

Notes for students on HOW I read this (you do NOT need to include this in your notes...this is me modeling!)

1. I knew I was going to read the whole thing over break and that I'd go back and re-read when I wanted to start really writing on it. This is a strategy that works for me, since as a learner in all ways, I MUST see the big picture before I can really start to process/work through any task.
2. I read parts of the preface/foreword, then stopped as I felt it was giving too much away. I never understand why they preface a book with that stuff. Gah.
3. I looked up the epigraph (this a quotation that is used at the start of a text that connects to its message in some way)
 - a. "Optima dies . . . prima fugit," a Latin phrase meaning "The best days are the first to flee."
4. I flipped to the back and saw there was an appendix, an original version of the first ... read it and compared.
5. After reading both, I wondered if this Jim dude was real. So I looked up Jim Burden. So glad I looked it up because it made me think the narrator was Cather but it's not. It's 1st person limited. I wonder why she changed the opening. Trimmed it.
6. At p 89 I checked to see how many pages were left and realized there were "parts" so I finally located the table of contents and realized I was coming to the end of part 1. I hope the shift in focus doesn't make me dislike the narrative
7. At page 99 I realized that I should start paying attention to stuff if I'm going to write on this.
8. Stopped at p. 145 to reflect and start taking actual notes. This was when I felt like I had a sense of the big picture to really get it.

Below are the types of notes you will create for the first checkpoint.

What you see here is the 2nd draft of my notes, after I put them into a word document and re-arranged them/organized them to create meaning for myself.

- It took me about an hour to categorize and prioritize.
- **Your notes must be 20 in total and have at least 4 quotations on character, 1 on setting, 2 on conflict, 4 others across any other topics**
 - Here, I did not include the actual DQs – this is because kids in your class are reading this text and I am not going to unfairly do work for them. So, I have them done, but I'm not posting them ☺
- Anything in *italics* are points that I added after the initial reading – it's where I went back to an original note and extended it via synthesis and understanding.

1. I cannot imagine being Jim and having to relocate from my generally safe/established home to the middle of nowhere. His initial descriptions of the land...wow. (p. 1-3)
 - a. His grandparents seem interesting. There's no real discussion of their struggle. Did they struggle?
2. SUPER interesting juxtaposition of "Americans" and "Immigrants" at this time. I mean, they are only 100 years out of ALL being immigrants, no??
 - a. How the Norwegians won't accept papa (129). Ugh.
 - b. *This is something to look at thematically – what does it mean to be "American" – especially given the language on p. 226*
3. Where is Bohemia?? Clearly it's referencing Europe... I looked it up – [it's the Czech Republic](#), or what was then Czechoslovakia. So the old language is Czech. I can now hear/understand the cadence Jim's speaking of.
4. Jake & Otto are inspirational in their work ethic. This is what it means to actually work to survive. It must be done. And they work always for others, not for themselves. We've lost this in today's world. Can we get it back?
5. (120-127) Papa's death. Wow. This is awful. But sadly understandable. But awful. Papa as a whole is clearly really important. A lot to come back to for him – his pride, his struggle, his fall. Even his burial and the significance of it. I'm sure there's more to it.
 - a. *Yes – his burial plot shows up a lot throughout the rest of the text as a marker, a place of return. There is life in his death...come back to/develop.*
6. I love "Tony". Even that that is her nickname. She's a woman with a man's nickname and all that that embodies. So interesting.
7. At page 140 I reread the back of the book to remind myself of the themes...Antonia is meant to be a teacher of sorts, and an inspiration. So far, I'm seeing it, but not quite.
 - a. *Added after finishing: Yes, based on p. 226 she is not just Antonia. Seems to be speaking for the beauty of the whole country and the dream it entails. Allegory or just symbolism?*
8. I know it's reflective of the times but I disliked the description of the blind African American piano player. The term "yellow" just felt wrong (144). Perhaps significant?
9. Lots of foreshadowing with this Wick Cutter guy (146). Not looking forward to what happens with him and perhaps Antonia?
10. Loved the description of the Harling mother and family (147). I wonder if I'll ever be known/seen like that.
11. Whoa to all Jim learns on his own in order to better himself. (150) But it's also out of boredom than just drive. There is literally nothing better to do. In some ways that's a theme I'm getting. Their lives are entirely driven by their **environment**. Papa is killed by it. It is, in many ways, the central character of the story: papa was killed by it, tony shaped and molded by it...this is definitely something to watch for. Poss write about.

12. For Setting: Obvi it's Nebraska – Black Hawk is the town, set in 1880-1920 as Jim ages. There's a lot of descriptive language about the land. Almost every chapter starts with it or it happens in conjunction with the shift/break in narrative.

13. Central conflicts at this point:

- a. One seems to be Jim's coming of age and deciding who he wants to be.
 - i. Look at p. 136 for where he criticizes the followers and all they miss in being concerned with being reputable. In this area there's also a line about the power of the land...it has improved those who are willing to stand up to it. Jim wants to be a part of that lot but isn't. He's paradoxically above it...which he sees as so stupid.
 - ii. How will he reconcile it? We know from the frame story that he ends up in NYC, which makes sense as he references his desire for more action. And he's clearly very intelligent and a strong speaker. But we know he went against his dislike of dudes who sold out as he married a socialite.

- b. A second is: Will working the land truly result in happier people? Is that the premise Cather is setting up? *YES – that is. Based on the ending, there is a clear celebration of the Western people who live on and off and with and for the land. Including those who did so as children and left it. There are unequivocally better off because of it. This is theme as well.*

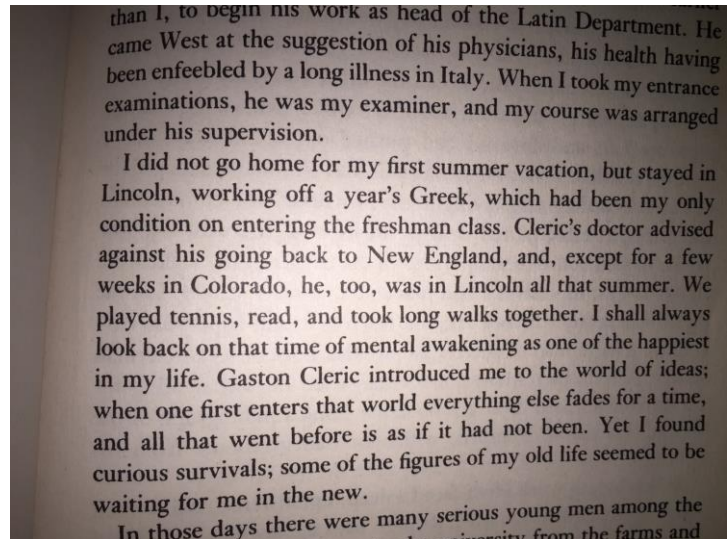
14. P. 156 is super symbolic of something. Like the permanence of that moment? *Yes - referenced on p. 168 - how things can be strengthened and simplified against certain backgrounds or circumstances*

15. Reflected on how lovely this must have been - sitting in nature with no technology (p. 174). Wondering if people could still do this today, like Thoreau. It humanized the girls, romanticized and celebrated them above all others. They are the dream. *See above point 8b for how they are part of this message.*

16. (p. 183) Perturbed by ending of Cutter scene. Feels like it was brushed off or minimized trivialized with the focus on his wife's anger. He would have raped her... no repercussions or even judgment from Cather? *I think this is meant to signify that this is just how life was...? Need to re-read. Also re-read the part about the guy dying in the tractor as a part of this kind of "life."*

- a. This ties in with Where is Jim's grief over his parents? Dying isn't really a big deal? Just something to always be prepared for? Or no tolerance for being set back by grief?

17. This passage is beautiful. I have lived its words



18. P. 206-207. Wow. Two luminaries. That's them? What he says too her...she's his person. Imagery amazing here.
19. Juxtaposing her success with Wick Cutter's demise (233) seems pointed as well - she is poor but soulful and happy, he rich and amoral and dead. His name takes on significance now. He's a wick cutter - takes down others flames and dreams which only ends his. He represents those against the freedom of America's dream to any who wish to inherit it.
20. The ending is beautiful. It's Gatsby all over again. But so much happier. Well, sort of happier. To be continued... Why can't we read these together???? So many overlaps.

Where I will go from here

- Re-read the opening pages
- *Maybe* read the foreword?
- Consider how the epigraph is a thematic foreshadowing/parallel. Is he saying that the best days are actually behind us? (In which case it's actually the SAME as Gatsby...ugh...).
- Go back and closely chart Antonia and Jim via DQs.
 - o **must** reread the opening to see the "end" Jim and re-contextualize him now that I know him better.
- Look up *Camille* play and reread ch. 3 in Lena's part - he's so emotional and it seems uncharacteristic this important. (Ends on p. 178)