



Three Literary Views of the American Frontier

Curriculum Unit 87.04.06
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I Introduction

My first thoughts about teaching the novel *Shane* to my upper level sixth grade English classes came to me when discussing the novel with my own twelve year old son. He had been assigned the book as part of a summer reading list, and it was the first book he chose to read. As many young boys probably do, he had thought that it was a marvelous story of good guys and bad guys, with the bad guys having the upper hand because of their utter disregard for the mundane world of legalities. That is, the bad guys had the edge until the mysterious appearance of Shane. The hero soon galvanizes the good guys not just with a spirit to fight the good fight, but with the necessary muscle when needed. My son cheered for Shane against the seemingly insurmountable odds until the victorious outcome, and he was not disappointed.

Then I, the omniscient father—English teacher, stepped in to discuss with my young charge why he liked the book. The answer, of course, was that he enjoyed the feeling of victory by a man who knew what was right and let nothing, least of all fear of numbers of men opposed to him, stand in his way. Needless to say, this is not an adequate enough answer for me. We started talking about why the homesteaders were there in the first place. After all, cattle ranchers were certainly there first. Didn't that give them some rights that perhaps the farmers were impinging upon? and, since water was a precious commodity on the frontier, didn't the cattlemen have a right to oppose people who came in after them and fenced off property, usually because the property had water on it? The discussion continued along these lines, and when we were through I had a strong feeling that *Shane* would be an intriguing vehicle to help young people understand a part of America's early history that has had, and still has, a profound effect on the way we Americans think today. However, I was also attracted to the story as an English teacher, because I was confident that the story alone would fascinate young readers: I was confident that I had a "winner" on my hands. My students would learn history but, more important to me, they would also understand an excellent novel much more completely. Thus began my thought processes about how to plan a unit that would be literary in its primary intent, yet simultaneously give a deeper understanding of American history. All I needed to do was to discover what the right questions and activities would be to move toward this very general goal of teaching literature and history simultaneously and, hopefully, painlessly.

To begin, I myself had only a basic understanding of what "frontier" meant. What was the frontier, and why was it important anyhow? If life on the frontier involved life and death struggles, Why in the name of sanity would someone leave civilization to go there? Surely, I would have to help my students understand these

questions if I wanted them to appreciate the plight of both cattle ranchers and homesteaders in *Shane*. Thus the novel would be enriched beyond the story. In addition to *Shane*, I chose two other novels, *Caddie Woodlawn* and *The Trees*, that I believe will round out my students' understanding of pioneers and the frontier. *Caddie Woodlawn*, by Carol Ryrie Brink, provides a peer's eye account of life on the frontier after the initial taming of the wilderness. Students get a view of everyday life as seen through the eyes of the Woodlawn children. On the other hand, *The Trees*, by Conrad Richter, gives a picture of the initial wave of pioneering into the wilderness. These two contrasting stories, one of users of the wilderness, the other of subduers, culminate in *Shane*, where both users and subduers clash.

Presenting the three books poses an interesting problem. Should one progress geographically, east to west? Or, should one present *The Trees* first as the initial wave of pioneers then *Shane*, as the conflict between groups gets resolved, and finally *Caddie Woodlawn*, as life after the conflict? Both paths make good sense, and I leave it up to the teacher of this unit to decide. For my purposes in writing this unit, I believe that *Shane* should be presented first to introduce all the aspects of the frontier I hope to teach. Also, I feel that *Shane* will grab the attention of my students more quickly than the other two novels. After *Shane*, the unit will focus on life on a farm after resolution of the conflict, (*Caddie Woodlawn*), and then back to the subduers, (*The Trees*). As an English teacher, this is the way the unit flows for me. I can understand different orders, particularly for a social studies teacher who would want to move across the country in geography and time. I believe that either order will work.

II Historical Background

Traditionally, frontier did mean a definite line separating two nations or peoples. The implication in meaning was confrontation. In nineteenth century America, it was native Americans versus the settlers. As the Indian resistance dissipated, the definition of frontier changed to a line between civilization and wilderness. Simply put, one side of the frontier was where people (settlers) lived and the other side was where there were no settlements. In this definition of frontier, the concept of place or geography plays a large part: the frontier is next to civilization, loads of room exists for each individual, resources appear to be boundless, and the opportunities for social and economic betterment near limitless. Living standards for individuals were changed by the availability of enormous tracts of land and richly abundant natural resources. Indeed, the set of geographic circumstances were unique in providing the opportunity for vast self-improvement. ¹

To understand the motivation for westward migration is complex, and involves an understanding of two terms, deficiency motivation and abundancy motivation. Deficiency motivation is a response to man's basic urge for survival and security. Escape is the key word. Life in one's present location does not provide the comforts desired. On the other hand, abundancy motivation implies a basic contentment with one's present lot, but the individual desires excitement, adventure or an even better life. Accepting that American pioneers had varying degrees of one or both of these motivations, the pioneers were markedly different from those people who chose to stay at home. Wherever these early settlers landed, they would produce societies that were enormously different from those they left behind. ² These early pioneers were not content to accept life as it was, either good or poor, but were anxious to move to improve their lives, and moving involved the harshest of conditions, unforeseen dangers and a complete uprooting of what they knew of as home.

The profound and lasting effects of the pioneer spirit are important for students to learn because this spirit has

shaped America's history in a unique way. The mere act of moving westward meant a severing of ties with tradition. Although all were transplanted Americans, having already migrated from other countries at some point, the pioneers had a uniqueness peculiar to their starting point in America. This lack of common heritage made violence and lawlessness a usual problem in frontier societies. There were not traditional behaviors to rely on. Interestingly, individuals who migrated directly from parts of Europe other than England to western areas showed a much stronger inclination to remain where they originally settled. American pioneers originating from England were much more prepared to move when the opportunity seemed right. ³ The Americans were a competitive, ambitious, upwardly mobile people who had a strong sense of self-reliance. The conquering of an environment by an individual was a mark of success. Fear of unknown places was unacceptable and no hindrance to movement. These traits, first formulated in western expansion, persist today with the slightest modifications.

Two groups of American pioneers bear consideration when attempting to understand the conflict presented in *Shane*. Generally the first newcomers on undeveloped frontier territory were *users* of the land. Examples of this group are fur-trappers, explorers, missionaries and herdsman. They all depended on the wilderness in its pristine state for their survival. The image of the fur-trapper in A.B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky* is a striking example of this group. When an area was trapped-out, they needed to move on to another, and in the process provided initial access into previously unexplored areas of America. They learned to co-exist with the native Americans and due to a need to trade their furs, caused the establishment of settlements such as the Hudson Bay Company. Fur trappers, as did cattle ranchers, began on the eastern frontiers and continually moved westward as they used up the resources. On the heels of the users, came the subduers of the frontier whose existence depended on clearing the forests, fencing in the land and literally destroying the wilderness. This group can be subdivided into three smaller categories— backwoodsmen, small propertied farmers and the propertied farmers who completed the frontiering process. ⁴ That the users and subduers should be in conflict, eventually, when the wilderness ran out, is important for understanding *Shane's* primary conflict. This concept of American western migration sets up the problem that motivates the novel: The cattlemen could no longer use the land that the ranchers wanted to tame.

The Starretts of *Shane* are a pioneer family on the frontier. Although there are other homesteaders and ranchers, the abundance of land and the opportunity for self-improvement were certainly vast. The setting for *Shane* clearly fits the frontier description as presented earlier. The problem arises, as it eventually did on the frontier, between the users and subduers. The Starretts are subduers who are encroaching upon the cattle ranchers' open ranges, at least in the eyes of the cattlemen. Why did the cattlemen feel that they had rights to the land that homesteaders seemingly got by law? In the early days of the cattle range, there was room enough for all. Cattlemen would move to another area of the range if they came across another rancher's cows. There were laws against driving stock from where they were comfortable grazing. Water controlled the range. Cattle were able to travel many miles to water, and the person who controlled the water had few troubles. ⁵ The cattlemen had set up a society with their rules of behavior and they coexisted within the limits of their organization.

Along came farmers who had been guaranteed their 160 acres of land and decided to take it directly in the middle of the range. Fences around a farm kept cattle from freely grazing as they always had, and certainly partitioned off valuable sources of water. With them, ranchers brought a civilization that contradicted the aims of the cattlemen. It is within this historical context that *Shane* portrays a pioneer family, who represents a new order of behavior, yet who are too small in number to overcome the old order. The Starretts are the symbol of what America was to become, the new society of people who were looking for a better way of life, upwardly mobile, if you will, and who had come against a formidable foe. The cattlemen are a symbol of the old way,

and as Joe Starrett says of Fletcher, “the old ways die hard.” For the country to grow, vast areas of land could not remain merely grazing areas for cattle. Cultivation of the land was essential for people to put down roots and to have a feeling of belonging. The pioneer spirit would not allow for giving in to pressure, and at the first signs of weakness by some homesteaders, Starrett reminds them that this is indeed where they have put down roots, and on their own, with no outside help, they have built something worthwhile.

III *Shane* : Users versus subduers

The intriguing aspect of *Shane* as a vehicle for learning about the cattlemen/rancher struggle is of course Shane himself. He is neither farmer nor rancher, but an outsider. Shane encompasses both good and evil, lawfulness and lawlessness. Here the students can learn how a myth can arise from an historical situation, and in the end resolve the conflict in a novel. This is an idea that should be discussed when dealing with *Shane* , but with sixth-graders, it probably should not be too heavily stressed. The idea of a myth having contrasting or opposite images is one that sixth-graders can understand. Television has certainly afforded our children with numerous examples of good guy bad guy story lines. Beginning with that, students can be brought to understand that there can be more than two characters appearing in a myth. When there are three or more, they appear as contrasting pairs. In our case, a classical western would have at least three elements: First, a wandering gunfighter who is opposed to homesteaders. ⁶ Shane tells Starrett, after Starrett asks him if he would hire on to help out on the farm, “I never figured to be a farmer, Starrett. I would have laughed at the notion a few days ago.” Shane contrasts the homesteaders, independence versus domesticity. Second, a group of homesteaders who are looking to settle the land, tame and use it for self-betterment and the improvement of the young nation. They represent the domesticity that was essential to America’s progress. Third, a rancher, who is also settled and domestic, but opposed to farmers, and yet different from the gunfighters. Where farmers represent progress and communal values, the rancher represents selfish, monetary values. ⁷ Shane belongs to neither group, cattlemen nor homesteaders, but is a group or type by himself. He, too, represents a mode of behavior that was on the wane. He recognizes the strength of the homesteader’s position and would like to be part of it, but he can’t. Shane knows the homesteaders are right in their goals. As the mythic hero, he must align with the homesteaders even though he can never be one of them. The myth inherent in *Shane* makes the historical setting exciting and more readily absorbed by young readers. It is this reciprocity between literature and history that most fascinates students. With the blending of myth and fact, both literature and history are served well.

These ideas of the western myth will help the student understand the story in *Shane* , but will also give them another insight into the pioneer character. Shane does side with the farmers, and does effect a successful outcome for them. In discussing the myth, along with the background on western migration and pioneer spirit presented earlier, the students will appreciate why individuals moved west, and why they persisted against difficult odds in remaining to develop the land. This attitude of perseverance set the tone for our country as it was developing and growing. Students today will appreciate better why America has a leadership role in the world, and hopefully can make connections to the historical era that began in the time of *Shane* .

Before leaving *Shane* , I think it is important to point out to students that Joe Starrett, representing all the homesteaders, had the character necessary to fight the oppressive cattlemen, although he did not have the necessary tools to solve the specific problem in *Shane* . Since the cattlemen went to outside resources, Wilson the gunfighter, Shane became necessary. Students will need to know that the battle between cattlemen and

ranchers/farmers was won by farmers because they were the way the country needed to progress. The open ranges could not be used merely as grazing land. The land had to produce if the country was to grow. However, Shane and Starrett are remarkably alike in one important way, they were both men who could not be pushed off from where they wanted to be. Starrett recognizes this early in the book when he says, "He's my kind of man." Starrett's wife, Marian disagrees, referring to Shane's appearance and previous life, and Starrett replies, "I wasn't talking about things like that." Starrett's pioneer spirit was too strong to be defeated by Fletcher and the other cattlemen.

IV *Caddie Woodlawn* : Life after the land is Subdued

Caddie Woodlawn is the story of a young girl and her family living on the American frontier. It is told by Carol Ryrie Brink, the granddaughter of Caddie Woodlawn, and it is a rich account of daily life in Wisconsin in the 1860's. While describing the adventures of Caddie and her six brothers and sisters, Brink brings to the reader a vivid picture of what existence on the frontier entailed. The book is separated into twenty-six short chapters, each one a distinct story in itself. The thread that ties them all together is the warm sense of family that the Woodlawns have. They are from Boston, and life in Wisconsin is distinctly different from what they knew. The children do not seem aware of this, however, and seldom do they wish for their former life. The book allows the children to explore their home now, and have adventures wherever they can find them. Their pioneer spirit makes every day exciting, and they waste no time wishing to go back.

Today's students reading this book achieve a larger understanding of what it means to the children of pioneer families who moved westward. Because of a degree of mobility among our students, many of them will relate quickly to what it is like to go on to a new area, make new friends and conquer new obstacles. In *Caddie Woodlawn* they discover through the eyes of children their own age what that experience was like 125 years ago. Caddie and her siblings encounter Indians, for example, and are fascinated with how they make canoes. Everything, it seems, is new to them, and nothing of their old lives is to be found. In a chapter called "The Circuit Rider", we learn how pioneers practiced their religion, waiting for the traveling preacher. However, the circuit rider brings more than religion. He is also the carrier of news from around his circuit, and from back home. The paucity and utter slowness of news arriving will strike today's students, many of whom seem to have telephones permanently implanted.

Political issues of the time are also brought up through visits of the circuit rider. For example, the Civil War had taken its toll on the country, and questions of slavery still inspire discussion among the adults in Wisconsin who hear about issues long after they have occurred. Caddie learns about these things by listening to the adults discuss their opinions. Many kinds of value judgment situations arise through the telling of the tales in this book, the treatment of Indians by the settlers, the fear toward Indians, the use of natural resources and the responsibility of the settlers to not abuse the land. The Woodlawns are subduers and they depend on the land for their survival.

The book may very well be at its best when it tells of everyday incidents that occur. For instance, when Caddie gets a silver dollar from her Uncle Edmund. Students today will be amused and amazed at how long it takes Caddie to spend it at the store. The extreme differences between life today and then in these ordinary encounters is interesting and fun for today's children. The description of school and school lessons provides amusing comparisons. The Woodlawn children have to share one teacher with another town because neither community can afford to pay their own full-time teacher.

After reading *Caddie Woodlawn*, one gets a sense of life coming from its pages. This should encourage many different reactions from students. Writing descriptions of scenes, drawing scenes, comparing and contrasting aspects of life then and now all would be valuable ways of getting students to understand the book and the time it tells about. It is an excellent source of discussion material for both the English and the Social Studies class. The stories truly let the reader delve into the kinds of details they are most interested in. In so doing, the book teaches in a painless manner what life on the frontier was like for the Woodlawns. One criticism of it may be that the picture drawn is sometimes too rosy. A book that I would recommend as a teachers, resource, *The Farmer's Frontier* by Gilbert Fite would be valuable to have on hand to help with keeping matters in perspective. *The Farmer's Frontier* is an historical work, covering the years 1865-1900. It will provide the teacher with background material, and some very enlightening photographs of farmers and their families. While this book may be too difficult for students to read, excerpts from it will provide useful information.

Finally, although *Caddie Woodlawn* is a book to be enjoyed as literature it most effectively paints a picture of life on the frontier that should provide education about our country's history in those times. Caddie's attitudes, strengths and moral judgments demonstrate how the pioneer spirit developed among the youth of the era. Her stories are real and they will enlighten and enrich young people today.

V *The Trees* : A closer look at users

Not all the pioneers of the frontier were subduers of the wilderness. Conrad Richter's *The Trees* tells the story of the Lucketts who have migrated from Pennsylvania to Ohio. Unlike the adults in *Shane* or *Caddie Woodlawn*, Worth Lockett is a user, a backwoodsman. The concept of a backwoodsman is a fascinating one. Some were psychological or social misfits in the city. Almost all were poor, always on the move, and had little chance of rising above their condition. They always sought the outer fringes of a settlement, both to escape the critical gaze of more successful pioneers, and because on the fringes there was a greater abundance of resources on which to exist. Not many owned land, and, of those who did, they made feeble attempts to make the land productive. They preferred to live near running streams so as to not need to draw water. Constant movement was their trademark, always seeking the prosperity that they felt was owed to them by the frontier, but never finding it. They moved west with other settlers, but never really became part of any community. They were often arrogant and abusive, demanding respect that they never earned.⁸

The Trees was held for last in this unit because it is a more serious book. The reader should have some idea of the concept of users and subduers before reading it. The stories of *Shane* and *Caddie Woodlawn* will more certainly grab the attention of young readers and hopefully make them want to discover more about the people of the westward expansion. The Lucketts are people who move forward on the edge of civilization figuratively and literally; they almost seem to be running away from civilization.

Worth Lockett fits into the backwoods description, and so *The Trees* will provide a picture of a different type of motivation for moving westward. *The Trees* presents a picture quite different from *Shane* or *Caddie Woodlawn*. The Starretts and the Woodlawns were filled with the frontier spirit that sought a better life through opportunity and hard work. The Lucketts, however, are leaving their home and moving westward because Worth, the father, has to move to find new hunting grounds. Worth's wife, Jary, expresses the attitude early in the book when she states, "What's a body to do if the game's left the country?" Class discussions should focus on the alternatives, especially in relation to *Shane* and *Caddie Woodlawn*. The students will see that cultivation of the land was a clear and viable choice, but the backwoodsman family needed to follow the

game, rather than farm the land.

About the first third of *The Trees* will provide a highly descriptive picture of a pioneer family's experience in complete and total wilderness. Examples of human reactions to a sea of trees that do not allow even sunlight to filter through should illuminate the magnitude of the loneliness of leaving an inhabited area for the unknown. When the Lucketts reach an area that appears to be habitable, they begin to build their home. Worth works very hard to build a cabin before winter, but always the call of the woods is in his ears. The cabin-building gets left regularly, and for long periods of time, so that he can hunt. Jary nags him to finish, and he finally does. It appears that the Lucketts will indeed settle in. However, Jary dies, seemingly from being overwhelmed by the wilderness, and Sayward, the oldest daughter must take her place. Worth succumbs to the call of the woods and leaves the family. The book details how the remaining Lucketts grow and survive.

Many valuable observations can be made by students of *The Trees*. The attitude towards women is one that surfaces early, for example. Even though Jary would rather have stayed in their home in Pennsylvania, she resolves herself to follow Worth. One gets the feeling that Jary's feeling about the move meant little to her husband. Women accepted their role, it seems, of being the one who stayed at home, cooking the food and raising the children. Sayward herself says, "But it's no use a cryin' you ain't a man. God Almighty done it that way and you kain't change it." The backwoodsman's attitude toward Indians is touchingly dealt with in scenes where Indians stay in the Lucketts' cabin, eat the last of their food, and all so the Lucketts do not offend the Indians. Squatters were treated with scorn by the backwoodsmen even to the point of irrational prejudice. For example, Worth blames the rain and fog on squatters burning trees, causing smoke, which makes rain, and the rain drawing out the fog that Worth blames all manner of sickness on. Finally, the cycle of life for the backwoodsman is observed in that Ascha, a sister, marries a man who regularly leaves her for long periods of time so that he can hunt, and Wyitt, Sayward's brother, becomes what his father is, a backwoodsman. Progress toward a better or, at least, a different life seems impossible among the men. Sayward, however, does offer hope in the book. She does succeed in establishing a home that her siblings return to for familial support. The process of laying down roots has begun for the Lucketts.

VI Conclusion

Through the use of these three novels I hope to help students answer questions about the American frontier. Was the American frontier a factor in our country's growth? Were subduers of the land essential to development? Were users of the land important to initial exploration of the wilderness? Why did users provide little to the country's growth? Through the use of historical background on the frontier and pioneers presented as teacher's notes and class discussion, the students should be prepared to understand the historical significance of the novels. Passages from novels such as *The Way West* and *The Big Sky* will provide descriptive evidence of the attitude of pioneers, the preparedness of groups of pioneers moving westward, the feeling for the land that fur-trappers and backwoodsmen had, and how all of these various people and attitudes came together to form a country. The spirit of pioneering truly set the tone for the United States, and students today should be able to trace the roots of our pioneering spirit to the people portrayed in the novels they read.

Lesson Plans

I

The unit is primarily an attempt to introduce sixth-grade students to good literature depicting life on the American frontier in the nineteenth century. However, another stated intent of the unit is to provide an historical context from which the students can derive a deeper understanding of motivation in the novels. I also want the students to develop critical thinking skills which will enable them to recognize character traits of early pioneers. As an early lesson I intend to provide historical background on the frontier to help students define it more clearly, but I do not want to turn my English class into a Social Studies class. Therefore, using R.A. Billington's *America's Frontier Heritage* as my main source, I will provide through lecture and ensuing class discussions the information contained earlier in this unit in the historical background section.

The following conclusions about the frontier, motivation for westward migration, pioneer spirit and the types of pioneers need to be reached in discussions of the historical background.

1. Frontier is a place, but it is also an atmosphere that allows for self-improvement.
2. Pioneers left for the west out of need, having a life in the east that did not provide comforts and security.
3. Pioneers who did have a comfortable life in the east also migrated out of a desire for adventure or further advancement.
4. Transplanted people left tradition behind, established new societies in the west, and this made for lawlessness to occur.
5. Conquering an environment or a situation was a mark of success, and fear had no place on the frontier. This attitude shaped America's spirit.
6. Users and subduers of the frontier both contributed to taming the wilderness, but the subduers caused the land to develop.

II

Shane deals with many themes on many levels. One theme which ties my unit together to a great degree is the users versus subduers idea introduced earlier in the text. Once again using Billington as my source, I will introduce these terms and a general definition of both before beginning the reading. Students will be told that they are to look for character traits and behaviors in *Shane* that will help to sharpen our general definitions of users and subduers. Students should be able to recognize the following character traits in each group:

Cattlemen Homesteaders

Lawlessness Lawful

Use the land to produce Re-use the land to produce

Interested in money Interested in making the country grow

Resistant to civilization Wish to have civilization

Of course Shane fits into neither group, but has some characteristics of both. Shane demonstrates lawlessness as the gunfighter, and yet lawfulness in his support of the homesteaders, for example. This leads us into discussion of the myth in *Shane*. To appreciate the novel as literature students need to understand that Shane is supernatural in the sense that he is above both groups in his actions. Discussions of the unreality of Shane in the American west focus students' attention on the need for American pioneers themselves to meet and overcome problems they faced. Role-playing can be employed here to have students understand reactions of pioneers to frontier problems. For example, the teacher can set up a conflict situation, with the class divided into two groups, homesteaders and cattlemen. Each group will work together to formulate a list of reasons why they have a right to the land. Homesteaders will work toward the ideas that they have obtained the land legally, that they want to develop the territory, and that they want to establish civilization. Cattlemen will work toward the ideas that they were in the territory first, they are using the land to make money, and they left the east because they wanted no part of civilization. The teacher should maintain a Shane-type role in helping to settle any disruptive disputes.

III

To further help students understand pioneer spirit and motivation, I plan to use the books *Nineteenth Century American Painting*, *19th and 20th Century Art* and *The U.S.A.: A History in Art*. These volumes contain excellent reproductions of nineteenth century paintings portraying America at this time period. The books are readily available in public libraries and should prove useful in the classroom for many types of lessons. Many of these pictures are also available as slides and in print collections in local libraries. Some of the prints I would use are:

Durand "Kindred Spirits" and "In the Woods"

Fisher "Mountain Stream"

Whittredge "The Trout Pool"

Church "Study for a Forest Pool" and "Cotopaxi"

Bingham "Fur Traders Descending the Missouri"

Moran "The Spirit of the Indian"

Inness "The Clouded Sky" and "The Rainbow"

Blakelock "Indian Encampment"

Cole "Schroon Mountain"

McIlvaine "Glowing Sunset"

and Caitlin's studies of the American Indians

After viewing the pictures and discussing student reactions to them, the students will write a short paper, two to three paragraphs perhaps, comparing and/or contrasting the historical background from Billington to the pictorial representations. Students should focus on which one provides a more accurate or more vivid portrayal. From which portrayal do you get a better idea of the American westward migration? If you were alive in 18—, would you have been inspired by the paintings to migrate? Were the paintings made just so people would be encouraged to move west?

IV

Caddie Woodlawn and *The Trees* are used to help the students round out their understanding of pioneers on the frontier, the former to develop the concept of subduers, the latter the concept of users. Building upon the historical background, the reading of *Shane* and discussions and activities, *Caddie Woodlawn* and *The Trees* further emphasize the importance of both users and subduers on the frontier. I want the students to see that ultimately the Worth Lucketts had to disappear, and the Caddie Woodlawns had to prevail. The two novels speak well for themselves and students discussion should be lively and energetic.

The main point I want the students to reach in *Caddie Woodlawn* is the style of living the pioneers had after settling in and laying down roots. To develop empathy with Caddie and her siblings I will have the students write reaction papers to particular scenes in the book. Since the book is neatly laid out in short chapters, any one of which is interesting and thought-provoking, the students will have no difficulty finding several to write about.

V

The Trees will take more careful consideration, since there is a movement from a family of users to a family who finally does lay down roots. The novel best portrays the mentality of a user in the men, and in particular Worth Lockett. To develop a sense of what users were, the students could do a character study of Worth Lockett, focusing on his attitudes about hunting, Indians and the wilderness. Since Wyitt, Worth's son, progresses through the novel and becomes the same man as his father, his character would reinforce the user concept. Sayward, the heroine, is the richest character for study. She works through the pioneer attitude toward women and finally emerges as the anchor for the family. Students doing a character study of her will work toward conclusions about gender discrimination, strength of belief in settling down and the need to have a home with permanence.

Finally, students need to relate to the concept of family to understand *Caddie Woodlawn* and *The Trees*. The Woodlawns are a traditional family in which the mother and father are both present and act in forceful but loving ways. On the other hand, the Lucketts have a father who would rather be someplace else, a mother who succumbs to the hard life of the wilderness and a teenage child who must assume the role of family matriarch. The contrasts between both novels are evident and provide fertile grounds for class discussions and role-playing. As an example of role-playing using *The Trees*, the students could be asked, if you were Worth Lockett, what would you do? Would you stay with your family or leave to hunt? A possible situation could be, your father gets a new job in a city far away; your mother must stay with the family because she has a job at home; you are the oldest child so you must see to your younger brothers and sisters. What are your feelings about your new responsibilities? Is it fair that you have to be in charge of your brothers and sisters? Another example using *The Trees* and *Caddie Woodlawn* could be to ask the students to choose which family they would want to be a part of. They would then tell why they chose the family they did, and why they didn't choose the other.

Notes

1. Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* , (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), pp. 23-25.
2. IBID, p. 26.
3. IBID, p. 56.
4. IBID, p. 41.
5. Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* , (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1929 by the University of Minnesota), pp. 183-184.
6. Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society* , (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p. 20.
7. IBID, pp. 20-22.
8. Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* , (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), pp. 41-43.

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