

# *Little House on the Prairie*



## *Study Guide*

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For the novel by Laura Ingalls Wilder



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## Synopsis

Laura Ingalls is a small girl caught up in the westward expansion. When her Pa decides the Big Woods of Wisconsin is too crowded, the Ingalls family packs up and heads for open spaces.

Life is difficult in a small covered wagon, and the dangers they must face are many. When they decide to settle in Kansas, the work is constant, hard, and sometimes dangerous. They build a home and work the land only to find after a year that they have built three miles over the line into Indian Territory.

How the family handles losing everything is as inspiring as their hard work of the previous year.

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7. When Pa carefully builds a campfire on the prairie, he says, “Best be on the safe side, it saves trouble in the end.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not? Does Pa always do things the safest way?

**Dig Deeper:**

8. When the family was traveling, Laura gets tired of riding and starts complaining. Ma says, “Laura,” which meant she must not complain anymore. Though she doesn’t complain out loud anymore, Laura continues to complain in her head. Was complaining in her head wrong? Was she really obeying her mother? Why or why not? (You may wish to look at Proverbs 16:2 and Jeremiah 17:10.)
9. When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, one of them was “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” Is there a difference between obeying and honoring? Look up *obey* and *honor* in a dictionary, then define them in your own words.
10. Define *providence* in your own words. Read Matthew 6:25–34. Paraphrase these verses. To paraphrase something means to write it in your own words.

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**Class Debate:**

Does God protect us from all danger and sickness? Why or why not?

**Optional Projects and Activities:**

1. *Cook:* Make cornbread. Serve it with butter, honey, or molasses like Laura did.

**Corn Bread**

4 teaspoons dry yeast  
1 cup lukewarm water  
1 cup corn meal (white or yellow)  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup unbleached white or whole wheat flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup skim milk powder  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (optional)  
2 tablespoons honey  
3 tablespoons oil  
2 eggs, beaten

1. Dissolve dry yeast in lukewarm water and allow to stand for 10 minutes.
2. Combine in a mixing bowl: corn meal, white or whole wheat flour, skim milk powder, salt, and nutritional yeast (if desired).
3. Combine honey, oil, and beaten eggs and add to dry ingredients, mixing well.
4. Gradually add dissolved yeast mixture, blending well into other ingredients.
5. Pour batter into a well-oiled 9×9-inch square pan. Place pan in warm area and allow corn bread to rise 30–40 minutes. Preheat oven to 350° F.
6. Bake in preheated oven for 30–35 minutes.

**Yield:** 6–8 servings.

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9. Laura wants to release Jack because she is sure her mother is in danger and Jack could protect her. Answers may vary about whether her reason makes sense, but in general it does—one of the reasons they have Jack is to protect them from danger. Pa gets angry with the girls, however, because he knows that if Jack had attacked the Indians they may have killed Jack, but they almost certainly would have taken revenge on the family. Because the Indians weren't there to hurt anyone, if the dog had attacked them they probably would have taken that as hostility from the family and may have attacked the family.

10. Answers may vary. The verse in Proverbs says that just because we think something is right, doesn't mean that it really is; it may be very dangerous or bad. If Laura had let Jack off the chain—even though it seemed the right thing to do—the whole family might have been killed. Mr. Scott could not see a good reason for checking the well with the candle, but he almost died when he did not do it. The verse points out that we can't see the answers or the reasons for everything, so sometimes we need to obey without knowing the exact reasons.

11. She got mad because she then felt she had to give up her own beads, and she did not want to.

12. Laura gives up her beads only to compete with Mary in being a "good girl." She wanted to "act just as good." Her motivation was not kindness or love for Carrie. The verses in 1 Corinthians tell us we must love patiently, be kind, not be jealous, not boast, not be proud nor rude nor selfish. We must not be easily angered, we should rejoice in truth, protect and trust one another, always hope and not give up our love.

### *"Fire in the Chimney" through "A Scream in the Night"*

#### *Vocabulary:*

1. massacre; 2. bristled; 3. uncinched; 4. quinine; 5. soberly; 6. savagely; 7. delayed; 8. contradict

#### *Questions:*

1. The top of the chimney, made of mud and sticks (called stick-and-daub), catches fire, and Ma goes outside and knocks down the burning portion. One of the burning sticks falls down into the cabin and under Mary's chair. Laura pulls the chair away from the stick and throws the stick back into the fireplace.

2. Pa squats next to the Indian at the fireplace, they eat together, and they smoke their pipes together.

3. Ma means that Pa needs to sell the furs to buy a plow and seeds. Without money from the furs, they would not be able to buy these things.

4. Mr. Edwards brought Christmas presents to Mary and Laura. He said Santa Claus could not cross the swollen creek, so he gave their presents to Mr. Edwards in Independence City.

5. A panther screams in the night. At first the family thinks it is a woman screaming at the Scotts' cabin and Pa goes to check. As Pa is on the way home, the panther screams from a treetop near him. After he gets safely home, he vows to hunt it until he kills it, but an Indian finds it and kills it first.

#### *Think About the Story:*

6. Answers may vary. Laura says she doesn't cry, but two big tears run down her cheeks and her throat chokes up because she is scared. Personal answers will vary. Note that Laura did not cry when things needed to be done. She cried a little after the worst was over. Sometimes letting our feelings out a little bit by crying can ease the pain or fear.

7. The wind is being personified with the phrases "the wind wailed," "it whispered sadly," and "the wind sounded like someone crying."

8. It took Pa four days to go to the store and back, so he goes to town only a couple of times a year. Answers will vary. Because he only goes once every few months, he must buy foods that will last: grains, beans, salted meat, spices, sugar, flour. He might buy something fresh for a treat, but for the most part if they can't grow it or hunt it, they can't get it fresh.

9. They listed a good house to live in, a warm fire, and a turkey. No, they didn't feel much better. Answers will vary. They enjoyed and were thankful for the things they had, but that didn't take away the disappointment of not getting presents for Christmas.

10. Laura and Mary each got a tin cup, a peppermint candy, a heart-shaped little cake, and one penny. Ma and Pa received some sweet potatoes for the meal. Comparisons will vary.

#### *Dig Deeper:*

11. Answers may vary. The two times that stand out are when Pa goes to town and Mr. Edwards comes and does the chores for the family, and when Mr. Edwards brings the Christmas gifts to the family. It would have been hard for Mr.