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Session de septembre 2004

Matière : ANGLAIS

Durée : 3 heures

Un bébé !

Jurgis et son épouse Ona viennent d'avoir un petit garçon, Antanas.

The coming of this boy was a decisive event with Jurgis. It made him irrevocably a family man ; it killed the last lingering impulse that he might have had to go out in the evening and talk with the men in the saloons.

There was nothing to be cared for now so much as to sit and look at the baby. This was very curious, for Jurgis had never been interested in babies before. But then, this was a very unusual sort of a baby. He had the brightest little black eyes, and little black ringlets all over his head ; he was the living image of his father, everybody said - and Jurgis found this a fascinating circumstance. It was sufficiently perplexing that tiny mite of life should have come into the world at all in the manner that it had ; that it should have come with a comical imitation of its father's nose was simply uncanny .

Perhaps, Jurgis thought, this was intended to signify that it was his baby - that it was his and Ona's, to care for all its life. Jurgis had never possessed anything nearly so interesting - a baby was, when you came to think about it, assuredly a marvellous possession. It would grow up to be a man, a human soul, with a personality of its own, a will of its own! Such thoughts would keep haunting Jurgis, filling him with all sorts of strange and almost painful excitements. He was wonderfully proud of little Antanas : he was curious about all the details of him - the washing and the dressing and the eating and the sleeping of him, and asked all sorts of absurd questions. It took him quite a while to get over his alarm at the incredible, shortness of the little creature's legs.

Jurgis had, alas! very little time to see his baby ; he never felt the chains about him more than just then.

When he came home at night the baby would be asleep, and it would be the merest chance if he awoke before Jurgis had to go to sleep himself. Then in the morning there was no time to look at him, so really the only chance the father had was on Sundays. This was more cruel yet for Ona, who ought to have stayed home and nursed him, the doctor said, for her own health as well as the baby's ; but Ona had to go to work, and leave him for Teta Elzbieta to feed upon the pale blue poison that was called milk at the corner grocery.

Upton SINCLAIR, *The Jungle*, 1906.