown as two different versions of himself; one as his current, wiser, and older self, and the other as his younger self, taking place in a flashback. The older Jim only appears in the first few pages of the novel, and he is not narrating this portion, though the identity of the narrator he is talking to is unknown. The majority of this novel is narrated through the younger Jim during his flashback to when he was young and first met Antonia. This flashback in Cather's novel shows how profoundly Jim feels about Antonia and the strong connection the two once had.

From the the very beginning of the novel, in the introduction, Jim's powerful feelings towards Antonia are shown. During the introduction, the narrator is not Jim, but is the unidentified character. This character is speaking to older Jim, and clearly already knows something about the relationship the two had back in the past. They say that " how [Jim] knew [Antonia] and felt her was exactly what I most wanted to know about [her]" (3). The idea is that Jim and the narrator will both write down what they remember about Antonia, and Jim is enthralled by this idea. It is clear how much Jim truly wants to recall his memories of Antonia when he says, " I should have to do it in a direct way, and say a great deal about myself. It's through myself that I knew and felt [Antonia], and I've had no practice in any other form of presentation" (3). This older version of Jim is a successful lawyer who is happily married. However, he has clearly been burying the memory of Antonia, and it is plain

to see that he still feels some sort of bond with her that will never leave his memories.

After the introduction, the flashback immediately starts to take place. Jim is now his younger, ten year old self, and he is just moving to Nebraska with his grandparents. This flashback leads into the first time Jim met *Ántonia*. Seeing as this whole event is a flashback, it is known that Jim knows how all actions will unfold; this is why Jim can give so much detail and description to all objects and events in this flashback. If Jim can remember even the smallest details such as how tall and colorful the grass was that day, or what his grandmother cooked for dinner, then obviously his connection with *Ántonia* is the most important thing that has happened to him in his lifetime. Even going back to the introduction, the narrator at that time could not write a single word about *Ántonia*, even though they had come up with the idea to recall their memories of her, whereas Jim shows through his flashback how he remembers everything single thing, whether simple or complex, because the event of meeting *Ántonia* was monumental feat for him.

Jim's flashback depict just how strongly he feels toward *Ántonia*, even after all these years. His willingness and eagerness to recollect the memories of his time with her show how he has been pushing the memories he has with her away, but he will never forget them, and they are some of the best memories of his life. Even his unnecessary amount of adjectives used show that he could never forget *Ántonia*. I hope to learn what happened to *Ántonia* and why Jim is no longer with her, seeing as he would not rather be with anyone else.