

## ANALYSIS

“The Teacher” (1919)

from *Winesburg, Ohio*

Sherwood Anderson

(1876-1941)

“Kate Swift, in ‘The Teacher,’ has tried to tell George that the writer’s lot is not ‘the easiest of all lives to live,’ but rather one of the most difficult. In one of those scenes where physical touch symbolizes an attempt to create the moment of awareness between two personalities, Kate has tried to explain the demanding principles by which the true writer must live. He must ‘know life,’ must ‘stop fooling with words,’ must ‘know what people are thinking about, not what they say’—all three being principles Anderson was to insist on himself as the code of the artist. That George is still immature himself both as a person and as a writer is signified at the end of ‘The Teacher’ when he gropes drowsily about in the darkness with a hand and mutters that he has missed something that Kate Swift was trying to tell him. This needed maturity comes to him only at the end of *Winesburg*.”

When, sitting beside the body of his dead mother, he decides to go to ‘some city’ and perhaps ‘get a job on some newspaper,’ he is really marked already for the profession of writer, whatever job he may take to support himself, just as Anderson supported himself by composing advertising copy while experimenting with the *Winesburg* stories. In ‘Departure’ the commitment of George Willard to writing unites with his final commitment to the world of dreams. For both George and his creator the two are indeed identical.”

Walter B. Rideout  
“The Simplicity of *Winesburg, Ohio*”  
*Shenandoah* XIII  
(Spring 1962)