

Farmer Boy

Study Guide

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Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House Series



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Synopsis

Almanzo Wilder, almost nine years old, is the youngest of the four Wilder children. He's a farmer boy, living and working on his family's large farm in northern New York state. He attends a one-room schoolhouse when school is in session, but when there is work to be done—and there almost always is on the Wilder farm—Almanzo does his part to help his family make a living.

Each season has its own special chores on the farm. In the winter the Wilder family hauls wood and cuts ice from the river. Spring is the time for planting and tending to the crops. Summer is time for picking berries, but it also means time for fishing or a trip to town on Independence Day. Harvest time brings lots of hard work, but it also means a trip to the County Fair. And then it's time to prepare for Winter all over again.

Almanzo is old enough to feed and milk the cows and to help with the planting and harvesting. He even has a pair of young oxen he teaches to obey his commands. But he isn't yet old enough to care for the young horses. Although the temptation to handle them is great, Almanzo obeys his father and leaves the young horses alone.

Throughout the year the Wilder family works hard, and Almanzo seems to eat as much as he works. As the older children leave for school and begin to think about their futures, Almanzo knows what kind of future he wants. He wants to be a farmer for the rest of his life, and he dreams of the day he will have a colt of his own to train.

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9. “You get a run for your money,” he said. “But I would rather get something more substantial for mine.”

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

Questions:

1. Where do Almanzo’s parents go on vacation? How long will they be gone?
What rules does Mother give as they pull away?

2. What does Almanzo do while his parents are away that Father specifically told him *not* to do?

3. What happens to Almanzo’s pig?

4. The day before their parents arrive home, what do all the children suddenly realize? What do they do?

Projects & Activities

1. Find a recipe and try to make some home-made ice cream. Your family may have an ice cream maker that you can use along with the recipe. How is the process you follow similar to the process the Wilder children followed to make ice cream?
2. Share a large cold watermelon. Save some of the seeds and plant them outdoors in the spring. See if you can grow your own watermelon.
3. *Art Project:* Buy a candle-making kit or get a book from the library about candle making. Buy some wicking and paraffin, and any other supplies needed for making candles (such as scent, coloring, molds). A crayon melted in the wax colors it nicely. *Be sure to use an old pan in which to melt the paraffin.* This project should only be done with adult supervision.

Farmer Boy Study Guide Answer Key

Questions:

1. They tighten the barn windows; they nail down all the boards that had become loose during the summer; they bank the walls of the barn and house with straw, and they put stones on the straw to keep it from blowing away; they put storm doors and storm windows on the house.
2. Answers will vary.
3. The Academy is a boarding school in Malone where all the children except Almanzo go during the week. They return home only on the weekends.
4. The girls take their old dresses apart at the seams, clean them and press them, and sew them back together inside-out so they look like new.
5. Eliza Jane complains about how Father drinks tea from his saucer. she says “nice people drink out of the cup.” Mother says that if Eliza Jane wants to show off her education, she can tell her where saucers come from. When Eliza Jane cannot answer, Mother tells her, and then says that something that’s been done for 100 years—drinking from saucers—they can keep on doing if they wish.
6. Royal plans to become a storekeeper. Almanzo thinks he would rather break colts and drive his own horses himself than let a coachman in the city drive him around.
7. Almanzo and Father make a bobsled so that Almanzo can hitch Star and Bright to it and help haul wood.

Dig Deeper:

8. Synonyms will vary. Some examples: cheerful, serene, snug, comfortable, acceptable, peaceful, happy, at ease, easygoing.
9. These verses encourage us to find satisfaction in our work, because working is our lot in life. Verse 19 tells us that finding satisfaction in work is a gift from God. Father and Almanzo seem to find satisfaction in their work. Father says that if they didn’t have work to do, they’d just sit around twiddling their thumbs. Almanzo heads off to do chores whistling. He tells the cows, sheep, pigs, and horses that they can depend on him to take care of them. Answers will vary.

“Christmas” through “Farmer Boy”

Vocabulary:

1. shook; 2. necktie; 3. rolled; 4. made into a 4' × 4' × 8' stack; 5. a machine that winds cable; 6. flexible bands; 7. miserly; 8. person who makes wheels

Questions:

1. While all the children are enjoying their gifts, suddenly they hear Father’s voice call out, “Look at the clock.” It is half past three.
2. One log slips and lands on Almanzo. It pins Almanzo down in the snow. When he gets up “his head hurt and his stomach hurt and his right foot hurt dreadfully.” Answers will vary. He might have wanted to prove that he could do the job, and he didn’t want injury to slow him down.
3. “See-sawing” a sled is what happens when it gets stuck. Successive back and forth pulling by each oxen does nothing to move it. Should this happen, the oxen will quit trying after awhile when nothing happens.
4. Almanzo finds a wallet with \$1,500 in it. Almanzo and his father deduce that the money belongs to Mr. Thompson, and they decide to return it to him.
5. Almanzo finds Mr. Thompson at Mr. Paddock’s wagon-shop. Mr. Thompson expresses a sigh of