

A thousand acres – summary



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Major Works Study Form AP Question 3 Title: A Thousand Acres Author: Jane Smiley Biographical Information: Jane Smiley was born in Los Angeles, California and later moved to Missouri, where she went to school until college. She went to Art at Vassar College, and then traveled around Europe where she worked on an archeological dig. She returned to America and became a teacher. She had two daughters and a son. Author's Style: The author's style is used to display the mysterious and unsettling feeling in the novel.

The book is told from the point of view of Ginny. The rape from the father keeps the tone of the book very disturbing and solemn because Jess and Rose want to keep their sister Caroline free of the problems they had to grow up dealing with. Plot Summary: The plot of this book completely parallels Shakespeare's play "King Lear". Larry Cook acts as the King of the novel, and he runs the farm. He has three daughters, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline. In the beginning of the novel, Ginny thinks about the intersection and about the road overall where the farm was.

Larry King wants love from his daughters to decide in how he should split up his farm. Ginny and Rose are sexually abused in the novel, but the youngest daughter, Caroline does not partake in this absurd scheme, and becomes a lawyer. She marries another lawyer and lives in Des Moines. Larry is respected by his neighbors and takes on the role of being the advisor but then retires for his children to fill his place. Caroline is cut out of the father's will because he does not think that he is grateful for everything he has already given to her.

Ginny and Rose have to take care of their father Larry, and deal with his rude behavior of drunk driving and wasting his money. Larry goes insane and one day runs out into a storm. The family has to go about their lives trying to cover up their family problems from the public, to make it seem like they are just another normal family. Larry curses Ginny with infertility. The storm in the novel displays the chaos of the family within the book, and the hope after the storm gives hope for the family. Larry goes to the farm of his friend Harold Clarke, where Harold's son has just returned from a very long journey from.

Pete ruins the farm equipment that Larry used, but instead of Larry being blinded, Harold is blinded. Caroline sues the farm, trying to say that they are not farming the right way, and Larry needs to run the farm again. Caroline ends up taking care of Larry as he goes crazy. Ty tries to save the farm from going into debt after Pete dies, but is unsuccessful when Ginny leaves in search of becoming a waitress. Then Rose takes over, but later dies from cancer in more debt than she began with. Ginny and Caroline end up having to sell the farm. Setting (describe each setting and its importance):

The farm is the main setting of the novel, which parallels the kingdom of King Lear. Larry Cook owns the farm and raises his children on the land. Another setting in the book is the dump. It is where Ginny and Jess go to hang out, and later use it as a place to have sex. Symbols (describe how they contribute to the characterization, conflict, or thematic pre occupation) One of the biggest symbols of the novel is the dump. It is the place where Ginny and Jess have sex. Dumps in general are grimy and disgusting places, and the sex they had fell along the same lines.

The foul act of having sex at the dump symbolizes that instead of having sex in a respectable place like a bed, the random objects in the dump hide their secrets. Another symbol is the white dresses. White dresses represent the innocence of the young girls, which is ironic because they are the opposite of pure. The storm represents the chaos in the novel, and arises during the conflict to parallel the chaos in her family life. Another symbol is the garden. After the storm, when she goes outside to look at her garden, she sees there is very little damage.

This provides her with hope for the future, because she connected it to the way that if her precious garden can survive a storm, her family can get through their own storm. A final symbol is the farm, because is the kingdom of Larry Cook. It represents his own area that he owns the way King Lear had control over his own kingdom. Thematic Concerns: One of the main themes is that everything is not what it seems to be. Ginny, Rose, and Caroline all had to keep up the appearance with the farm that everything was normal in their family.

In reality, everything was completely chaotic with their family life, but from the outside everything seemed fine. They wore white dresses when they went in public to give off the image that they were pure and clean girls, and kept up the farm so that it always looked neat. They have to try their best to hide their family problems, but ultimately Ginny cannot mask the chaos. Water is usually vital to life, but here the water makes Ginny unable to have a baby, and contributes to Rose's cancer. Key Quotes: (Choose 3 with Page #) " While they were cooking, I went out to check my garden.

Something that always has amazed me is the resilience of the plants. My tomato vines showed no ill effects from the onslaught of the storm weren't even muddy, since I had made it a point to mulch them with old newspapers and grass clippings" (197.) " Away from the farm, it was easier to think of how people went on from these sorts of troubles; it was easier to see a life as a sturdy rope with occasional knots in it" (248.) " I told myself that I had to decide what I really wanted and settle for that- every course of action is a compromise, after all" (308).