CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Jungle

Upton Sinclair · *1906 · original English text*

A Lithuanian wedding on the South Side of Chicago opens Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel of the stockyards. Jurgis Rudkus means to work his way to a home, and the packing houses, the bosses, and the city take him to pieces. The book is a muckraking narrative with a political close, and it is hard reading.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does an industrial city do to a man who only means to work, and can a political gospel at the end answer the slaughter of a family?

"CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"

The last cry of the book

The wedding, the house bought on a swindle, the killing floors, winter, injury, Ona's fate, the children, jail, and a wandering through the city's other underworlds: this is a descent. Sinclair wrote to convert readers; the last movement is a socialist meeting and a shout that Chicago will be ours. The hosted text is the 1906 English, PG #140. A footnote gives Jurgis as pronounced Yoorghis. The packing-house and the later vice are graphic. This is for older students, taught as a moral and historical document, not as spectacle. The political close should be read, not cut, and not preached as the library's own program.

KEY CHARACTERS

Jurgis Rudkus
The Lithuanian laborer whose strength is the first hope, and not enough. This text notes the pronunciation Yoorghis.

Ona and the family
The household bought a house and is taken apart by the yards and the city.

the packing-house bosses
The system of speed, filth, and small print.

the city orators of the close
The political meeting that gives Jurgis a last creed and the book its final cry.

A LAST CRY

> *"CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"*
> The last cry

Grades 10–12

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Wedding in Chicago

CHAPTER I

A Lithuanian feast, a young husband, a hope of America. The dedication is to the workingmen of America; the first chapter still looks like a beginning.

- The dedication is part of the book's design.
- Jurgis's name is footnoted in this text: pronounced Yoorghis.
- The joy of the opening is already expensive.

02

The Yards

THE PACKING-HOUSE CHAPTERS

Work on the killing floors, the speed, the filth, the bosses, and the small print of a house. The city's machine is shown as a machine.

- The documentary force is the point; do not skip it, and do not linger for shock.
- The house-swindle is as important as the plant.
- Sinclair's aim was public, and the pages still carry that heat.

03

Winter, and a Family Taken Apart

THE MIDDLE DESCENT

Injury, hunger, Ona's use by the system, death, and the breaking of the first household. Jurgis's strength is not enough.

- These chapters are the book's moral center and its hardest reading.
- Teach Ona's fate and the children's with gravity; this is Adult/Advanced.
- Anger in the book is earned; cruelty should not be copied as tone in class.

04

A Wanderer in the City

THE LATER WANDERING

Jail, tramping, other jobs, the city's vice and its politics as another packing house. Jurgis learns the American underworld as a system too.

- The book widens from one plant to a whole city.
- Graft and drink are part of the indictment.
- Keep Jurgis a person, not only an example.

05

A Meeting, and a Cry

THE CLOSE

A political conversion and a final shout: Chicago will be ours. The hosted text ends on that capitalized cry.

- The last line is exact: 'CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!'
- Read the close as Sinclair wrote it; do not cut it, and do not treat it as the library's creed.
- A muckraking novel, graphic and partisan, for older students, with a clear 1906 historical frame.

> *"CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"*
> The last cry

Labor | A City as Machine | A Family Destroyed | Indignation | A Political Gospel

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The hosted text is Upton Sinclair's 1906 English (Project Gutenberg #140). A footnote gives Jurgis as pronounced Yoorghis. The book ends on the capitalized cry "CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!" Quote this page.
2. This is a graphic muckraking novel of the Chicago stockyards: injury, hunger, sexual exploitation, the deaths of a family, drink, and a socialist close. It is Adult/Advanced. Teach the packing-house and later vice with gravity, not as spectacle. Read the political ending as Sinclair wrote it; do not cut it, and do not present it as the library's own program.
3. The dedication is "TO THE WORKINGMEN OF AMERICA."

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #140, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/sinclair-the-jungle/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.