



Study Guide:

Louise L'Amour: *Bendigo Shafter*

Prepared by Ian Cox and Rachel DeMille

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This month's reading is available in most libraries and booksellers, and on [Amazon](#).

The Introductory Mentoring Audio for this book (provided via links in your course email) is presented by Oliver DeMille.

Please take a moment to download your audio content to your computer immediately so you have uninterrupted access to it!

The Debriefing Audio that follows at the end of this month will consist of a group discussion of the Mentoring Prompt (below). Contributions from subscribers who share their responses on [the Facebook Discussion Group](#) are welcome and expressly invited!

Ideas for Writing or Discussion:

Part 1: Literary Analysis

As not all subscribers received previous content where these concepts are enumerated – and many may benefit from the repetition – a copy of previous content, with additions, follows. Oliver defines these in the Introduction Audio, so you can take notes on this while listening if you desire.

Types of Analysis

- What is formalism?
- What is moral and philosophical analysis?
- What is mythic and archetypal analysis?
- What is structuralism?

- What is deconstructionism?
- What is psycho-analytic analysis?
- What are Marxist, Feminist, and Multi-cultural analysis?

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- What is the author attempting to influence in society?
- What is the new historicism?
- What are the additional questions Oliver says are powerful to ask when reading any book?
- What is pluralism?
- What is the natural result of reading with pluralism analytics and with questions?
- What types of books are considered great literature? Why?
- What types of books are not considered great literature? Why?

Criteria for Classic Literature

- Literature teaches us about Human nature
 - Survival security
 - Social mobility
 - Power
 - Relationships
 - Adventure
 - To know God/gain meaning
- Literature brings us face-to-face with Greatness
 - We learn vicariously through the triumphs, tragedies, choices and experiences of the characters
- Literature takes us to the frontier to be conquered, the frontier within
- Literature impels us to think, to feel, to go deep, to consider our own experience as it relates to the story
- Literature awakens our genius within
 - Our ideas are bigger
 - Our dreams are wilder
 - Our plans and faith expand

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- Why does Oliver review these?
- Why is it important to not get caught up in only one type of analysis?
- Ask yourself as you read any book:
 - Is this a classic?
 - Should I pass it on?
 - What's the truth in this reading?
 - What are the principles of this book (vs. just the information)?
 - What does it mean to separate principles from data/information?
- Questions to ask when reading:
 - What's true in this book?
 - What's false in this book?
 - What did the author get right?
 - Where did the author miss out on an opportunity to do better?
 - What are the great lessons or issues or problems the author was trying to speak to in writing this work?
 - Are those still relevant today? What can we still learn from it?
- Is *Bendigo Shafter* a classic?
- What are the ideals we want to instill in our boys as they become men?
- Why is *Bendigo Shafter* a great book to mentor boys with?
- What is the difference between fragile, resilient, and anti-fragile (referring to terms defined in [Taleb's Anti-Fragile](#))
- How does *Bendigo Shafter* promote the raising of boys to become anti-fragile?
- How does *Anne of Green Gables* promote the raising of girls to become anti-fragile?

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- Do you believe that the current generation has raised fragile boys? If so, how, and why?
- What is the family and societal culture for the rising generation in *Bendigo Shafter*? In *Anne of Green Gables*?
- What kind of man or women do we want to make up our society?
- In what ways do we raise the boys and girls of our day to be fragile?
- How can we help the boys and girls of our day be more anti-fragile? How can *you* do more of this?
- “The resilient resists shocks and stays the same. The anti-fragile gets better.” ~Taleb. Discuss.
- “Today...we are witnessing the rise of a new class of inverse heroes.... At no point in history have so many non-risk-takers, that is, those with no personal exposure, exerted so much control.” ~Taleb. Discuss.
- “...lecturing birds how to fly...” ~Taleb. Discuss.
- “...the unscientific overestimation of the reach of scientific knowledge...” ~Taleb. Can you think of areas where this description applies?
- Does this overreach ever have undue influence on your values, opinions, choices or vision? Discuss.
- “Yet simplicity has been difficult to implement in modern life because it is against the spirit of a certain brand of people who seek sophistication so that they can justify their profession.” ~Taleb; “The expert class (to a large extent), in order to maintain their status and their pay and their profession as experts, have convinced us that we should be dependent on them and other experts, instead of hav[ing] the character to stand up and be what we should be, and who we should be.” ~Oliver DeMille. Agree or disagree? Give examples. Discuss.
- What is “relative” character and values?
- What is the role and importance of risk?

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- Why are youth told to avoid risk at all cost?
- What wise risks have you taken in your life?
- What benefits have come to you from taking wise risks?
- What cost have you seen in taking wise risks? In taking foolish risks?
- Do you agree that it is inferior to have a different ideal (such as a good job, a good career, and good benefits) than to be good, true, strong, and wise? Are prosperity or security more important than being of good character? Play devil's advocate. Discuss both sides.

Part 2: Interacting with the Text

- Like last month's *Anne of Green Gables*, *Bendigo Shafter* is a coming-of-age story, and chronicles the progression from a young protagonist through youth and into early adulthood. In what ways do you feel the path outlined for the main character was ideal? In what ways was it flawed?
- Do you identify with Anne Shirley's adolescence? Explain.
- Do you identify with Bendigo Shafter's adolescence? Explain.
- Agree or disagree?: Anne is a verbal processor, meaning that she processes her experiences and feelings by talking them out. Bendigo is an internal processor, meaning that he processes his experiences and feelings by thinking about them privately.
- In what ways is Anne an *internal* processor?
- In what ways is Bendigo a *verbal* processor?
- Does knowing someone's process impact the way you interact with them? Should it?

It is recommended that you look up and read the following quotes in context in order to get their full meaning and intent.

- P. 24: "You are building a town before you finished a cabin!" Discuss.
- P. 24: "...the sound of the words was a rolling music to my ears, and I longed for a command of them so that I might speak and

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write with wisdom.” Do you and your children have exposure to “words” that make you feel this type of longing? Discuss.

- P. 24: Bendigo speaks of “supper-table conversations” from his youth, and the formative influence they had on his brother, and on his own thoughts. Discuss.
- P. 25: “...of course, it is the teacher that makes the school, no matter how magnificent the building is...” Many schools are set up with the subject matter in mind, or the educational model in mind, or the age group, or some other factor. What is the wisdom of building a school around a teacher?
- Should schools be built to endure? Why or why not? Argue both sides.
- P. 25 references many ways and venues in which to learn. Do you consider this variety of ways to be valid? Have you ever experienced the ones that you value less? Which do you value most, and why?
- P 26: “I learned from [them] the beauty of building, and a hatred for all who destroy, of all who are heedless of the work of others.” Discuss.
- P 40: “She asked me some dangerous questions.” What is the virtue of “dangerous” questions (in the way that Bendigo means the term)? Do you ask “dangerous” questions? Why or why not? Give examples.
- P 40: “...much that passed for learning was simply a good memory, and many an educated man was merely repeating what he had learned, not what he had thought out for himself.” Discuss.
- P 58: (read the paragraphs leading up to this quote) “In that trunk I have some of the greatest minds in the world, ready to talk to me and teach me whenever I am prepared to listen.” In the Introduction, Oliver refers to this process as “coming face to face with greatness.” Have you experienced this with literature? With any other type of work or experience? Share/discuss.
- P 59: “Most of all I needed what all men need, a destination.” (read preceding sentences) Discuss.
- P 95: “A mind...is furnished by its owner. You have the chance to select from some pretty elegant furnishings.” Do you have this

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same chance? Which do you select? What do you pass over?
Why?

- P 161: "...you're getting books than you will five or ten years from now [because of the special consideration given to weight in a wagon]. Now they only bring the best, the ones they can read over and over again for profit..." This may be a good criterion for determining which books to focus on, or which to own in your private collection. What books make it in to your "wagon" as you cross into the frontier?
- P 186 & p 193 feature the nostalgia they feel at leaving their town, and invite discussion: Is something only "worth it" if it endures? Can we gain benefit from something that "comes to pass," and does not remain? Does anything actually remain? If so, what?
- How can we gain full benefit from what ends, and hold on to what endures in the right way?
- P 195: "The westward movement, the pioneer movement, had been a selective process... Why did some stay and some go?" (Read this whole page) How do pioneering-type movements attract a "type"? In what ways does this suit people to building community? In what ways do such individuals, who fall into the "pioneering" type, still differ?
- P 196: "Compromise is not a dirty word, it is the cornerstone of civilization, just as politics is the art of making civilization work. [People] do not and cannot and hopefully will never think alike, hence each must yield a little to avoid war, to avoid bickering. Men and women meet together and adjust their differences; this is compromise. He who stands unyielding and immovable on principle is often a fool, and often bigoted, and usually left standing alone with his principle while others adjust their differences and go on." What do you believe about compromise? How is knowing when to compromise and when to stand firm a key to wisdom?
- If you are familiar with the Great Compromise at the first American Constitutional Convention, argue the opposing viewpoints, and the relative good that came from the compromise.

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- P 243: “Civilization is a flimsy cloak.” What does L’Amour mean by this? How does our perception of security jeopardize our security? Our perception of order jeopardize our order? Discuss.
 - P 250: “On the frontier every boy wishes only to be a man. One is eager to be given responsibility and to be worthy of it.” How can we promote this type of frontier mentality in our homes? In our communities?
 - What militates against this type of natural and successful maturation? How can we diminish such influences in our homes and lives?
 - P 294: “We are people of the frontier, born to it, bred to it, looking always toward it. And when the frontiers of our own land are gone, when we have drawn them all into an ordered world, then we must seek other frontiers, the frontiers of the mind beyond which men have not gone, the frontiers that lie out beyond the stars, the frontiers that lie within our own selves, that hold us back from what we would do, what we would achieve.” Discuss.
 - P 300: “The children who studied with him were of the country, of the backwoods, but no one who knew them in the years that followed would have believed it. He gave them a pride of bearing and appearance, as well as a love for knowledge....I shall not say “scholarship,” for that is often a different thing.” Discuss.
 - What did Drake do to give them a “pride of bearing and appearance?” How would this open doors for them, and leave them unhindered in whatever they might want to do with their lives and education?
 - What is the difference between scholarship and a love of knowledge? Discuss.
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- In what ways is this a family classic?
 - In what ways is this a community classic?
 - In what ways is this a friendship classic?
 - In what ways is this a freedom classic?
 - In what ways is this an education classic?
 - In what ways is this a coming-of-age classic?
 - In what ways is this a romance classic?
 - In what ways is this a hero’s journey classic?

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Resources for Additional Study:

- [*The Lonesome Gods* by Louis L'Amour](#)
- [*The Walking Drum* by Louis L'Amour](#)
- [*A Thomas Jefferson Education* by Oliver DeMille](#)
- [*A Thomas Jefferson Education for Teens* by DeMille and Brooks](#)
- [*Anti-Fragile*, Taleb](#)
- ["Entrepreneurs Raising the Next Generation of Chief Executives,"](#)
[*New York Times*](#)
- ["Steel to Gold: Feminism or Stateswomanship" by Rachel DeMille](#)
- ["On Entropy and Allegiance," by Rachel DeMille](#)

Level 5* Mentor Prompt

- **How do we raise boys and girls to be men and women of character? Make a list, especially in the book itself, of how to raise men and women who are good, strong, true, and wise. Make these a part of your home, community, classroom, and society.**
- **With pen in hand for annotation and highlighting, underline, dog-ear, or circle any line, part, or quote from the book you just can't wait to share with your youth—your children, your community, or those you mentor. Mark these sections in a distinct way from your other annotations so that you can readily find them to share.**

*Levels 1-5 of reading are discussed in the Mentoring content for Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea*. We highly recommend that you review that Audio and Study Guide to gain the full benefit of this course.

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