

UNIT 5 Progress & Conflict
Early Twentieth Century 1910–1929

A STEAM school
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



A Wagner Matinee

WITH
JIM SOTO

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Music has the power to change moods and help people process their feelings. The subjective experience of music across cultures has been mapped within many overarching feelings that include: Joy, eroticism, relaxation, sadness, triumph, anxiety, fear, annoyance, nostalgia and feeling pumped up.

Close your eyes. Imagine that you are listening to favorite piece of music.
What emotions do you feel?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.

THE CITY OR THE COUNTRY SIDE?

Published in 1904, "A Wagner Matinee" is one of Willa Cather's earliest stories. In it, she juxtaposes rural life in Red Willow, Neb.—with city life in Boston, Mass. When Aunt Georgiana visits her nephew, Clark, it stirs in him regard for the care she provided him as a child but also sadness at the realization of what her life in Nebraska has lacked. Clark's conflicting feelings emerge when he takes her to an afternoon performance of the operatic music of Richard Wagner, a 19th-century German composer. This story combines two familiar Cather themes—the hardship and desolation of pioneer life and the sustaining power of music on the human spirit.



Although the story itself takes place entirely in Boston, Howard and Georgiana's farm in Nebraska is a pervasive presence in "A Wagner Matinée," where it serves as a symbol of the many hardships of life on the American frontier.

"A Wagner Matinee" is also brilliant example of **symbolism**, the brightest symbol is music that is dominant in the story. It has many manifestations and represents various aspects of Georgiana's life.





LITERARY ELEMENTS

Narrator

Can be a character or speaker who tells a story.

Point of View

Is the related experience of the narrator
— not that of the author.

Characterization

Is the process of developing or describing a character in a work of fiction. Characterization can be either direct or indirect. It can be **direct** or **explicit**, where another character or the narrator tell the readers or audience about the subject, or it can be **indirect** or **implicit** is a more subtle way of introducing the character to the audience. The audience has to deduce for themselves the characteristics of the character by observing their thoughts and actions.



As you read, consider what information is provided by Clark, the narrator, and whether it is reliable. On what does he base his opinion of his aunt? Consider, too, the other ways Cather creates the character of Aunt Georgiana. Make predictions about what you think will happen, based on the narrator's point of view. Correct or confirm those predictions as you read.



ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 390-398 in your book, complete the following activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &

2. REASON WITH TEXT

3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

- **Narrator, Point of View, and Characterization** - In what ways does Clark, the narrator, misjudge or underestimate his aunt? How does this affect the first-person point of view of the narrator? Evaluate whether Clark is a reliable narrator.
- What techniques does the author use to reveal Aunt Georgiana's character to readers? Summarize what kind of person you think she is after reading this story.



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