

**2008N:
American Literature and Culture 1600-1980**

Tid/Time :	5 timer
Målform/Language :	English
Sidetall/Pages :	5
Hjelpemiddel/Aid :	English-English dictionary
Merknader/Notes	Answer one of the questions
Vedlegg/Appendix :	2

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The results will be published on Studentweb.



Answer ONE of the questions:

1. Discuss how the characters in O. E. Rølvaag's "The Power of Evil in High Places" handle and are affected by their new environment. (Excerpt of text attached.)
2. Discuss the role of nature and civilization in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
3. Give an interpretation of Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy." (Poem attached.)

IMMIGRATION

– Certainly he did! How could he ask such a foolish question? The river lay off there; all he needed to do was to steer straight west. After finding the river, of course he'd have to ask. But that part of it would be quite easy . . .

Per Hansa shuddered, and asked no more questions.

The woman had been quite calm since their return. She kept away from the others, muttering to herself and pottering over insignificant things, much like a child at play; but she was docile and inoffensive, and did what anyone told her. A short while before noon that day she took a notion that she must change her clothes; she got up from what she was doing, washed, and went into the wagon. When she came back she had dressed herself in her best; in a way she looked all right, but made a bizarre appearance because she had put so much on . . . The man seemed fairly cheerful as they started; he talked a good deal, heaping many blessings upon Per Hansa . . . If he could only find his neighbours, and Kari could only forget, things would be all right in a little while. Ya, it was a hard life, but – Well, God's blessings on Per Hansa, and many thanks! And now he must be off! . . . His voice was just as husky and blurred as when he came.

The wagon started creaking; the man, short and stooping, led the way; the family piled into the wagon; the two cows jogged behind . . . They laid their course due west . . . Banks of heavy cloud were rolled up on the western horizon – huge, fantastic forms that seemed to await them in Heaven's derision – though they might have been only the last stragglers of the spell of bad weather just past.

After they had gone, Beret could find no peace in the house; her hand trembled; she felt faint and dizzy; every now and then she had to go out and look at the disappearing wagon; and when the hill finally shut off the view she took the youngest two children and went up there to watch. In a way she felt glad that these people were gone; at the same time she reproached herself for not having urged them to stay longer. Sitting now on the hilltop, a strong presentiment came over her that they should not have started to-day . . . "That's the way I've become," she thought sadly. "Here are folk in the deepest distress, and I am only glad to send them off into direr calamities! What will they do to-night if a storm comes upon them? He is all broken up – he couldn't have been much of a man at any time. And the poor wife insane from grief! Perhaps she will disappear forever this very night . . . What misery, what an unspeakable tragedy, life is for some!" . . .

Slowly, very slowly, the forlorn caravan crept off into the great, mysterious silence always hovering above the plain. To Beret, as she watched, it seemed as if the prairie were swallowing up the people, the wagon, the cows and all. At last the little caravan was merged in the very infinite itself; Beret thought she could see the wagon yet, but was not certain; it might be only a dead tuft of grass far away which the wind stirred . . .

She took the children and went home, walking with slow, dragging steps; she wanted to cry, and felt the need of it, but no tears came . . . Per Hansa and the boys were breaking prairie; to judge from the language they used in talking to the oxen, they must be hard at it. Her loneliness was so great that she felt a physical need of bringing happiness to some living thing; as soon as she got home she took her little remaining store of rice and cooked porridge for supper; the boys were very fond of that dish.

Toward evening the air grew heavy and sultry; the cloud banks, still rolling up in the western sky, had taken on a most threatening aspect; it looked as if a thunderstorm might be coming on.

After supper Per Hansa was due to meet at Hans Olsa's with the other neighbours, to lay plans for the trip to town which had to be made before harvesting set in. The boys asked leave to go, too – it was so much fun to be with the men.

When she had washed the supper dishes Beret went outdoors and sat down on the woodpile. A nameless apprehension tugged at her heart and would not leave her in peace; taking the two children as before, she again ascended the hill. The spell of the afternoon's sadness was still upon her; her constant self-reproach since then had only deepened it . . . Those poor folk were straying somewhere out there, under the towering clouds. Poor souls! The Lord pity the mother who had left a part of herself back east on the prairie! How could the good God permit creatures made in His image to fall into such tribulations? To people this desert would be as impossible as to empty the sea. For how could folk establish homes in an endless wilderness? Was it not the Evil One that had struck them with blindness? . . . Take her own case, for example: here she sat, thousands of miles from home and kindred, lost in a limitless void . . . Out yonder drifted these folk, like chips on a current . . . Must man perish because of his own foolishness? Where, then, was the guiding hand? . . . Beret was gazing at the western sky as the twilight fast gathered around her; her eyes were riveted on a certain cloud that had taken on the shape of a face, awful of mien and giantlike in proportions; the face seemed to swell out of the prairie and filled half the heavens.

She gazed a long time; now she could see the monster clearer. The face was unmistakable! There were the outlines of the nose and mouth. The eyes – deep, dark caves in the cloud – were closed. The mouth, if it were to open, would be a yawning abyss. The chin rested on the prairie . . . Black and lean the whole face, but of such gigantic, menacing proportions! Wasn't there something like a leer upon it? . . . And the terrible creature was spreading everywhere; she trembled so desperately that she had to take hold of the grass.

It was a strange emotion that Beret was harbouring at this moment; in reality she felt a certain morbid satisfaction – very much like a child that has been arguing with its parents, has turned out to be right, and, just as the tears are coming, cries, "Now, there, you see!" . . . Here was the simple solution to the whole riddle. She had known in her heart all the time that people were never led into such deep affliction unless an evil power had been turned loose among them. And hadn't she clearly felt that there were unspeakable things out yonder – that the great stillness was nothing but life asleep? . . . She sat still as death, feeling the supernatural emanations all around her. The face came closer in the dusk – didn't she feel its cold breath upon her? When that mouth opened and began to suck, terrible things would happen! . . . Without daring to look again, she snatched up the children and ran blindly home.

After a while the others returned, the boys storming boisterously into the house, the father close behind; he was evidently chasing them; by the tone of his voice, she knew he was in high spirits.

"Why, Beret," he cried gayly, as soon as he got inside, "what have you been doing to the windows – covering them up?" He was looking at her with narrow, sparkling

Daddy

You do not do, you do not do
 Any more, black shoe
 In which I have lived like a foot
 For thirty years, poor and white,
 Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
 You died before I had time—
 Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
 Ghastly statue with one grey toe¹
 Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
 Where it pours bean green over blue
 In the waters of beautiful Nauset.²
 I used to pray to recover you.
 Ach, du.³

In the German tongue, in the Polish town⁴
 Scraped flat by the roller
 Of wars, wars, wars.
 But the name of the town is common.
 My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
 So I never could tell where you
 Put your foot, your root,
 I never could talk to you.
 The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
 Ich,⁵ ich, ich, ich,
 I could hardly speak.
 I thought every German was you.
 And the language obscene

An engine, an engine
 Chuffing me off like a Jew.
 A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.⁶
 I began to talk like a Jew.
 I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol,⁷ the clear beer of Vienna
 Are not very pure or true.
 With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck

And my Taroc⁸ pack and my Taroc pack
 I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you*,
 With your Luftwaffe,⁹ your gobbledygoo.
 And your neat mustache
 And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
 Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—

Not God but a swastika
 So black no sky could squeak through.
 Every woman adores a Fascist,
 The boot in the face, the brute
 Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
 In the picture I have of you,
 A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
 But no less a devil for that, no not
 And less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
 I was ten when they buried you.
 At twenty I tried to die
 And get back, back, back to you.
 I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
 And they stuck me together with glue.²
 And then I knew what to do.
 I made a model of you,
 A man in black with a Meinkampf³ look

And a love of the rack and the screw.
 And I said I do, I do.
 So daddy, I'm finally through.
 The black telephone's off at the root,
 The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two—
 The vampire who said he was you
 And drank my blood for a year,
 Seven years, if you want to know.
 Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart
 And the villagers never liked you.
 They are dancing and stamping on you.
 They always *knew* it was you.
 Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.