

On the Banks Of Plum Creek



By

Laura Ingalls Wilder

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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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 curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on 4 chapters of *On the Banks of Plum Creek* and is comprised of the following:

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

A portfolio cover (page 7) as well as a Checklist (page 6) are included so that students may keep 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 living in the American West, blizzards, grasshoppers and prairie fires, the importance of family and community, courage and sacrifice, friendship, personal growth and perseverance.

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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 *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

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. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

On the Banks of Plum Creek

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Synopsis

The adventures of Laura Ingalls and her family continue as they leave their little house on the prairie and travel in their covered wagon to Minnesota. They settle into a house made of sod on the banks of beautiful Plum Creek. Soon Pa builds them a sturdier house, with real glass windows and a hinged door. Laura and Mary go to school, help with the chores around the house, and fish in the creek. Pa's fiddle lulls them all to sleep at the end of the day. But then disaster strikes—on top of a terrible blizzard, a grasshopper infestation devours their wheat crop. Now the family must work harder than ever to overcome these challenges.

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 of novelbiographies.com)

On The Banks of Plum Creek



By Laura Ingalls Wilder

Name:

On the Banks of Plum Creek

By Laura Ingalls Wilder

Chapters 1-4



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *On the Banks of Plum Creek* is seven year old Laura Ingalls, whose family has just moved to Minnesota in a covered wagon in the year 1875. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this character?

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Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|---------------|---------|
| slunk | thickets | rushes (noun) | picket |
| mustang | smart (verb) | pint | contend |

1. It took almost an hour for Charles to lead the frightened _____ into the corral.
2. A prairie homesteader had to _____ with draught and plagues of insects.
3. We waded into the creek and began to collect _____ for our art project.
4. It was difficult to pick wild raspberries because of all the _____ surrounding them.
5. Her finger began to _____ after being pricked by the thorn.
6. The two dogs _____ away from the turmoil and disappeared under the house.
7. She poured about a _____ of water into the canteen.
8. Be sure you _____ the horses for the night or they will wander off.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.

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2. There are many unusual expressions in this novel. Put the following sayings in your own words. (You may have to check the context first.)

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|--|--|
| Laura jumped out of her skin(Chapter One) | |
| The water was talking to itself (Chapter One) | |
| On top of the water the water-bugs skated. (Chapter 3) | |

3. What had Pa traded for Mr. Hansen's crops and oxen?

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4. Answer True or False:

- a) Pa told Ma that after he harvested the first wheat crop he would build her a fine house. True or False
- b) Pa was sorry to have traded Pet and Patty, for they could have helped with the plowing. True or False
- c) Ma didn't like the idea of sleeping on the floor of a house. True or False



5. Describe three things about the description of their dugout home that stood out for you.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |

6. Why do you think that Hansen built his stable of sod instead of logs?

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7. What wouldn't you have enjoyed about living in a dugout like the Ingalls family?
What do you think might have been fun?

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8. We will discover as we continue to read this novel that the Ingalls family is quite prejudiced with regard to the indigenous people of that area. Find proof of that from this section. Why might the Ingalls have felt this way at this time?

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9. Why did Pa tell the girls that they must never go upstream beyond the little willow valley?

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10. Describe what Pa did when Laura was in the pool to teach her a lesson.

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Language Activities



A. Oxen

Pa is really counting on the two oxen he got from Mr. Hansen to help him plow the fields so he can bring in a great crop of wheat. What do you know about these magnificent beasts? Did you know, for instance, that oxen are very loyal animals that usually won't shy away from even the most demanding task? Did you know that they are usually stronger than a horse? Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, record three additional facts about this mammal in the space below.



| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |

B. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first four chapters of *On the Banks of Plum Creek*.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|---------|---------|--|
| stable | | On which a meal is spread. |
| ropes | | Not poetry. |
| rushes | | Usually seen at a wedding. |
| slope | | Used to propel a raft. |
| spread | | Her feelings were _____ from being hurt. |
| stove | | One does this during an election. |
| slender | | Banks are _____. |

C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrates Robots.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is the first four lines of the famous poem, **My Ox**, written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*My ox he lives out back my house
He cranky as can be.
No one dare get close to him,
'Cause he got a million fleas.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first four chapters of our novel (like **mustangs**, **dugouts** or **swimming holes**).

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

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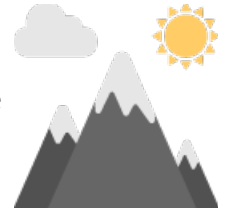
Bonus Question.

In the above poem why do you think the poet chose to skip the odd word (i.e. *back my house*, instead of *back of my house*?)

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D. Cliffhanger

Chapter Three contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter 3? Why do you think the author ended the chapter this way?



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E. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter Three is: . . . *three velvet petals that curved down like a lady's dress over hoops*.

What is being compared in this example?

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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) the sound of an angry mule

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| |

b) the flight of a bumble bee

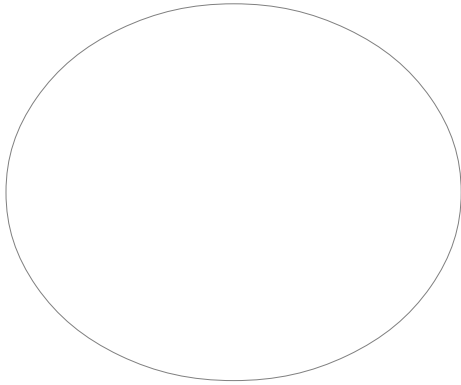
| |
|--|
| |
| |

c) your choice

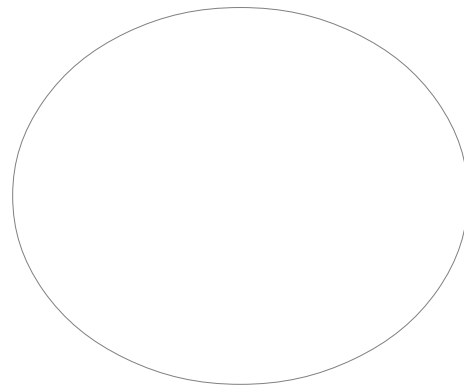
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F. 5 Ws and an H.

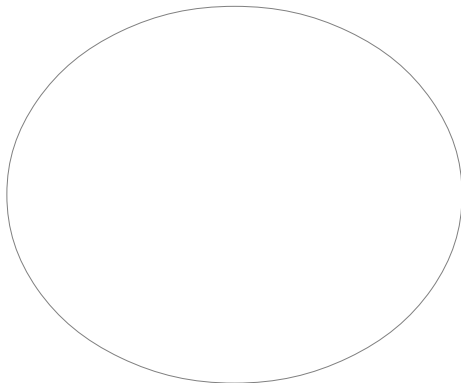
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



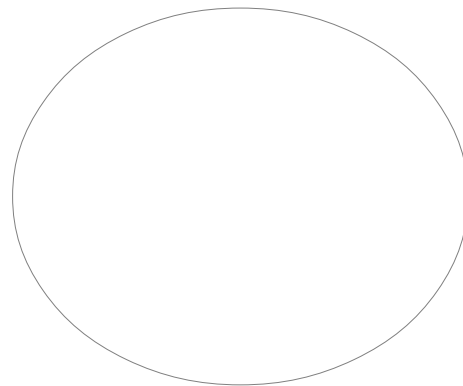
WHO?



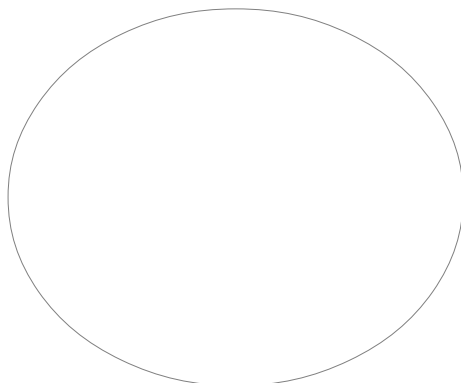
WHAT?



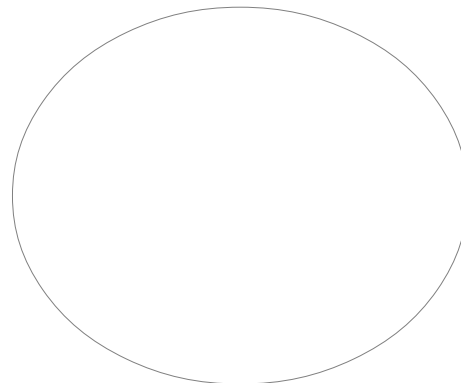
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

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 four chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |