**Growing Up (Response #7)**

In Books II–III of My Ántonia, Jim and Tony and their friends are growing up. At one point, Jim reflects on this directly, saying, “When boys and girls are growing up, life can’t stand still, not even in the quietest of country towns; and they have to grow up, whether they will or no. That is what their elders are always forgetting” (p. 124).  As they grow, these characters begin to take on adult roles. They enjoy new opportunities and freedoms, but they also must deal with adult concerns and problems. They begin to understand grown-up stories, and they have to face issues that children don’t comprehend.

Reflect on the process of growing up as you analyze the scene below. (You may answer the questions listed and/or add your own insights.)

**1. The hired girls come to town.**  Book II of My Ántonia is titled “The Hired Girls.” Why do the “hired girls” move to town? Do they all have the same reasons? Why does Ántonia say “Maybe I be the kind of girl you like better, now I come to town” (p. 100)?

**2. The gossip about Lena Lingard and Ole** **Benson**(p. 106–p. 109). What does this gossip show about the characters involved and about the society in general?

**3. The fight between Ántonia and the Harlings.** Why are the adults worried about Ántonia and why do they oppose her going to dances in town with Lena? Why is Ántonia so insistent on going?

**4. The gossip about the Wick Cutter and Mrs. Cutter.** Why do Wick Cutter and Mrs. Cutter quarrel incessantly? Why do they stay married?

**5. Ántonia’s protectiveness of Jim** (p. 143). Why doesn’t Ántonia want Jim kissing Lena? Why does Ántonia warn Jim against marrying someone from their town?

**6. The secrets in the Shimerdas family’s past** (p. 150-151). What insights do we learn from this backstory? What issues did Ántonia’s parents face? How could this story explain why the family immigrated to America?

**7. The hired girls’ relationships with their families.** What contributions do the hired girls make to their families by leaving home to work? How do the girls feel about their families?

**8. The attack on Jim in Chapter 15.** How does Wick Cutter’s sinister name fit his character? What is the impact of this violent episode? How does it affect the overall story?