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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit  
*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



## The Jungle

by Upton Sinclair

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# Literature Teaching Unit

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## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. relate significant details from the story illustrating the hardships the men and women endure working in the Chicago stockyards in the early 1900's.
2. define vocabulary words from the text.
3. point out instances of the following literary devices: allusion, flashback, in media res, foreshadowing, and irony.
4. discuss the following themes:
  - People in authority use their positions to take advantage of others.
  - The capitalist economic system promotes economic efficiency at the expense of the health of the people.
  - The capitalist economic system promotes anti-social behavior.
  - There is little justice in a capitalist economic system for the lower class, the unskilled laborer.
  - Those in authority in the capitalist system will take unfair advantage over those less powerful.
  - In a capitalist society, marriage and children severely limit a man's economic prospects.
5. point out instances of the following uses of language: descriptive imagery, personification, simile, metaphor, and repetition.
6. cite incidents from the story to illustrate that Jurgis is an example of the classic literary type, a *naif*.
7. discuss in what sense Sinclair's description of the killing of the hogs is an allegory representing the lives of the unskilled stockyard workers.
8. define "muckraker," and point out details which illustrate *The Jungle* is a muckraking novel; comment on the author's reasons for writing a muckraking novel.
9. discuss the following as possible symbols in the story: the house Jurgis buys, Jurgis' bath in the stream, and Marija.
10. define the following terms associated with the stockyards: pacemakers, speeding up, graft, the War Whoop League, the killing beds, duffers and dope, blacklisted, and scab.
11. understand the differences between a capitalist economic system and a socialist economic system including the definitions of the following terms: competitive wage system, Communism, and proletariat.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Find three vocabulary words for each of the following categories.
  - A. Words describing the work in the packing plants.
  - B. Words describing character traits.
  - C. Words defining political ideas or concepts.
2. Relate an incident from the story describing the ways the capitalist economic system, in Sinclair's view, harms the elderly, the children, and the women in Packingtown.
3. For what reasons does Jurgis embrace the ideas of socialism?
4. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: Marriage is not good for a man working in Packingtown.
5. Why does Ona give in to Connor's advances? Why does she hide her problems at work from her husband?
6. Define the "American Dream." What might the house Jurgis buys symbolize or represent in the story? What theme for this novel does this incident illustrate?
7. Cite two incidents from the story to support the following theme: the capitalist economic system promotes economic efficiency at the expense of the health of the people.
8. Describe life in a socialist community as defined by Schliemann. Discuss the merits and the drawbacks of such a system, basing your answer on your own observations, experiences, and opinions.
9. Define the term "muckraker." Find a passage in the text where Sinclair seems to be more interested in muckraking than he is in telling Jurgis' story.
10. Some critics believe Jurgis experiences two turning points in his life. One of these is when little Antanas dies. Which incident do you think is his second turning point?
11. Naturalism is defined as a literary movement that began in the late nineteenth century, which emphasizes that man is as much a prisoner of instinct, environment, and heredity as animals; man has no free will in the theory of naturalism. Novels written in this form often include: people in lower economic classes who must fight against overwhelming odds to survive, an urban rather than a rural setting, a story that describes the harsh realities of life and the unsuccessful attempts that the characters make to change the circumstances of their lives.

Based on this definition, cite incidents from the story to prove that *The Jungle* is an example of naturalistic writing.

# The Jungle

Note: All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Press Edition of *The Jungle*, published 2005.

## Chapter 1

### VOCABULARY

**acziavimas** – a Lithuanian wedding custom in which the men take turns dancing with the bride and leaving money in a hat at the conclusion of each dance  
**altitudinous** – relating to heights  
**badinage** – playful, teasing talk  
**cortege** – a train of attendants, a procession  
**incommode** – to bother, inconvenience  
**incongruous** – lacking harmony or agreement, incompatible  
**lugubrious** – sad or mournful  
**perforce** – through necessity  
**precipitately** – hastily or rashly  
**promiscuous** – consisting of different elements mixed together  
**seraphically** – in a heavenly way  
**veselija** – Lithuanian wedding

- Many interesting and important characters are introduced in this chapter. Briefly describe the following characters. Whenever possible, include in your description each character's occupation, relationship to other characters, age, and personal character traits which seem to separate one character from another.

For example, Marija Berczynskas is described as being exuberant and interested in maintaining the proprieties of a traditional Lithuanian wedding ceremony. As the bride's cousin, she takes charge of the wedding reception.

Ona Lukoszaite

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Jurgis Rudkus

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**Chapter 2**

VOCABULARY

**felicitous – appropriate**

1. The literary term “in media res” means to begin in the middle of the action. In Chapter 1, Sinclair begins the story by describing Jurgis and Ona’s wedding. Why do you think he begins the novel in this way?

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2. In Chapter 2, the story flashes back to Jurgis’ life in Lithuania. This flashback provides the reader with the necessary background information about Jurgis and Ona so that the reader will accept and understand the motivations of the characters in the action to come. Why does Jurgis decide to immigrate to America?

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3. When Jurgis and Ona’s family reach Chicago they “were pitiable in their helplessness; above all things they stood in deadly terror of any sort of person in official uniform, and so whenever they saw a policeman they would cross the street and hurry by.” (Pg. 32) Why are Jurgis and the others afraid of the policemen? What theme for this novel does this fear suggest to the reader?

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### Chapter 13

#### VOCABULARY

**albumen** – a protein substance found in animal tissue (now spelled albumin)  
**charnel** – a building or place where corpses or bones are deposited  
**magnanimity** – being generous in overlooking injury or insult  
**obdurate** – hardhearted; not easily moved to pity or sympathy  
**perversity** – stubbornly deviating from what is considered to be right  
**piecework** – work for which one is paid a fixed rate  
**prestidigitator** – magician  
**ptarmigan** – a brownish bird  
**voluble** – talking a lot

1. In this chapter, Sinclair continues his exposé of the flaws in capitalism by relentlessly describing the problems working class people like Jurgis must face. Which of the incidents in this chapter do you think is the most horrible? Based on that incident, what do you think Sinclair is saying about capitalism?

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2. Why does Jurgis decide the boys must return to school? What theme for *The Jungle* does this incident support?

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