



Curricular Indicators Satisfied by a Unit Devoted to “Paul’s Case”

Chief Learning Objectives:

1. To learn how to analyze the symbolic meanings of texts.
2. To understand how literary texts interact with their cultural contexts.
3. To relate the work to oneself and to the larger culture.
4. To clearly express one’s ideas in writing, using textual evidence to support one’s ideas.
5. To become proficient in using the writing process to produce excellent written products.
6. To learn how to listen well to what others are saying and be able to participate in high-level, critical discussions about texts and issues raised by those texts.
7. To use a wide variety of print and digital materials to enhance understanding and express one’s own views.

Most of the following indicators will typically be satisfied by a unit that incorporates some of the assignments and projects outlined later in this unit site. Classroom teachers are in the best position to identify which specific indicators (i.e. LA 10.1.5.a) apply to the unit they have crafted.

Curricular standards were compiled by Dr. Charles Johanningsmeier and the Willa Cather Foundation in 2016.

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Nebraska College- and Career-Ready ELA Standards (2014)

LA 10.1 and 12.1 READING. Students will learn and apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend text.

LA 10.1.5 and 12.1.5: **VOCABULARY**. Students will build and use conversational, academic, and content-specific grade-level vocabulary.

LA 10.1.6 and 12.1.6: **COMPREHENSION**. Students will construct meaning by applying prior knowledge, using text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading increasingly complex grade-level literary and informational text.

LA 10.2 and 12.2 WRITING. Students will learn and apply writing skills and strategies to communicate.

LA 10.2.1 and 12.2.1. **WRITING PROCESS**. Students will apply the writing process to plan, draft, revise, edit and publish writing using correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other conventions of standard English appropriate for grade-level.

LA 10.2.2 and 12.2.2 **WRITING MODES**. Students will write in multiple modes for a variety of purposes and audiences across disciplines.

LA 10.3 AND 12.3 SPEAKING AND LISTENING. Students will develop and apply appropriate speaking and listening skills and strategies to communicate for a variety of purposes.

LA 10.3.3 and 12.3.3 **RECIPROCAL COMMUNICATION**. Students will develop, apply, and adapt reciprocal communication skills.

LA 10.4 and 12.4 MULTIPLE LITERACIES: Students will apply information fluency and practice digital citizenship.

LA 10.4.1 and 12.4.1 **Information Fluency**. Students will evaluate, create, and communicate information in textual, visual, and digital formats.

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COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY STANDARDS

Grades 11-12 READING

The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9

Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10

By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

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GRADES 11-12 WRITING

The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.

Range of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.a

Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.b

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.c

Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.d

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.e

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.a

Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new

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element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.b

Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.c

Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.d

Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.e

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.f

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9.a

Apply grades 11-12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics").

GRADES 11-12 SPEAKING AND LISTENING

The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence

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made on all sides of issue; resolve contradictions when possible; determine what additional information or research is required to deepen investigation or complete tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11-12 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

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BACKGROUND AND TIMELINE

Cather’s story, “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament,” was first published in March 1905 in her short story collection *The Troll Garden*; two months later it appeared in the May issue of *McClure’s Magazine*, published in New York City.

Many people associate Cather with Nebraska, where she spent her childhood and college years (1883–1896), and she herself told a Lincoln, Nebraska, newspaper interviewer in 1921, “All my stories have been written with the material that was gathered – no, God save us! Not gathered but absorbed – before I was fifteen years old.” Yet she lived one important decade in Pittsburgh (July 1896–April 1906) and the majority of her life (1906–1947) in New York City.

“Paul’s Case,” one of Cather’s best-known works, does not take place in Nebraska; it is most directly connected to her work as a high school English teacher in Pittsburgh and her own early experiences of New York City. Close reading also reveals that it was influenced by a number of Cather’s other personal concerns and interests, which predate her time in these eastern cities.

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| December 7, 1873 | Willella Cather is born in Back Creek Valley, near Winchester, Virginia, to Charles Cather, a sheep farmer, and Mary Virginia Cather. |
| April 1883 | Cather’s family moves to a farm in Webster County, Nebraska. There they join Charles Cather’s parents, his brother George and his family, all of whom had earlier moved to Nebraska. |
| September 1884 | Charles Cather sells his livestock and farm equipment, and the family moves into the small town of Red Cloud, about sixteen miles away. He opens a real estate and loan office. Willa is the oldest child in a family that would eventually have seven children: Willa, Roscoe, Douglass, Jessica, James, Elsie, and John (Jack). |
| 1886 | Willa cuts her hair and wears boys’ clothes. She often goes by “Willie,” especially to family. She hopes to become a surgeon, a profession generally considered to be for men. |
| Spring 1890 | Willa is one of three graduates from Red Cloud High School. Her commencement address is entitled, “Superstition vs. Investigation”; in it she subtly critiques what she sees as small-minded, overly religious people of the town who believed her interest in becoming a doctor was unsuitable for a young woman. |
| September 1890 | Cather moves to Lincoln, Nebraska, and enrolls in the Latin School (University Prep) in order to prepare for entrance exams to the State University. |

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- March 1891 Cather's first publication is an essay about the British writer Thomas Carlyle, which her teacher had submitted to the *Nebraska State Journal* newspaper without her consent.
- September 1891 Cather officially begins classes as a student at the State University of Nebraska.
- May 1892 Again thanks to a professor who submitted her work, Cather's first work of published fiction, a short story entitled "Peter," appears in *The Mahogany Tree*, a literary weekly published in Boston.
- June 1895 Cather graduates from college.
- Late Fall, 1895 Cather, after spending the early fall in Lincoln, returns home to her small town of Red Cloud. There, she writes some stories that are eventually published; the first one to appear in a national publication is "On the Divide," in *Overland Monthly* of San Francisco. She is, however, deeply discontented with small town life; she signs her letters during the winter as being from "Siberia."
- July 1896 Leaves Red Cloud to take a position on *The Home Monthly*, a ladies' magazine in Pittsburgh. In general, Cather does not like the content and the purpose of the magazine, but she recognizes that she is gaining a great deal of valuable experience as an editor and writer. Writing under various pseudonyms, Cather publishes a great deal of fiction, poetry, and other short pieces in *The Home Monthly* in order to fill its pages.
- August 4, 1896 Reflecting Cather's passion for art, she writes to her friend Mariel Gere shortly after she arrives in Pittsburgh: "There is no God but one God and Art is his revealer; that's [sic] my creed and I'll follow it to the end, to a hotter place than Pittsburgh if need be. It's [sic] not an affectation, it's my whole self, not that I think I can do anything myself, but the worship of it. That is about all that life has given me; it is enough. I don't ask anything more. I think I get as much good out of it as most people do out of their religions. . . . It has felt this way from the time I could like anything, and it only grows stronger as I grow older."
- July 1897 *The Home Monthly* is sold, and Cather gets work writing drama and book reviews for the Pittsburgh *Leader* newspaper as well as serving as their telegraph editor, a job which requires her to rewrite news that comes in over the telegraph. In her spare time she edits the "Our Young Folks" page in the *National Stockman and Farmer* newspaper, writes short pieces for a Pittsburgh publication entitled *The Library*, and writes music reviews for the *Nebraska State Journal*.

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- 19 September 1897 Cather’s ambivalence about Pittsburgh is evident in a letter she writes to her friend Mariel Gere: “I will not be away from Nebraska another year. Of what use are money and success if one is not happy? And I can not be happy so far away from home. O Mariel, I am so tired of it, their gay Bohemia! I have seen enough of it. It is not so black as it’s painted, but it’s such a lone and loveless land and it’s so many leagues from home.”
- November 1897 For the first time, Cather uses the middle name of “Sibert” to sign her published works. Cather used this name professionally up until 1920; after that, she used the middle name only for signing checks.
- February 1898 Spends a week in New York City, her first real visit there. She attends the Metropolitan Opera and lunches with a famous Polish actress.
- 1899 Cather meets a woman named Isabelle McClung in the dressing room of her friend, actress Lizzie Collier. Cather and McClung, the sophisticated daughter of a prominent Pittsburgh judge, form a lifelong friendship.
- October 1899 Cather resigns from the Pittsburgh *Leader* and moves to Washington, D. C., where she works as a translator for her cousin, who is with the U. S. Commission to the Paris International Exposition; she stays in Washington until March 1901.
- March 1901 Cather returns to Pittsburgh and serves as a long-term substitute for an ill teacher. She teaches Latin, Composition, and English at Central High School for a salary of \$650 per year. She moves in with the McClung family, who live in an upscale neighborhood of Pittsburgh.
- September 1901 Cather assumes a full-time position at Central teaching English. She continues to write, especially poems, and also writes columns under the name “Henry Nickelmann” for the Pittsburgh *Gazette* newspaper
- Summer 1902 Cather and Isabelle McClung tour England and France. Cather is enchanted with European life.
- November 1902 Pittsburgh newspapers are filled with news about two young men, James J. Wilson, and his cousin Harold Orr, who robbed the Denny Estate and fled to Chicago. While the two were there, one newspaper reported, “Millionaires could not have spent their money with more reckless extravagance. They occupied the best apartments, rode in stylish turnouts, patronized aristocratic dining rooms and saw all the sights of the great city.” Wilson told one reporter that he was motivated by “a longing to know how it would feel to have enough money to have just as good a time as any boy would care about having.” The young men were brought back to Pittsburgh but, according to Cather biographer James Woodress, were

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“not prosecuted because the families reimbursed the employer.”

- March 28, 1903 Cather first mentions, in a letter to a close friend, having written a story entitled “Paul’s Case.”
- April 1903 Cather’s book of poems, *April Twilights*, is published by Boston publisher Richard Badger. Although the reviews were mostly positive, Cather later bought up all the copies she could find and threw them away.
- April 1903 Harry H. McClure, working for *McClure’s Magazine* of New York, meets Cather in Pittsburgh and encourages her to submit some of her work to the *Magazine*. Based on these pieces, the editor, S. S. McClure, invites Cather to New York, and they meet on May 1. McClure promises to publish Cather’s work and help her career. Cather is bedazzled by McClure and the promise of a fascinating, worldly, New York life. Over the summer, she reconnects with Lincoln acquaintance Edith Lewis, who will become her partner of nearly forty years.
- September 1903 Cather begins a new job as head of the English Department at Allegheny High School in Pittsburgh, a school in a nicer neighborhood; it comes with a better salary (\$1,400 a year) and, she hopes, shorter hours.
- March 1905 Contrary to the usual tradition at the time of having a short story be first published in a magazine and then as part of a book collection, “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” first appears in Cather’s short story collection *The Troll Garden*, which was published by McClure, Phillips, and Company of New York City. Cather dedicates the book to Isabelle McClung. One very negative review appears in the *Bookman* magazine; its author, Bessie du Bois, calls *The Troll Garden* a “collection of freak stories that are either lurid, hysterical or unwholesome, and that remind one of nothing so much as the coloured supplement to the Sunday papers”; she added her opinion that the book was filled with “the ash-heap of the human mind – the thoughts and feelings that come to all of us when the pressure of the will is low, the refuse and sweepings of the mental life.”
- 1905 “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament,” is published in the May issue of *McClure’s Magazine* (pages 74-83), with no illustrations accompanying it. To fit the space available in the magazine, Cather cuts about 400 words from the text. In later reprintings, these words were restored to their place in the story.
- 1906 In the early spring, S. S. McClure travels to Pittsburgh to try to persuade her to come to New York City and work on the editorial staff of his magazine. He is successful: Cather abruptly leaves Pittsburgh for New York City. In March the Allegheny High School paper reports, “When we

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return from our April vacation, we shall fail to see Miss Cather; but . . .we feel relieved in knowing that next September she will again be able to take her classes.”

June 6, 1906

In an open letter addressed to her homeroom class at Allegheny High School and also reprinted in the school paper, Cather tells students, “I had made many plans for your Senior work next year and had hoped that we should enjoy that work together. I must now leave you to enjoy it alone. One always has to choose between good things it seems. So I turn to a work I love with very real regret that I must leave behind, for the time at least, a work I had come to love almost as well. But I much more regret having to take leave of so many students whom I feel are good friends of mine.”

1920

“Paul’s Case,” no longer including the subtitle “A Study in Temperament,” is reprinted – in a slightly different form, due to Cather making some changes in the text – in *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, published by the Alfred A. Knopf company of New York City.

April 8, 1921

In a letter to her friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Cather acknowledges that when she lived in Pittsburgh years ago “I know I was sullen and defiant for a good many years – like Paul in ‘Paul’s Case,’ all mixed up.”

March 15, 1943

In response to a letter from a “Mr. Phillipson,” Cather writes: “You ask me about ‘Paul’s Case.’ I once had in my latin [sic] class a nervous, jerky boy who was always trying to make himself ‘interesting,’ and to prove that he had special recognition and special favours from members of a stock company then playing in the town theater. You will recognize one part of Paul. The other part of Paul is simply the feeling I myself had about New York City and the old Waldorf Astoria (not the horrid structure which now stands on Park Avenue), when I first left college and was teaching latin [sic] in the Pittsburgh High School. I used to come to New York occasionally then, and that is the way the City seemed to me. Of course, I never ran away, or jumped under a railway train: neither did the real Paul, in so far as I know. But that is the way stories are usually made – a grafting of some outside figure with some part of the writer’s self.”

April 24, 1947

Cather dies of a cerebral hemorrhage at home in New York. In accordance with instructions in her will, she is buried on April 28 in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, where she had written most of *My Ántonia* as well as large portions of other works. On her tombstone is a quotation from *My Ántonia*: “. . . that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great.”

Note: All letters cited can be found in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Knopf, 2013).

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Cather published the story under two slightly different titles: first as “Paul’s Case – A Study in Temperament,” and later as simply “Paul’s Case.” Do you think the difference in titles affects how you approach the story? If so, how? Which title do you prefer, and why?
2. The word “Case” in the story’s title, as well as the story itself, have led many readers to want to “diagnose” Paul and figure out what is “wrong” with him, just as his teachers want to do. Do you think anything is “wrong” with Paul? If so, what do you think it is?
3. Why do you think Paul gets in trouble at school? What about Paul bothers his teachers the most?
4. Paul loves spending time at Carnegie Hall, where the symphony orchestra plays its concerts. How does spending time there make him feel? What do you think being there represents to him?
5. In stark contrast to how he feels about Carnegie Hall, Paul hates going home to his house and his neighborhood. What do his house and neighborhood, as well as the people who live there, represent to him? Why does he feel he *has* to leave there?
6. Paul’s father is a complicated character. Paul sees him as ugly, oppressive, and lacking in imagination; Paul may also be a bit frightened of him. But Paul’s father also pays back the money Paul has stolen from his employers and, near the end of the story, goes to New York City to bring Paul home. What do you think of him as a father? What does he represent to *you*?
7. In one scene, Paul spends time in an art gallery at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh and “lost himself” while looking at several paintings. (Refer to “Understanding and Interpreting Willa Cather’s ‘Paul’s Case.’”) Why might Paul enjoy these paintings so much? Do they have anything in common with each other? Can you relate to Paul’s experience at all? For instance, have you ever lost track of time looking at art, listening to music, or watching a play or movie? What is that experience like, and why is it valuable to you?
8. What socioeconomic class do you feel Paul belongs to? What evidence is there in the text to support your belief?
9. Once he has a great deal of money, Paul travels to New York City and lives the life he feels he has always been destined to live. Do you think you and other people your age

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have similar dreams? Do you, like Paul, have an “ideal” place and role for yourself in mind that are different from the ones you occupy right now?

10. Near the end of his time in New York, Paul reflects, “he knew now, more than ever, that money was everything, the wall that stood between all he loathed and all he wanted.” Do you think Cather is suggesting Paul is correct, or is she introducing Paul’s belief ironically in order to suggest that Paul is blind to many more important aspects of life?
11. Color imagery – both bright and dull – is used throughout the story. Why do you think Cather used this imagery? What do you think is the effect of the colors on you as a reader, even if you didn’t notice them at first?
12. Near the end of the story, Cather writes of Paul, “He had the old feeling that the orchestra had suddenly stopped, the sinking sensation that the play was over.” Where else in the story do you have the sense that Paul is a character in a play? Why do you think Cather introduced this metaphor?
13. A great many critics and general readers believe that Paul is gay, and that his rejection of “conventional” life includes rejecting traditional ideas of family and men’s roles. Do you think the text supports the argument that Paul is gay? Do you think your interpretation of the story would be altered if you thought of him as gay?
14. Paul clearly has prepared a plan to make sure that he never returns to his life in Pittsburgh: suicide. He possesses a revolver that he contemplates using, before deciding “that was not the way.” But then he commits suicide another way, by jumping into the path of an oncoming train. What does it signify, then, when she writes about Paul, “As he fell, the folly of his haste occurred to him with merciless clearness, the vastness of what he had left undone. There flashed through his brain, clearer than ever before, the blue of Adriatic water, the yellow of Algerian sands”?
15. Cather wrote this story while working as a high school English teacher in Pittsburgh who had a great ambition to be a well-known and critically-respected writer. How do you think Cather’s situation might have influenced her portrayal of Paul?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES / PROJECTS:

- 1) Research the physical settings of Paul's life in Pittsburgh (where he lived, where he worked, what he saw and heard, etc.). Create a map that shows Paul's world – using historical photos, street names, and other things related to the time.
- 2) As a group project, create a Facebook account for Paul. Feel free to be creative. Possible things to explore: Who are his "friends," both actual and imaginary? What are his interests? What would Paul post about? What groups would he belong to?
- 3) Based on what you know about Paul's father, write a fictional diary entry of at least 300 words in which you record your feelings about your son before you find out he has killed himself.
- 4) Create a fictional Twitter feed for Paul's time in New York City.
- 5) Craft a Vine video (no more than six seconds!) that reveals what you think is an important part of Paul's character.
- 6) As a friend, write a letter to Paul in which you discuss his thoughts about suicide.
- 7) Read a review or critical response to "Paul's Case" and determine its main points. Then write a response to the writer's ideas. Make sure not only to include quotations from the review or response but also use quotations and examples from the text to support your positions. Students should practice the writing process by creating at least one draft for peer review editing and making multiple revisions of their papers.
- 8) Research Cather's biography and, using outside sources, write an essay that makes an argument for how events and people in her own life are reflected in the story.
- 9) Ekphrastic poetry is poetry that is inspired by a piece of art. Using the paintings that Paul mentions in the story, write an ekphrastic poem that relates to Paul's life.
- 10) Research the music that Paul may have heard performed in the Carnegie while he was working as an usher. Create a playlist that Paul might have shared with his friends.

“Paul’s Case”

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF “PAUL’S CASE”

The Willa Cather Foundation’s short biography, timeline, and bibliography:

<https://www.willacather.org/about-willa-cather>

James Woodress’s authoritative biography of Willa Cather:

<http://cather.unl.edu/life.woodress.html>

Interactive Walking Tour of Willa Cather’s Pittsburgh:

<http://sites.psu.edu/willacatherspittsburgh/>

Cather, *The Troll Garden* (1905), the collection in which “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” was first published: <http://cather.unl.edu/0006.html>

Cather, “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” as it appeared in *McClure’s Magazine* in 1905:

<http://cather.unl.edu/ss006.html>

Many photographs related to Willa Cather and her life can be found at the Image Gallery of the

Willa Cather Foundation: <https://www.willacather.org/gallery/willa-cather-gallery>

Carnegie Museum of Art collection:

<http://collection.cmoa.org/collection/themes/painting-sculpture-1860-1920/>

“Paul’s Case”: opera by Gregory Spears and Kathryn Walat: <http://www.aopopera.org/paulscase/>

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