

Chapter 1

Young Man Axelbrod

SINCLAIR LEWIS



A PRE-READING

1. Think Before You Read

Answer the following questions.

1. Why do people go to college?
2. What should someone do to prepare for college?
3. What are the qualities of a good college student?
4. How do you feel when you have a much older student in one of your classes?

2. Picture Focus

With a partner, talk about the picture.

Who are the two men? Where are they going?

Vocabulary: Young Man Axelrod

1. Dream: Think and hope for the future, pictures in your sleep
2. Realize: to understand something is true
3. Habits : what you do everyday
4. Strange: different for you, odd, weird
5. Soul: inside spirit, feeling
6. Secret: a story or idea you hide or keep to yourself
7. Stare: to look closely and for a long time at someone
8. Lonely: to feel alone
9. Steal: to take something that doesn't belong to you
10. Adventure: to have or take a trip to somewhere new
11. Content: to be happy
12. Miracle: a wonderful and unusual thing happened
13. Yawn: mouth stretches open when you are tired
14. Spoil: to make something bad, not right

4. *Story Preview* 🎧

Read the preview of the story. Then answer the question in *Making Predictions* on the next page.

Knute Axelbrod is a retired farmer who decides to go to college. He is accepted at Yale University. He is excited about studying at a big university, but his love of knowledge is not enough to make him happy. The other students think he is old and strange. He becomes very lonely and disappointed and misses his farm and family.

5. *Making Predictions*

From the *Story Preview*, try to predict what will happen. Circle one choice below or write your own answer. Discuss your prediction with a partner.

What will Knute do at the university?

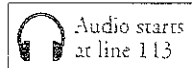
1. He will study hard and be better than the younger students.
2. He will leave the university and go back home.
3. He will go to a different university.
4. _____

Life in the American

Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951), a novelist, short-story writer, and playwright, was born in Sauk Center, Minnesota. His father was a country doctor, and Sinclair often helped him when he went to visit his patients. One of his most famous novels was *Arrowsmith*, which has a country doctor as its main character.

Sinclair Lewis went to Yale University. He was a sailor, and he went to Panama to help build the Panama Canal. He had various jobs as a reporter, editor, lecturer, and writer. He published several popular novels including *Babbitt* and *Main Street*. In 1930, he became the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Young Man Axelbrod



5 Knute Axelbrod was born in
10 Scandinavia. As a young man he
dreamed of being a famous scholar.
When he first came to America,
he worked all day and studied all
evening. He even taught school for a
short time. After he married, he gave
up teaching and reading and became
a farmer. He had a wife and three
children, and he no longer had the
free time to read the books he loved.

15 Knute worked hard for many years.
Then one day, when he was sixty-five,
he realized he was an old man. His
wife was dead, and his children were
grown up. His two sons lived in other

states, and Knute decided to give the
farm to his daughter Angela and her
husband. He built himself a small
house nearby and spent his days in
the garden growing vegetables and
flowers.

20 After Knute gave his daughter
his farm, he still had the habits of
a farmer. He awoke at five every
morning, cleaned his house, made his
bed, and worked in the garden. He
was in bed by the time the sun went
down. Soon, he began changing his
habits. He slept until seven or eight
in the mornings, and he often took long
walks at night. The neighbors began

to talk about Knute. They thought his night walks were strange.

35 He bought a cat and named her Princess. He let her drink milk from a bowl on the kitchen table. He talked to her as if she were human.

40 Knute often sat in the sun and looked at the trees. His wide shoulders leaned against his rocking chair, and he touched his white beard. One day while he was sitting in his chair on the porch, he looked up at the trees and thought, "I'm an old man. I've had a good life, but there's one thing I wish for in my old age. I want to go to college. I want to be a student again and read all the great books I never had time to read."

50 Knute always had a young soul that looked for knowledge and beauty. He loved learning and thought that all college students loved to study and learn. He pictured Harvard and Yale as famous universities where students, like the ancient Greeks, stood around under marble temples¹ and talked about great ideas. He ordered college catalogs and textbooks. He studied Latin, algebra, English, and history. He studied twelve hours a day, and all this time he kept it a secret. Finally, one day he told his daughter.

65 "I just want you to know that I'm going to college. I plan to leave next week."

70 "Father, what are you talking about? You can't go to college. You're too old."

"I'm leaving in a few days. I'm not too old to keep learning. I've been studying, and I think I can pass the examinations."

"But the other students are eighteen or nineteen years old." 75

"That's not a problem. I don't have to go dancing with them. I just want to be in college with them."

"What if you get sick?" 80

"Angela, I'm not a child. If I get sick, I'll go to a doctor. Don't worry, my dear. I'll be all right."

Angela realized that her father was not going to listen to her. "Dad, where are you planning to go to school?" 85

"Yale. I'm going to Yale."

The next day he brought Princess over to his daughter's house along with some of his plants. His daughter agreed to watch his little house. Knute said goodbye and boarded a train to New Haven, Connecticut. He had to travel across the United States from his home in Minnesota. 90 95

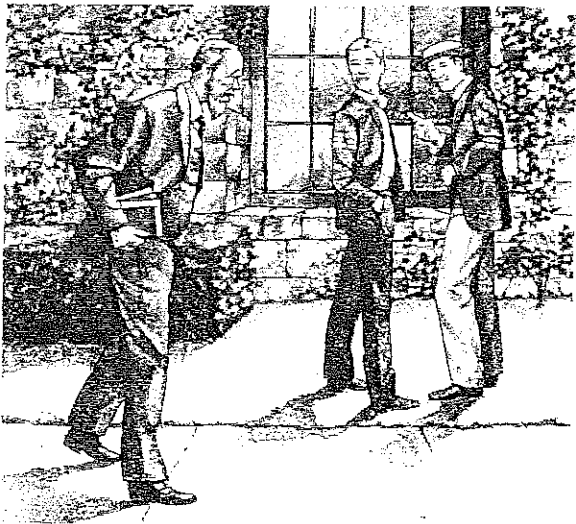
Knute Axelbrod passed the entrance examinations and was accepted at Yale. His roommate was Ray Gribble. Ray was a teacher and wanted a degree so he could make more money. He was surprised that Knute was interested in studying literature and that he didn't care about making money. 100

Knute knew people at Yale thought he was strange. He listened to instructors who were younger than his sons, and his large body looked uncomfortable in the chairs in the 105

¹ *marble temples*: buildings used for religion or education and made of hard stone

classrooms. Most of the students stared
110 at him and thought he was crazy.
Soon, even Gribble, his roommate,
stayed away from him.

Yale began to lose its magic for
Knute. The buildings were no longer
115 marble temples. The dining room
where Knute ate his meals became
a lonely place. No one sat next to
him or talked to him. Several young
men laughed at Knute's beard, and
120 eventually, he began eating at a
nearby restaurant. Without friends,
it became harder for Knute to do
his assignments. Loneliness became
his friend. He missed his cat, his
125 daughter, and his little house. He
missed the walks at night and the
sunshine on his porch. He had been
at Yale only a month.



One day Knute climbed a large
130 rock that overlooked the school
and saw a young man sitting on a
bench. It was Gil Washburn, another
freshman. He was a quiet type and
not very popular with the other

students. Knute stared at him. The
135 young man looked lonely, too.

Gil noticed Knute and walked
over to him. "Great view," he said
smiling. Knute smiled back and said,
140 "Yes, I think The Acropolis² must be
like this."

"You know, Knute, I've been
thinking about you. We are the two
who don't fit in here. We came to
145 dream, and everyone else is here to get
good grades and make money. You
may not agree with me, but I think
we're very much alike."

"Why do you think I came here
to dream?" 150

"I listen to you talking in class. I
watch you with the other students.
Do you like poetry? I have a book I
brought with me. Do you want to
155 look at it?"

Knute took the thin, brown leather
book in his big hands and touched it
gently. The pages had gold on their
edges. When he opened the pages, he
saw a foreign language. "It's beautiful,
160 but I can't read it."

"It's French poetry. Let me read you
a little."

Gil read to Knute, and the words
sounded like music. Knute had
165 been waiting for this for sixty-five
years. Then Gil said, "Listen, there's
a concert in Hartford tonight, and
Ysaye, a famous violinist, is playing.
Let's go hear him. We'll take the train
170 and get there in plenty of time. I
asked some of the other fellows, but

² *The Acropolis*: a rocky hill in the center of the city of Athens in Greece

they thought I was crazy.”

175 Knute never heard of Ysaye, but he said, “Sure.” When they got to Hartford, they found out they had just enough money to eat dinner, buy concert tickets, and pay for a train ticket to a nearby town. After the concert, Gil suggested, “Let’s walk
180 back to New Haven. Can you walk that far?” Knute had no idea how far away they were, but once again he said, “Sure.”

185 So the young man and the older one walked beneath the October moon. They stopped to steal apples and stare at the moon. Gil did most of the talking, and Knute listened. They
190 reached the campus at five in the morning. Knute didn’t know how to thank Gil, so he said, “It was fine. I’ll go to bed now and dream about our adventure.”

195 “You can’t go to bed now. The fun isn’t over. Let’s go get something to eat. I’m hungry. I’ll go up to my room and get some money. Wait here.”

200 Knute was delighted. He would have waited all night. He had lived sixty-five years and traveled fifteen hundred miles to find Gil Washburn. When Gil returned, the two walked
205 arm in arm down the empty streets until they found a restaurant. For the first time, Knute felt content and happy.

They brought the food up to Gil’s room. Knute sat in a comfortable chair and looked around at the books,
210 Persian rugs, a silver tea set, and paintings. Gil started a fire in the small fireplace. As they ate, they spoke about great men and their ideas. Gil read some of his own poetry. Knute
215 thought it was a miracle to meet someone who wrote poetry.

They began to yawn, and Knute said goodbye. As he left Gil’s room, he saw the sun coming up. It was a
220 new day.

“I can go to his room anytime now. He’s my friend.”

Knute held the book of French poetry, which Gil wanted him to keep.
225 As he walked back to his own room, Knute felt very tired. In daylight, the adventure seemed hard to believe.

“Age and youth – I guess they can’t be a team for long. If I saw the boy
230 again, he would get tired of me. I told him all I know. This is what I came to college for. I waited sixty-five years for this one night. If I go away now, I won’t spoil it.”
235

He wrote a note to Gil and packed his clothes. At five that afternoon, on a westbound train, an old man sat smiling. His eyes were content, and his hands held a small book
240 of French poetry even though he couldn’t read French.



Study the following key words from the story. They all relate to *going to college*. Then complete the paragraph using each word once.

scholar a person who studies and loves learning; a person who has a lot of knowledge

knowledge information that someone receives from experience or studying

degree a title given by a college or university for completing a program of courses

grades scores from a test or a course, using the letters A, B, C, D, or F

literature books, stories, poems, plays, etc., with artistic value

assignments work or study that you must do for a class

There are many students who go to a college or university just to get a _____. But a true _____ is someone who studies because he or she has a love of learning. Perhaps such students study _____ so that they can gain _____ from the words of great writers and poets. And when they do their _____, they are not worried about the _____ that the teacher gives them. They study because they love learning something new.

6. Idioms and Expressions

You will find these idioms and expressions in the story.

sun went down sunset; time just before darkness

pass an examination do well on a test

boarded a train got on a train

lose its magic not be as exciting as it was before; become disappointing

don't fit in be different from other people; not belong

get there in plenty of time arrive very early

walk arm in arm walk with one arm hooked around another person's arm

get tired of become bored with something; become impatient with something

2. Vocabulary Comprehension

The words in the list are in the story. Find the words in the story, and try to understand their meanings. Then complete the sentences with words in the list. Use each word once.

dream	soul	steal	yawn
realizes	secret	adventure	spoil
habits	stare	content	
strange	lonely	miracle	

1. Knute keeps his plan to go to college a secret from his daughter.
2. Angela _____ her father won't give up his plan to go to college.
3. The other students at Yale _____ at Knute's white beard.
4. They think Knute is _____.
5. Knute doesn't have any friends at school, and he feels _____.
6. Knute thinks it is a _____ to meet someone who writes poetry.
7. When he leaves his farm in Minnesota, Knute starts a new _____.
8. Knute has a _____ of going to college and studying literature.
9. After Knute gives his farm to his daughter, he still has the _____ of a farmer.
10. Knute and Gil stop to _____ apples from a tree on their walk back to Yale.
11. Knute and Gil both _____ because they are sleepy after staying up all night.
12. After spending time with Gil Washburn, Knute feels _____.
13. Knute wants to leave college so that he doesn't _____ his friendship with Gil.
14. Knute has the _____ of a scholar because he loves learning.

Practice 1

In the following sentences, some proper nouns are missing. With a partner, fill in the blank lines with correct proper nouns from the story. Capitalize the first letter of each proper noun.

1. Knute Axelbrod was born in Scandinavia and later came to America.
2. Knute had a cat named _____.
3. _____ and _____ are famous centers of learning.
4. To prepare for college, Knute studied _____, algebra, _____ and history.
5. _____ realized that her father was not going to listen to her.
6. Knute traveled by train from _____ to _____.
7. When Knute saw the view from the large rock, he said, "Yes, I think The _____ must be like this."
8. Knute and _____ went to a concert in _____.
9. After the concert, they walked back under the _____ moon.
10. Gil gave Knute a book of _____ poetry.

■ *Practice 2*

In the following paragraph, look for the common nouns and proper nouns. Circle the common nouns. Underline the proper nouns. Capitalize the first letter of each proper noun.

knute and gil went to hartford for a concert. They ran out of money and couldn't take a train back to yale. So they had to walk back to the university. They stayed up, all night talking about great men and their ideas. In the morning, gil gave knute his book of french poetry. When knute decided to return to minnesota, he was content with his adventure in connecticut.

Name _____

Change the verbs below to past tense. Write a sentence using the verb in the past tense.

Realize _____

Steal _____

Yawn _____

Stare _____

1. A **content** person is a _____ person.

a. smart

b. happy

c. hard

2. The opposite of **strange** is _____

a. familiar

b. courteous

c. simple

3. An **adventure** would be if you went to _____

a. the Hubbs student lounge

b. a room in your house

c. a state you've never travelled to

4. The vegetables are **spoiled**. This means they are _____

a. bad, no good, rotten

b. there are too many of them

c. tasty

5. Wow! It was a **miracle** to see flowers outside in January

a. the right thing to happen

b. unbelievable

c. a good thing

Put the following words in the past tense:

Read _____

See _____

Hear _____

Think _____

Do _____

Go _____

Sit _____

Write _____

Come _____

Share _____

Watch _____

Work _____

Talk _____

Listen _____

Miss _____

Want _____

Wish _____

study _____

Dictation is on the back of page: