

My interest in Willa Cather developed from reading her novels "My Antonia", "O Pioneers!" and several short stories dealing with European immigrants, especially those from Bohemia. I found it interesting that an American writer devoted so much attention to portray characters of another nationality with such a consistent approach. In this work I present available information on the background of her motivation and trace her sources for understanding the expatriate Bohemian community in the United States, in order to describe their representatives in fiction.

I would like to draw a connecting line between the historical context and the literary portrayal of immigrants from Bohemia.

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the real life model for Antonia Shimerda in "My Antonia" and depict some of the general characteristics ascribed to Bohemians at the break of the twentieth century. This thesis will deal with the factual, as well as the implicit, characteristics of Bohemian characters shown in her writings. I intend to compare Cather's point of view with the perspective of others who added their voice to the literary discussion of this subject matter.