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English 11 period 4

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The West

On a wide and green grassland, a young man is looking at this place where he called home.

“Ah, what a nice day. Ah, such a nice weather.” The young men then took a deep breath and found himself in love with this place. “Such a nice place that even the air smell better than the air in the East, it is so... sour, the smell of nature!” Then the young men took another deep breath.

“Of course it smell different, look under you, there is a buffalo poop right next to you.” A girl voice came from behind. “It has been two years since we move here, how can you still acts like it is the first day.” The young men stood there and looking deep to the poop, then the man look up to the girl and ask.

“Are you saying that I haven't grown at all?” Without waiting for answer, the young man continue his sentence. “So i'm still good looking, strong, and young as two years ago!”

“Sigh...” The girl put her hand on her face.

This young man's name is Steven, a man that move to the Great Plain with his sister, Anna. In 1862, due to land shortage and overcrowding. United State pass down

the Homestead Act of 1862¹, promising 160 acres of land for anyone that had work in the west for five years. This motivated many people to move west to seek for brighter future, Steven and his sister were one of these people.

“Old Macdonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O...”

“Steven, I know music is your only entertainment² during this time, but won’t you get bored with singing the same song over and over again for two years?”

“It does get bored after a while.” Steven stood there for a while then he sing, “Steven Chester had a farm E-I-E-I-O...” He then continue watering the crop.

“ ... ”

The life in the West³ is boring and tough. The harsh weather and the lack of water made growing crops difficult, which require farmer to spend more time taking care of them. Beside of the crops, farmer also need to clean the livestock, feed them, and clean the barn everyday. All the daily necessities are all hand made and they don’t have spare time for entertainment. There are just so much things to do that packed the entire day of the settlers, leaving them just little time for resting.

By the time Steven and Anna finished their work, the sun had already settle and the moon is high up in the sky. The two of them sit in front of the dining table and enjoying the food, this is the most relaxing time of the day, however, tonight is not a peaceful night.

“Steven, have you ever think about giving up?” Anna look up to his brother and ask him this question.

¹ See Policarpo for further explanation of Homestead Act of 1863.

² See Westward Expansion on more details on the daily life of a frontier

³ See Policarpo on more details on the life of westward expansion

“The idea of giving up had appeared in my head numerous times.” Steven isn’t joking around this time, but instead, his face looks dignified. “But I can’t give up, because we can’t go back anymore, this is all we have.” Anna know what Steven is saying, the trip between East and West is too expensive, they don’t have spare coins for that. The room suddenly become quite.

“Ah!” A scream came from far away had woke Steven and Anna. They went outside the door and saw a fire burning in farsite.

“The natives⁴ are coming, hide!” Steven ordered Anna as he packed up some food, water, and turn off all the light in the house. Anna left the house and opened up a secret basement in the barn. The whole process is smooth and quick, clearly, it is not the first time they doned. When Steven went down the basement, they heard the horse riding over their farm. They herd their livestock wailing and the sound of heavy object falling down. The sparking sound of fire is like a knife that cut through their heart, all of their hard work had been burnt down to ash in just a matter of seconds. After a while, the sound of the horse become quieter and quieter, the natives finally leave.

When the two of them came out, they saw their farm had been destroyed. The noisy farm had become a hell. The wheats and crops are now ashes on the ground, the livestock is bleeding on the ground with holes and cuts on them. The repetitive disaster had empty out Steven’s wallet, he can’t afford another disaster like this again.

⁴ See Policarpo on more information on Native Americans

Steven question himself, is this the end of my journey in the west? He look around the ruin of the farm, and he made a decision. No! This is not the end of my journey, I can't go back anymore, this is all I got!

This night is not peaceful, no one sleep during this night, only the one that is dead lies on the ground. The one that survive had to clean up the mess and prepare for reconstruction. While the others are preparing for rebuild, Steven went out for something else. He went from neighbor to neighbor and ask for help in his plan. A plan that will set the natives quite for a bit. After several days of hard work, Steven got help from several neighbor. His farm got put up in just a couple days, the farm is different than the one before, it had much more crops and variety of livestocks, and a bunch of dry grass around the farm. After the rebuilding, everyone gather together to dance and celebrate. The natives quickly know about this news.

"Will this plan work, Steven?" Anna ask his brother with a look of worry.

"Don't worry, the plan will work, and if the natives does come, they will not want to come to this place again!" Steven hold tight on his hand and said the last phrase word by word, hardly.

As the moon began to rise and shine its light to the ground, a group of riders rush into the farm and began to teach the settlers a lesson. However, they didn't know that the settlers were not in the farm, and the one waiting for them is not what they expected. At soon as the last rider went into the farm, the dry grass were set on fire and a gun sound rise up in the air. The natives were frightened, they are surrounded by the fire. The things that more frighten them is the sound of footsteps, the footsteps of a

marching army⁵. The general with his army stood outside of the farm and command fire, the bullet shot out from the gun and into the fire, a series of scream came out from it. The massacre last the long entire night. When the sun rise up again, there were no men left standing inside the farm.

“Thanks for your help, Mr.Chester.” The general of the troops gave a hug to Steven and send his troops back. When the general leaves, other settlers came and gave Steven a hug and thanks for his action. After everyone went back to their farm. Anna asked Steven of what’s going on.

“Easy, the natives doesn’t like us, the settlers, so they will do everything they can to weaken us and force us to leave. But if we were able to rebuild the farm in just a couple of days, it will attractive the natives and they will attack us again.” Steven paused and look at his sister.

“The troops in the west already get sick of the natives, so you set a trap for the natives and use fire and gun firing sound as signal for the troops to come?”

“Anna, have you been impressed by your brother’s intelligence?”

“ .. ”

The natives didn’t came to attack the settlers for a while, because the military had a great excuse to launch attack⁶ on the natives. Without the danger from the natives, the settlers gather together more often and had a greater confidence in living in the west.

⁵ See Diaries for more information on American troops

⁶ See Davis on more information on the American-Indian Wars

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