

# Indiana Sundays



As a child, I loved Sunday afternoons in summer. Precisely at twelve o'clock noon, church let out with the loud ringing of the huge bell. In a flash, my cousins and I burst out the nearest door and climbed into each other's cars in a wild and disorderly fashion. We were off to Grandma and Grandpa's farmhouse!

The first order of business was to devour a large and long noontime dinner. Then we slammed our way outside through Grandma's back door. The fun was about to begin. We chased barn cats, stomped in cow pies, and threw each other into haystacks. We explored every nook and cranny of Grandpa's old barn. Our newest-addition cousins sat in a playpen not far from the volleyball net where the adults gathered. Sometimes, we snatched up the little tykes to take them for rides in wheelbarrows or into the barn to kiss the cows. And young cousins always learned the rules for kick-the-can and king-of-the-hill even before they could speak.

On lucky Sunday afternoons, Grandpa would join us in the field behind the barn. We took turns riding on the old John Deere all around the farm. The cows moored their complaints when we entered their domain. We just laughed and reached out to pet them on the nose. Sometimes, we even did real work—planting seeds or gathering eggs. The chickens hated Sundays almost as much as the cows did. Grandpa always assured them that we were good and gentle helpers.

Eventually, the sun started to set. The adults stopped their volleyball game, groaning about bug bites, sore muscles, and hunger. Adults and kids alike clamored into the mosquito-free house for supper, which was a makeshift affair, featuring noontime leftovers. After

supper, the adults retired to the living room, collapsing onto couches and into rocking chairs. We kids headed for the cellar to battle with cue-stick swords between games of eight ball.

I stayed upstairs sometimes. I silently found a corner on the floor of the adult world and listened. The conversation was always about ethics. Is it ever okay to lie? Do all people have a conscience? Never resolved, the issues were sooner or later shelved for further discussion. The men then moved their party to the cellar. When the door squeaked open at the top of the stairs, the kids left the pool table. It was the grown-ups' turn to play.

For a while, then, we kids explored the basement. There were flowers drying in the cramped quarters behind the massive furnace. There was a tall, rickety old metal box that Grandpa showered in after his shifts on the B&O railroad. There was a fruit cellar full of fresh-fruit bins, and the vegetables that Grandma had canned last fall filled the tall shelves. Eventually, one of us was caught forgetting to shut the fruit cellar door. Besides, we were making too much noise and kept bumping into cue sticks at crucial moments, so we would all be booted upstairs, where the womenfolk offered us a choice. We could play outdoors or move into the "porch." The porch was actually a huge, fully enclosed room. In any self-respecting California ranch home, it would have been called the "recreation room."

Deciding our next move always turned into a debate for us kids. Catching fireflies and moonlight tag were the main outdoor attractions. Games involving the hundreds of buttons from Grandma's button box were an indoor option. Because we usually decided on some mix of indoor and outdoor fun, the porch door slammed frequently, letting bugs into the house. The adults were quick to comment on both annoyances.

Slowly, a few at a time, aunts and uncles surrendered to the threat of another Monday morning arriving too soon. Cousins were coaxed into cars with bribes of Grandma Ruth's cookies. Children's games fell apart, and adult talk slowed with each disappearing brood. My family was always the last to leave, and I was the most reluctant to say goodbye to another Indiana Sunday.



## Questions About Indiana Sundays

1. What is the author's purpose for writing this personal narrative?
  - A. to explain the advantages of a big family
  - B. to persuade readers to live in the country
  - C. to entertain readers with a story about a childhood experience
  - D. to tell readers how to plan large family gatherings
2. Name three of the kids' activities after the noon meal that showed they had no adult supervision.
3. Why do you think that the cows and the chickens "hated Sundays"?
4. What detail in the story shows that the author was interested in the grown-ups' activities?
5. Quote lines from the beginning and the end of the story that express how the author felt about Indiana Sundays.
6. Would you have preferred to explore the barn or the basement? Explain your choice.

## Vocabulary

*Match each word to its definition.*

makeshift	tykes	ethics	conscience	reluctant	coaxed
annoyances	bribes	clamored	crucial	rickety	domain

1. extremely important
2. standards of right and wrong
3. built for temporary use out of available resources
4. made loud noises
5. an inner sense of right and wrong
6. offers of money or gifts to get something in return
7. close to breaking or falling apart; flimsy

8. gently persuaded
9. territory or space
10. hesitant, uncertain, or unwilling
11. small children
12. bothersome actions; nuisances

## Dialect

A **dialect** is the word usage and pronunciations typical of a certain area or region. This story uses a somewhat old-fashioned dialect that is typical of Indiana and several other midwestern states.

*Match the words from the story's midwestern dialect with their synonyms.*

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. dinner          | family                |
| 2. porch           | basement              |
| 3. cellar          | lunch                 |
| 4. brood           | recreation room       |
| 5. womenfolk       | women                 |
| 6. nook and cranny | corner or small space |

## Idioms

An **idiom** is a phrase that does not mean exactly what the words say.

**Example:** *Children's games fell apart* means that the children gradually stopped playing their games.

*Find the phrases below in the story and explain what they mean.*

1. ...the issues were sooner or later shelved for further discussion.

2. ...we would all be booted upstairs...

3. ...aunts and uncles surrendered to the threat of another Monday morning arriving too soon.

## Imagery

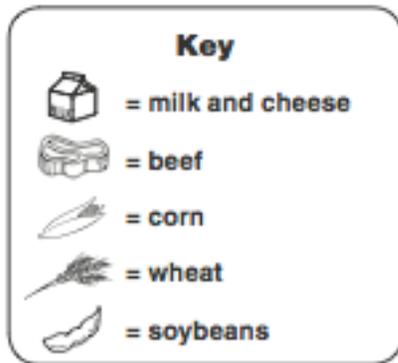
**Imagery** is the use of colorful and expressive words and phrases to help readers picture or imagine what the writer is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling.

**Example:** *We slammed our way outside through Grandma's back door* creates an image, or picture, of the back door slamming behind the children as they raced outside to play.

1. Write four more examples of imagery from the story.

2. What piece of farm equipment is described as “Old John Deere”?

## Read the Map



Look at the map and the key above to answer the following questions about the main crops and livestock raised on farms in the midwestern states.

1. What is the main crop grown in the state where the story takes place?
2. Which states produce what you need to make a bowl of cereal for breakfast?
3. From which state could factories that make flour buy their grain?
4. Which states' main product is something that vegetarians do not eat?
5. Which states would be great places for grilled cheese sandwich lovers to live?
6. Which states produce legumes?