
Willa Cather

The Song of the Lark (Great Plains Trilogy #2)



Title: The Song of the Lark (Great Plains Trilogy #2)

Author: Willa Cather

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Description

The Song of the Lark is the story of an American opera singer, her childhood in the Colorado desert, her early struggles in Chicago, her romantic adventures among the Cliff dweller ruins in Arizona, her splendid triumphs on the operatic stage. There is a diverting picture of musical circles in Chicago. There are wonderful chapters of the Cliff Dweller ruins which first awake in the heroine the historic imagination so necessary to a great Wagnerian singer, and where she grows all at once into a powerful and wilful young creature, gets her courage, and begins to find herself.

Insightful reviews

Devyn Duffy: "Einst, O Wunder!"

It's hard to say what's good about this book without spoiling it. It's a story of sacrifices that a person makes to achieve artistic goals, it's a story of a girl pursuing a goal that isn't a man, it's a story of men being moved to inappropriate feelings due to surface appearances, it's a story of people tormented by unrealized dreams, and it's a rare novel in which a major character really changes--and not always for the better. Although the latter part of the story is not as strong as the early parts, it's still an amazing novel.

Today's celebrity culture makes this story as relevant as ever. So often, it would be easier to appreciate art if we knew nothing about the artist. We might hear the singer sing and think that her song is beautiful, and then we might get to know the singer a little and think she's a big jerk. This story might be Cather's way of telling us that the people who write our favorite stories wouldn't necessarily be our best friends, and that's OK.

Teresa: At some point in this novel, I imagined a subtitle for it: "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman," especially as I'm convinced (without any facts to back it up) that it contains many autobiographical elements. I imagined that Thea's being different from the rest of her family, and from the others in the area she grew up in and loved, to be similar to Cather's experience as a burgeoning writer, also feeling the creative urge when she was a young child *in her heart, was it, or under her cheek?... that sturdy little companion with whom she shared a secret.*

Cather does a phenomenal job embodying how it might feel for any true artist: growing, despairing, caring deeply and passionately about her craft, succeeding by the world's standards but still reaching for an unachievable ideal. Though Thea's growth as an artist takes her to two major cities, Cather's depiction of the West is what stays with one. Gorgeous prose describes the cliff-dwellings of Arizona where time slows down and heals Thea. It later becomes an ironic contrast to the high-rise apartments of New York City.

I was surprised by the ending that takes us back to Thea's hometown and to one of her relatives. It was so lyrical, especially those last two beautiful sentences, that I forgot my initial reaction of pity for this relative, as that is not at all what Cather wants us to feel.

John Freeman: Binge drinking and codependency in Willa Cather's Song of the Lark

First let me say that if I didn't have a Kindle, I would have never read Willa Cather. It was a free ebook, so I downloaded it. Glad I did. Song of the Lark was written in 1915. It should be no surprise that drink was a problem back then, just as it is now to many of us. The snippet below caught my eye for the reason that alcoholism or co-dependency is not once mentioned, but how many of us could relate to what Cather is writing about:

Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with Johnny... Periodically he went crazy.

There was no other way to explain his behavior. He was a clever workman, and, when he worked, as regular and faithful as a burro. Then some night he would fall in with a crowd at the saloon and begin to sing. He would go on until he had no voice left, until he wheezed and rasped. Then he would play his mandolin furiously, and drink until his eyes sank back into his head. At last, when he was put out of the saloon at closing time, and could get nobody to listen to him, he would run away--along the railroad track, straight across the desert. He always managed to get aboard a freight somewhere. Once beyond Denver, he played his way southward from saloon to saloon until he got across the border.

He never wrote to his wife; but she would soon begin to get newspapers from La Junta, Albuquerque, Chihuahua, with marked paragraphs announcing that Juan Tellamantez and his wonderful mandolin could be heard at the Jack Rabbit Grill, or the Pearl of Cadiz Saloon. Mrs. Tellamantez waited and wept and combed her hair. When he was completely wrung out and burned up,--all but destroyed,--her Juan always came back to her to be taken care of,--once with an ugly knife wound in the neck, once with a finger missing from his right hand,--but he played just as well with three fingers as he had with four.

Public sentiment was lenient toward Johnny, but everybody was disgusted with Mrs. Tellamantez for putting up with him. She ought to discipline him, people said; she ought to leave him; she had no self-respect. In short, Mrs. Tellamantez got all the blame. Even Thea thought she was much too humble. To-night, as she sat with her back to the moon, looking at the moonflowers and Mrs. Tella mantez's somber face, she was thinking that there is nothing so sad in the world as that kind of patience and resignation. It was much worse than Johnny's craziness. She even wondered whether it did not help to make Johnny crazy. People had no right to be so passive and resigned. She would like to roll over and over in the sand and screech at Mrs. Tellamantez. She was glad when the doctor came out.

The Mexican woman rose and stood respectful and expectant. The doctor held his hat in his hand and looked kindly at her.

"Same old thing, Mrs. Tellamantez. He's no worse than he's been before. I've left some medicine. Don't give him anything but toast water until I see him again.

You're a good nurse; you'll get him out." Dr. Archie smiled encouragingly. He glanced about the little garden and wrinkled his brows. "I can't see what makes him behave so. He's killing himself, and he's not a rowdy sort of fellow. Can't you tie him up someway? Can't you tell when these fits are coming on?"

Mrs. Tellamantez put her hand to her forehead. "The saloon, doctor, the excitement; that is what makes him. People listen to him, and it excites him."

The doctor shook his head. "Maybe. He's too much for my calculations. I don't see what he gets out of it."

"He is always fooled,"--the Mexican woman spoke rapidly and tremulously, her long under lip quivering.

"He is good at heart, but he has no head. He fools himself.

An alcoholic that fools himself? Wow, that rings true for me!

Heidi: Willa Cather is very good at evoking the sensation of the Plains. i will be able to suppose the warmth of the summer season in my face and the chilly of the wintry weather on my again while I learn her writings. this actual publication fantastically captures the struggles of an artist growing to be up in a society that does not comprehend her talents. i like to recommend it to all younger artists. you will not think by myself anymore.

Jennifer Hughes: My Antonia is considered one of my favourite books, so i assumed i would revisit Willa Cather considering it has been an extended time. whereas i discovered myself savoring little morsels of prose right here and there, total this novel was once too long, and frankly, I simply did not care that a lot concerning the major character. i believe i might have loved this e-book extra if 2 hundred pages were edited out in order that the tale used to be tighter and there were not such a lot of descriptive passages that actually were not correct within the lengthy run.Of course, in these very information that i might chop, Cather is portray (beautifully, as always) practical and certain images of Scandanavian immigrant families. i suppose you cannot have it all. but when you must learn Cather at her best, i might test My Antonia or O Pioneers! instead.

Ali: Having promised myself that i'd learn extra Willa Cather novels this year, it was once lovely convinced that TheSong of the Lark will be one of many novels i'd eventually get round to. First released in 1915 – it used to be Cather's 3rd novel and is taken into account to be the second one novel in her Prairie Trilogy. "The global is little, individuals are little, human existence is little. there's just one sizeable factor — desire."At nearly six hundred pages it's one of Cather's longer novels, if now not the longest, and it has a scope to match. there's loads to this novel when it comes to intensity and scope, that i'll purely attempt to supply a flavour of it, it's a really nice story, and a particularly formidable work, superbly written as one could expect, memorable and engaging. The identify comes from a portray of a similar name, by means of Jules Adolphe Aimé Louis Breton. songofthelark1The starting of the tale is determined within the fictional city of Moonstone, Colorado, the place Thea Kronberg, one in every of seven kids of the Swedish

Methodist minister, at 11 years previous is already displaying indicators of changing into a talented musician. Thea's strong, clever mom permits Thea area to grow, she understands her daughter is various to the others, Thea's aunt Tillie, who lives with the kinfolk is a section silly, irritates such a lot of different people, is unusually tolerated through the adolescent Thea. a long time later, Tillie's fierce delight in her niece survives as she continues to be by myself in Moonstone. Even at this younger age, one in every of Thea's maximum friends, is the younger city doctor, Dr Archie, a friendship that would continue to exist many years and Thea's bring up from her humble heritage to turn into a superb opera singer. the radical is informed in six parts, charting Thea's development as an artist and a woman, as she progresses from Moonstone to Chicago and New York, reviews in Europe and her eventual nice luck in her debut as Sieglinde on the Metropolitan Opera. "Many an evening that summer time she left Dr. Archie's place of work with a wish to run and run approximately these quiet streets until eventually she wore out her shoes, or wore out the streets themselves; whilst her chest ached and it appeared as though her middle have been spreading everywhere in the desert. whilst she went home, it was once to not visit sleep. She used to tug her bed beside her low window and lie wide awake for a protracted while, vibrating with excitement, as a desktop vibrates from speed. lifestyles rushed in upon her via that window — or so it seemed. In reality, of course, existence rushes from within, no longer from without. there's no murals so great or so attractive that it was once no longer as soon as all contained in a few younger body, like this one that lay at the flooring within the moonlight, pulsing with ardor and anticipation. It used to be on such nights that Thea Kronborg realized the item that previous Dumas intended whilst he instructed the Romanticists that to make a drama he wanted yet one ardour and 4 walls. A fiercely decided younger woman Thea is helping to appear after her more youthful brother, born at a time while Thea used to be gravely in poor health and attended via her friend Dr Archie. whereas studying piano from difficult drinking, Professor Wunsch, by way of fifteen Thea is already educating scholars herself, utilizing the cash she makes to create her personal room lower than the eaves, this jealously guarded deepest house turns into a spot the place Thea will be herself. frequently requested to sing at funerals Thea additionally competes along with her making a song rival the gorgeous Lily Fisher. Wunsch lives with the neighborhood tailor Kohler and his spouse who dwell inside of sound of the Mexican community, the place Spanish Johnny and Mrs Tellamantez live, sing and dance; and who in addition to Dr Archie, The Kohlers, Prof. Wunsch, and railwayman Ray Kennedy shape Thea's staff of grownup friends. Thea in simple terms partially is aware what wishes lie inside of her, her striving and ambition, her desire to circulate past Moonstone and her track pupils. Wunsch leaves Moonstone, and Thea leaves college to tackle better numbers of students and earn her personal money. while Ray Kennedy, whose mystery want it truly is to marry Thea while she is sufficiently old is killed, his bequest of 600 money provides Thea the chance to depart and examine in Chicago. In Chicago Thea stories demanding at piano, yet her real reward is in her voice so whilst her voice is published to her piano instructor he sends her to paintings with an excellent vocal instructor instead. in spite of the fact that Thea is typically dissatisfied, annoyed in herself and people round her, she starts to teach these character features we'd count on of a very good artist. Thea struggles to regulate to her new life, residing with German women, and shut to a Swedish reform church the place she frequently sings within the choir. while Thea returns to Moonstone for a vacation she reveals herself out of step together with her outdated home, seeing resentment at the faces of her siblings and angered to have herself mentioned through the neighborhood community. Returning to Chicago to embody her studies, Thea places Moonstone firmly in the back of her, the 1st of the sacrifices she

makes in her made up our minds pursuit of her voice. whereas learning along with her instructor Bowers, Thea needs to play piano for different singers, whatever she tires of, resenting the luck of much less talented singers and despising the public's choice for them. Then Thea meets wealthy younger guy Fred Ottenberg, with whom she spends a few remarkable carefree therapeutic days in Arizona on a vacation prepared via Fred. in spite of the fact that like Thea's nice pal Dr Archie, Fred too is trapped in an unsatisfied marriage. those males although stay with reference to Thea as she finally succeeds to the greatness that's her destiny. Apparently loosely in accordance with the lifetime of soprano Olive Fremstad, The tune of the Lark is the tale of an artist, of determination, ambition and sacrifice. relocating from a small Colorado city within the 1890's to the recent York live performance halls within the first decade of the 20 th century Cather captures completely the psychology of a really proficient singer, the virtually paralysing ambition and the sacrifices which include that. Cather's characterisation of Thea is sincere and unsentimental, Thea is typically difficult, as she does relatively shrug off the folk in her lifestyles she can't take with her.

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