



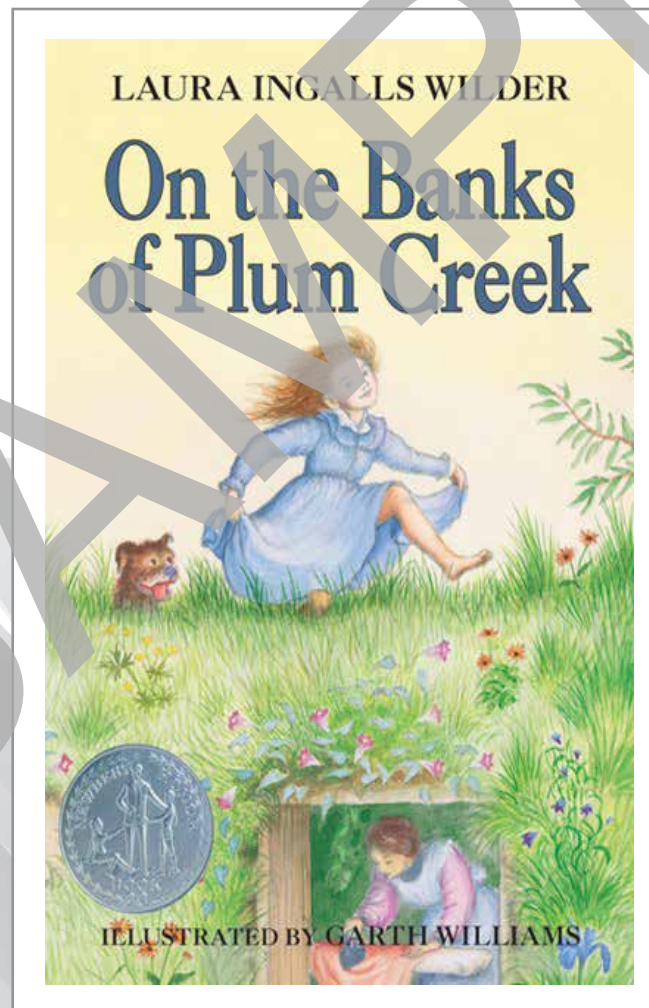
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# On the Banks of Plum Creek

Laura Ingalls Wilder



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# On the Banks of Plum Creek

Laura Ingalls Wilder

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, sorting,  
visualizing, mind mapping

### Vocabulary

Multiple meanings, word  
mapping, synonyms,  
antonyms

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
comparison/contrast

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral memory

### Literary Elements

Characterization, story  
elements, personification,  
mood, foreshadowing

### Writing

Journaling, description,  
explanation

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## Summary

After returning east from Indian Country, the Ingalls trade their wagon team for land on the banks of Plum Creek. Wilder's reminiscences of life in Minnesota in a frame house with glass windows on a wheat farm near a small town provide the reader a glimpse of prairie pioneer life. Mary and Laura attend school and church in town and the whole family learns about grasshoppers and snow blizzards.

## About the Author

Laura Ingalls Wilder was born in 1867 in Wisconsin. Her "Little House" books detail her family's pioneering experiences as the family moved from Wisconsin through Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakota Territory. After marrying Almanzo Wilder in 1885, she lived in Florida, Minnesota, and Missouri.

In 1932, when Wilder was 65, *Little House in the Big Woods* was published. Between 1932 and 1943, eight "Little House" books were written while Laura was living at Rocky Ridge Farm. Laura and Almanzo celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1935. Laura Ingalls Wilder died in 1957.

The Little House stories were adapted for a television series, "Little House on the Prairie" and a Broadway musical, "Prairie."

## About the Illustrator

Garth Williams was born in 1912 in New York City. Both his parents were artists. He attended the City of London School and Westminster Art School, Royal College of Art and British School, Rome.

Growing up he lived in New York City, on a farm in New Jersey, in Ontario, Canada, and in England.

The following page lists selected books Williams has illustrated.

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## Using Character Webs

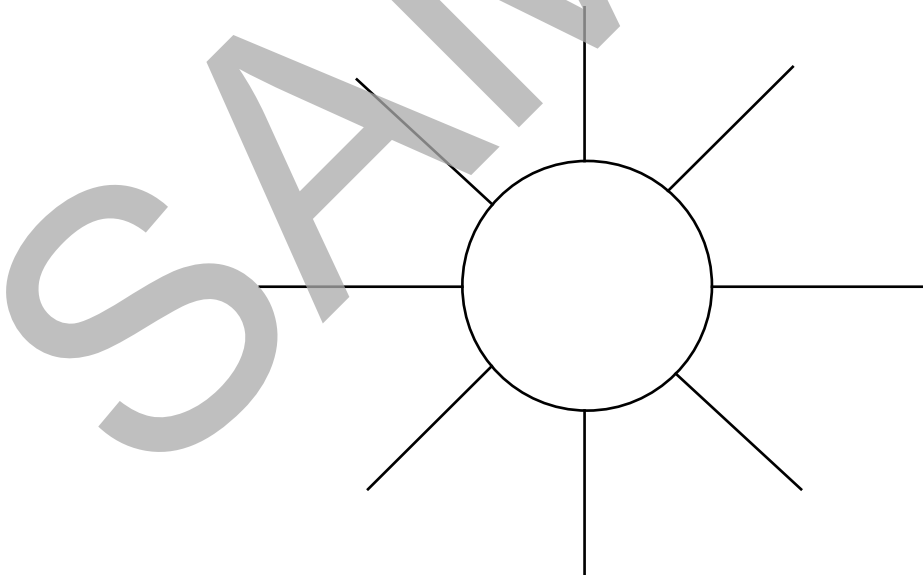
Attribute webs are simply a visual representation of a character from the novel. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about a particular character. Attribute webs may be used after reading the novel to recapitulate information about a particular character, or completed gradually as information unfolds. They may be completed individually or as a group project.

One type of character attribute web uses these divisions:

- How a character acts and feels. (How does the character act? How do you think the character feels? How would you feel if this happened to you?)
- How a character looks. (Close your eyes and picture the character. Describe him/her to me.)
- Where a character lives. (Where and when does the character live?)
- How others feel about the character. (How does another specific character feel about our character?)

In group discussion about the characters described in student attribute webs, the teacher can ask for backup proof from the novel. Inferential thinking can be included in the discussion.

Attribute webs need not be confined to characters. They may also be used to organize information about a concept, object, or place.



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## Chapter 5: “Strange Animal”—Pages 28-36

### Vocabulary

heaved 29      snarl 31      quivery 33      badger 34  
fetched 35

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why did Laura disobey her father and start for the swimming-pool? *(Mary wasn't with her to remind her of the parental rule. She was thirsty. She remembered how pleasant and cool the deep water and the shade of the willow trees was.)*
2. Who prevented Laura from going in the swimming-pool? *(an old grey badger who frightened her into running home)*
3. How did Laura react to her guilty conscience? *(She looked pale and then confessed to Pa.)*
4. How did Pa punish Laura for disobeying? *(He told her that she would have to stay with Ma all day so she could be watched because she couldn't be trusted alone.)* Was Pa's punishment fair and reasonable?
5. How did Ma support Pa's discipline? *(She watched Laura and planned the day so it would be indoors and boringly unpleasant.)*
6. Agree or Disagree: Ma and Pa Ingalls were wise parents. Use references from the book to support your answer.
7. Look for old-fashioned words in the book. Make a list, offering an up-to-date alternate for each.

## Chapter 6: “Wreath of Roses”—Pages 37-44

### Vocabulary

lichens 37      trampling 38      surged 39      gouge 39  
milch 41      cud 41      zinged 43

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What was the big grey rock? Did it have any special significance? *(The rock was big and flat on top. Laura and Mary could run on it side by side. The rock was very smooth and an interesting landmark for the girls. However, they avoided the rock in the mornings and late afternoon because herds of cattle went by at those times.)*
2. What does the title of the chapter mean? *(The girls saw a cow with a perfect circle of red spots as big as roses on her white side. The girls were excited when Pa told them that cow would be theirs. The cow was from the Nelson herd. Mrs. Nelson had called the cow “Reet,” a corruption of wreath.)*

- 
3. What did you learn from the cow milking? (*Cows expect to be milked from the right side. Children can learn some things by watching their parents.*)
  4. Explain Pa's comments on page 44. (*The Ingalls family have lived near Swedes, Germans, Indians, and Norwegians. It's not stated how the Ingalls would specify their own heritage.*)

## Chapter 7: "Ox on the Roof"—Pages 45-51

### Vocabulary

dabbled 45	twittering 47	bellowing 47	smudge 47
bawled 48	heaved 48		

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How did the Ingalls manage grazing Spot, Pete, and Bright? (*Every morning Mary and Laura drove the cows to the big grey rock so they could join the herd of cows and go to graze during the day. Mary and Laura met the herd and stabled the three cows at the end of the day.*)
2. Reread Laura's description of the prairie sunrise. What were the stages she and Mary observed each day?
3. What were Laura's feelings about Spot, Pete, Bright, and the assembled herd of cows? (*Spot was gentle and so Laura was unafraid, Pete and Bright were so big that they frightened Laura. The herd was thundering and to be feared.*)
4. How did it happen that Ma saw a cow's hoof come through the roof of the dugout? (*One day the cows returned from grazing in an angry mood. Laura managed to get Spot and Bright into the stable. Pete ran off and leaped on top of the dugout. His hind leg went down through the roof.*)
5. Why did Pa have to repair the dugout roof? (*After Pete ran on the roof, the thatched roof fell down and the house was open to the sky overhead.*)

## Chapter 8: "Straw-Stack"—Pages 52-60

### Vocabulary

scythe 52	yoked 52	plough 53	stubble 53
threshing-machine 53	chaff 53	burrowed 56	quivered 60

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What were Pa's harvesting jobs? (*cut down the wheat, bind it into bundles; cut prairie grass and after letting it dry in the sun, stack it into hay-stacks*)
2. What is the difference between hay and straw? (*The term "straw" refers to a single stalk and "hay" isn't so specific. Both are grasses dried and used for fodder, to feed livestock.*)