

Student #2

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### Hardships That May Follow

When viewing someone's life through a resilience perspective it is key to look at how factors such as the individual, family, spiritual beliefs and society at large play a role in how the person deals with obstacles throughout their journey. Resilience is about overcoming any hardships, and by viewing a person through the resiliency lens you can better understand why they dealt with their problems a certain way and what influences helped with their decisions. An excellent example of this is portrayed by *Ántonia*, a female character in the novel, *My Ántonia*, who is influenced by each of these factors. The author, Willa Cather, demonstrates how these components are reflected into *Ántonia*'s life through three resilience models; the compensator model which shows how she can adapt, the challenge model which reveals how she faces stressful situations and the protective model which shows what she does because of these influences, all these examples happen throughout different parts of her journey. Without these obstacles and influences *Ántonia* wouldn't be the strong woman she grew up to be.

*Ántonia* was a strong girl, even at a young age, she had to have been growing up in an immigrant family having to move to a foreign place and being the only one in the family that hardly knew English (Cather 4). When viewing *Ántonia* through the compensatory model it is best to look at the parts in her life in which she had to adapt to her new surroundings making it a positive experience instead of a negative one. A sign of strength is shown by *Ántonia* adapting to a new country after her family moves and taking lessons to learn English, she could have refused

to learn English or make friends with the children around, but she chose to do what is best and what in the end will benefit her the most (Cather 34). Both beliefs and familial factors are in play throughout this fundamental moment in her life where she enters a new world/journey. She, like her mother, believes they can make it in the new country so much that they are willing to give up a good life, with faith and the help of the family *Ántonia* is able to view this big move in a new light. Cather presents *Ántonia* as mature even at a young age, as a female she didn't hold the financial responsibilities in the family, but she did have to find a way to be of use, and because of this we are able to see the reasoning behind both factors – beliefs and family- and why she tried hard to be of help within her family. When analyzing *Ántonia*'s path going through this obstacle, a new view of narrative place appears. *Ántonia* is traveling by train with an unobstructed view, whereas if I were to travel it would be by car with A.C. and buildings as far as the eye can see. The journey that *Ántonia* took with her family can now be so easily dismissed not factoring the differences that would make this brave journey even more unpleasant.

Within the challenge model it is important to analyze how a person overcomes their obstacles and what factors contributed to those stressors. When looking at this model in the perspective of *Ántonia* an excellent scenario to analyze would be how she dealt with the passing of her father (Cather 109). As a girl at the time, it was not common whatsoever to do labor intensive work but with the passing of her father *Ántonia* decided to help her brother do the outdoor work. Though she had to face many naysayers within the community she stuck by her morals and did what was best for her family. With the community's disapproval of a young girl doing a man's job her family's reputation began to crumble even more, but as time went on people began to respect her work ethic and the morals behind it (Cather 139). Cather exhibits *Ántonia*'s determination by showing how she was able to go against the community's norms- one

that she tried hard to become a part of- in order to stick by her family, and in the end seeing how it worked out for the best. This show of resiliency is reflected throughout different parts of her journey as a result of her sticking to what she believed in and it working she later began to not second guess her decisions and learn to grow from each challenge. *Ántonia's* family values are the same as those implemented within my family, we value family itself as a priority over social norms or others' beliefs, and what *Ántonia* did would be seen as very respectful and a sign of honor to her family.

Though a lot of environmental factors can contribute to resiliency, the individual itself may also play an important role. When viewing this perspective through the protective model a key element to look for would be how a stressor allows a person to grow and try something else as a result. A wonderful example of this is how as a child *Ántonia* could be easily spotted as a country kid when she was younger and though she was one it had a negative connotation behind it, because she didn't like how people viewed her, she decided to raise well-mannered children, ones that cannot be spotted as country (Cather 387-388). The author shows how *Ántonia* had a bad experience and used it as fuel to motivate her into giving her children a better upbringing. This is familiar to my life because my parents grew up speaking Spanish at home and only English at school, this made it so that their English was never as good as their classmates. Because of their bad experience at school, they decided to only speak English at home in order to improve my English and have it as good as my fellow classmates. The two scenarios show how a challenge can later be used as a learning tool for improvement and that individual factors play a big role in deciding how the learning tool will be applied.

Narrative of place, not a foreign topic but one I was only able to look through from a specific lens. Through Cather's well picked imagery I was able to discover a new look of what

narrative of place may mean to others. From this unique perspective I was able to picture the hardships that one may encounter when taking a journey through the great plains, the view of never-ending nothings and the various colors of yellow that circulated when catching a glimpse of what their future holds. Through narrative of place the simple like-minded ideologies found in the town's folk mirrored the vast views of flat unobscured landscapes and quaint homes. The environment itself shaped the people who surrounded it and breathed the air it produced through social norms- what type of work is suitable for a guy or girl, social status- through how well your crops did or how much land you acquired, and principles- such as family loyalty or morals.

To conclude, resiliency of itself is hard to accomplish at a young age but when factoring a new environment, a new language and the loss of a father gathering some resilience may seem impossible to most but not to *Ántonia*. Through the compensator model, the pressure of her family's safe travels is shown through a young girl who learned from this what strength is. As her journey continued, she suffered a great heartache with the passing of her father which through the challenge model she discovered self-independence and trust in herself when making an important decision. As later years pass, she can use her past experiences as a learning tool to better improve the life that she created for herself as an example of the protective model. The environment itself shifted her perspective of narrative of place at such a young age, shifting her goals and creating new dreams for herself. *Antonia's* journey was not solely a series of unfortunate events but something more - something that was molded through the many obstacles she had to endure and were sculpted by the outcomes she created for herself through the three resilience models. In all, *Ántonia's* life can be used as a model to analyze how stressors factor into resilience and the strong mentality needed to gather up resiliency but furthermore can also

be used as an example of the many complexities faced in life that can easily be shifted onto a new light.

## Work Cited

Cather, Willa Sibert, et al. *My Antonia*. Penguin Books, 1994.