

Items 1 through 8

Read the following passage and answer items 1 through 8.

From One of Ours
By Willa Cather

- 1 THE CIRCUS was on Saturday. The next morning Claude was standing at his dresser, shaving. His beard was already strong, a shade darker than his hair and not so red as his skin. His eyebrows and long lashes were a pale corn-colour—made his blue eyes seem lighter than they were, and, he thought, gave a look of shyness and weakness to the upper part of his face. He was exactly the sort of looking boy he didn't want to be. He especially hated his head,—so big that he had trouble in buying his hats, and uncompromisingly square in shape; a perfect block-head. His name was another source of humiliation. Claude: it was a "chump" name, like Elmer and Roy; a hayseed name trying to be fine. In country schools there was always a red-headed, warty-handed, runny-nosed little boy who was called Claude. His good physique he took for granted; smooth, muscular arms and legs, and strong shoulders, a farmer boy might be supposed to have. Unfortunately he had none of his father's physical repose, and his strength often asserted itself inharmoniously. The storms that went on in his mind sometimes made him rise, or sit down, or lift something, more violently than there was any apparent reason for his doing.
- 2 The household slept late on Sunday morning; even Mahailey did not get up until seven. The general signal for breakfast was the smell of doughnuts frying. This morning Ralph rolled out of bed at the last minute and callously put on his clean underwear without taking a bath. This cost him not one regret, though he took time to polish his new oxblood shoes tenderly with a pocket handkerchief. He reached the table when all the others were half through breakfast, and made his peace by genially asking his mother if she didn't want him to drive her to church in the car.
- 3 "I'd like to go if I can get the work done in time," she said, doubtfully glancing at the clock.
- 4 "Can't Mahailey tend to things for you this morning?"
- 5 Mrs. Wheeler hesitated. "Everything but the separator, she can. But she can't fit all the parts together. It's a good deal of work, you know."
- 6 "Now, Mother," said Ralph good-humouredly, as he emptied the syrup pitcher over his cakes, "you're prejudiced. Nobody ever thinks of skimming milk now-a-days. Every up-to-date farmer uses a separator."
- 7 Mrs. Wheeler's pale eyes twinkled. "Mahailey and I will never be quite up-to-date, Ralph. We're old-fashioned, and I don't know but you'd better let us be. I could see the advantage of a separator if we milked half-a-dozen cows. It's a very ingenious machine. But it's a great deal more work to scald it and fit it together than it was to take care of the milk in the old way."
- 8 "It won't be when you get used to it," Ralph assured her. He was the chief mechanic of the Wheeler farm, and when the farm implements and the automobiles did not give him enough to do, he went to town and bought machines for the house. As soon as Mahailey got used to a washing-machine or a churn, Ralph, to keep up with the bristling march of invention, brought home a still newer one. The mechanical dish-washer she had never been able to use, and patent flat-irons and oil-stoves drove her wild.

- 9 Claude told his mother to go upstairs and dress; he would scald the separator while Ralph got the car ready. He was still working at it when his brother came in from the garage to wash his hands.
- 10 "You really oughtn't to load mother up with things like this, Ralph," he exclaimed fretfully. "Did you ever try washing this . . . thing yourself?"
- 11 "Of course I have. If Mrs. Dawson can manage it, I should think mother could."
- 12 "Mrs. Dawson is a younger woman. Anyhow, there's no point in trying to make machinists of Mahailey and mother."
- 13 Ralph lifted his eyebrows to excuse Claude's bluntness. "See here," he said persuasively, "don't you go encouraging her into thinking she can't change her ways. Mother's entitled to all the labour-saving devices we can get her."
- 14 Claude rattled the thirty-odd graduated metal funnels which he was trying to fit together in their proper sequence. "Well, if this is labour-saving—"
- 15 The younger boy giggled and ran upstairs for his panama hat. He never quarrelled. Mrs. Wheeler sometimes said it was wonderful, how much Ralph would take from Claude.
- 16 After Ralph and his mother had gone off in the car, Mr. Wheeler drove to see his German neighbour, Gus Yoeder, who had just bought a blooded bull. Dan and Jerry were pitching horseshoes down behind the barn. Claude told Mahailey he was going to the cellar to put up the swinging shelf she had been wanting, so that the rats couldn't get at her vegetables.
- 17 "Thank you, Mr. Claude. I don't know what does make the rats so bad. The cats catches one most every day, too."
- 18 "I guess they come up from the barn. I've got a nice wide board down at the garage for your shelf."
- 19 The cellar was cemented, cool and dry, with deep closets for canned fruit and flour and groceries, bins for coal and cobs, and a dark-room full of photographer's apparatus. Claude took his place at the carpenter's bench under one of the square windows. Mysterious objects stood about him in the grey twilight; electric batteries, old bicycles and typewriters, a machine for making cement fence-posts, a vulcanizer, a stereopticon with a broken lens. The mechanical toys Ralph could not operate successfully, as well as those he had got tired of, were stored away here. If they were left in the barn, Mr. Wheeler saw them too often, and sometimes, when they happened to be in his way, he made sarcastic comments. Claude had begged his mother to let him pile this lumber into a wagon and dump it into some washout hole along the creek; but Mrs. Wheeler said he must not think of such a thing; it would hurt Ralph's feelings. Nearly every time Claude went into the cellar,

he made a desperate resolve to clear the place out some day, reflecting bitterly that the money this wreckage cost would have put a boy through college decently.

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