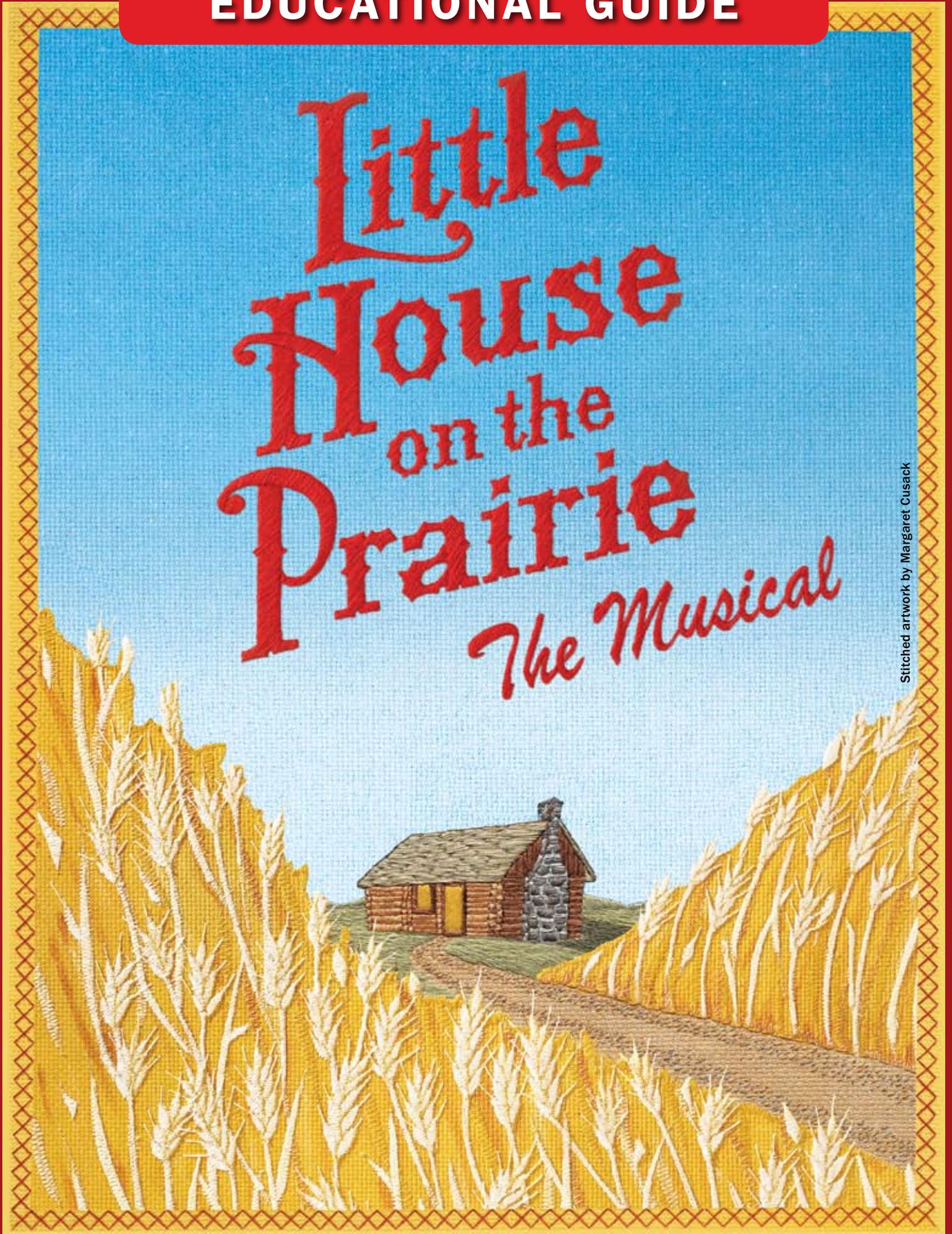


Little House on the Prairie *The Musical*

Stitched artwork by Margaret Cusack



Little House on the Prairie *The Musical*[™]

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

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Production Photos of *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*

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to the Guthrie Theater, for use of their *Little House on the Prairie* Play Guide in the development of these materials.

Designed by

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Kara Lindsay as Laura Ingalls

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Introduction

Welcome to the world of *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*. *Little House on the Prairie* has remained one of the most popular and beloved celebrations of pioneering America since Laura Ingalls Wilder published the first book of her classic series 75 years ago. Now the inspirational stories cross into yet another frontier in an uplifting new musical. Recommended for the whole family, *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical* brings the joys and sorrows of family life during the settlement of the prairie to contemporary America.

We want to ensure the experience of going to a production begins before you walk into the theater door and lasts well after the final curtain. This Guide will hopefully spark new ideas on ways you can expand your journey with *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*.

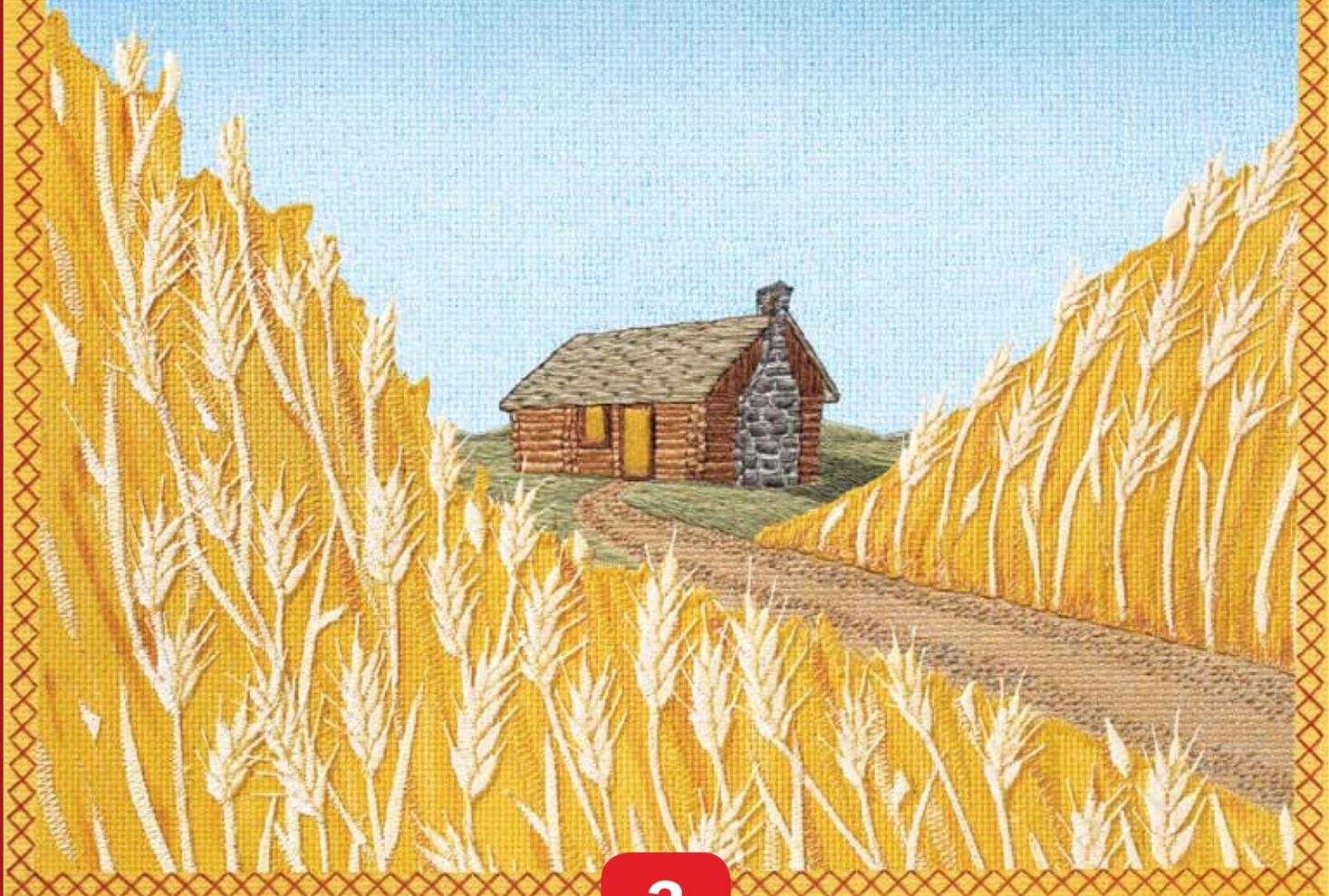
The materials in this Guide are broken into two sections: an Educator's Section and a FOR KIDS section. The Educator's Section provides teachers or parents with all the tools necessary to turn an afternoon at the theatre into an interactive, educational experience. It is rich in material that includes Language Arts, Social Studies, Performing Arts and other skills that follow the National Standards for Education. The student pages of this Guide (FOR KIDS pages 22 to 35) can be copied separately for children. The pages contain additional information written especially for young people about the show. There are also activities designed to encourage the use of their imagination, to reinforce the themes of the show, introduce them to exciting new vocabulary words and asks questions that illustrate how a young person staying true to their hopes, dreams and values is as relevant and vital today as it was over 100 years ago.

We hope you find this material useful and that you will continue to bring the Arts into your daily life in the classroom, your living room, your homestead, or any other place you just might happen to visit.

Enjoy the show!

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Educator's Section



Biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura's life began in the Big Woods of Wisconsin on February 7, 1867. Her parents, Charles "Pa" and Caroline "Ma" Ingalls, had married seven years earlier, and already had one daughter, Mary. When Laura was one and a half, the family traveled by covered wagon to Indian Territory (modern-day Kansas) where Pa built a house for his family, and where Laura's sister Carrie was born in 1870.

The family was forced to leave their little house on the prairie and return to Wisconsin when their land was returned to the Osage Indians by the US Government. The family then moved to a farm on the banks of Plum Creek near the town of Walnut Grove, Minnesota. In 1875, Ma gave birth to Laura's brother, Charles Frederick, or "Freddie," who died in infancy. After two years struggling to make ends meet, the Ingalls family moved on again, this time to Burr Oak, Iowa. They stayed in Burr Oak for two years, managing the town's hotel, and eventually welcomed the youngest Ingalls sister, Grace, into the world. In 1878, the family returned to Walnut Grove.

Freddie's death and their ongoing financial problems were not the only tragedies for the Ingalls family. In 1879, Mary be-

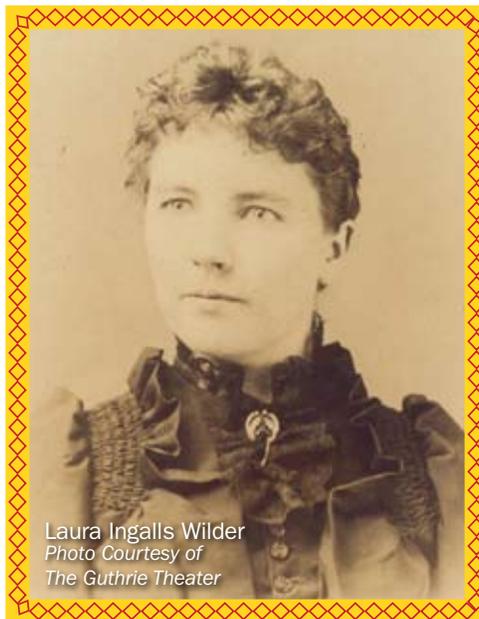
came very sick, suffered a stroke, and went blind. Pa instructed Laura to be "eyes" for Mary; many believe this was a key moment in Laura's development as a storyteller. Pa continued to struggle financially, until he learned of a position with the new railroad in Dakota Territory. Pa moved ahead to the unsettled country, while the rest of the family waited for Mary to regain her strength. Ma, Mary, Laura, Carrie, and Grace later rode a train west to meet him.

The Ingalls family spent their first months in Dakota at a railroad camp near Silver Lake. In the spring of 1880, homesteaders flooded the area, and constructed the town of De Smet. The Ingalls family built a rental building in De Smet, and claimed a homestead nearby.

The winter of 1880-81 nearly wiped out the

little town. The first blizzard hit in October, and it snowed almost without stopping until May. To stave off starvation, the townspeople ground wheat into flour in coffee mills for their daily bread, and two of the town's settlers, Almanzo Wilder and Oscar Edmund "Cap" Garland, risked their lives to find more wheat on the snowbound prairie.

In 1883, two months before her sixteenth birthday, Laura obtained her teaching certificate, and began teaching in one-room



Laura Ingalls Wilder
Photo Courtesy of
The Guthrie Theater

schoolhouses near De Smet. Mary left Dakota Territory to attend a college for the blind in Vinton, Iowa, where she studied for eight years. Soon, Almanzo Wilder was courting Laura. They married in 1885.

Laura called the early years of her marriage “days of sunshine and shadow.” The Wilders’ daughter, Rose, was born in December 1886. Soon after, their house burned down, and both Laura and Almanzo contracted diphtheria. In 1889, the Wilders’ son died before they even named him. Difficult farming conditions and poor health led the Wilders to briefly move to Florida, before returning to De Smet. In 1894, they left the prairie for good, travelling by wagon to Mansfield, Missouri.

Laura named their new home Rocky Ridge. Laura and Almanzo’s years of relentless work and careful saving enabled them to slowly build Rocky Ridge into a prosperous farm. During the early years of the twentieth century, Laura wrote a column for an area farm newspaper. The Wilders were well-known, respected members of Mansfield society, and active in a variety of clubs and organizations.

While Laura and Almanzo were building up Rocky Ridge, Rose lived an adventurous, extraordinary life. After leaving home as a teenager, she lived around the world, becoming a telegraph operator, a real estate saleswoman, and a very successful freelance writer. By the 1920s, Rose Wilder Lane was a highly-paid, globe-trotting journalist and best-selling novelist.

By the early 1930s, Laura was living in a world that little resembled the frontier of her youth. Electricity and telephones made their way into even the smallest towns. Cars replaced horse-drawn wagons. Airplanes zoomed across the sky. Pa, Ma, and Mary had died. Laura felt they should be remembered.

To commemorate her family and their many adventures, Laura wrote an autobiography titled *Pioneer Girl*. When she and Rose

failed to find a publisher, Laura reworked the early parts of *Pioneer Girl* into *Little House in the Big Woods*, which was published in 1932.

A steady stream of Little House books followed. With Rose’s help and expertise, Laura published *Farmer Boy* in 1933; *Little House on the Prairie* in 1935; *On the Banks of Plum Creek* in 1937; *By the Shores of Silver Lake* in 1939; *The Long Winter* in 1940; *Little Town on the Prairie* in 1941, and *These Happy Golden Years* in 1943. Laura was 76 years old when her last book was published.

The *Little House* books made Laura famous and wealthy. Letters, gifts, and cards from around the world flooded her mailbox. Cities named libraries and schools for her. Her books won awards, critical praise, and literary honors. In 1949, Almanzo died at the age of 90, leaving her alone at Rocky Ridge.

Laura spent her last years reading, answering letters from fans, and visiting with friends. In the 1950s, she wrote a letter to her readers, explaining, “The Little House books are stories of long ago. Today our way of living and our schools are much different; so many things have made living and learning easier. But the real things haven’t changed. It is still best to be honest and truthful; to make the most of what we have; to be happy with simple pleasures, and to be cheerful and have courage when things go wrong.”

On February 10, 1957, three days after her 90th birthday, Laura Ingalls Wilder died at Rocky Ridge. Pa, Ma, Mary, Carrie, and Grace would never be forgotten. . . and the success and popularity of *Little House* had just begun. Years later, a television series loosely based on her books became one of the most popular family dramas of all time. Through scores of books, television movies, plays, museums, and now, a musical, Laura Ingalls Wilder has arguably become *the* most beloved figure of America’s pioneering past. ♦

The Homestead Act and the Ingalls Family

“Uncle Sam is Rich Enough to Give Us All a Farm!”

“On every side now the prairie stretched away empty to far, clear skyline. The wind never stopped blowing, waving the tall prairie grasses that had turned brown in the sun. And all afternoon, while Pa kept driving onward, he was merrily whistling or singing. The song he sang oftenest was:

*‘Oh come to this country,
And don’t you feel alarm,
For Uncle Sam is rich enough
To give us all a farm!’”*

— *Laura Ingalls Wilder, By the Shores of Silver Lake*

The Ingalls family’s pioneering way of life—in real life, in the *Little House* books, and in *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*—was created by the United States government.

On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a new law called the Homestead Act, which declared that any citizen of the United States could “claim” 160 acres of surveyed government land and set up a farm, or “homestead.” The land was often advertised as “free for the taking.” Many of the 270 million acres of land made available through the Homestead Act lay west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains, and included the present-day states of Montana, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas.

After paying an inexpensive fee and filing a claim at a US Land Office, homesteaders were required to “improve” their land by living on

it, building a home, and planting crops. Other settlers took land where the government required them to grow and cultivate trees on the empty prairies. If the homesteader fulfilled the government’s requirements and occupied the homestead for five years, the land became the homesteader’s.

160 acres of valuable farm land? For free? And all you had to do is live on it for five years? Sounds easy, right?

Not really.

The Act’s requirements proved to be absolutely impossible for many settlers. Many homesteaders had little or no farming experience, and growing crops in the West was a difficult task for even the most experienced farmers. Many homesteads in the dry plains were too small to produce profitable crops, and the cost of irrigation far exceeded the land’s value.

There were many other obstacles. Horrifying environmental conditions—including tornadoes, dust storms, hail storms, prairie fires, and deadly blizzards—threatened homes and families. Weeks—and sometimes months—of total isolation from other people caused depression. Medical care was often poor or nonexistent. Keeping a farm operating and a family clothed, fed, and sheltered often required money that homesteaders simply didn't have.

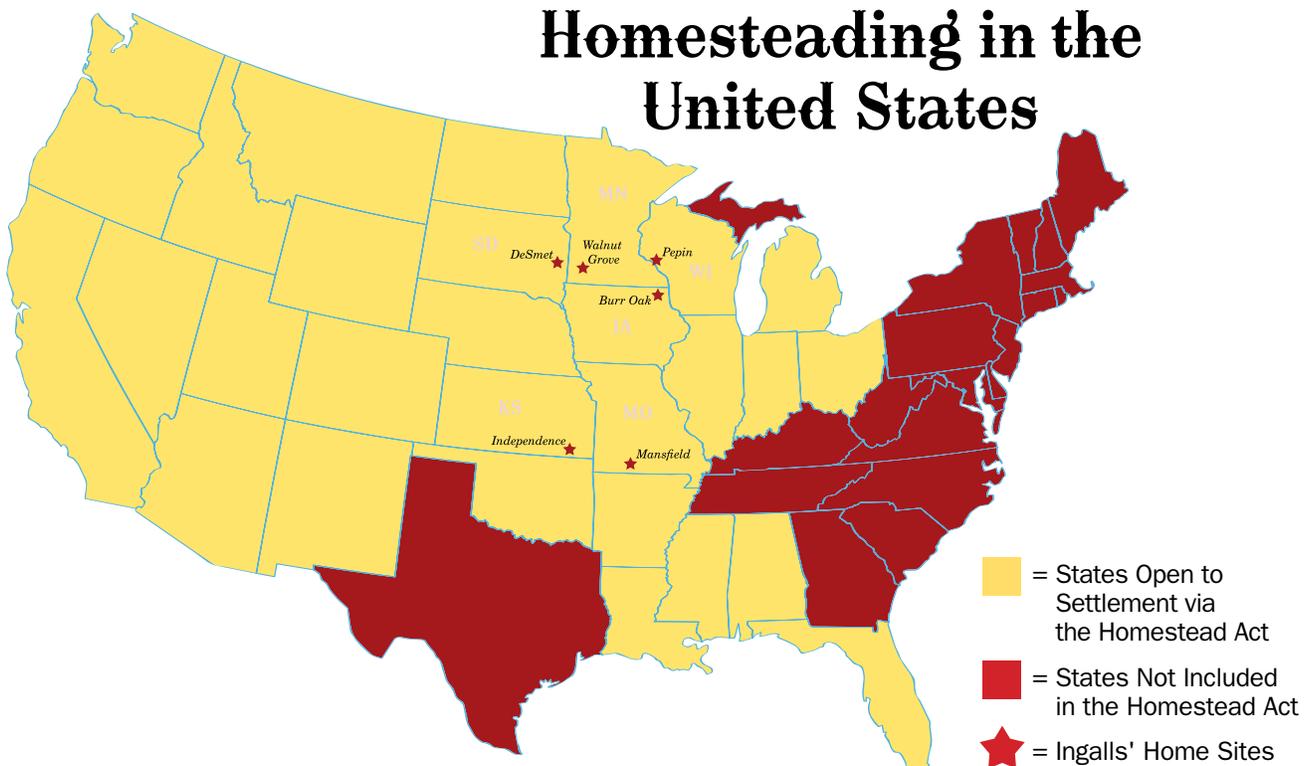
Despite the odds, thousands of settlers from all walks of life—including recently freed slaves and immigrants from across Europe and around the world—went to the frontier to meet the challenge of “proving up” a claim. Single women and African American citizens were also permitted to file homestead claims, and thousands did. Between 1862 and 1986, when homesteading ended, more than 2 million people made a “bet with Uncle Sam” and filed claims. Only 783,000 ultimately obtained the deeds for land.

Successful homesteading required determination, perseverance, resourcefulness, care-

ful planning, years of backbreaking work, and good luck. Several of the characters in Laura Ingalls Wilder's books and in *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*, including Pa Ingalls, Almanzo Wilder, Eliza Jane Wilder, and even Carrie Ingalls (as an adult) filed and held down homestead claims.

Though many homesteaders failed, the Homestead Act had an incredible and lasting impact on American life. The Act literally turned the United States into a “land of opportunity,” where almost anyone had the chance to own their home and land. The land improvement completed through the Homestead Act enabled the United States to become an agricultural superpower. The Homestead Act gave the United States its heritage of determined pioneers, scraping a life out of untamed lands, and building up farms, towns, and railroads. The Homestead Act gave Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family opportunity, and a reason to keep moving West. The Homestead Act gave us the *Little House* books, the beloved television series, and now, the musical. ♦

Homesteading in the United States



Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Plot Synopsis

ACT ONE

It is the 1880s, and the US government is opening new land for settlers in Dakota Territory. The whole country is on the move. Young LAURA INGALLS longs to move west (*Thunder*). Her father, CHARLES (“PA”), has to convince her mother, CAROLINE (“MA”), that moving west would present new opportunities. Ma is unsure about moving again and is worried about the hardships the family will undoubtedly face in settling untamed land, but she ultimately agrees to follow her and Pa’s shared dream of making a better life for their family, and the Ingalls family heads west (*Up Ahead*). Pa decides to settle near the new town of De Smet, though Laura wishes to keep on journeying (*The Prairie Moves*). When Pa travels to the Land Office to file his homestead claim, he meets a young homesteader, ALMANZO WILDER, who has decided to settle on his own (*Old Enough*). Pa returns to his family, and over several months, they build a little house on the prairie (*Make It Home*).

Laura, MARY, and CARRIE start school in De Smet, where they meet snobbish NELLIE OLESON, who looks down at Laura’s rough-and-tumble ways (*Country Girls*). Laura has a

hard time adjusting to school, and causes a major disruption in the classroom (*Rock*). All three Ingalls sisters are sent home, as Laura and her mother consider how different Laura is from Mary (*How Can You Be So Good?*).

A winter of dangerous blizzards closes in and supply trains stop running. The people of De Smet are running out of food (*Uncle Sam, Where are You?*). Almanzo Wilder and CAP GARLAND set out to find wheat to save the town (*Blizzard*). Mary, Carrie and Ma become very sick, and Pa blames himself for the risk he took in leading his family out west into such peril and hardship (*Tin Cup*). Almanzo and Cap find the wheat, but Mary grows weak and her vision begins to fail. Laura reassures her sister and vows to help her (*I’ll Be Your Eyes*).

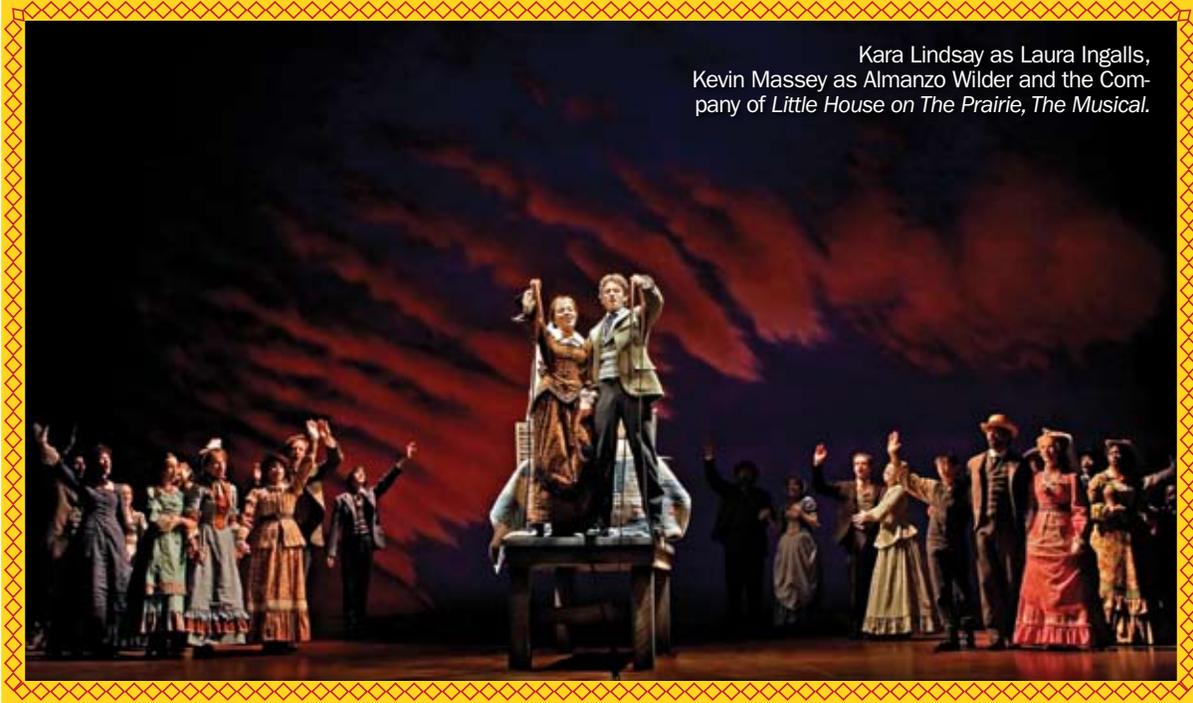
The long winter ends. Pa and Ma hope for a good crop (*Almost Wheat*).

At a Fourth of July celebration, the Ingalls sisters watch Almanzo compete in a horse race (*Go Like The Wind*). Almanzo asks Laura to go buggy riding, but when a prairie fire destroys the wheat crop, the Ingalls family is penniless. Sacrificing her own personal freedom, Laura agrees to teach at a school twelve miles away to help pay Mary’s tuition at a college for the blind (*I’ll Be Your Eyes Reprise*).



Steve Blanchard as Charles “Pa” Ingalls and Melissa Gilbert as Caroline “Ma” Ingalls

Kara Lindsay as Laura Ingalls, Kevin Massey as Almanzo Wilder and the Company of *Little House on The Prairie, The Musical*.



ACT TWO

Ma and Pa prepare to send Laura and Mary from home, in two different directions (*The Prairie Moves Reprise*). Laura starts teaching at the Brewster School, while Mary heads to college in Vinton, Iowa (*Prairie Strong*). A beleaguered MRS. BREWSTER resents having Laura stay with her, and makes life miserable. In De Smet, Nellie Oleson laments over missing Laura (*Without An Enemy*).

Laura struggles to manage her classroom, and Mary adjusts to life away from home (*How Can You Be So Good Reprise*). Almanzo surprises Laura by coming in his sleigh to take her home for weekends (*Faster*).

As weeks go by, Laura begins to make progress with her teaching, but Mrs. Brewster grows more openly despondent over her feelings of being trapped in the untamed and empty land as she must “obey” her husband (*Teach The Wind*). Fearful she may be journeying down a similar path, Laura tells a startled Almanzo she’s not interested in anything more than free rides (*Leaving*).

Laura successfully finishes the term while Mary thrives in college (*Make It Home Reprise*). When Laura returns to De Smet, she discovers that Mary has found her own way to pay for college and Almanzo is riding with Nellie Oleson. Laura doesn’t know what will make her life meaningful and happy anymore (*My Restless Heart*).

Time passes, and De Smet continues to grow and thrive (*Prairie Strong Reprise*). Laura, in spite of her fears, continues to be drawn to Almanzo while at the same time remains unhappy with her life and unsure of her future. She struggles to be the responsible grown woman she envisions she must be. Ma advises Laura to always keep her wild spirit (*Wild Child*) and Laura is finally set free. When Almanzo proposes, Laura agrees to marry him, as long as she will not have to obey him (*Faster/The Prairie Moves Reprise*).

Laura and Almanzo marry, and the Ingalls family and the people of De Smet look forward to a bright and happy future (*Go Like The Wind/Finale*). ♦

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Cast of Characters

(In order of appearance)



Kara Lindsay as Laura Ingalls



Steve Blanchard as Charles "Pa" Ingalls and Melissa Gilbert as Caroline "Ma" Ingalls



Kevin Massey as Almanzo Wilder

Laura Ingalls: Headstrong, feisty, and independent, Laura Ingalls shares her father's sense of adventure and love for life.

In real life: Laura Elizabeth Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957) became one of the most beloved children's authors of all time when, in her sixties and seventies, she wrote the *Little House* series of novels. The novels were the inspiration for a long-running television series, as well as *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*.

Charles "Pa" Ingalls: Laura's father. A hunter, trapper, carpenter, and adventurer, Pa is constantly seeking a better life for his family.

In real life: Charles Philip Ingalls (1836-1902) was born in New York State. Charles Ingalls spent much of his life moving around the American frontier looking for new opportunities and security for his family. He served as a Justice of the Peace in De Smet, and was respected as one of the town's founding citizens.

Caroline "Ma" Ingalls: Laura's mother. Gentle and caring, but strong and determined, Ma wants her daughters to have an education and lead civilized lives.

In real life: Caroline Lake Quiner Ingalls (1839-1924) was born in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. After working as a teacher, she married Charles Ingalls. She lived in De

Smet, South Dakota from 1880 until her death in 1924.

Mary Ingalls: Laura's oldest sister; sweet, patient, and well-behaved with a passion for learning, Mary goes blind after a bout of scarlet fever.

In real life: Mary Amelia Ingalls (1865-1928) went blind at age 14 in 1879 after an illness and stroke. She attended the Iowa College for the Blind, graduating in 1889. After college, she returned to De Smet, and later moved to Carrie's home in Keystone, South Dakota, where she died in 1928.

Carrie Ingalls: Laura's younger sister, who looks up to and admires Laura and Mary.

In real life: Caroline Celestia "Carrie" Ingalls (1870-1946) grew up to be a newspaper editor in Keystone, South Dakota, the town at the base of Mount Rushmore.

Mr. Boast: a friend of Pa's in De Smet, who is also filing a homestead claim near De Smet.

In real life: Robert Boast and his wife Ella were close friends of the Ingalls family. The Boasts were the second family to permanently live in what became the town of De Smet.

Almanzo Wilder: a young homesteader in De Smet, who eventually marries Laura Ingalls.

In real life: Almanzo James Wilder (1857-1949) grew up in New York State before moving west to Minnesota and South Dakota. In 1885, he married Laura Ingalls. In 1894, Laura and Almanzo moved to Mansfield, Missouri, where they lived at Rocky Ridge Farm.

A master woodworker, Almanzo carved many pieces of furniture at Rocky Ridge. His name was actually pronounced AI-MAN-zo.

Mr. Oleson: the owner of the General Store in De Smet.

In real life: William Owens and his wife Margaret ran a store in the town of Walnut Grove, Minnesota, when the Ingalls family lived there. In her books, Laura changed their last name to "Oleson."

Miss Wilder: Laura, Mary, and Carrie's schoolteacher in De Smet; Almanzo Wilder's sister.

In real life: Eliza Jane Wilder was Almanzo's bossy older sister and Laura's teacher in De Smet. She appears in Laura's books *Farmer Boy* and *Little Town on the Prairie*. Called "E.J." by her family and friends, she eventually moved to Louisiana, and became a key figure in Rose Wilder's life.

Willie Oleson: a schoolmate of the Ingalls girls; the younger brother of Nellie Oleson.

In real life: Willie Owens was Nellie Owen's younger brother. He later went blind in an accident with firecrackers; he went to a college for the blind as well.

Cap Garland: a schoolmate of the Ingalls girls and a friend of Almanzo Wilder; he and Almanzo go find wheat on the prairie during the hard winter.

In real life: Oscar Edmund Garland, known as "Cap," was one of Laura's schoolmates in De Smet. Before Almanzo began courting her, Laura had a bit of a crush on Cap. Cap Garland died in 1891 near De Smet in a farm machinery explosion.

Nellie Oleson: Laura's arch-enemy; the snooty, haughty, and manipulative daughter of a town storekeeper.

In real life: The character of Nellie Oleson is based on three of Laura's childhood classmates: Nellie Owens, Genevieve Masters, and Stella Gilbert. Nellie Owens was the daughter of a storekeeper in Walnut Grove. Genny Masters knew Laura in both Walnut Grove and De Smet, and served as the basis for Nellie in *Little Town on the Prairie* and *These Happy Golden Years*. Stella Gilbert was briefly interested in Almanzo, before Laura and Almanzo began courting.

Mary Power: one of Nellie Oleson's best friends.

In real life: Mary Power was one of Laura's best friends during her teenage years in De Smet. She married a banker, and lived across the street from Ma and Pa Ingalls for many years.

Ida: another of Nellie Oleson's best friends.

In real life: Ida Brown's real name was Ida B. Wright, and she was the adopted daughter of De Smet's Reverend Brown. Ida Brown and her beau Elmer McConnell were the witnesses at Laura and Almanzo's wedding.

Dr. Tann: a doctor who cares for Mary when she is going blind.

In real life: Dr. Tann appears in Laura's novel *Little House on the Prairie*. George A. Tann was an African American doctor who cared for the Ingalls family when they contracted malaria in Kansas.

Mrs. Loftus: a townswoman of De Smet.

In real life: Daniel Loftus was a storekeeper in De Smet. When Almanzo and Cap Garland brought the much-needed wheat to town in the long winter, Mr. Loftus paid for it... then tried to make a handsome profit! Daniel Loftus and his wife are buried in the De Smet Cemetery.

Mr. Brewster: a homesteader who hires Laura for her first teaching position.

In real life: The unpleasant "Brewster" family in *These Happy Golden Years* is based on the Bouchie family that lived twelve miles south of De Smet. Mr. Brewster was a cousin of Robert Boast.

Mrs. Lib Brewster: Mr. Brewster's unhappy wife; she is having a lot of difficulty adjusting to life on the prairie.

In real life: The unhappy Mrs. Brewster in *These Happy Golden Years* is based on Olive Bouchie. Many women on the frontier experienced severe depression from the harsh living conditions.

Blanche: Mary's good friend at college.

In real life: Mary's College for the Blind still exists and provides services to blind and visually impaired students. It is now called the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, and it is still located in Vinton, Iowa.

Clarence, Ruby, Tommy, Martha: Laura's students at the Brewster school.

In real life: Isaac, Clarence, and Fanny Ruth Bouchie were students of Laura's at the Bouchie School south of De Smet. ♦

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

From Life to Page to Stage

“All I have told is true, but it is not the whole truth.”

— Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1937

When Laura Ingalls Wilder sat down in the 1930s and 1940s to write the *Little House* books, she faced the daunting task of turning the life she had lived into a series of exciting and dramatic stories. She couldn't possibly include all of her adventures and experiences in the books. With her daughter Rose's guidance and advice, Laura rearranged the order of some events from her life, deleted others, and invented some characters, situations, and episodes to tell an engaging story. Through careful writing, editing, and revising, Laura created a version of her life that was based on actual events, but it is not the entire truth. Therefore, the *Little House* books are not true autobiographies, but novels based on actual people, places and events.

Readers of the books may be interested in some of the elements from her life Laura changed or omitted. These include:

- Laura was too little to remember much about living in Indian Territory, where *Little House on the Prairie* is set. She was only one and a half when the family moved to Kansas, and she was just over four when they returned to Wisconsin. Much of the novel was undoubtedly based on stories she heard from Ma, Pa, and Mary.
- Laura couldn't remember where the family got their drinking water in Walnut Grove. She

suspected they drank straight from the creek, but she didn't want them to seem “dirty,” so she invented a spring.

- Laura never wrote about the two years she spent in Burr Oak, Iowa, a time of extreme sadness for the Ingalls family, which included the illness and death of her baby brother.
- Though Laura's novel *The Long Winter* is about the Ingalls family battling ferocious winter storms in almost total isolation, a married couple named George and Maggie Masters actually lived with the family throughout the “hard winter.”
- Mary Ingalls received significant financial aid from the government to attend college.
- A roller skating rink opened in De Smet in 1884, and not only did Laura enjoy roller skating, she once skipped school to go!

“Of course, what one remembers most from the books is the individual stories—and, of course, one can't fit all of these into a musical (however much I may have erred on the side of trying to)!”

—Rachel Sheinkin,
Book Writer, *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*



Company of *Little House on the Prairie, The Musical*

When the creators of *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical* decided to create a stage musical based on the *Little House* books, they had to figure out a way to share Laura's life. Like Laura, they rearranged the order of some events, deleted others, and invented other events in order to tell an entertaining story.

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical, roughly covers the events of four books from the latter part of the series, from the beginning of *By the Shores of Silver Lake* to the end of *These Happy Golden Years*. Readers of the *Little House* books will notice many characters, plot developments, and dialogue taken directly from Laura's words. They will also notice some changes. These include:

- Grace Ingalls, Laura's youngest sister, does not appear in the musical.
- Much of the Ingalls family's first year in Dakota Territory, when they lived in the house belonging to the surveyors who were building the railroad, is not presented in the musical.
- In the books, Laura meets Nellie Oleson for the first time as a very little girl in Minnesota. In the musical, she meets Nellie Oleson in De Smet as a young teenager.
- In the books and in real life, Mary went blind before the long winter in De Smet. In the musical, Mary doesn't go blind until the long winter sets in. ◆

"It takes many people, a lot of time and dedication, hard work, trial and error in workshops and readings, and a bit of luck to create a new musical, many of the same qualities it took Laura Ingalls Wilder and her community to create a new life in Dakota Territory in the 1880s."

—Francesca Zambello, Director,
Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Pre-Performance Activities

1) Go over the Plot Synopsis, Cast of Characters, Laura Ingalls Wilder Biography and Glossary of Terms found in this Guide. Familiarize your students with the information found in these sections. As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between the characters in the stories and the real people they are based on.

(National Standards for Education – U.S. History: NSS.US.H. K-4.3 – The History of the United States and the People Who Contributed to its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage.)

2) Have your students read a chapter from a book in the *Little House on the Prairie* series written by Laura Ingalls Wilder to gain insight into the world they are about to see onstage. We suggest “Sent Home From School” from *Little Town on the Prairie* or “School” from *On The Banks of Plum Creek* which are chapters that are actually depicted in *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*.

(National Standards for Education - Language Arts: NL.ENG.K-12.1 - Reading for Perspective, NL.ENG.K-12.2 - Understanding the Human Experience.)

3) The Ingalls family decides to “head west” to claim land under the Homestead Act. Read over the historical information found in this Guide explaining how the Homestead Act worked. Have your students brainstorm both the benefits and challenges of heading into unchartered territory to claim land.

4) The *Little House* books take place in the 1870’s and early 1880’s. Chart the similarities and differences between that time period and modern day in terms of transportation (horse & buggy vs. cars), clothing (bonnets vs. hats), music (acoustic vs. electronic) etc.

(National Standards for Education – U.S. History: NSS.US.H. K-4.1 – Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago.)

5) The children in the show attend class in a one-room school house, which means that students of all different grades are in the same large room being taught by the same teacher. Discuss the benefits and difficulties of learning in a one-room school house from both the student and the teacher’s point of view.

6) In the musical, as well as the books, an African American doctor, Dr. Tann, provides care for the Ingalls family. Research the journeys and roles the immigrants, freed slaves, and African American citizens played in settling the West.

7) In the musical, Laura often talks about her hopes and dreams. Lead a class discussion about how the dreams of a young person in the 1880’s might be similar to the dreams of young people today.

8) Lead a class discussion on how the *Little House* books might be brought to life onstage. Ask your students how the show’s creative team might stage the building of a house, homesteaders surviving a blizzard, the planting of an untilled field, and even a horse race.

(National Standards for Education - Language Arts: NL.ENG. K-12.3 – Evaluation Strategies, NL.ENG.K-12.6 – Applying Knowledge)

9) Talk with your students about the difference between going to a live performance and seeing a movie or watching a TV show. Go over the Theatre Etiquette on page 24 to help reinforce these ideas. ◆

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Post-Performance and Extension Activities

Class Discussion/Reflection

After seeing *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*, use the following questions to lead a class discussion: How did the creators of the musical adapt the chapter from the book that you read (“Sent Home From School” or “School”) for the stage? Were they able to tell the story in an interesting way while staying true to the book? What were your favorite parts of the musical? Why? Are some of the struggles the Ingalls faced similar to those that people face today? How are they different? How are your dreams and hopes similar to the dreams of the characters in the musical? How are they different?

Further Exploration – Students familiar with the complete series of books can discuss what changes they noticed from the books to the musical. Why do you think these changes were made? What was the most memorable moment in the musical for you that is not from the books? What other stories from the *Little House* books would you like to see in a musical? Why do you think the musical’s creators chose to focus on the last four books in the series, rather than the first five?

Language Arts

Historical Novels – Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about her life in great detail, and as a result, we have a better understanding about American frontier life. Have students define the difference between fiction, non-fiction, novels, and autobiographies. Discuss which category the *Little House on the Prairie* books fall and why. What other novels have your students read that also provide a factual understanding about a specific era, person or place?

(National Standards for Education - Language Arts: NL.ENG.K-12.1 - Reading for Perspective, NL.ENG.K-12.2 - Understanding the Human Experience.)

Descriptive Writing – Have your students write a one page autobiography that gives readers a glimpse into their world. They should choose a specific period in their life to write about. For example, they could write about their first year of school, or the events of last summer. Encourage them to include details that would allow future generations to better understand the time period they lived in. Sample topics can include what they did for entertainment (sports, books they read, camp, video games), their school or home environment (the building’s design, decorations, locations), current music (entertainers, topics, style), or even the food they ate.

(National Standards for Education - Language Arts: NL-ENG.K-12.4 - Communication Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.5 - Communication Strategies, NL-ENG.K-12.12 - Applying Language Skills.)

Social Sciences

The Homestead Act – The Homestead Act of 1862 was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. Have students do a bit of research on the Act to determine why President Lincoln signed this law. What were the benefits to the country? To the American people? To the land? How did this law affect Native Americans? Discuss with your students when this law expired and why. What do your students think would happen if the law was still in existence today?

Further Exploration – Have your students imagine they are living in the 1880's and deciding whether or not to travel west and face unknown hardships to claim land. Have them make their choice and write down specific arguments to back up their decision. Divide your class into those heading west and those staying put. Lead a debate between the two sides, and afterwards, see if anyone has changed his or her mind based on the arguments heard.

(National Standards for Education – U.S. History: NSS.US.H.K-4.1 – Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago, NSS.US.H.K-4.3 – The History of the United States and the People Who Contributed to its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage, NSS-US.H.5-12.6 – Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900).

Building Homes – When the Ingalls family moved West in the 1880's, they had to build their own house in order to have a place to live. Luckily for them other community members were willing to lend a helping hand. Research what materials pioneers may have needed to build a house from scratch (i.e. lumber, land, cement, etc). What were the benefits of building your own house?

Do You Think Helping Your Neighbors Build a Home is a Thing of the Past?

Today there is Habitat for Humanity, an organization that builds new houses for families in need through the generosity of donations and volunteers. Habitat for Humanity and *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical* encompass shared messages



es about the importance of having a simple, decent home; the power of community where neighbors help neighbors; and the importance of a secure home to children as a place to dream, learn and grow. www.habitat.org

Science

Farming – Many homesteaders, including the Ingalls family, earned their living by farming. Farming is the planting, growing and harvesting of crops (plants) that can be both eaten by the family, and also sold to other families. The composition of the soil makes a big difference on the success of farming and the types of plants that can be grown in that soil. Have students bring in soil samples from their yards or collect soil samples from the schoolyard. Encourage students to explore the different samples by examining the soil through a magnifying lens, and by handling the samples and comparing the consistencies of each. Ask students to describe the various soil samples. Are the samples all alike? If they answer “no,” have students describe how they are different. Are some of the samples more like clay? Are others more like sand?

The ideal type of soil for farming is called “loam.” This is the perfect mix of soil that has both clay and sand. Smart homesteaders would check the soil of their potential homesteads to determine if it consisted of loam by using a “ribbon test.” Have your students conduct a ribbon test on their soil samples by adding water to a small clump of soil until it makes a moist ball. Next, students gently roll the ball of soil between their palms. If the soil forms a nice, long “ribbon” of soil, the sample has too much clay, and may not yield a good harvest. If the ball falls apart, it has too much sand. If the results are somewhere in between these two extremes, the soil sample is most likely loam and ideal for planting.

(National Standards for Education - Science: NS.5-8.3 – Life Science, NS.5-8.4 – Earth Science, NS.5-8.6 – Personal and Social Perspective.)

Weather – Weather played a large role in the daily life of the pioneers. How does the fact they were living on an open prairie affect the type of weather the pioneers dealt with? How would the weather conditions have been different if they were near mountains? Or the ocean? Think back to the musical and create a list of the different ways weather affected the Ingalls family and their neighbors. After each example, describe how the characters in the show dealt with the event.

Compare those weather examples with the types of weather that affect you and your community. What are the similarities in the type of weather problems you deal with and those of the homesteaders?

(National Standards for Education - Science: NS.5-8.4 – Earth Science.)

Music

Find a recording of music that was popular in America, specifically the American West, in the 1880’s to play for your students. (i.e., *Oh, Susanna*, *Camptown Races*, *Old Dan Tucker*) Play a few selections from this recording for your class. Ask them to describe how the music makes them feel. Can they tell which instruments are being played? Next have them compare it to the music they heard during the performance of the musical. Is there a similarity in style? Tempo? Feel? Are the same instruments being used?

(National Standards for Education - Fine Arts, Music: NA-M.5-8.6 – Listening to, Analyzing, and Describing Music. NA-M.5-8.9 – Understanding Music in Relation to History and Culture.)

Visual Arts

Activity Quilt – Quilting was a common part of prairie life. Quilting was not only an activity that helped pass the time during long winters, it also created a much needed resource—warm blankets, and quilters often told stories in the patterns they created in their quilts. Have your students create a quilt that memorializes their favorite things.

Begin by asking students to create a list of their favorite things, activities, or memories. Explain to students they will then create a visual representation of one of these favorite things on their own quilting square, and eventually form a quilt consisting of each of these squares.

To create these squares, give each student an 8X8 inch piece of construction paper. (Make sure to use a variety of colors for the squares.) Students can design their square using markers, crayons, paint, or even other pieces of construction paper. After the students complete their squares, have them assist you in joining them together, creating a large patchwork “quilt” depicting their favorite things.

(National Standards for Education - Fine Arts, Visual Arts: NA-VA.5-8.1 -Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes. NA-VA.5-8.3 - Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas, NA-VA.5-8.4 - Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures.)

Texture Collage By Feel – Students should gather lots of different craft items with a variety of textures and shapes, like macaroni, fabric, paper, string, leaves, flowers, etc. Pair up your students and have each partnered pair choose one person to be blindfolded. Have the blindfolded person feel the collected craft items, and choose those they would like to use. Next, while still blindfolded, have the student glue the material to craft paper based on how it feels versus how they think it will look. The seeing person can help guide the placement of items, while making sure glue doesn’t get all over the place. When your project is done, change places and create another art project. Have students display their work proudly in the classroom for other people to not only look at but to feel.

(National Standards for Education - Fine Arts, Visual Arts: NA-VA.5-8.1 -Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes. NA-VA.5-8.3 - Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas.)

2009 is the 80th Anniversary of The Seeing Eye,

the oldest existing dog guide institute in the world. Located in Morristown, New Jersey, The Seeing Eye serves applicants from all over the United States and Canada. Check them out at www.seeingeye.org for more information.

While Mary Ingalls did not have access to a guide dog in the 1880’s, she did attend the Iowa School for the Blind and was able to attain some independence. Increased services for the blind over the past century such as The Seeing Eye encourage a continued spirit of independence and courage to overcome adversity. It is also very important to continue to raise awareness of blind services and teach about respect and etiquette towards the blind.



Performing Arts: Make Your Own Musical

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical is based on the stories and characters from the series of books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Encourage your students to write their own adaptations (scenes and songs) of one of the chapters (“Sent Home From School” from *Little Town on the Prairie* or “School” from *On the Banks of Plum Creek*) they read before seeing the show.

Exploring a Scene

Begin the process by defining character, action, and dialogue. These are the three main elements needed to begin their adaptation. The characters are the people in the scene, the action is what happens during the scene and the dialogue is what the characters say, also known as “lines.”

Partner up your students and have each choose a character from the scene. (If your scene has more than two characters, add additional students to each group.) Students then work together to improvise their scene keeping in mind the characters, action, and dialogue they identified earlier. Be sure each scene has a beginning, middle, and end. Encourage them to continue improvising the scene until they are comfortable enough to share it in front of the class.

Further Exploration – Have your students choose a section from one of the *Little House* books with at least two characters to adapt into another scene following the same process.

(National Standards for Education – Fine Arts, Theatre: NA-T.5-8.1 - Script Writing by the Creation of Improvisations based on Literature and History, NA-T.5.8.2 – Acting by Developing Basic Acting Skills to Portray Characters who Interact in Improvised Scenes, NA-T.5-8.5 – Researching by using Cultural and Historical Information to support Improvised and Scripted Scenes.

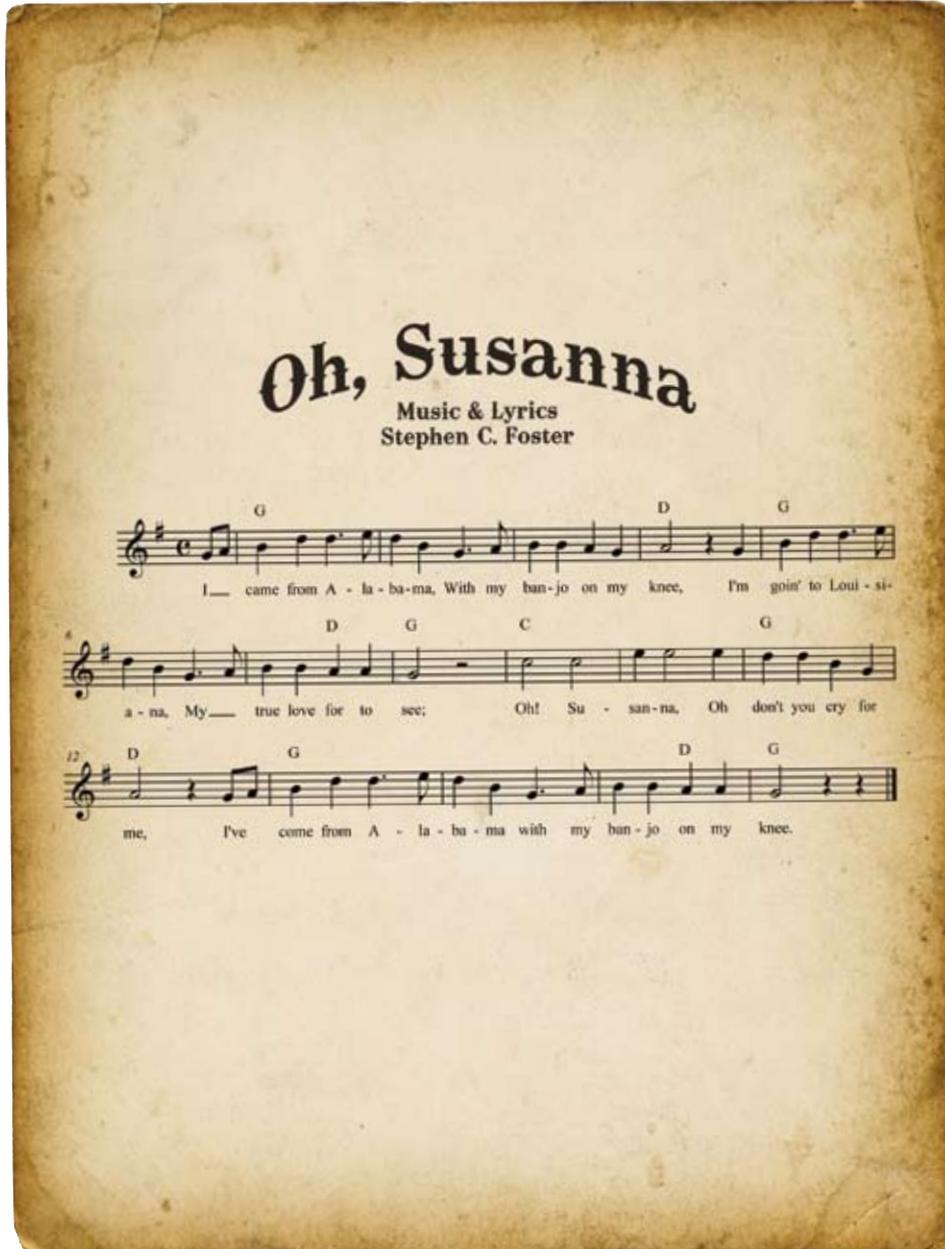
Language Arts Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.4 – Communication Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.5 – Communication Strategies, NL-ENG.K-12.12 – Applying Language Skills.)

Writing a Song

Lead a class discussion about why characters break into songs in musicals. One reason is to show the passage of time. Another reason is that the emotions the characters are experiencing are so strong the characters can no longer just speak. It doesn’t matter whether the emotion is extreme joy, gut-wrenching sorrow, or the feeling of love—the emotion is too great for spoken words. Regardless of the reason, every song is a part of the storytelling.

Have your students write their own song expressing their hopes and dreams for their future. They should begin by brainstorming words and images that convey these views and the emotions that accompany them. Then they should choose a familiar song with a simple melody and write new lyrics that express their ideas. For instance, they could use “Oh Susanna,” “Pop Goes the Weasel,” or “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” Once they have completed the lyrics, they can share their new songs with their classmates.

Further Exploration – Have your students write a new song for their own musical adaptation of the *Little House* books. Students can write a song for a character from a chapter they previously read, or identify a new passage themselves, that has a character dealing with strong emotions. For this song, have the students use the music from a well-known song from the *Little House* time period such as “Oh Susannah” or “America the Beautiful.” Students can share their lyrics with the rest of the class by singing or speaking.

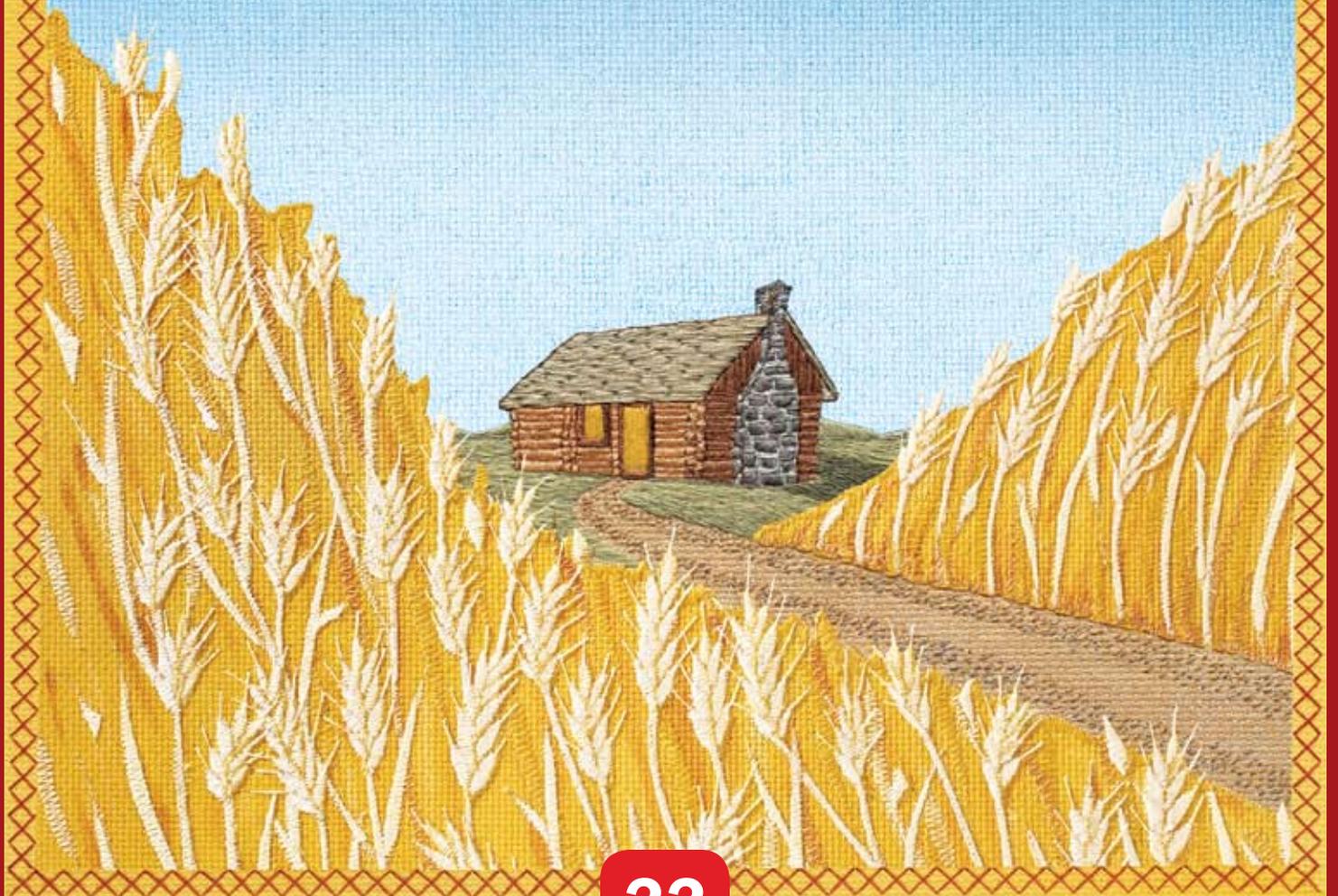


(National Standards for Education - Fine Arts, Music: NA-M.5-8.4 – Composing and Arranging Music within Specified Guidelines, NA-M.5-8.6 – Listening to, Analyzing, and Describing Music, NA-M.5-8.8 – Understanding Relationships between Music and the Other Arts, NA-M.5-8.9 – Understanding Music in Relation to History and Culture.)

Language Arts Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.4 – Communication Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.5 – Communication Strategies, NL-ENG.K-12.12 – Applying Language Skills.)

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

**FOR
KIDS**



Little House on the Prairie, the Musical

Introduction

Little House on the Prairie, the Musical is an engaging live stage adaptation of the much loved books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder and first published 75 years ago. The following pages contain information and activities specifically designed for young people to encourage exploration of both the musical and the United States in the 1880's.

A Brief Synopsis

The musical tells of the Ingalls family's journey westward to the settlement of De Smet in Dakota Territory. We follow them through the hardships of winter, the joys of learning and the excitement of settling down on a new land. The musical brings to life the importance of family and the trials young people face growing up and learning to become adults while staying true to their hopes and values.



Kara Lindsay as Laura Ingalls
and Kevin Massey as Almanzo Wilder

Theatre Etiquette



- The theatre is a special place and should be treated like other special places like a museum, a place of faith, or your grandmother's dining room during a special meal.
- Make sure to go to the bathroom before the show so you won't have to get up in the middle of the performance and miss something.
- Don't be afraid if the lights go out. It's totally normal, and they'll come back on very soon. Usually, if the lights go out it means the show is starting or something *very special* is happening onstage.
- Remember in the theatre, the show you are seeing is happening live, unlike a movie or a TV show. Those are real people on the stage, *performing just for you*, and they can hear you. *But, you may clap* when you are really enjoying the show and *laugh* when you think things are funny. Don't try to talk to the actors or to the people sitting with you. It can be disturbing to both the performers and the rest of the audience.
- No eating or drinking in the theatre. Sorry.
- Never chew gum in the theatre and *never ever* place used gum anywhere other than a garbage can.
- Keep your feet off the seat cushions and never kick the back of the seat in front of you; it's not nice and it is distracting to other people.
- No taking pictures, talking on the phone, or texting during the show. Cell phones and cameras are distracting to the actors.
- The theatre is super-duper fun. Enjoy the show, clap loudly, and if the show is really, *really good*, stand up at the end while you clap. That's called a "standing ovation" and it means the show was really good!

Behind the Scenes

Below is a chart that illustrates how a story goes from a writer's imagination to the stage! Look at how many people it takes to put on a show!

PRODUCER – This person hires all the people involved in creating a successful show. He or she is in charge of every aspect of the production including all the people listed here as well as raising all the money to put on the show. The big, big boss.

WRITERS – The people who think up the story for the show and put in writing all of the words, songs and music known as book writers, lyricists, and composers.

DIRECTOR – The person who oversees the artistic vision for the show, and works with the other creative team members and actors to bring the show to life onstage.

CHOREOGRAPHER – The individual who creates and teaches the dances.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR – This person teaches the music to the actors, and often conducts the orchestra.

DESIGNERS – These folks create the costumes, scenery, lights and sound.

PERFORMERS – The actors, singers, and dancers in a show.

STAGE MANAGER – This person oversees the actors and crew for the production each day.

TECHNICIANS – The people who build the sets, hang the lights, and find or build the costumes and props imagined by the designers.

CREW – The people who work backstage during a performance to keep it running smoothly.

MARKETING – The people who design posters and create advertisements letting everyone know when the show is happening and how to buy tickets.

BOX OFFICE – The team of people who sell the tickets for the show.

AUDIENCE – Everyone who comes to see the show (you!).

Cool Words from the Show

1) ACRE

A plot of land, about the size of a football field. Homestead claims on the prairie were 160 acres.

2) BEAU

Pronounced “bōw,” it means a boyfriend or sweetheart.

3) BISON

Another name for American buffalo.

4) BLIZZARD

A severe winter storm of low temperatures, heavy snow, and strong wind that blows the snow around making it difficult to see, even a few feet in front of you.

5) BRAILLE

A printed alphabet of raised dots, which

enables people who are blind to read with their sense of touch.

6) BUGGY

A small, light carriage usually pulled by a single horse.

7) CALICO

A rough cotton fabric, often printed with a bright pattern.

8) CIPHER

To figure numbers or do mathematics.

9) CLAIM

A section of undeveloped land “on sale” from the government to American citizens. If a homesteader lived on a claim for five years and improved it, the claim became his or her property.

10) CUTTER

A lightweight, open sleigh, pulled by one or two horses and used for winter travel during the 19th century.

11) DAKOTA TERRITORY

The land that later became the states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

12) THRESHING WHEAT

To beat the seeds out of a grain of wheat.

13) HARVESTER

A farm machine that harvests, threshes, and cleans grain.

14) HAYSTICK

Pieces of cut hay twisted into sticks to provide heating fuel for a wood stove.

15) LAND OFFICE

A division of the federal government that oversaw the surveying, homesteading, and sale of public land in the American west.

16) SCARLET FEVER

A disease featuring fever, rash, and sore throat. Today, it is easily treated with antibiotics. In the 19th century, it could be deadly.

17) SHANTY

Small, shed-like homes hastily built by homesteaders on their claims.

18) SLATE & SLATE PENCIL

A slate is a small, personal blackboard about the size of a license plate used by 19th century schoolchildren. A slate pencil was the shape of school chalk today, and could be made of chalk, clay, or soapstone.

19) SOD

The surface layer of the ground, containing grass and its roots.

20) SUNBONNET

Hats that protected the wearer's face from sunlight and blowing dust, which had a brim or hood that stuck out as much as eight inches from the wearer's face.

“The use of words in itself is an interesting study. You will hardly believe the difference one word rather than another will make until you begin to hunt for a word with the right shade of meaning... have you ever thought that words have color? The only stupid thing about words is the spelling of them.”

—Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1940s

Some Cool Facts about Little House on the Prairie

- ◆ Laura's favorite childhood doll was named "Roxy," not "Charlotte," as she is named in the *Little House* books.
- ◆ Laura and Almanzo named their daughter Rose after the wild prairie roses.
- ◆ Carrie Ingalls' husband David Swanzey is believed to have named Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.
- ◆ Over 60 million copies of the *Little House* books have been sold around the world, in over 33 different languages.
- ◆ After World War II, the US Government distributed copies of the *Little House* books in Japan and Germany to help develop understanding and tolerance of Americans.
- ◆ When Laura's sister Grace was small, she did not know what trees were, since she had spent most of her life on the tree-less prairies of the Dakota Territory. Laura painted Grace a picture to show her what a forest looked like.

A Poem Written by Laura Ingalls Wilder

*"We remember not the summer,
For it was long ago.
We remember not the summer,
In this whirling blinding snow.
I will leave this frozen region.
I will travel farther south.
If you say one word against it,
I will hit you in the mouth."*

*—Laura Ingalls Wilder,
during the "long winter" of 1880-81*



The Company of *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*

Community Building

Throughout the *Little House* books and *Little House on the Prairie, the Musical*, support from the community helps the Ingalls family through challenging times. For example, the community comes together to help build homes, schools and town buildings. Today there are many great charities and organizations that support underprivileged people, including an organization known as **Habitat for Humanity** (www.habitat.org). Through the generosity of donations and volunteerism, this organization assists in building new houses for families in need. Find out which local charities in your area are looking for volunteers and sign up to help! Try to convince your family and friends to sign up with you and make it a true community event.



Make Your Own Butter

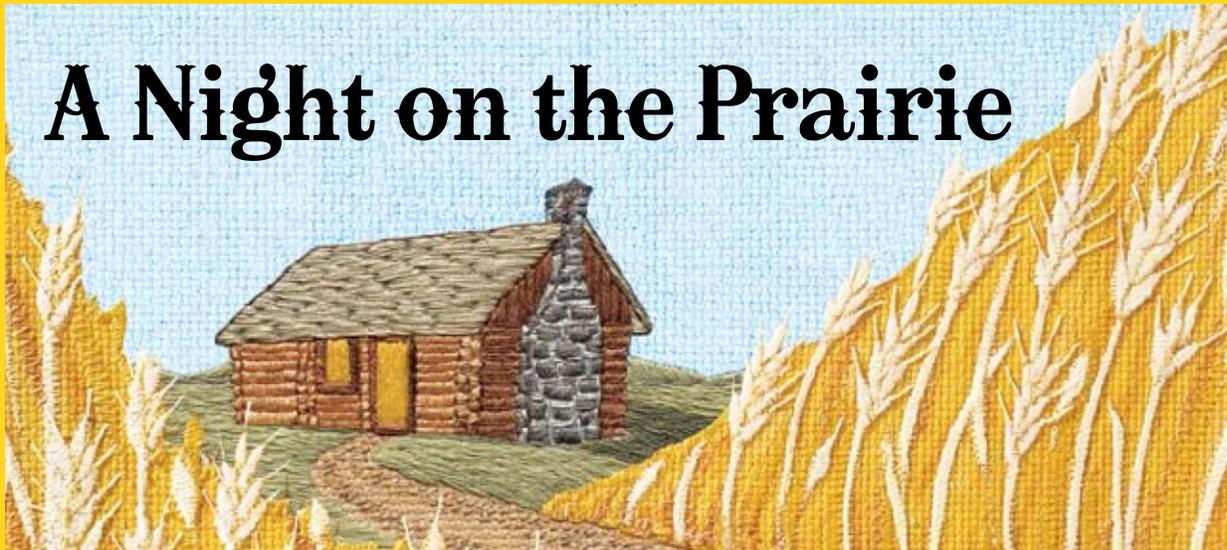
Materials:

- 1 baby food jar (or other small glass jar with a lid)
- 1 tablespoon of cream

Directions:

- Put the cream in the baby food jar and place the lid on tight.
- Shake the jar for about 15-20 minutes and a lump of butter will form! (You might want a friend around to help when your arm gets tired.)
- Spread the butter on a piece of bread and enjoy.

A Night on the Prairie



Convince your family and friends to spend a night on the prairie with you in your house. Begin by turning off all the lights and electronic objects in your house. Spend the evening telling stories, singing songs, talking or playing simple games.

See for Someone Else



When Mary Ingalls becomes blind due to an illness, Laura promises to “be her eyes.” Find a partner and practice “being each others’ eyes.” Decide who will be the guide and who will be blindfolded. If you are the guide, you should use the information listed in the “Awareness” section on the next page when leading your partner around. As the guide, you need to use descriptive words to relay what you are seeing. If you’re blindfolded, make sure you feel comfortable with how you are being led. After a short period of time, switch roles.

Awareness

The Ingalls family had to learn how to adapt to Mary's blindness. Here are a few important items to note in case you meet someone who is blind or visually impaired.

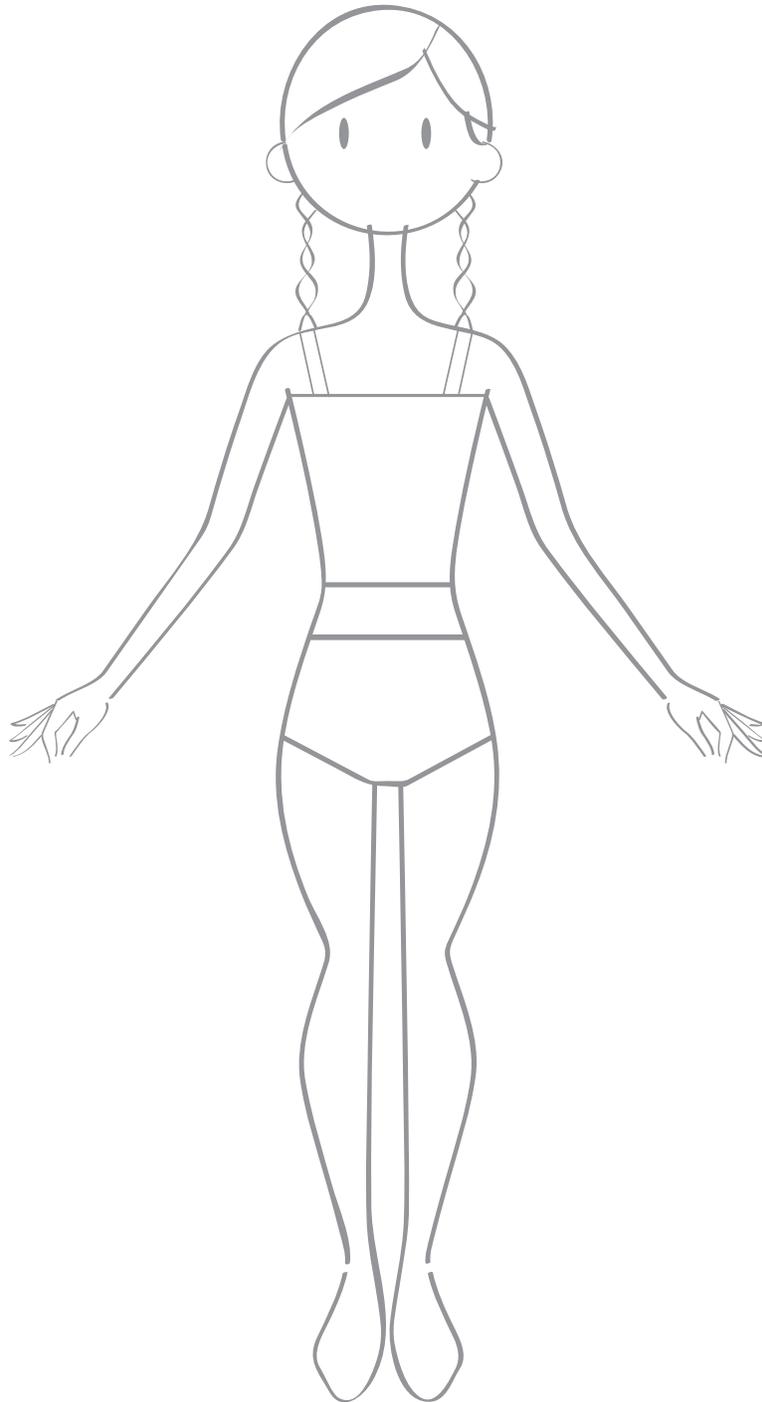
- ◆ When speaking about a person with a disability, refer to the person first and then to the disability. For example, say "people who are blind" rather than "blind people."
- ◆ Greet people who are blind right away when they enter a room. Make sure to use your name if they aren't familiar with your voice.
- ◆ Speak directly to people who are blind or visually impaired, not through their friend or guide.
- ◆ Make sure to address people who are totally blind by name when possible. This is especially important in crowded areas.
- ◆ Do your best to refer to specific people or items by name instead of general terms like "you", or "they", or "this."
- ◆ Offer to guide people who are blind or visually impaired by asking if they would like assistance. They won't always need assistance so respect their desires.
- ◆ For people who ask for assistance, allow them to take your arm just above the elbow when your arm is bent and walk ahead of the person you are guiding.
- ◆ Never grab a person who is blind or visually impaired by the arm and push him/her forward.
- ◆ Never call or whistle to a guide dog or touch the dog's harness or leash. Guide dogs are working animals.

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the oldest existing dog guide institute in the world. Located in Morristown, New Jersey, the Seeing Eye Institute serves applicants from all over the United States and Canada. Check them out at www.seeingeye.org for more information. There was no professional guide dog training in the 1880's. Increased services for the blind over the past century has encouraged a continued spirit of independence and courage to overcome adversity.

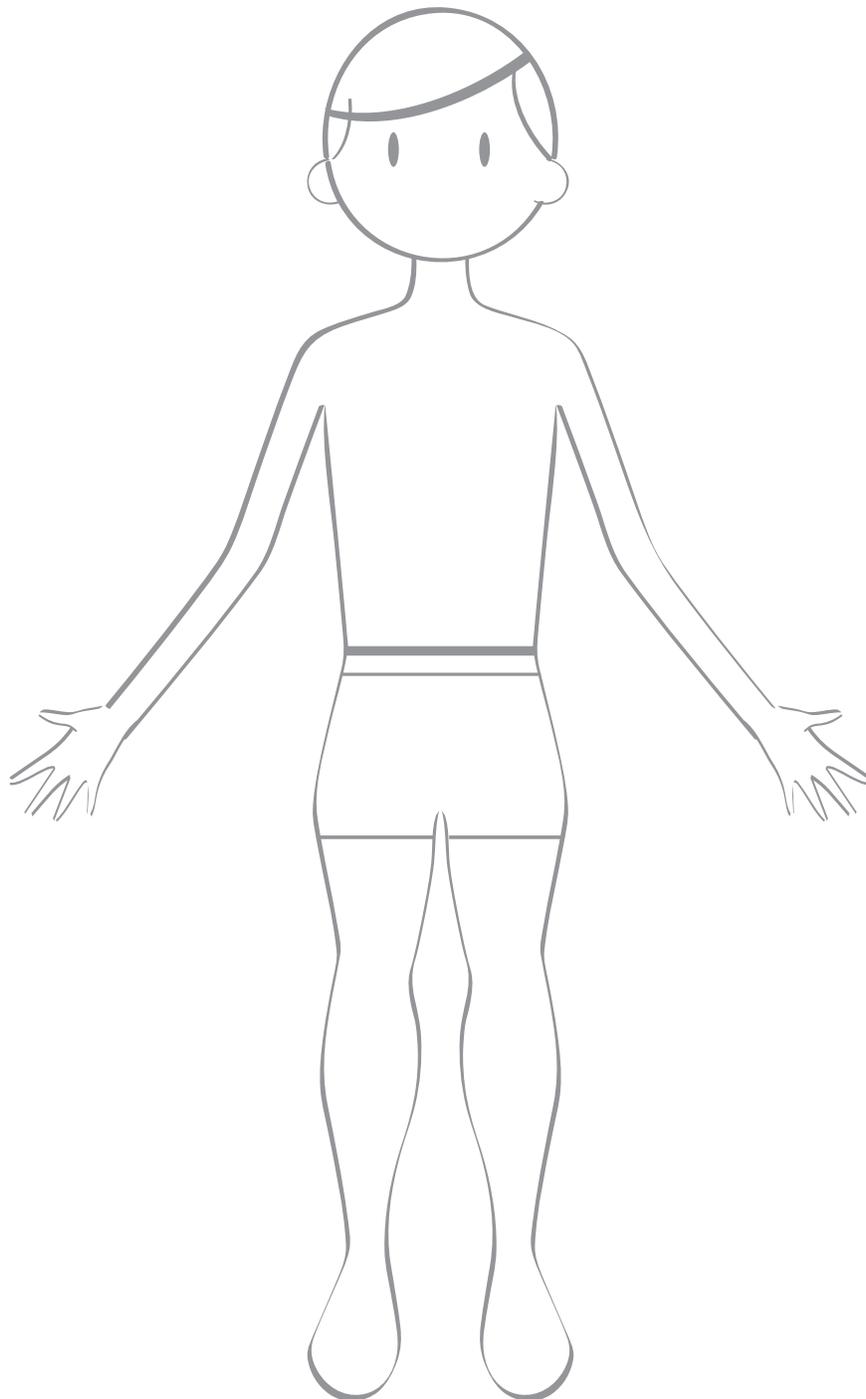


Design Your Own **Costumes**



ACTIVITIES

In order to help establish differences between characters, costume designers use color, fabric, and style of clothing. For example, you can tell many different things about Laura and Nellie by the way they are dressed in the show. Use markers, crayons, or colored pencils to design your own costumes for Laura and Almanzo on the bodies below.



Write About the World Around You

Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote great descriptions of the world she lived in. This is one of the reasons we know so much about what life was like for people in the 1880's. For example in "The West Begins" chapter in *By the Shore of Silver Lake* she wrote, "Laura saw old Indian trails and buffalo paths worn deep in the ground and now grassed over. She saw strange large depressions, straight-sided and flat-bottom, that had been buffalo wallows, where now the grass was growing." Follow Laura's example and write a descriptive paragraph about the world around you.





Create Your Own *Little House on the Prairie* Musical



You can create your own musical version of one of the *Little House on the Prairie* stories for your family and friends. Here is a step-by-step guide to creating your own musical in your living room or backyard.

- 1) Ask your friends to help you put on a show. Make sure you get permission from an adult to turn the backyard or family room into a stage. Assign everyone his or her job for the production. Look at the “Behind The Scenes” section for a list of jobs.
- 2) Select a section or theme from the *Little House* series for your musical. Write an outline for your musical, identifying the characters, the setting, and the storyline (the action that will take place). Make sure the storyline has a beginning, middle, and an end. For example, Laura and her sisters go to school, Laura gets into an argument with the teacher, the sisters are all kicked out of school.
- 3) Work in small groups and make up scenes based on the story outline to begin creating specific dialogue. Ask someone to write down the dialogue.
- 4) Identify where you want a song in your show. Find a song with a simple melody that fits into your theme. For instance, choose a sad, slow melody if you want to write a sad song and choose a happy, up-beat melody if you want to depict a happier emotion. Write new lyrics for the song to help tell your story.
- 5) Have the Director assign roles.
- 6) Have the Musical Director teach everyone the song they will be singing in the show as well as any dances. Then have the Director start working with the actors on their *blocking*. (Blocking is where the characters move on the stage).
- 7) Have a couple of *run-throughs* with any simple costumes or props you will use for the show.
- 8) Invite your family and friends to see your musical!

Bibliography

For Further Reading, Viewing, and Exploration

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Little House on the Prairie: Special Edition Movie Boxed Set. The final three *Little House* movies, including the “explosive” series finale. DVD. Performers Michael Landon, Karen Grassle, Melissa Gilbert, Victor French. Lionsgate, 2006.

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WEB SITES, BLOGS, AND ONLINE RESOURCES

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<http://littlehousethemusical.com/>

The *Little House* Books: Official Web Site
<http://www.littlehousebooks.com/>

The Almanzo Wilder Home (Burke, NY)
<http://www.almanzowilderfarm.com/>

The Ingalls Homestead, De Smet, South Dakota
<http://www.ingallshomestead.com/>

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<http://www.liwfrontiergirl.com/>

Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum, Mansfield, Missouri
<http://www.lauraingallswilderhome.com/>

Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society, De Smet, South Dakota
<http://www.liwms.com/>

Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Walnut Grove, Minnesota
<http://www.walnutgrove.org/>

Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum, Burr Oak, Iowa
<http://www.lauraingallswilder.us/>

The Laura Ingalls Wilder/Rose Wilder Lane Collection at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library
<http://hoover.archives.gov/LIW/>

Little House on the Prairie (Homesite South of Independence, Kansas)
<http://www.littlehouseontheprairie.com/>

Pepin, Wisconsin (Laura Ingalls Wilder birthplace)
<http://www.pepinwisconsin.com/>

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