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Teaching Unit™

Sample

Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Winesburg, Ohio

by Sherwood Anderson

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



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Winesburg, Ohio

Notes

Sherwood Anderson was born in 1876 and died in 1941. Growing up in Ohio, Anderson eventually became dissatisfied with his life and deserted his family and work, and moved to Chicago to become a writer. His best-known work is *Winesburg, Ohio*, which is a collection of short stories that powerfully portray life in small-town America shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century. This work is considered a masterpiece that reflects both the inner and outer dimensions of his characters.

While portraying his characters' inner struggles, the frustrations of youth, and the search for self, Anderson includes conflicts of maturity and sexuality, including premarital and extramarital affairs. Teachers should be forewarned that many characters fantasize about and act on their sexual urges. The acts themselves are not described in the text, but rather implied in various situations throughout the book.

All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *Winesburg, Ohio*, copyright 1995.

Winesburg, Ohio

Objectives

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

1. cite examples of simile, symbol, foreshadowing, tone, and allusion from the book.
2. identify the main theme of the book.
3. determine the narrator's opinion of small town America in 1919.
4. identify the conflict between industrial society and the individual as portrayed in this book.
5. distinguish internal from external conflict as experienced by the characters of the book.
6. define and use the vocabulary words in the study guide.
7. analyze the different techniques that Anderson uses to develop the characters.
8. identify and understand experiences and feelings of characters in the stories.
9. explain how the townspeople's lives are interconnected in the book.
10. relate to the characters using personal experiences and prior knowledge.
11. analyze the struggles that lead to a coming-of-age for various characters in the book.

Winesburg, Ohio

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Imagine that you have discovered a time capsule buried by one of the residents from Winesburg, Ohio, almost one-hundred years ago. Describe what would be in the time capsule, identify which of the characters in the novel had buried it, and explain each item's significance.
2. Sherwood Anderson criticizes the ideology behind several social and cultural institutions in *Winesburg, Ohio*, focusing specifically on religion, marriage, and family. Select one of these institutions and describe Anderson's assessment of the concept. Include character descriptions and actions to support your interpretation.
3. Compare and contrast the George Willard at the beginning of the book with the George Willard at the end of the book. Refer to specific stories and examples.
4. Study the four parts of the story "Godliness." What commentary on religion does Anderson make in the stories? How does he make his point? Cite details from the book to support your answer.
5. Identify the historical references in the novel to place the story in its correct historical context.
6. Several characters in the book either seek adventure or find it incidentally. What does the word "adventure" symbolize in this book? Consider the following:
 - Who seeks adventure?
 - Who stumbles upon adventure?
 - What is the outcome of most of the adventures?
 - What do various characters learn from their adventures?
7. Throughout the story, many townspeople share their private thoughts and experiences with George Willard. Why do you think people feel that they should confide in George?
8. What is Anderson's definition of manhood? Use details from the stories to support your answer.
9. Of all of the characters portrayed by Anderson, which one is the most admirable? Why?

Winesburg, Ohio

The Book of the Grotesque

Vocabulary

grotesque – someone with qualities or characteristics that are distorted and strange
ludicrous – absurd; ridiculous
indelible – lasting; permanent
elaborate – highly detailed; complex
profligacy – extravagance; wastefulness

1. Explain the meaning of the simile, “He was like a pregnant woman...” (Pg. 1)

2. According to the story, what happens to the beautiful truths of the world when people come along?

3. Read the following excerpt from the story, and then rewrite it in your own words.

“For an hour the procession of grotesques passed before the eyes of the old man, and then, although it was a painful thing to do, he crept out of bed and began to write.” (Pg. 2)

4. What prevented the old writer from becoming a grotesque himself?

Mother

Vocabulary

transient – temporary
listless – weak; lacking energy and enthusiasm
gaunt – thin

1. Contrast Elizabeth Willard with her husband Tom Willard.

2. Explain the meaning of Elizabeth Willard’s prayer for her son, “And do not let him become smart and successful either.” (Pg. 14)

3. Describe the relationship between Elizabeth Willard and her son, George.

4. Explain the meaning of the following quotation: “Within [George] there is a secret something that is striving to grow. It is the thing I let be killed in myself.” (Pg. 16)

5. Why is Elizabeth described as a tigress?

Respectability

Vocabulary

perverted – corrupted; distorted
homage – praise; honor
leering – staring
abominably – disgustingly
respectability – worthiness

1. Why is Wash Williams called “a man of courage”? (Pg. 69)

2. Why is Wash Williams so critical of his wife’s respectability?

3. Why does Wash Williams share his story with George Willard?

4. Compare and contrast the descriptions of Wash as a young man and as an older man.
