

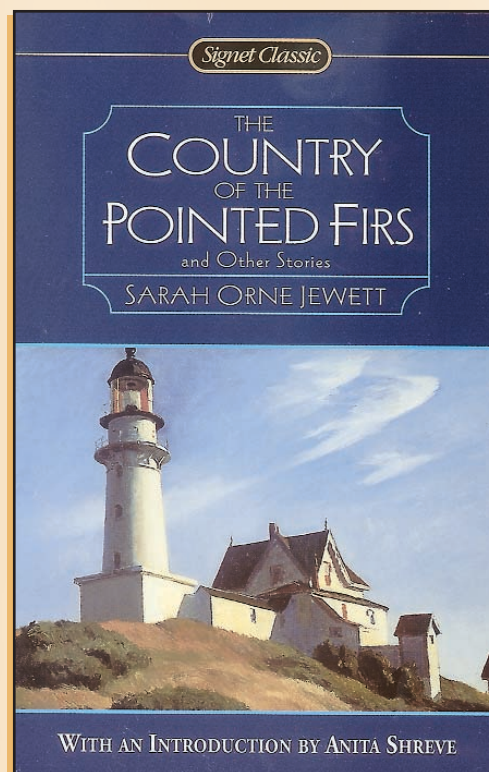


A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSIC EDITION OF

SARAH ORNE JEWETT'S

THE COUNTRY OF THE POINTED FIRS AND OTHER STORIES

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S E R I E S E D I T O R S :

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE NOVEL

As a teenager, Sarah Orne Jewett became determined to write about the rapidly disappearing traditions of country life around her. Her best-known work, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) can be read as a study of the effects of isolation and hardship on the inhabitants of the decaying fishing villages of coastal Maine. Henry James described it as Jewett's "beautiful little quantum of achievement."

The Country of the Pointed Firs also contains realistic sketches of aging Maine natives, whose manners, dialect, and folk wisdom Jewett records with humor. Her writing style is sympathetic, but not sentimental. Because Jewett is among the best known of the 19th-century regionalists, her works have often been used to represent the genre of local color fiction as a whole. Other authors working in this tradition include Harriet Beecher Stowe and Alice Freeman in the Northeast; Joel Chandler Harris and Kate Chopin in the South; Hamlin Garland and Zona Gale in the Midwest; and Mark Twain and Bret Harte in the West.

The novel's appeal, though not immediately apparent, emerges as the reader becomes acquainted with its characters. These coastal Mainers are suspicious of outsiders, like the narrator, and it is only through time and patience that their humor and tenderness surface. In a letter to thirteen-year-old Mary E. Mulholland dated December 19, 1897, Sarah Orne Jewett writes, "you will always have the happiness of finding friendships in books, and it grows pleasanter and pleasanter as one grows older. And then the people in books are apt to make us understand 'real' people better, and to know why they do things, and so we learn sympathy and patience and enthusiasm for those we live with, and can try to help them in what they are doing, instead of being half suspicious and finding fault. It is just the same way that a beautiful picture makes us quicker to see the same things in a landscape, to look for rich clouds and trees, and see their beauty" (as reprinted in Sarah Orne Jewett's *Letters*, ed. Richard Cary, 1967:116).

Because plot does not structure the work, many critics view the book not as a novel, but as a series of sketches; however, its structure is unified through both setting and theme. Due to this novel's challenging structure, it is recommended for advanced high school or college students as an introduction to the genre of local color in American literature.

ABOUT THIS TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide contains four sections: Prereading Activities, Summaries and Teaching Suggestions, After Reading the Novel, and Extended Learning. The prereading activities involve and engage students, preparing them to read this mature work. The "Summaries and Teaching Suggestions" section guides students during their reading. Organized by chapters, it provides questions, vocabulary study, quotations, and assorted activities. Numbers in parentheses refer to the page number in the Signet Classic edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

Questions are useful for class discussion, individual writing or group activities.

Vocabulary is listed with the page number of its first use in the text. When possible, students should ascertain meaning through context. Less able students may benefit from a review of these words prior to their reading of the respective chapters, while more able readers may be able to handle them when encountered in context.

Quotations can be discussed by the class or handled in small groups. Students can respond to them individually in writing journal entries.

Activities may be selected by the teacher or students, since completing all the activities would be too time-consuming. Some may be delayed for use as part of the post-reading experiences.

The "After Reading the Novel" section suggests activities that pull together reading experiences through an examination of themes. Finally, the "Extended Learning" section assists those who wish to pursue individual interests.

CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

The narrator—Female writer who seemingly has no family or professional commitments other than her writing.

Mrs. Almira Todd—A large woman in her sixties who acts as the narrator's conduit into the lives of the residents of Dunnet Landing and the surrounding areas. Mrs. Todd is a widow who makes her living by selling herbal remedies and by boarding travelers in her home.

The village doctor—The local physician who has a good working relationship with Mrs. Todd, the herbalist.

Mrs. Beggs—Dunnet resident who helps Mrs. Todd care for Mrs. Tollard on her deathbed. Mrs. Beggs's own funeral acts as a plot device for the narrator to be introduced to Captain Littlepage.

Captain Littlepage—Retired sea captain who shares his love of poetry with the narrator as well as a strange story of a mystical place near the North Pole serving as a transition between our world and the hereafter.

Mari Harris—Captain Littlepage's housekeeper who is held in low esteem by Mrs. Todd and her circle of friends.

Gaffett—Old Scottish seaman who tells Captain Littlepage about the strange town in the farthest north.

Johnny Bowden—Mrs. Todd's cousin's son who helps her and the narrator take a dory to Green Island to visit Mrs. Todd's mother and brother.

Mrs. Blackett—Mrs. Todd's eighty-six-year-old mother who lives on Green Island. She is a small, lively woman who is beloved and respected by all who know her.

William Blackett—Mrs. Todd's reclusive, fisherman brother. He lives on Green Island with his mother and has had a forty-year courtship with Esther Hight.

Susan Fosdick—Mrs. Todd's old friend who lives her life in a constant procession of visits with friends. She is the last living member of her family having outlived her brothers and sisters as well as her husband and children. To have her visit you is seen as a great honor.

Joanna Todd—The cousin of Mrs. Todd's late husband who banished herself to live life alone after being jilted by her fiancée.

Mr. Dimmick—The ineffectual minister who goes with Mrs. Todd to visit and comfort Joanna Todd at her hermitage on Shell-Heap Island.

Captain Bowden—Mrs. Todd's cousin who befriends the narrator.

Sant Bowden—One of Mrs. Todd's older relatives who directs everyone at the family reunion. Rejected in his attempts to join the army, Sant becomes fascinated with and an expert on military strategy.

Mrs. Caplin—One of Mrs. Todd's friends from the Landing who attends the Bowden Family reunion.

Mary Anna Bowden—Poet who read one of her poems at the Bowden Family reunion.

Elijah Tilley—One of the oldest fisherman living in Dunnet Landing. He is a widower who terribly misses his wife years after her death.

Mrs. Hight—Esther's forbidding mother who is an invalid because of a stroke. Her incapacity has made her fearsome and forbidding.

Esther Hight—A former school teacher turned shepherd who has been William Blackett's beau for forty years. In addition to the sheep, she takes care of her invalid mother.

Mrs. Captain Tollard—A French woman who was stranded in Jamaica after the death of her family due to yellow fever. Befriended by four sea captains from Dunnet, she marries Captain Tollard. Almost friendless after a falling out with the Captain's sister, she suffers alone while the Captain is at sea. Upon her death, she leaves everything to Mrs. Todd who befriended her in her loneliness.

Eliza Tollard—Captain Tollard's unpleasant sister who makes life miserable for his wife.

Captain Lorenzo Bowden—Mrs. Todd's uncle and the caretaker of Captain Tollard's affairs. Along with Mrs. Todd he breaks the news of the Captain's death to Mrs. Tollard. He later becomes obsessed with finding hidden treasure in Captain Tollard's house.

Abby Martin—A friend of Mrs. Todd who considers herself Queen Victoria's twin.

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

1. Research coastal Maine of the late 1800's. What are the major occupations of the people? How is life different today?
2. Describe your physical surroundings. Record the smells and images of your room, neighborhood, or school. Create a written sketch of your environment so those readers can "see" it without visual aids.
3. Research "local color fiction." What are its characteristics? Which authors are considered "local color artists" and why? Consult <http://www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl311/color.html> for definitions and examples of local color authors and their works.
4. Research dialects and write a skit using dialect from your area of the country. Then, rewrite the skit using a dialect from another part of the country. What are the differences?
5. Read "Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" by Mark Twain aloud in class and discuss how the elements of local color fiction pertain to this short story.
6. Begin a series of journal entries to assist you in the study of this novel. Include your own observations, questions, quotations from the novel, and reactions to help you chart your own reading experience.
7. Develop small "writing circles" or small groups whose purpose is to discuss journal entries and to work on activities specified for small group. By using these groups prior to whole-class discussion, students may feel more comfortable with class participation.

SUMMARIES AND TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

A Continuing Activity: Sarah Orne Jewett only allows us to see Dunnet and its people through the eyes of a narrator. Students can keep a running journal of the narrator's thoughts and feelings about her experiences with Dunnet and its people. When possible, text should be cited for support.

I. "THE RETURN"

SUMMARY

The narrator returns to Dunnet after having fallen in love with the place a few years earlier, just as someone who falls in love with a person at first sight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, what qualities of the town made the narrator fall in love with it?
2. What do you think the narrator is looking for in her return to Dunnet?

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary is selected from the text with page numbers in parentheses and may be used in conjunction with student writing, as items for discussion of regional language, and to further understanding of the time in which the novel is set.

acquainted (1): having just met

subdued (2): quiet, restrained

ACTIVITIES

1. Jewett personifies the houses of Dunnet (1). Discuss what is meant by personification. In your journal, personify a building familiar to you without naming it. Read your personification to a partner or small group. Can they identify it?

2. Write a journal entry reflecting the thoughts of your personified building (from activity 1). Mimic Jewett's style in your entry.
3. Research eastern Maine. What are the small towns of this region like today?
4. Make a collage reflecting the narrator's feelings about returning to Dunnet.

QUOTATIONS

These houses made the most of their seaward view, and there was a gayety and determined floweriness in their bits of garden ground; the small paned high windows in the peaks of their steep gables were like knowing eyes that watched the harbor and the far sea-line beyond, or looked northward all along the shore and its background of spruces and balsam firs. (1)

When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. The process of falling in love at first sight is as final as it is swift in such a case, but the growth of true friendship may be a lifelong affair. (1)

II. "MRS. TODD"

SUMMARY

The narrator boards with Mrs. Todd, a widow who grows and collects herbs to sell as remedies. The narrator comes to Dunnet to write but is distracted by spending most of her time assisting Mrs. Todd with the sale of herbal remedies. She finally tells Mrs. Todd she must begin writing and can't help with sales any longer. This change in relationship draws the two women closer together, and Mrs. Todd confides her own youthful relationship with a young man far above her station. His mother thwarted their love, and they both married others, yet Mrs. Todd still thinks of him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Mrs. Todd make her living?
2. Citing the text to support your answer, what is Mrs. Todd's relationship with the town physician?
3. Why has the narrator come to Dunnet?
4. What keeps the narrator from her writing? What does she learn about Mrs. Todd in one of their nightly talks?
5. What does their relationship say about society of that time?

VOCABULARY

seclusion (3): being alone, away from society

ardent (3): passionate

rustic (3): country

pharmacopoeia (3): collection of medicines

pungent (4): strong-smelling

rites (4): ceremonies

nostrum (4): medicinal formula

unadmonished (4): not being advised

elixir (4): concentrated solution; liquid medicine

estranged (6): made into strangers; separated

sibyl (7): mythical creature

ACTIVITIES

1. Based on your reading of this section, draw a picture or write a detailed description of Mrs. Todd. Compare your depiction to one done by a classmate. How were your perceptions different? Find text to support your perceptions or to support another view.
2. Most people have olfactory, or odor, memories. Bring items to class that invoke these memories and use them as writing prompts. Exchange items to demonstrate how certain scents have different impacts on people.
3. Jewett rarely uses dialogue. When she does, she uses regional dialect. Using the dialect of Dunnet, create a conversation between Mrs. Todd and one of her customers or with her lodger, the narrator. Share it with the class.
4. In your journal, discuss a memory or feeling that keeps returning to you, as Mrs. Todd's romance does to her.

QUOTATIONS

It may not have been only the common ails of humanity with which she tried to cope; it seemed sometimes as if love and hate and jealousy and adverse winds at sea might also find their proper remedies among the curious wild-looking plants in Mrs. Todd's garden. (4)

Literary employments are so vexed with uncertainties at best, and it was not until the voice of conscience sounded louder in my ears than the sea on the nearest pebble beach that I said unkind words of withdrawal to Mrs. Todd. (6)

"I ain't seen him for some years; he's forgot our youthful feelin's, I expect, but a woman's heart is different; them feelin's comes back when you think you've done with 'em, as sure as spring comes with the year. An' I've always had ways of hearin' about him."(7)

III. "THE SCHOOLHOUSE"**SUMMARY**

To find a peaceful place to write, the narrator rents the local schoolhouse to use for her writing.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Who are the only visitors to the schoolhouse while the narrator is working? What does that tell you about the place?

VOCABULARY

consumption (8): tuberculosis

wistful (8): thoughtful, longing

therapeutic (8): healing; having to do with therapy

autocrats (9): powerful people

feigned (9): faked, made false

excursions (9): trips

ACTIVITIES

1. Because setting is vital to this work, describe in detail Dunnet and the surrounding area. Include Mrs. Todd's house and yard, the village, the seashore, the path to the schoolhouse, and the schoolhouse itself. Cite the text to support your descriptions.
 2. Write about a place where you find it easy to concentrate or reflect. What do you consider to be distractions and how do you get rid of them?
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3. Research tansy (10) and share information about someone you consider to be like the tansy near the schoolhouse.

QUOTATION

Being scuffed down all the spring made [the tansy] grow so much the better, like some folks that had it hard in their youth, and were bound to make the most of themselves before they died. (10)

IV "AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE WINDOW"

SUMMARY

After attending the funeral services for Mrs. Begg, a local widow, the narrator arrives at the schoolhouse. She watches the walking procession to the graveyard through the schoolhouse window, focusing on Mrs. Todd, the elderly Captain Littlepage, and his housekeeper, Mari Harris.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do we know about Mrs. Begg?
2. What does the narrator know about Captain Littlepage?
3. What does she theorize about him from what she learns from Mrs. Todd?
4. What do we know about Mari Harris?
5. What guess does the narrator make about the Captain in relation to Mrs. Todd's work with herbs?
6. From the clues given, what do you think is behind Mrs. Todd's secrecy about Captain Littlepage and Mari Harris?
7. The narrator chooses to watch the funeral procession from the schoolhouse rather than joining in. Why does she do this? What effect does this have on her telling of the story?

VOCABULARY

lament (11): mourn

scribe (13): writer

cadences (13): rhythms

ACTIVITIES

Find examples of people who resemble the landscape of eastern Maine and/or the herbs in Mrs. Todd's garden. What is the author trying to say about these people? Who in your life resembles or reflects your area's landscape? Write a journal entry about a time you felt out of place or uncomfortable in a situation or group of people.

QUOTATIONS

He wore a narrow, long-tailed coat and walked with a stick and had the same "cant to leeward" as the wind-bent trees on the height above. (12)

[Captain Littlepage] might have belonged with a simple which grew in a certain slug-haunted corner of the garden, whose use she could never be betrayed into telling me, though I saw her cutting the tops by moonlight once, as if it were a charm, and not a medicine, like the great fading bloodroot leaves. (12)

One anxious scribe felt very dull that day, a sheep-bell tinkled near by, and called her wandering wits after it. (13)

V. "CAPTAIN LITTLEPAGE"

SUMMARY

The narrator receives an unexpected visit at the schoolhouse from Captain Littlepage. The Captain tells her about the trials and tribulations of his forty-three years at sea and how he developed a love of poetry. He laments the languishing of sea trade and the consequent narrowing world view of Dunnet's residents. He tells her of an ill-fated voyage of his ship, the *Minerva*, that changed his view of the meaning of life.

QUESTIONS

1. How has the failing sea trade caused the inhabitants of Dunnet Landing to narrow their world view?
2. How did Captain Littlepage become interested in poetry?
3. What do you think happened to the Captain during the *Minerva's* voyage that gave him insight into our places in the hereafter?

VOCABULARY

besieged (14): under attack

misapprehension (15): misunderstanding

conjecture (16): guessing

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a journal entry that reflects on the following: How do modern Americans learn about the world? How does this differ from the people of Dunnet? How is it similar? Is our world view larger or smaller than earlier generations? Why? Discuss your opinions with a small group.
2. Research a place you have never visited. Use every research tool, including technology. Present your findings to your small group. Discuss: How does modern technological research affect our world view?

QUOTATION

"A captain is not expected to be familiar with his crew, and for company's sake in dull days and nights he turns to his book. Most of us old shipmasters came to know 'most everything about something; one would take to readin' on farming topics, and some were great on medicine-but Lord help their poor crews!—or some were all for history, and now and then there'd be one like me that gave his time to the poets"(19)

VI. "THE WAITING PLACE"

SUMMARY

Captain Littlepage recounts his experiences when the *Minerva* sinks and he is shipwrecked at a Moravian Mission on Greenland. While awaiting transportation from the mission, the Captain roomed with Gaffett, a Scottish seaman who was also stranded at the mission. Gaffett tells the Captain of his shipmate's visit to a town two degrees farther north than any man had been before. The town was "like a place where there was neither living nor dead" (23). Gaffett believes the town is a waiting place for people stuck between our world and the hereafter. He asks the Captain to share his story with "the experts" when he returns to civilization. The Captain does this but receives no reply from "the experts."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you explain what Gaffett and his shipmates saw?
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2. Citing the text to support your answer, tell how Gaffett's story affects Captain Littlepage's outlook on life and death?

VOCABULARY

Esquitnaux (20): Eskimos

reverie (21): daydream

ACTIVITIES

1. Research the story of Odysseus. How does Captain Littlepage's journey compare to that of Odysseus? How does it differ?
2. Research theories about the afterlife, particularly of purgatory, or a "waiting place" between death and the hereafter. How does Captain Littlepage's story compare to these beliefs?
3. Write a journal entry about a time you were homesick.

QUOTATION

"The old poets little knew what comfort they could be to a man. I was well acquainted with the works of Milton, but up there it did seem to me as if Shakespeare was the king; he has his sea terms very accurate, and some beautiful passages were calming to the mind. I could say them over until I shed tears; there was nothing beautiful to me in that place but the stars above and those passages of verse "(22)

VII. "THE OUTER ISLAND"

SUMMARY

While walking home from the schoolhouse, the narrator bumps into Mrs. Todd. As the sun sets, it illuminates one of the outer islands, making it particularly clear in their sight. Mrs. Todd remarks that the island is Green Island where she grew up and where her eighty-six-year-old mother still lives. She promises to take the narrator to the island to visit her mother.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What images connect this chapter to the previous one?
2. What do you learn about Mrs. Todd's life in this chapter?

VOCABULARY

lee (28): down wind

sleevin' (28): holding the arm of

incantation (30): chant to bring magic

QUOTATIONS

The sunburst upon that outermost island made it seem like a sudden revelation of the world beyond this which some believe to be so near. (29)

"I don't give that to everybody," said Mrs. Todd kindly; and I felt for a moment as if it were part of a spell and incantation, and as if my enchantress would now begin to look like the cobweb shapes of the arctic town.(30)

ACTIVITIES

1. Write about a particularly beautiful sunset.
2. Find music that reflects on sunset or sunrise. Use it as background for a video of a sunset or a sunrise.
3. Research celebrations, myths, or stories about sunset or sunrise. Discuss: Why do humans find the rising and setting sun significant?

VIII. "GREEN ISLAND"**SUMMARY**

On the short dory ride to the island, Mrs. Todd describes the other outer islands and their inhabitants to the narrator. She also takes a halibut from her brother William's line for their supper. The narrator is introduced to Mrs. Blackett, Mrs. Todd's mother. Mrs. Blackett, a small lively woman, gives the narrator a tour of her homeplace. The narrator is impressed with the beauty and coziness of the place and is eager to meet Mrs. Todd's reclusive brother William.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the narrator discover about Mrs. Todd's nautical skills?
2. Citing the text to support your answer, describe the relationship between Mrs. Todd and her mother. How are she and Mrs. Todd alike and different?
3. Green Island and the Blackett house are described as very inviting places. What words does the author use to create such a feeling?
4. What do we learn in this chapter about William?

VOCABULARY

furled (32): folded

aft (32): behind; at the back of the boat

capsize (32): turn upside down

ACTIVITIES

1. Research the nautical terms included in this chapter and discuss how they contribute to the local color of the novel.
2. Write a poem or short essay about discovering another side to a person you thought you knew well.
3. After reading about the relationship between Mrs. Todd and her mother, write a piece about the relationship you have with your mother. Share this with a partner or small group.

QUOTATIONS

"There, they enjoy it; they've got to have somethin' to interest 'em in such a place; 't is a good deal more tryin' to be tied to folks you don't like than 't is to be alone."(34)

"There, you never get over bein' a child long's you have a mother to go to."(35)

IX. "WILLIAM"**SUMMARY**

The narrator meets William, Mrs. Todd's reclusive brother. William is a small, neat man who looks more like his mother

than his sister. Overcoming his initial shyness, William takes the narrator to the highest point of the island to share its beautiful view.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe William. Who is he most like in appearance, Mrs. Todd or Mrs. Blackett?
2. How do you think the narrator and William's relationship will evolve in the future?

VOCABULARY

loutish (42): awkward, ill-mannered

ACTIVITIES

- After reading about the narrator's encounter with William, create a character sketch of someone you know who is shy. Retell a conversation you have had with that person, detailing your thoughts as you were talking to him or her.

QUOTATION

"There ain't no such view in the world, I expect," said William proudly, and I hastened to speak my heartfelt tribute of praise; it was impossible not to feel as if an untraveled boy had spoken, and yet one loved to have him value his native heath.(45)

X. "WHERE PENNYROYAL GREW"

SUMMARY

After dinner with William and Mrs. Blackett, Mrs. Todd takes the narrator to search for herbs. They go to a secret patch of pennyroyals where the flowers' fragrance, combined with the view of the ocean, make the place seem enchanted. In this special place, Mrs. Todd shows the narrator childhood pictures of herself and her family. She also points out the spot in the channel where her late husband Nathan was lost. She talks frankly about her feelings for Nathan and how she loved another man even while she and Nathan were married. She makes it clear that she still has feelings for this lost love from her youth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe what Mrs. Todd sees as William's failings.
2. Why does Mrs. Todd share her secret place with the narrator? How does this change their relationship?
3. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Todd's relationship with her late husband.
4. What prediction do you make about Mrs. Todd's future love life? On what do you base this prediction?

VOCABULARY

pious (46): being humble before God

pathos (46): extreme emotion

ACTIVITIES

1. Research the reference to Antigone alone on the Theban plain (49). How does this reference give depth to Mrs. Todd's story?
 2. Write a poem or essay about a place significant to you. What makes it special? With whom have you shared it? Share your poem or essay with a partner or small group.
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- Based on the clues Mrs. Todd gives in this chapter, write the story of her true love and what went wrong.

QUOTATION

"My heart was gone out o' my keepin' before I ever saw Nathan; but he loved me well, and he made me real happy, and he died before he ever knew what he'd had to know if we'd lived long together."(49)

XI. "THE OLD SINGERS"

SUMMARY

After tea, William and Mrs. Blacken sing for the narrator and Mrs. Todd. Before they have to leave the island, Mrs. Blacken has the narrator come into her bedroom so that she can sit in her rocking chair and enjoy the view from her window.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What "treasure" does William want his mother to share with the narrator? What does the origin of the "treasure" tell you about the Blackett's lives?
- How do Mrs. Blackett and William entertain themselves on winter Sunday evenings? Do you and your family have similar rituals? If so, describe them.
- What does the narrator say about William's singing?

VOCABULARY

daguerreotypes (52): images made on tin before modern photography

ACTIVITIES

- Find pictures of daguerreotypes. Write a short story about the image.
- The narrator describes the rocking chair as the "heart of the old house on Green Island"(53). What is the heart of your home? What makes it that way? Write song lyrics about it in your journal. Share your entry with a small group.

QUOTATION

I began to discover that [William] and his sister could not speak their deeper feelings before each other. (51)

XII. "A STRANGE SAIL"

SUMMARY

Mrs. Susan Fosdick, a childhood friend of Mrs. Todd, comes to visit. She and Mrs. Todd share hours of happy memories of people from their past.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Citing the text to support your answer, describe the qualities that make Mrs. Fosdick such an honored guest.
- What do you learn about Mrs. Fosdick's life and past?

VOCABULARY

adieux (57): good-byes

amiable (58): likeable, friendly

ACTIVITIES

1. Outline the differences between Louise Fosdick and Mrs. Todd. Why are they friends? Write in your journal about a friend who has personality traits different from yours.
2. Recreate the tea party held for Louise Fosdick for your class, including the oolong tea. As you eat and drink, discuss how Mrs. Todd shows her feelings for Louise through the food and special tea. Discuss what food and drink you would prepare for a special friend.
3. Research the "idyl of Theocritus"(59). What does this image contribute to the development of the novel? Discuss in a small group.

QUOTATION

"Yes'm, old friends is always best, 'less you can catch a new one that's fit to make an old one out of."(61)

XIII. "POOR JOANNA"

SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick tell the narrator the story of Joanna Todd, a cousin of Mrs. Todd's late husband, who banished herself to Shell-Heap Island to live out her life alone after being jilted by her fiance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, explain why Joanna Todd's temperament led her to self-banishment.
2. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Shell-Heap Island and discuss its suitability as a permanent home.
3. How did the people of Dunnet Landing react to Joanna's self-banishment?
4. How do you think Joanna will react to Mrs. Todd and the minister's visit?

VOCABULARY

reticence (65): reserve; holding back

hermitage (69): a place to live away from society, like a hermit

ACTIVITIES

1. Under what circumstances would you take yourself away from the world to live on a deserted island? What would you take with you for entertainment or comfort?
2. Have you ever had a premonition that came true? Create a skit showing how it happened.
3. How are the other characters of the novel hermits like Joanna? Make a mobile showing how each character lives in his/her own world.

QUOTATION

I had been reflecting upon a state of society that admitted such personal freedom and a voluntary hermitage. There was something mediaeval in the behavior of poor Joanna Todd under a disappointment of the heart. (69)

XIV “THE HERMITAGE”**SUMMARY**

Mrs. Todd tells Mrs. Fosdick and the narrator about her and Reverend Dimmick's visit with Joanna on Shell-Heap Island. She describes Mr. Dimmick's clumsy attempts to comfort Joanna as well as her own unsuccessful attempt to get Joanna to come and live with her. She ends the story with a description of Joanna's well-attended funeral on the island.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Joanna receive Mrs. Todd and Mr. Dimmick?
2. Citing the text to support your answer, compare and contrast Mrs. Todd's and Joanna's reactions to Mr. Dimmick's attempt to minister to Joanna.
3. Why does Joanna think she is unfit to live with others? What is her sin? 4. How does Mrs. Fosdick think a situation like Joanna's would be handled in their present time? How would it be handled today?

VOCABULARY

ventured (78): attempted, tried

ACTIVITIES

1. Make and perform a skit of Mrs. Todd and Mr. Dimmick's visit to Joanna.
2. Create Joanna's journal of the time she spent on the island alone.
3. Read other stories about life on an island. How does living on an island change your perception of life? If a bridge were built to connect the island to the mainland, how would life change? Discuss island life with your small group.

QUOTATION

“Tis like bad eyesight, the mind of such a person: if your eyes don't see right there may be a remedy, but there's no kind of glasses to remedy the mind “(78)

XV “ON SHELL-HEAP ISLAND”**SUMMARY**

On a voyage with Captain Bowden, the narrator visits Shell-Heap Island. On the island, she explores the remains of Joanna's house and the rest of the island. While standing at a lookout point, she hears the happy voices of young sailors and imagines what life must have been like for Joanna, alone on the island.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Captain Bowden's reaction to the narrator's request to visit Shell-Heap Island and his reaction to Joanna in general.
2. What is the narrator's attitude to people like Joanna who shut themselves off from the world? What do you think about people like Joanna?

VOCABULARY

recluses (80): people who stay apart from society; hermits

ACTIVITIES

- What are the simple acts of kindness people perform today? In teams, brainstorm small, everyday gestures everyone could make to help out others. Share your list with the class.

QUOTATION

Later generations will know less and less of Joanna herself, but there are paths trodden to the shrines of solitude the world over—the world cannot forget them, try as it may; the feet of the young find them out because of curiosity and the dim foreboding, while the old bring hearts full of remembrance. (82)

XVI. “THE GREAT EXPEDITION”**SUMMARY**

Mrs. Todd, the narrator, and Mrs. Blacken make preparations to go to the annual Bowden Family reunion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Mrs. Todd expect of the narrator at the beginning of this chapter? How does the narrator figure out what is going on without offending Mrs. Todd?
2. What is Mrs. Todd's initial attitude toward William? Is her attitude correct? Cite the text to support your answers.

VOCABULARY

propitious (84): lucky

altercation (84): argument or fight

conveyance (85): means of travel

ACTIVITIES

1. Write in your journal about a time you were expected to “read someone's mind.” How did it turn out?
2. Brainstorm with a partner times you each had high hopes for a special event that fizzled. Write a skit about these and present it to the class.

QUOTATIONS

Mrs. Todd gave no place to the pleasures of anticipation, but she spoke like the oracle that she was. (86)

There was a patient look on the old man's face, as if the world were a great mistake and he had nobody with whom to speak his own language or find companionship. (89)

XVII. “A COUNTRY ROAD”**SUMMARY**

Mrs. Todd, the narrator, and Mrs. Blacken travel by wagon “up country” to the Bowden Family reunion. During the trip Mrs. Blackett tells the narrator about her sister who lived in the area.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe the relationship between Mrs. Todd and the doctor. What is surprising about their relationship?
2. What does the narrator learn during the trip about the local people's opinion of Mrs. Blackett? Citing the text, explain why you think they feel this way about her.
3. How do you think Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd will be received at the reunion?

VOCABULARY

shrewdest (91): sharpest; most intelligent

ACTIVITIES

1. Mrs. Todd leaves the back door open to her house, and rejects the narrator's offer to close and lock it. Make a list in your journal of how society has changed since the time of this novel. Reflect on your list. Write a poem, song lyrics or short story about this topic.
2. Research basic body language. What does Mrs. Todd's body language say about her feelings in this chapter? Practice body language with a partner. Show how you might show frustration, anger, joy, excitement, agreement, etc. without saying a word.
3. Mrs. Todd says, "Every tree has got its own livin' spring; there's folks made to match 'em"(94). What does she mean? Who are the "running springs" in this novel? Who are the "running springs" in your own life. Write a poem as a tribute to these people.

QUOTATIONS

"Last time I was up this way that tree was kind of drooping and discouraged. Grown trees act that way sometimes, same's folks; then they'll put right to it and strike their roots off into new ground and start all over again with real good courage."(93)

"Every tree has got its own livin' spring; there's folks made to match 'em "(94)

XVIII. "THE BOWDEN REUNION"**SUMMARY**

At the Bowden Family reunion, Mrs. Todd describes various family members to the narrator. Through her descriptions the narrator sees a new side of Mrs. Todd. The narrator also learns a great deal about the Bowden Family homesite.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Mrs. Blackett honored at the reunion? What is Mrs. Todd's reaction to this honor?
 2. Why does Sant Bowden organize the procession to the dining area?
 3. What new, unpleasant side of Mrs. Todd does the narrator see at the reunion?
 4. How did the Bowden Family reunion differ from most family reunions? What touches did the family add to the events to set their reunion apart from others?
 5. How does the narrator's view of Mrs. Todd as being "heavily domestic" change at the reunion? What is it that Mrs. Todd needs to make her whole?
-

VOCABULARY

disconsolate (105): sad

sordid (105): dark, evil

animosities (106): hatreds

ACTIVITIES

1. Write about a time you felt included in a group, although you were an “outsider.”
2. Write about important places in your life. What do they represent? How did you discover them? How did they become important? Draw, paint or create a collage to illustrate how you feel about this place.
3. Research some of your family's history. Share interesting stories about your ancestors with the class.
4. If you have a picture of a family reunion, pick one person from the picture and write a letter to him or her.

QUOTATIONS

Such is the hidden fire of enthusiasm in the New England nature that, once given an outlet, it shines forth with almost volcanic light and heat. (97)

The splash of the water could be heard faintly, yet still be heard; we might have been a company of ancient Greeks going to celebrate a victory, or to worship the god of harvests in the grove above. (101)

XIX. “THE FEAST’S END”**SUMMARY**

After listening to several speakers during the feast, Mrs. Todd, Mrs. Blackett, and the narrator make their good byes and return home. All three remark on what a wonderful event it was.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is Mrs. Todd's response to Mary Anna's poetry reading? What does her reaction show you about Mrs. Todd's personality?
2. Why does Mrs. Blackett's lament that “There wa'n't many old folks there, somehow,” make the narrator and Mrs. Todd sad?
3. What is Mrs. Todd's reaction to Mis' Peter Bowden's singing? How does this comment make Jewett's characterizations seem more realistic?
4. How is the Bowden Family reunion similar to or different from reunions you have attended?

VOCABULARY

ingenuity (108): intelligence, ability to create

ACTIVITIES

1. Recreate the reunion's pies or the gingerbread version of the old Bowden house to share with the class.
 2. In a poem, compare and contrast the attitudes of the young versus the old regarding the reunion.
-

QUOTATIONS

There were enough young persons at the reunion, but it is the old who really value such opportunities; as for the young, it is the habit of every day to meet their comrades—the time of separation has not come. (109)

Clannishness is an instinct of the heart,—it is more than a birthright, or a custom; and lesser rights were forgotten in the claim to a common inheritance. (110)

“Those that enjoyed it best’ll want to get right home so’s to think it over.”(111)

So we always keep the same heart, though the outer framework fails and shows the touch of time. (112)

XX. “ALONG SHORE”**SUMMARY**

After a chance meeting while walking along the shore, the narrator is invited to visit Elijah Tilley at his home. During her visit, Elijah proves to be a surprisingly good housekeeper as he works to keep things just as his long-dead wife would want them. He entertains the narrator with stories about his relationship with his late wife and the happiness he found in their life together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What comic event brought the narrator and Elijah Tilley together in conversation?
2. How does the narrator describe the four old fishermen’s relationship, mental life, and physical appearance?
3. What surprises the narrator about Elijah’s fields? His house?
4. Who keeps Elijah’s house? Why?
5. Citing the text to support your answer, construct a description of the late Mrs. Tilley. What did she look like? What was her temperament? What did she take pride in?
6. What is Mrs. Todd’s opinion of Elijah? Citing the text to support your answer, compare and contrast her opinion with that of the narrator.

VOCABULARY

vagaries (114): eccentricities, quirks

vicissitudes (115): unpredictable changes

contrivances (116): devices, creations

petrification (116): state of being petrified

ACTIVITIES

1. In small groups or with the entire class, discuss differences between men’s and women’s friendships.
2. Design, draw or bring in pictures of your dream house. How does it express your “nature and character”? (118)
3. In a private journal entry, reflect on the secrets you keep from those closest to you. Why do you keep them?

QUOTATIONS

There was an alliance and understanding between them, so close that it was apparently speechless... Arguments and opinions were unknown to the conversation of these ancient friends you would as soon have expected to hear small talk in a company of

elephants as to hear old Mr. Bowden or Elijah Tilley and their two mates waste breath upon any form of trivial gossip. (115-6)

You felt almost as if a landmark pine should suddenly address you in regard to the weather, or a lofty-minded old camel make a remark as you stood respectfully near him under the circus tent. (116)

I found that I had suddenly left the forbidding coast and come into a smooth little harbor of friendship. (117)

XXI. "THE BACKWARD VIEW"

SUMMARY

At the end of the summer, the narrator says her good-byes to Mrs. Todd and Dunnet Landing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Todd's reactions to the narrator's leaving.
2. Citing the text to support your answer, what is the narrator's reaction to leaving Dunnet Landing?

VOCABULARY

provision (129): something prepared ahead of time, often food

ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss the significance of the gifts Mrs. Todd gives the narrator. What are some significant gifts you have been given in your life? Write a descriptive essay or poem discussing their importance.
2. Write about a significant gift you selected for someone. Why did you select it? How did giving it make you feel? Compose a poem or song lyrics about the gift, the recipient or reactions to the gift.

QUOTATIONS

1. The days were few at Dunnet Landing, and I let each of them slip away unwillingly as a miser spends his coins. (127)
2. There may be restrictions to such a summer's happiness, but the ease that belongs to simplicity is charming enough to make up for whatever a simple life may lack, and the gifts of peace are not for those who live in the thick of battle. (127-8)
3. So we die before our own eyes; so we see some chapters of our lives come to their natural end. (129)

FOUR RELATED STORIES

"A DUNNET SHEPHERDESS"

I. SUMMARY

The narrator wakes to the sound of Mrs. Todd good naturedly scolding her brother William. She is anointing William with an herbal ointment designed to repel mosquitoes in preparation of his annual upcountry fishing trip. William makes his escape, and the narrator retreats to the schoolhouse for her daily writing. Once at the schoolhouse she finds she is in no mood to write and is delighted when William appears to invite her to go with him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Todd's attitude toward her brother's trip. Why do you think the
-

author describes her speech and actions in such contradictory ways?

- Why was this story included in this book? How does it relate to the longer narrative? Why was it not part of the longer narrative?

VOCABULARY

declamatory (135): authoritative, as if giving a speech

deprecating (135): speaking ill of someone or something

pungent (136): strong-smelling

ACTIVITIES

- If "A Dunnet Shepherdess" were included in the novel, where should it be placed? Be prepared to defend your answer with information from the text.
- Research Medea's anointing of Jason before the episode of the iron bulls. (136) What does the allusion contribute to the scene between Mrs. Todd and her brother William?

QUOTATION

If there is one way above another of getting so close to nature that one simply is a piece of nature, following a primeval instinct with perfect selfforgetfulness and forgetting everything except the dreamy consciousness of pleasant freedom, it is to take the course of a shady trout brook. (139)

II. SUMMARY

The narrator and William travel to his fishing spot with little conversation. The narrator observes that he looks more like an "old beau" than "an ancient seafaring William."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What clues does the author give that William's fishing trip is not what it seems?
- What do you think is the real reason for his trip? Cite the text to support your view.

VOCABULARY

beau (140): boyfriend

ACTIVITIES

- Create an illustration, a mosaic or a character sketch poem of William based on the description on page 140. Read or present it to the class.
- Tell a partner or small group about a thoughtful gesture that someone made to you.

QUOTATION

He did not wear the fishing clothes that belonged to his sea going life, but a strangely shaped old suit of tea-colored linen garments that might have been brought home years ago from Canton or Bombay. (140)

III. SUMMARY

William and the narrator fish all morning with no success. After a pleasant lunch, William suggests that they look in on "Thankful Hight's folks" because "Mother'd like to get word."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What further clues does the author give that William's fishing trip is not what it seems?
2. Do you have a relationship with someone with whom you really don't need to talk? Why has the relationship developed that way? What comfort do you get from that relationship?

VOCABULARY

barbel (142): a kind offish

ACTIVITY

- With a partner, act out a relationship that occurs without words. Use body language to develop the story.

QUOTATION

I felt that William's glances changed from anxiety to relief when he found that I was used to such gear; perhaps he felt that we must stay together if I could not bait my own hook, but we parted happily full of a pleasing sense of companionship. (142)

IV. SUMMARY

William and the narrator travel to the Hight's homeplace where they meet a shepherd minding a large flock. William greets the shepherd enthusiastically and tells the narrator a bit about her.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn about raising sheep in Maine from William's conversation with the narrator?
2. What did you learn about the shepherd?
3. Based on what you've learned in this chapter, predict what we will discover by the end of this story.
4. What is satisfying about being alone? Defend your position with examples from your experience, from history, and from examples from the text.

VOCABULARY

portents (144): omens, warnings

mortifying (145): embarrassing

oration (147): long speech

QUOTATION

It was mortifying to find how strong the habit of idle speech may become in one's self. One need not always be saying something in this noisy world. (145)

V. SUMMARY

William introduces the narrator to Mrs. Hight who has been made an invalid by a stroke. Her incapacity has made her angry and forbidding. As soon as it is polite to do so, William leaves the narrator alone with Mrs. Hight so that he can go talk to her daughter Esther who is the shepherd he greeted earlier.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Hight.
2. To what does the narrator ascribe Mrs. Hight's forbidding attitude?
3. Why do you think William has really come to visit the Hights?

VOCABULARY

scepter (148): staff representing royal power

apprehension (149): fear

conciliatory (149): accommodating, obliging

ACTIVITY

- Write a journal entry or poem about something you wanted but were afraid to request.

QUOTATION

Then he lingered for a moment like a timid boy. I could see that he wore a look of resolve, but he did not ask the permission for which he evidently waited. (149)

VI. SUMMARY

In their conversation Mrs. Hight tells the narrator about her illness and the hardships it has placed on her and her daughter Esther. She also tells the narrator a bit about Esther's habits as a shepherd.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the hardships that the stroke has placed on Mrs. Hight?
2. Why does Esther do all of the shepherding herself?

VOCABULARY

unwarrantable (150): unforgivable

ACTIVITY

1. Research shepherding on the internet or visit a sheep farm.
2. How has shepherding changed since the time this story was written?

QUOTATION

"I've kind of got used to disappointments"(151)

VII. SUMMARY

As their conversation began to lag, Mrs. Hight worries about why William and Esther aren't back. The narrator realizes that she has stumbled onto a romance and rejoins the conversation with a new energy so that William and Esther will have more time together. When Mrs. Hight asks her to look outside to see if she can see either of them, the narrator discovers they are close by sitting together on a ledge and talking.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What great discovery does the narrator make in this chapter?
2. How does this compare to your earlier predictions?

VOCABULARY

lofty (153): from a high position

ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to a recording of Chaucerian English, then listen to recorded speech from coastal Maine. Is the narrator accurate in her comparison?
2. Research the myth of Atalanta. How does this allusion enrich the story?
3. Visit and have a conversation with an elderly person. What kinds of stories does he/she tell? How do the stories affect you? The teller? Relate the stories, using storytelling techniques, to the class.

QUOTATION

It may be only a fancy of my own that in the sound and value of many words, with their lengthened vowels and doubled cadences, there is some faint survival on the Maine coast of the sound of English speech of Chaucer's time. (152)

VIII. SUMMARY

Mrs. Hight continues the conversation in which she tells the narrator about her financial struggles and how, through her and Esther's hard work, they own the farm clear and have been able to save. She laments that Esther had to give up her teaching career because of their finances. William and Esther enter the house, and they are obviously deeply in love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Esther give up her teaching career?
2. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Hight's feelings for her daughter.
3. How does the narrator describe William and Esther to show how their love has transformed them?

VOCABULARY

vex (156): frustrate

ACTIVITY

- Research Jeanne d'Arc. What does this allusion contribute to the story? Tell the story to the class.
-

QUOTATION

I had seen enough of old Mrs. Hight to know that nothing a sheep might do could vex a person who was used to the uncertainties and severities of her companionship. (156)

IX. SUMMARY

William and the narrator say their good-byes, and Mrs. Hight exclaims how much she enjoyed their visit. Esther walks with them a short way until she and William say goodbye with shy, loving smiles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the narrator read into Esther's farewell smile?
2. What does William tell the narrator that lets us know that he thinks of Esther often?
3. What do you think will happen between Esther and William in the future? Why?

VOCABULARY

wistfully (158): wishfully

ACTIVITIES

1. Trace the foreshadowing in this story. What kinds of clues does Jewett leave for her reader? Are they subtle or obvious? Discuss your findings with a small group.
2. What characteristics and experiences do Esther and William share that make them a good couple? Make a collage detailing these characteristics and experiences and share with the class.
3. The story begins and ends with attention to William's face. Why? Draw a picture of William according to the description and share with a partner.

QUOTATION

We had not seen a solitary mosquito, but there was a dark stripe across his mild face, which might have been an old scar won long ago in battle. (158)

“THE FOREIGNER”**I. SUMMARY**

The narrator and Mrs. Todd are deep in conversation on a stormy night. Mrs. Todd is worried about her mother and brother on Green Island, but the narrator reassures her with the news that Captain Bowden and his son Johnny will be spending the night on Green Island with them. With Mrs. Todd satisfied about her family's safety, the narrator asks her jokingly to tell a ghost story. Mrs. Todd remarks that it was a night like this one when Mrs. Captain Tolland died. Then she begins her story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What news from the narrator quiets Mrs. Todd's fears about the safety of her mother and brother?
 2. What do you think Mrs. Todd's story about Mrs. Captain Tolland will be about?
-

VOCABULARY

circumstantial (160): strongly suggesting without direct proof

placid (160): peaceful

ACTIVITIES

1. Tell your best "true" ghost story. What makes a good ghost story?
2. Research ghost stories related to seafaring in Maine. What are some common elements?
3. Discuss attributes of good coaches. How are they like the sea captains of Mrs. Todd's tale? How are the two professions similar? Write a tribute to a coach you know.

QUOTATION

"There was some o' them old shipmasters as tough as iron, an' they had the name o' usin' their crews very severe, but there wa'n't a man that wouldn't rather sign with 'em an' take his chances, than with the slack ones that didn't know how to meet accidents."(163)

II. SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd begins telling the story of Mrs. Captain Tolland. Captain Tolland and three other captains from Dunnet Landing met her in Jamaica where his future wife was just surviving by playing her guitar and singing for money. The Captains were moved by her story of how she lost her family to yellow fever and was stranded in Jamaica. They decided to bring her back to Dunnet, bunking in Captain Tolland's boat. On the journey to Maine, she and Captain Dunnet are married. In Dunnet's Landing the new Mrs. Tolland has problems with the Captain's unfriendly sister and her friends. Almost friendless, she is often left alone while the Captain is at sea.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, describe Mrs. Tolland and her circumstances.
2. Why is the new Mrs. Tolland ostracized by most of the people in Dunnet's Landing?
3. Why is the narrator, but not Eliza Tolland, able to assimilate into Dunnet's Landing? Cite text to support your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Reenact the scene where Captain Tolland meets his future wife with members of the group. Perform your scene for the class.
2. Rewrite in journal format Mrs. Captain Tolland's story from her perspective. Share your stories with group members.
3. Research David's "dancin' before the Lord"(170). What does the allusion contribute to the story?

QUOTATION

"I don't really feel able to explain, but she kind o' declared war, at least folks thought so, an' war 't was from that time. I see she was cryin', or had been, as she passed by me; perhaps bein' in meeting' was what had power to make her feel homesick and strange."(170)

III. SUMMARY

Mrs. Blackett befriends Mrs. Tolland and insists that Mrs. Todd do the same. Mrs. Todd goes to visit Mrs. Tolland and they become friends. Mrs. Tolland shares her knowledge of medicinal herbs as well as French cooking with Mrs. Todd.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Tolland become acquainted. Given Mrs. Tolland's character traits, is this surprising?
2. Why do Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Tolland become friends?
3. What tangible rewards does Mrs. Todd gain from their friendship?

VOCABULARY

reproachful (173): critical

contemptuously (174): with hate

ACTIVITIES

1. Script the conversation between Mrs. Todd and Eliza Tolland that led to their friendship.
2. Create a book of recipes that Mrs. Tolland gave to Mrs. Todd. Explain why you include each recipe.

QUOTATION

"What consequence is my supper?-or your comfort or mine, beside letting a foreign person an' a stranger feel so desolate; she's done the best a woman could do in her lonesome place, and she asks nothing of anybody except a little common kindness. Think if 't was you in a foreign land!"(173)

IV. SUMMARY

Captain Tolland is lost at sea and Mrs. Tolland becomes gravely ill at the news. Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Begg tend to her, but she grows progressively weaker. A visit from a priest helps revive her for a short time, but she dies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Mrs. Tolland react so violently when the Captain left on his last voyage?
2. What was Mrs. Tolland doing when Mrs. Todd and Captain Lorenzo came to deliver the news about her husband's death? How did this make their news even harder to take?
3. What was Mrs. Tolland's reaction to the news of her husband's death? Why do you think she reacted this way?
4. How did the priest get word of Mrs. Tolland's tragedy?
5. What thing did Mrs. Todd regret she hadn't done for Mrs. Tolland while she was still alive?

VOCABULARY

countenances (178): facial expressions

ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a song Eliza Tolland would have sung after her husband was lost at sea.
2. Write the eulogy that Reverend Bascom would have read at Eliza's funeral.

QUOTATION

"I says to myself that I guessed quite a number must ha' reached there that wa'n't able to set out from Dunnet Landin'!" (180)

V. SUMMARY

After the funeral, Lorenzo Bowden orders Mrs. Todd to go back to Mrs. Tolland's house and wait for him. When he arrives, he informs Mrs. Todd that Mrs. Tolland left everything to her and that he is sure that there is a treasure chest hidden somewhere in the house. A thorough search reveals no treasure, but Mrs. Todd is left a comfortable amount from the sale of Mrs. Tolland's furniture and other possessions. She receives nothing from the house itself as it burns down as a result of Lorenzo's search for the hidden treasure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, explain why Captain Bowden is convinced there is treasure hidden in the Tolland house.
2. What did Mrs. Todd receive from Mrs. Tolland's estate? What did she do with the inheritance?

VOCABULARY

cordage (186): rope

ACTIVITY

- In a small group, brainstorm a list of other things Eliza owned that may have been lost in the fire. Explain the significance of each.

QUOTATION

"You can't be sorry for a poor creatur' that's come to the end o' all her troubles; my only discomfort was I thought I'd ought to feel worse at losin' her than I did..." (182)

VI. SUMMARY

After a pause, Mrs. Todd tells the narrator a part of the story that she has told to only a few people. On Mrs. Tolland's last night, her mother's ghost visited her. Mrs. Todd saw the ghost clearly herself and wasn't frightened when she realized that the ghost brought peace to Mrs. Tolland.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What was Mrs. Todd's reaction to seeing the ghost of Mrs. Tolland's mother? Why did she react this way? Cite the text to support your answer.

VOCABULARY

augury (188): foreseeing the future; prophesy

ACTIVITY

- Write the ghost scene from this chapter as a radio play. Tape it with sound effects, and play it for the class.

QUOTATION

"Yes, dear, I did; you ain't never goin' to feel strange an' lonesome no more" (191)

VII. SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd ends her story with a speculation on the nature of ghosts and with the happy realization that the storm is dying out.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What is Mrs. Todd's theory about ghosts? On what does she base her theory?

VOCABULARY

jar (192): shake, disturb

ACTIVITY

- Research depictions of ghosts in films, songs, stories, and literature. How are the ghosts in these various portrayals alike and how are they dissimilar?

QUOTATION

"There's somethin' of us that must still live on; we've got to join both worlds together an' live in one but for the other."(192)

"THE QUEEN'S TWIN"**I. SUMMARY**

Upon her return from a day's wandering, Mrs. Todd tells the narrator about a visit she had with Abby Martin. Mrs. Martin calls herself the twin of Queen Victoria and backs up her claim with an impressive array of facts. Mrs. Todd promises to take the narrator to visit Mrs. Martin in a couple of days.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Abby Martin consider herself Queen Victoria's twin? What is Mrs. Todd's reaction to this claim?
2. Who are your "twins"? To whom do you bear the most resemblance, physically or in personality?

VOCABULARY

discern (195): figure out; locate

solicitude (195): care, concern

ACTIVITY

- Locate a picture of Queen Victoria. Illustrate what a rural coastal Maine version of Queen Victoria might look like.

QUOTATION

"Don't you go to worryin' about me, settin' still's the only way the Evil One'll ever get the upper hand o' me."(196)

II. SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd leads the narrator on the winding path through the swamp to visit Abby Martin. Because of the strangeness of their path and the unusual nature of their visit, the narrator begins to believe that, indeed, they are on their way to meet royalty.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Citing the text to support your answer, describe how the narrator is drawn into the fantasy that they are truly on their way to meet royalty.

VOCABULARY

proclaimed (198): spoke

ACTIVITIES

1. Write about a time you saw or met someone famous. Share this story with a partner or a small group.
2. Research the life of Queen Victoria. Present your findings to the class.

QUOTATION

To think of being presented at Court in the usual way was for the moment quite commonplace. (200)

III. SUMMARY

On their walk to meet Abby Martin, Mrs. Todd describes to the narrator Abby's life and present difficult situation. She also expresses her hope that Abby will show the narrator her collection of pictures of the Queen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What gifts does Mrs. Todd take to Abby Martin? Why did she choose these particular gifts?
2. Why doesn't Abby get along with her daughter-in-law? What clue does this give you about Abby's obsession with the Queen?

VOCABULARY

ceremonious (202): with ceremony; festive

ACTIVITIES

1. Write about the "great souls" you have known, either in a poem, a song or creative essay.
2. Discuss ways in which people cope with life's disappointments. Write a story or one-act play about a person who is coping in an unusual way. Share it with the class.

QUOTATION

There was a vigor of growth, a persistence and savagery about the sturdy little trees that put weak human nature at complete defiance. One felt sudden pity for the men and women who had been worsted after a long fight in that lonely place, one felt a sudden fear of the unconquerable, immediate forces of Nature, as in the irresistible moment of a thunderstorm. (203-4)

IV. SUMMARY

Abby tells the narrator why she feels so connected to the Queen. She then tells the story of her visit to London when she actually saw Victoria. She concludes her story by describing how large a part the Queen plays in her imagination.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Citing the text to support your answer, compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the Queen's life and Abby's as described by Abby.
2. How does Abby "know" that she and the Queen think alike?
3. Citing the text to support your answer, describe how the author makes it seem that Abby and the Queen may indeed be twins.
4. What celebrity do you most admire? To what extent do you follow his/her career?

VOCABULARY

quell (207): crush, stop

ACTIVITIES

1. Compare Abby to celebrity fans of today. If she lived in modern times, who would she admire, and how would she decorate her special room? How would she be treated today?
2. Create a diorama of the modern Abby and her "celebrity" room.

QUOTATION

"Don't it show that for folks that have any fancy in `em, such beautiful dreams is the real part o' life? But to most folks the common things that happens outside `em is all in all."(215)

V. SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd and the narrator say their good-byes to Abby, who promises to visit Mrs. Todd and Green Island.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Mrs. Todd kindly encourage Abby's fantasy life? Why do you think she encourages the fantasy?
2. How do you know that Mrs. Todd does not expect Abby to visit her as she promises? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. Why doesn't Mrs. Todd feel bad about leaving Abby alone?

VOCABULARY

reverent (216): solemn, respectful

ACTIVITY

Research the different ways people kept in contact at the end of the 19th century. Compare them to the ways we maintain friendships today. How are they different? How are they similar? Research the writing style of letters of the 19th century, then write a letter to a friend in that style.

QUOTATION

"I've got a real china cup that belonged to my grandmother, and I believe I shall call it hers now."(216)

“WILLIAM’S WEDDING”**I. SUMMARY**

The narrator returns to Dunnet Landing in May feeling as if she should have come back sooner.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- How does the author create a sense of uncertainty about the narrator’s return to the Landing? Why do you think she has created this sense of uneasiness?

VOCABULARY

futile (218): ineffective

ACTIVITY

- Discuss with your classmates the differences between big-city living and country life. What are the advantages of each? The drawbacks? Make a mural showing the distinctions.

QUOTATION

Life was resumed, and anxious living blew away as if it had not been. I could not breathe deep enough or long enough. It was a return to happiness. (218)

II. SUMMARY

Mrs. Todd informs the narrator of William and Esther’s wedding to be held later that week.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Mrs. Todd inform the narrator about the wedding? What is her reaction to Mrs. Hight’s death? What do these two things say about Mrs. Todd’s personality?
2. Why does Mrs. Todd expect them to be married that week?

VOCABULARY

bunnit (220): dialectical spelling of bonnet

ACTIVITY

- Script the reactions of the people of Dunnet Landing when they hear the news that Mrs. Hight is dead. Include William, Esther, and Mrs. Todd in your scenes.

QUOTATION

“Poor thing!” said I, with a sudden vision of her helplessness and angry battle against the fate of illness... (221)

III. SUMMARY

Seeing William’s boat coming in from Green Island, Mrs. Todd and the narrator know he is on his way to get Esther. During the wait Mrs. Todd readies refreshments for William’s return with Esther and talks with the narrator about their

forty-year courtship.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Mrs. Todd think William will sail in from the island? Why does she think this?
2. What is Mrs. Todd's reaction when William sails straight into Dunnet Landing? What does this tell us about William and what he's feeling?
3. Why didn't Mrs. Todd ever let on that she knew William's trout fishing trips were really to see Esther?
4. Why did Mrs. Todd spread the ointment all over William when she knew he was going courting?
5. What do Mrs. Todd's actions tell us about her feelings for William?

VOCABULARY

presumptuous (223): arrogant

fervor (223): rushed energy

discernment (224): discovery

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a journal entry about a time you saw a normally calm person lose his/her composure. What was your reaction?
2. Tell about a person you know who seems to know the future. Write a short story about their ability.
3. Research Medea and the mythical sybil. Why does Sarah Orne Jewett use these figures in connection with Mrs. Todd? Discuss in a small group setting.

QUOTATION

Medea could not have been more conscious of high ultimate purposes.(226)

IV. SUMMARY

While waiting for William and Esther to arrive, Mrs. Todd is bombarded by visitors who want to know the wedding plans. To one and all she truthfully declares that she doesn't know, as she hasn't talked with William. Finally, Mrs. Todd and the narrator see William and Esther go into the minister's house where they are married. After the brief ceremony, William and Esther come to Mrs. Todd's house to share their joy, wine, and cake. William and his bride leave to start their new life on Green Island.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Mrs. Todd refuse to tell anyone about William's marriage plans?
 2. How does Mrs. Todd describe William as he left the parsonage and began walking toward her house?
 3. How does William greet the neighbors who come to offer their congratulations?
 4. Citing the text to support your answer, describe how William's personality has changed in this chapter. How do you explain the change?
-

VOCABULARY

clamorous (227): noisy

volubility (228): talkativeness

ACTIVITY

- Research weddings at the end of the 19th century. How were they different from those of today? Stage a mock wedding to show the customs of that time.

QUOTATIONS

“I don't know nothin' 't all about it; that's what folks say!” (229)

This was so moving, so tender, so free from their usual fetters of selfconsciousness, that Esther and I could not help giving each other a happy glance of comprehension. (231)

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss in a small group: Isolation is a theme that runs through the novel and the four related stories. Which characters isolate themselves, and what purpose does isolation serve for each? How does the setting contribute to the theme of isolation? After discussion, write an essay discussing this theme.
2. Make a three-dimensional model of this area of coastal Maine based on the descriptions in the novel; include significant places and landmarks. In presenting the model to the class, be sure to highlight the importance of these landmarks to the novel and document the authenticity of your model by citing text.
3. Locate and record in your journal parts of the novel that connect the people of Dunnet to their surroundings. Where in the novel are people described in terms of trees or other natural elements? Write an essay explaining how this imagery contributes to the novel.
4. Sarah Orne Jewett uses classical imagery throughout her novel. Trace the images used and explain what each contributes to the development of her characters and the novel as a whole in your journal. Share your findings with a small group.
5. Using your journal entries and discussion question responses, create a character sketch of the narrator. What is she like? What are her fears and expectations? What other functions besides narration does she serve in the novel? Why is she not named?
6. Make a picture or three-dimensional model of Mrs. Todd using only plants and plant material. When you present it to the class, explain why you selected the materials you used.
7. Discuss in a small group: Why did Sarah Orne Jewett return to Dunnet Landing and these same characters with “Four Related Stories”? How does reading these stories enrich the novel?
8. Jewett herself felt that her strengths as a writer lay not in plot development or dramatic tension, but in character development. Defend or refute this argument using characters from the novel and stories as support.

EXTENDED LEARNING**RELATED WORKS**

Tilbury Town by E.A. Robinson and *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters. Though poetry, not prose, both works are groupings of character sketches centered on small towns.

Winesburg, Ohio by Sherwood Anderson contains similar groupings of character sketches, though in prose form.

Main Street by Sinclair Lewis and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt. Both are heavy on character sketches within the frame of a larger story.

The novels of Stephen King and John Irving's *The Cider House Rules* integrate the Maine landscape into the development of the text.

Television shows such as *Twin Peaks*, *Northern Exposure*, and *Picket Fences* all owe a huge debt to the authors of local color fiction and their focus on character and place as well as the theme of an outsider looking in.

Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway, *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck, and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* focus on the lives of fishermen and fishing communities.

For research into the mythological allusions Jewett employs throughout the novel, consult Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*.

Other examples of local color fiction can be found in the novels and stories of Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Bret Harte, Alice Freeman, Joel Chandler Harris, Kate Chopin, Hamlin Garland, and Zona Gale.

RELATED WEBSITES

The following is a list of websites to help facilitate teacher preparation in the teaching of the novel as well as student research during the reading of the novel.

<http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/sj-index.htm>

<http://members.nbci.com/sarahjewett/>

<http://www.traverse.net/people/dot/jewett.html>

<http://sites.unc.edu/storyforms/pointedfirs/teaching/index.html>

<http://www.authorslibrary.com/b/pfirs11.htm>

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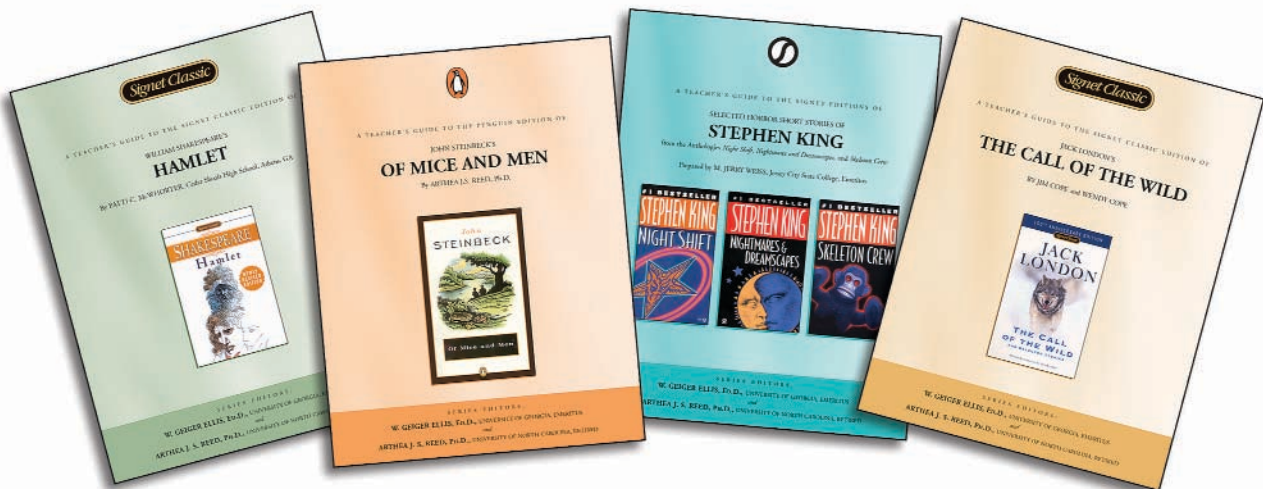
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