



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Biography Page Count: 16 Word Count: 1,077

Book Summary

"Home is the nicest word there is." These are the words of pioneer and renowned *Little House* author Laura Ingalls Wilder. From the vast Kansas prairie to the cold Dakota Territory, Laura had many homes throughout her youth. It was only late in her life that she began to share her childhood memories through a series of unforgettable books. Students will enjoy learning about the life and adventures of Laura Ingalls Wilder in this engaging and detailed text. Book and lesson are also available at Levels V and Y.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Visualize

Objectives

- Visualize to understand text
- Sequence events in the text
- Recognize and use adjectives
- Place words in alphabetical order

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Pioneer's Life* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Dictionaries
- Map of the United States
- Visualize, sequence events, adjectives, alphabetical order worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on an interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if the books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

- Content words:
 Story critical: **hardship** (n.), **homestead** (n.), **income** (n.), **pioneers** (n.), **prairie** (n.), **publisher** (n.)
 Enrichment: **reciting** (v.), **stroke** (n.), **vivid** (adj.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the name *Laura Ingalls Wilder* on the board. Explain to students this is the name of a well-known American author. Write the following on the board: *Little House in the Big Woods* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Explain to students these are the titles of two famous books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. If possible, show students a copy of each of the books.
- Ask students if they have ever heard of Laura Ingalls Wilder or of any of her books. Have students share their prior knowledge with the class.

- Show students a map of the United States. Explain to students that in the 1800s there were very few people living in the western part of the United States. Point out that some brave people and families made their way out West to make a life for themselves. Explain that the Ingalls family was one such group of people, and the books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder are about these years of moving and adventure.
- Write the word *pioneers* on the board. Read it aloud with students. Ask students what they know about pioneers. Explain to students that Laura and her family were pioneers who moved often in search of homes in distant lands. Explain that pioneers had to carry everything they would need with them as they traveled and that it was a very hard life. Have students share ideas about what would make pioneer life difficult (illness, lack of food, weather, and so on).

Book Walk

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book and author's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Visualize**

- Explain to students that effective readers often visualize, or create pictures in their mind, while reading. Readers visualize on the basis of the words used in the text and what they already know about the topic. Stopping often to visualize helps readers understand and remember what they read.
- Read page 5 and model how to visualize.
Think-aloud: When I read a book, I pause often to make pictures in my mind of what I have just read. Even if there is a photo or an illustration, it is still helpful to create my own picture in my mind because I can use what I already know to make an image. Laura Ingalls Wilder moved a lot as a young girl, so visualizing will help me to remember all of the different places she lived. As I read page 5, I stopped to visualize the Kansas prairie. The author describes Laura seeing the insects and listening to the birds singing in waving grass. I pictured Laura as a little girl walking through tall grass on a warm day as the sun is setting. I envisioned very flat land and a large sky. I imagined the birds flying overhead and calling out to one another as Laura looks up at them. I thought about all the insects that live in the grasses and the sounds they make. I tried to imagine the sound of the grass moving in a gentle wind. Even though there is an illustration on page 5, when I create my own image from the text it helps me remember what I have read.
- Read page 6 aloud to students. Invite them to visualize as you read the page aloud. Introduce and explain the [visualize worksheet](#). Have students draw what they visualized from page 6 on the worksheet. Invite students to share their drawings and discuss how their visualization helped them remember the text.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Sequence events**

- Review or explain that knowing the order in which the events happen in a text is important for understanding the story. Explain to students that the order in which events occur is called the *sequence of events*. Point out that when discussing the sequence of events, there are often words that signal the sequence of events such as *first*, *next*, *then*, *after*, *before*, *last*, and so on. Write these words on the board and ask students to share other examples of signal words that may appear in the text.
- Explain that the sequence of information in a nonfiction book is important. In this book, the sequence of events helps us understand the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Using the illustrations and photographs also helps us remember the sequence of events in a text.

- Model using signal words to describe the sequence of events in your morning routine.
Think-aloud: I know my mornings usually follow a pattern, or sequence of events. First, I wake up and turn my alarm clock off. Then, I take a shower and get dressed. Next, I make the coffee and pack my lunch. After that, I cook breakfast and read the newspaper while I eat. Lastly, I gather up everything I will need for the day, get into the car, and drive to work.
- Ask students to share their morning routine with a partner. After students have shared, ask them to recall what signal words their partner used to tell the sequence of his or her morning routine.
- Explain to students this book follows a sequence, or tells about events in the order in which they happened, and that they will be using a graphic organizer later to help them recall the sequence of events in the text.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on large pieces of paper and hang them up around the classroom: *hardship, homestead, prairie, income, publisher*. Read each word aloud with students.
- Place students in small groups and assign each group to a word. Have them discuss what they know about the meaning of the word. Then, have students write a definition for the word on the basis of prior knowledge. Rotate the groups until each group has visited each word.
- Review each word and the information about the word that students wrote on the paper. Create a class definition on the basis of students' prior knowledge and write it on the board.
- Explain to students that sometimes they will not find any context clues that define an unfamiliar word. Review with them how to locate a word and its definition in the dictionary. Remind them to look at parts of the word with which they may be familiar to help define the larger word.
- Have a volunteer read the definition for each word. Compare students' definitions with the dictionary definition.
- Invite students to locate the glossary on page 16. Have them compare the dictionary definitions with the glossary definitions. Ask students to compare and contrast the elements of a glossary and a dictionary (the glossary lists the page number on which the vocabulary word is found in the text; the dictionary gives pronunciation, parts of speech, and so on).

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out about the life of author Laura Ingalls Wilder. Remind them to pause after every few pages to visualize the most important information.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 8. Encourage those who finish early to go back and reread.
- Model visualizing.
Think-aloud: After I read pages 3 through 8, I paused to visualize. On page 7, I learned Laura's father moved the family back to Minnesota. I read that Pa built a house out of wood and planted wheat near the house. I visualized Pa building the house using large pieces of wood and a hammer. I imagined him planting rows of wheat in the dark, rich soil. I also read on page 7 that grasshoppers arrived in swarms as big as thunderclouds and ate all the family's wheat, leaving the family poor and without food. I imagined what a swarm of grasshoppers as big as a thundercloud would look like and sound like. I pictured Laura's family watching as the grasshoppers ate the fields of wheat. I will draw a picture of what I visualized when I read about the grasshoppers destroying the crop.
- Have students choose one image they visualized while reading pages 3 through 8 and draw it on the visualize worksheet. Invite them to share their drawings and captions with the class. Explain to students that each person's visualization will be different. Point out there is no wrong way to visualize as long as it is supported by the text.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Pioneer's Life

- Write the following events on the board: *Laura Ingalls Wilder was born on February 7, 1867. Pioneers often traveled in covered wagons. Pa missed the open space of the prairies. The Ingalls family moved to the Kansas prairie. The happiest days of Laura's childhood were in Wisconsin. When Laura was seven, the family moved to Minnesota, where they fell on hard times. In 1897 Mary had a stroke and lost her vision. Grasshoppers ate the entire crop of wheat.*
- Discuss and circle the events that are the most important to correctly tell the events of Laura's life. (*Laura Ingalls Wilder was born on February 7, 1867. The Ingalls family moved to the Kansas prairie. The happiest days of Laura's childhood were in Wisconsin. When Laura was seven, the family moved to Minnesota, where they fell on hard times.*)
- Ask students to explain what they have learned so far about the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Review the circled events on the board. Point out that the other information includes details that make the text interesting but is not crucial in understanding the sequence of events in Laura's life.
- Introduce and explain the [sequence events worksheet](#). Have students write the circled events in order on their worksheet. Discuss the correct order and allow students time to make corrections on the worksheet as necessary.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 12. Remind them to pause while reading to visualize the information in the text. Ask students to draw what they visualized on their visualize worksheet. Invite students to share their visualizations.
- Ask students to write additional important events in correct order on the sequence events worksheet. Discuss the important events as a class and write them on the board in order. (*The Ingalls family moved to the Dakota Territory. Laura took a job away from home as a teacher. Laura married Almanzo Wilder.*) Allow students time to make corrections on the worksheet.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Encourage them to continue to visualize as they read the rest of the book. Remind them to continue to think about the important events of Laura's life as they read.



Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce that pausing to visualize while reading helps readers remember and understand the text.
- **Think-aloud:** *As I read pages 13 through 15, I paused often to visualize the information I was reading in the text. On page 14, I learned that Laura would often stay up all night writing at her desk. I imagined Laura sitting with a pen in her hand and paper in front of her as she scribbled away. I visualized the stack of paper getting bigger and bigger as she continued to write until the book was complete. On page 15, I read that Laura's books were immediately successful and many of her readers wrote her letters asking for more stories. Laura's mailbox was overflowing with letters. I visualized Laura walking down her lane at Rocky Ridge and opening her mailbox that was stuffed full of letters. I imaged Laura sitting at her desk and reading and responding to each letter.*
- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the visualize worksheet. If time allows, have them share their illustrations.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Review the sequence of events students wrote on their worksheet using signal words such as *first, next, then, after, finally*, and so on. Be sure that students have recorded the sequence of events using their own words.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Pioneer's Life

- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the sequence events worksheet. If time allows, have them share what they wrote in the remaining boxes of their worksheet.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about the life of author Laura Ingalls Wilder. Laura's books were about her childhood as an early pioneer, a time without cars, electricity, and radio. To Laura's surprise the books were an immediate hit. Why do you think her books were so popular with young readers?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives

- Review or explain that *adjectives* are words that describe nouns or pronouns. An adjective tells *which one, how many, or what kind*.
- Have students turn to page 5 and locate the adjective that describes the horizon (*wide*). Have students explain if the adjective *wide* describes which one, how many, or what kind (*what kind*).
- ✍ Have students turn to page 6 and circle the adjectives that describe the woods (*big, dark, wild, mysterious*). Have students explain if each adjective describes which one, how many, or what kind.
- ✍ **Check for understanding:** Have students work in pairs to reread the section "Hard Times" and circle all of the adjectives. Have students underline the noun that each adjective describes. Have students share their findings with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [adjectives worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Review or explain the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order. Remind students that if the first letters of two words are the same, they must compare the next two letters instead.
- Write the words *pioneer* and *homestead* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order (*homestead*) and why (because *h* comes before *p* in the alphabet).
- Write the words *homestead* and *hardship* on the board. Point out these words begin with the same letter (*h*). Ask a volunteer to tell which word would appear first in alphabetical order and to explain why (*hardship* because the second letter in *hardship* comes before the second letter in the word *homestead*).
- Write the words *publish* and *publishing* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order (*publish*) and why. Point out that all the letters in *publish* and *publishing* are the same until the final letters *ing* in the word *publishing*. Explain that because there are no other letters at the end of *publish*, it comes first in alphabetical order.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the words *pioneer, prairie, prairies, income, and publish* on the board. Have students write the words in alphabetical order and explain their rationale on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their answers aloud.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [alphabetical order worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after they are finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students demonstrate how to pause and visualize while reading.

Extend the Reading

Writing and Community Connection

Invite a local author to visit the class and discuss the publishing process. Have students prepare questions to ask the guest speaker. Have students think about the events of their own lives that might be interesting to a reader. Have students brainstorm to generate a list of ideas and engage in the writing and publishing process. Have students create a rough draft of a story based on an event from their lives. Discuss, review, and have students engage in the peer-editing process. Have students create a final copy of their story with a front and back cover and illustrations. Create a publishing area of the room where all of the students' books will be available for other classmates to view.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on writing.

Social Studies Connection

Discuss the establishment of the West in the United States. Explain that the settling of the West affected many groups of people including the pioneers and the Native Americans. Discuss with students that the books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder help explain what the experience was like for some pioneers. Have students discuss what it might have been like for the Native Americans when people started to move onto their land. Provide Internet and text resources for students to complete research about the changes in the West during this time. Invite students to choose to conduct their research through the eyes of a pioneer or through the eyes of a Native American. Have students compile their research into a brief report to share with the class. Once all students have shared their findings, discuss how the experience for the pioneers and the Native Americans during this time was similar and how it was different.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently use the strategy of visualizing to comprehend the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- understand and accurately identify a sequence of events in text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- correctly identify adjectives and the nouns they describe in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- accurately place words in alphabetical order during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)