

APPENDICES

Synopsis of *The Octopus*

The Octopus is based on the Mussel Slough incident, a land dispute between Californian farmers and the Southern Pacific Railroad, which culminated in the killing of eight men in a shootout. However, the conflict between farmers and railroad went to the heart of American capitalism's relation with land, always ideologically significant in the U.S.A., and never more so than in this period with the closure of the frontier in the 1890s, and the realisation in the same decade that the industrialised economy had come to dominate agriculture in the U.S.

When the novel begins there is already much animosity between the wheat farmers of the San Joaquin valley and the Pacific and Southwestern Railroad. Having rented land from the railroad, the ranchers find themselves in financial straits through a combination of heavy mortgages, poor harvests, and the railroad's policy of setting freight charges "as high as the market will stand". Although the railroad had initially pledged to sell the land at low prices, arrangements to transfer ownership have been delayed, during which time the farmers have improved it through cultivation. Meanwhile, the P. & S.W. controls the cost of shipping the farmers' grain through its

dominance of the Californian Railroad Commission. Over a communal dinner, one farmer, Osterman, proposes an attempt to take control of the commission by the only means possible, bribery. Undermined by the narrator as “hot-headed”, and “a wearer of clothes”, Osterman nevertheless recruits several neighbours to his plan, including Buck Annixter (an inarticulate, intemperate, but sympathetic character, based on Norris's friend Seymour Waterhouse), old Broderson, and the enigmatic Dabney. The pre-eminent farmer, Magnus Derrick (a figure partly based on the farmers' leader in the Mussel Shoals conflict), at first remains aloof on moral grounds. But when, during a vividly depicted dance held to celebrate the opening of Annixter's new barn, the farmers are informed of the extortionate rates finally set for the land sale, Derrick agrees to head the league.

As the conflict rise up, the farmers are defeated at every turn. The plan to pack the Railroad Commission goes awry when the league counts on the support of Derrick's eldest son Lyman. Political ambition has already led Lyman to ally himself secretly with the railroad, and he betrays the league. The affair comes to a climax when two railroad representatives, S. Behrman and Cyrus Ruggles, arrive with the United States marshal to put puppet buyers in control of the land tenanted by the ranchers.

Synopsis of The Jungle

The Jungle is a story about an immigrant family from Lithuania who come to America to fulfill the so called American Dream which are so famous among European. The main character in this story is Jurgis Rudkus; he is a very optimistic

person who always thinks positive in every single way, Jurgis believes that by working very hard, he will be easily reach his goal which is to have a good life in America. However, a better life is not happen only by working hard and be positive, it needs lucky and chance.

As they begin working, the family members discover the horrifying swindles of Packingtown. The conditions of work are inhuman, and the workers are treated awfully. Jurgis' father is only able to get a job after bribing a boss in the pickling rooms of a meat packing plant. The conditions there are terrible, and the job ultimately kills the old man. Winter brings fresh cruelties. Walking to work in the snow is difficult, the factories are unheated, and for Jurgis, the killing beds are fraught with danger due to poor visibility.

Calamity hits the family when Jurgis sprains his ankle at work and the company refuses to take responsibility for the accident. Jurgis is bedridden for three months. One night, Ona does not return from work. The next morning she tells Jurgis she was forced to spend the night with her friend Jadvyga, because heavy snow had disrupted the streetcars. When Ona fails to return home a second time, Jurgis goes to Jadvyga's house and learns that Ona has lied to him. Angry and suspicious, he confronts Ona and learns that she has been forced to sleep with the foreman of the loading gang at her plant, Phil Connor. Jurgis berates Ona cruelly and in a fit of fury attacks Connor. Jurgis is sentenced to thirty days in jail for this crime. He returns from jail to find the family thrown out of the house and back at Aniele Jukniene's. In

the end of the story, Jurgis joined the Socialist Party which is said to be the best solution to their sufferings.

Biography of Upton Sinclair

Upton Sinclair (1878-1968), was an American novelist, essayist, playwright, and short story writer, whose most famous book is *The Jungle* (1906). He was born in Baltimore, Maryland on September 20th 1878. He started to write dime novels at the age of 15 and produced ethnic jokes and hack fiction for pulp magazines to finance his studies at New York City College. In 1900 Sinclair married his first wife (they divorced in 1911). The unhappy marriage led to the writing of *Springtime And Harvest* (1901). As a writer Sinclair gained fame in 1906 with the novel *The Jungle*, a novel which depicts the life conflicts of the Immigrants life who come to America. The book won Sinclair fame and fortune, and led to the implementation of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906. Sinclair had joined the Socialist Party at the age of 24. In 1934 he ran for the governor of California, but failed to be elected.

From Pasadena Sinclair suddenly moved in 1953 to a remote Arizona village of Buckeye. His second wife, whom he married in 1913, predeceased him in 1961, as did his third wife, in 1967. Sinclair died on November 25, 1968.

Biography of Frank Norris

Frank Norris (1870-1902) was an American author and journalist, whose famous by his work, *McTeague* (1899). Frank Norris was born in Chicago, Illinois on

March 5th 1870. He studied art in Paris before attending the University of California at Berkeley (1890-1894) where finally he started his literary career. In 1900 he married Jeannette Norris Black. A man of contrasts, born in the East, Norris would soon adopt the West as his spiritual home, a member of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco during the days of the Gold Rush. He enthusiastically studied Émile Zola and Edgar Allen Poe, experimenting with poetry, short stories and essays. His grasp of the American West is captured in many of his short stories and novels including *The Octopus* (1901). Frank Norris died in San Francisco on 25 October 1902 after an attack of appendicitis. He lies buried in the Mountain View Cemetery of Oakland, Alameda County, California. *The Pit* (1903) and *Vandover the Brute* (1914) were published posthumously.

(Summaries and biographies **The Jungle** & **The Octopus** are adopted from Sparksnotes, <http://www.sparksnotes.com>)