

Little House On The Prairie



By

Laura Ingalls Wilder

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Little House on the Prairie

By Laura Ingalls Wilder



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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 90 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *Little House on the Prairie* and is comprised of these different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . and many others.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include pioneer life, farming and agriculture, the importance of friends and family, perseverance, overcoming difficulty.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a brochure
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Design an Information Card

Little House on the Prairie

By *Laura Ingalls Wilder*

Synopsis

Laura Ingalls and her family are moving! They travel from Wisconsin to Kansas, where wide open land stretches as far as the eye can see. Sometimes farm life is difficult, even dangerous, but Laura and her family are kept busy and are happy with the promise of their new life on the prairie. [Courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography

Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura Ingalls Wilder was born February 7, 1867, in Pepin, Wisconsin, the second of four children. She once described her father, Charles Philip Ingalls, as always jolly and sometimes reckless. Her mother, Caroline Lake Quiner, was educated, gentle, and proud, according to her daughter. Her sisters were Mary, Carrie, and Grace. Laura also had a younger brother, Charles, Jr. who died at the age of only nine months.



As a young girl, Laura moved with her family from place to place. In 1874, the Ingalls family left Wisconsin for Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where they lived at first in a dugout house. The family finally settled in what would become De Smet, South Dakota, which remained Charles and Caroline's home until they died. Laura attended regular school whenever possible. However, because of her family's frequent moves, she was largely self-taught. In 1882, at the age of fifteen, she received her teaching certificate. For three years, Laura taught at a small country school a dozen miles from her home in De Smet.

In 1885 she married a local farmer, Almanzo Manly Wilder. The couple's only surviving child, Rose, was born in 1886. In 1894 the Wilders moved to Mansfield, Missouri, which they would call home for the rest of their lives. Here she sent her account of their travels to the De Smet News. This was her first published writing. In 1932, at the age of sixty-five, Wilder published the first of her eight "Little House" books, *Little House in the Big Woods*, which was a huge hit with readers. Wilder was seventy-six years old when she finished the final book in her "Little House" series. Her husband, Manly, died in 1949 at the age of ninety-two. Wilder was ninety when she died at Rocky Ridge Farm on February 10, 1957.

Courtesy: <http://www.notablebiographies.com/We-Z/Wilder-Laura-Ingalls.html>

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1 & 2

Going West – Crossing the Creek



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Little House on the Prairie* is Laura Ingalls, a very likable young girl, who experiences many exciting adventures as the story unfolds. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

papoose	molasses	complain	ford	arched
mourning	enormous	throb	dreadful	shameful

1. Pa took an _____ risk when he crossed the river at break-up time.
2. Jackie _____ her back painfully after planting trees all morning.
3. After the passing of Grandpa Will, the entire family was in _____.
4. I think it is quite _____ that no one on the team defended the coach.
5. Where do you think the best place would be to _____ the river?
6. The woman placed the _____ into the cradle and rocked him to sleep.
7. I don't mean to _____, but this steak is too rare for me.
8. After striking his thumb with the hammer, Mark's thumb began to _____.
9. What a _____ hop-scotch player she is.
10. Laura and Mary spread _____ on their bread.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Patty
2	Charles
3	Laura
4	Caroline
5	Mary
6	Jack
7	Carrie

A	The brindle bulldog
B	The novel's protagonist
C	Baby of the family
D	Oldest child of the family
E	A western mustang
F	The father of the family
G	The mother of the family

3. Why did Pa want to move from the Big Woods? Where did he want to go?

Test Your Math

The opening sentence of the novel states: *A long time ago, when all the grandfathers and grandmothers of today were little boys and little girls or very small babies, or perhaps not even born...* If **Little House on the Prairie** was published in 1935, which of the author's descriptions would apply to you? Your grandparents?

4. Why was it important that they leave right away and not wait until spring?

Good to Know

This novel was written several generations ago, and the actual events took place about 150 years ago. Since then, the way we refer to many different groups of people has changed. For instance, the author refers to the original peoples of North America as **Indians**, whereas people today often use the terms **First Nations, Native Americans (or Canadians) or Aboriginal/Indigenous Peoples**.



5. According to Pa, what were two positive things about the western mustangs?

6. As they travelled out onto the prairie, Pa realized that trees meant _____.

7. What is a **ford**? (In this case it isn't a kind of automobile.)

8. Describe what Pa had to do to make sure they crossed the river safely. What was Ma's responsibility during this time?

9. What happened during the crossing that caused Laura and the family a great deal of grief later?

Language Activities



A. Wildlife on the Prairie

Living on the great American prairies in the late 1800s would certainly be an exciting (and dangerous) experience. Many different kinds of wildlife inhabited this region at that time. Some are mentioned in the coming chapters: **bison, whitetail deer, coyotes, wolves, prairie chickens, whitetail jackrabbits, Canada geese, Phoebe birds, ground squirrels, gophers, grasshoppers, mockingbirds,** and many others.



Using resources in your school library or on the Internet investigate one of these animals, or another which is native to the American prairie (and approved by your teacher). Your investigation should uncover at least three facts about the animal of your choice, as well as an appropriate picture.

1	
2	
3	

B. Choose ten words from these chapters with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** good / bye.

C. Personification

Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In Chapter Two the author writes, ... ***Far away the sun's edge touched the rim of the earth.*** In this sentence the sun is given human characteristics (it touches).



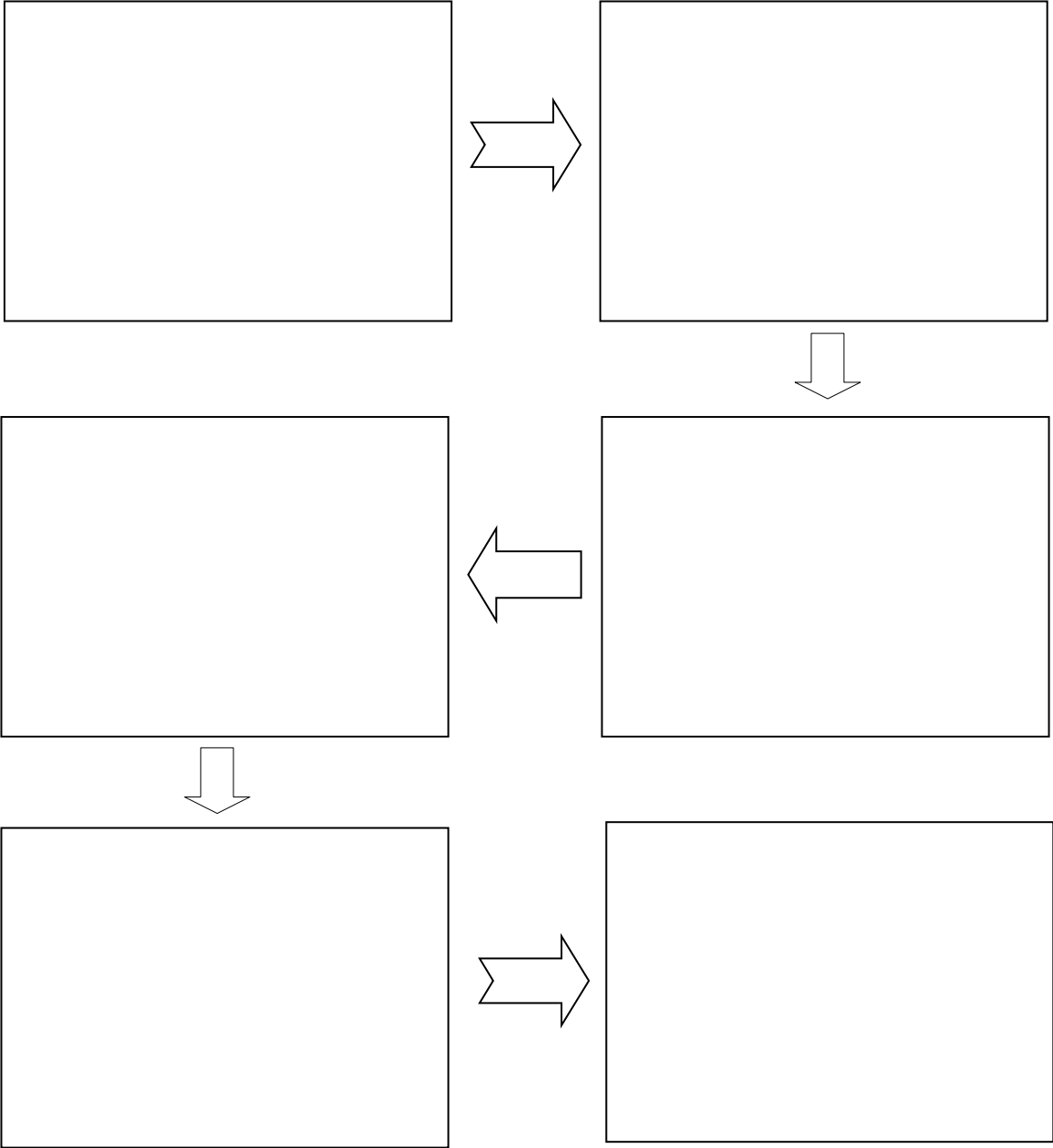
a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

c) If you come across another example of personification in this novel, return to this question and record it below.

D. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



E. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems describing two of the characters from *Little House on the Prairie* using what you know about them from this novel. With your teacher's permission you may wish to collaborate with a colleague in the creation of these poems.

<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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Character 1 _____

Character 2 _____

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6