

American Lifestyle Series

Carl Sandburg's Connemara Farm

Synopsis

Born of illiterate but hardworking immigrants, Carl Sandburg grew to be nearly the ultimate in American literacy. Along the way, we are told by Host Hugh Downs, he rode the rails, went to the Spanish-American War, and wrote for various newspapers and journals. He met and married Paula Steichen-sister of photographer Edward Steichen. He was a socialist who believed passionately in democracy and the innate wisdom of the people. (Much of his poetry celebrates the nobility of the common citizen). He loved the people, who loved him back.

He spent the last third of his life at a Connemara Farm in North Carolina's Great Smokies. It is a peaceful place. Its beauties are almost entirely natural. Connemara's artworks-unlike those shown in some of the American Lifestyle Series-were unpretentious. Sandberg simply ripped out of magazines what he liked and stuck it up on the walls of his bedroom and writing room.

Sandberg was the earthy poet who saw Chicago as hog butcher for the world, toolmaker, and stacker of wheat: and he saw the fog come little cat feet.

Few poets knew us better; few had a better vision of people enduring.

Questions to ask before viewing

1. What do you know about Carl Sandburg?
2. For what do you think he is most famous?

Questions to ask after viewing

1. What was the name of Carl Sandburg's home and where was it located? (Connemara Farm, near Flat Rock, North Carolina.)
2. Where and when was Sandburg born and what were his family's economic circumstances? (Galesburg, Illinois; 1878; one of seven children; family was poor; father was illiterate.)
3. At what age and grade in school did Sandburg have to go to work full time (Age 15, in the eighth grade.)
4. What did he do at age 19? Describe those circumstances.
5. How do you think these experiences might have influenced his later writing?
6. How did Sandburg "catch up" on his formal education?
7. What is "The American Songbag"?
8. Hugh Downs says Sandburg's later travels made him a "radical." What do you think that means? What in Sandburg's travels do you think made him a radical?
9. For how long were Sandburg and Paula Steichen married? Recall details in Paula Steichen's education and educational achievements.
10. What poem first drew wide public attention to Sandburg? (it will be useful to have a copy of Chicago to read aloud to the class.)
11. Describe Sandburg's taste in dress and "office décor."
12. How many books are on Connemara's shelves?
13. Recall the "Lincoln on Lake Michigan" anecdote. How does the story relate to Sandburg's writing?

14. Hugh Downs says that Sandburg knew America "was an idea-one to keep working on." What do you think that means?

Length

- 23 minutes

Subject Areas

- U.S. History, American Literature

Audience levels

- Junior, Sr. High School, College, Adult

Catalog Number

- 9748

*Discussion Guide***American Lifestyle Series****Carl Sandburg's****Connemara Farm**

Objectives

- To provide a context for the examination of the achievements of Carl Sandburg.
- To recreate the life and times of this distinguished American.
- To provide examples of the American spirit at its best.
- To instill pride in the American virtues and values of individualism, productivity, and creativity.

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