

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Little House on Rocky Ridge

by

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Book Information

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A continuation of the Little House On The Prairie series as the Wilders move out on their own.

Topics: History, Frontier/Pioneer Life; People, Pioneers/Settlers; Series, Little House; U.S. States/Regions, Missouri

Main Characters

Almanzo also known as Papa, Rose's father

Alva Stubbins the "tomboy" neighbor of the Wilders in Missouri

Cyrus a man Papa hires shortly after the Wilders move onto their new farm in Missouri.

George Cooley the Cooley's younger son, eight years old

Grandma and Grandpa Laura's parents

Laura Ingalls Wilder also known as Mama, Rose's mother

Mr. and Mrs. Cooley people traveling to Missouri with the Wilders

Paul Cooley the Cooley's older son, "nearly ten years old"

Rose Wilder a seven-year-old girl, traveling with her parents in a wagon to Missouri

Vocabulary

basque a close-fitting bodice

chiggers bugs too small to see that bite the ankles of the Wilders during the Wilders' first night in their new house

hardtack a kind of biscuity bread baked without yeast

nabob a rich person

persimmon a kind of fruit, horrible-tasting when not ripe

tarantula a very large, hairy spider

Synopsis

The story takes place in 1894 as the Wilders travel from South Dakota to Missouri and then settle themselves on a new farm. They are leaving South Dakota and Laura's parents because a drought has caused them to lose their farm.

On their trip, they first experience a dust storm and later they have to cross the Missouri River on a ferry. For a few days they camp near a settlement of Russians and have friendly relations with them despite not having a common language. Later, in Kansas, Paul makes a shadow figure of a wolf, causing Rose to laugh while Mama is reading from the Bible. Mr. Cooley whips Paul, and Paul ostracizes Rose during the rest of the trip until Rose gets in trouble for throwing grapes after they get to Missouri. During the journey, Mama keeps a journal to remind her of the little things that happen day-to-day. Making Rose promise not to tell, she reveals a hundred-dollar bill in her writing case. She has saved the money from a year of sewing, and it is their "future, when we get to Missouri," but when Papa finds a farm to buy, the hundred-dollar bill is missing. Rose eventually looks in the box where Mama keeps the writing case and finds the bill.

The night before they move into their cabin, a man approaches, asking for work. Papa hires the man, Cyrus, to help him cut wood, and it works out well until winter comes and Cyrus leaves. Papa needs a barn before it gets really cold, so he asks Mr. Cooley and Mr. Stubbins to help. The day of the barn-raising, all the neighbors turn up with their families and food to do what they call a working. Everyone works together to build the barn in one day.

Shortly after they move into their cabin, Rose explores the nearby stream and tastes a fruit which makes her mouth pucker. A strange girl first laughs at her, then asks belligerently if Rose is a drifter. When Rose says she lives on the nearby farm, the girl becomes friendly, confides that she prefers helping her father in the barn and the fields to

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helping her mother in the house, and says her name is Alva Stubbins.

The book ends with Mama reflecting that while they are poor, they aren't having such a hard time after all."

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Describe what led up to the working and the events during the day of the working.

The Wilders really need a barn before winter. Papa asks his only friends in Missouri, Mr. Cooley and Mr. Stubbins, to help him build the barn. The day before they are due to come, Mama and Rose clean the house and bake extra corn bread, two apple pies, and butcher a chicken for a chicken pie. In the morning, they find that Mr. Stubbins has passed along the word about the barn-raising to his neighbors, and all the neighbors show up. Mama is worried about having enough food to feed them all, but Rose points out that the neighbors have brought food. The men build the barn. The women prepare food and serve the men at noontime, then in the afternoon have a chance to knit and sew. By the end of the day the barn is complete, from the ground to the shingles.

Literary Analysis

Describe some of the events that give us insight into Mama's character.

Mama is embarrassed by open displays of affection and is shocked when the Russian woman pulls the biscuits out of her blouse to give the Wilders as a gift. She's also the person who keeps telling Rose that she must endure what she cannot change.

Inferential Comprehension

Why did the Wilders really decide to move to Missouri?

The book says they were going to leave because of the drought, but even after they lost their farm they were able to survive with Mama sewing and Papa doing odd jobs. There is the strong implication that they want to farm, that they want property of their own, and that they don't want to be beholden to anyone.

Constructing Meaning

Would you like to have lived during the time this story takes place? Why or why not?

The people worked very hard, and the women were generally second-class citizens. Health care was mediocre where it existed. However, a child might find the adventure attractive, and working instead of going to school might be appealing.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting During this story the Wilder family moves from South Dakota to Missouri. Have the students make a map showing the trip. Have them list what supplies they would bring on a trip like that.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors The Wilders use a hundred-dollar bill to put a down payment on a farm. Have the students do research to figure out how much that would be today. Have them compare the prices of eggs, butter, milk, a shirt, etc., to what they cost today. Have them compare wages. Do the items really cost more today?

Describing Actions or Events The family moves because of a drought. Ask the students to research the weather in the Midwest in the 1890s. Was there a drought? How many farmers lost their farms? Have them think about what they would do if their parents lost their job(s), and their home. Would they move in with a relative? What else might they do?

Responding to Literature In the story Rose has

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numerous chores both during the journey and in Missouri. These chores are necessary to keep the family functioning. In fact, Rose does not go to school the first year in Missouri because she has to help her parents. Have the students talk about their chores. Are they real and necessary? Would the students rather stay home from school if they had to work?