

On The Banks of Plum Creek

a Reading Comprehension Guide
by Carla J. Courtney

On the Banks of Plum Creek

The Ingalls family adventures continue in this engaging volume by Laura Ingalls Wilder. In this volume the Ingalls family settles in Minnesota, hoping to build a new life free from the worries of wolves and Indians. However, hard providences find the family as they face grasshoppers, debt, and prairie blizzards. In true pioneer style, the family works hard, works together, and works unceasingly to overcome their difficulties.

In this book Laura begins to wrestle with sin, as well as temptations and consequences of sin. The reader will notice that Laura is not always a “good little girl”, doing what she ought to do at all times. She compares herself to Mary quite often and wishes she were good like Mary. She admits that she is “naughty” even in the midst of her sin. Laura accepts her consequences and punishments with understanding that discipline follows wrong-doing. She occasionally shows penitence when she realizes the hurt she has caused Pa and Ma, but she also shows her pioneer “stiff upper lip” on occasion. Laura makes her first real friends and enemies, learning all the social skills young ladies need as they grow up.

How to Use this Literature Guide

1. These comprehension questions are to be completed after reading the book. This guide provides 6-8 questions pertaining to the content of each chapter. Some questions will be fill-in-the-blank or listing, but most require the use of a complete sentence with the restatement of the question. Definitions should be taken straight from their source.
2. The comprehension questions provide opportunities for the use of complete sentences with restatement of the question. Most of the questions are asked in a manner that will encourage the students to respond in a complete sentence. Teachers should encourage a completely accurate and full answer so that the students learn to make the best use of their writing potential.
3. The comprehension questions provide grading options for reading comprehension, English, and spelling. The reading comprehension grade reflects the complete accuracy of the answer. The English grade reflects the use of complete sentences, correct capitalization, and proper punctuation. The spelling grade reflects the student’s ability to spell commonly used words as well as words given in the original question or text.
4. The comprehension guide provides an opportunity for penmanship practice. Whether answers are given in manuscript or cursive forms, students should be encouraged to use their neatest penmanship.
5. The comprehension guide is compatible to U.S. history during westward expansion. This fascinating time of life is reflected in the history of westward expansion and the Oregon Trail. Many pioneers faced challenges similar to those of the Ingalls family. You may find it helpful to organize tours to local historical sites so that students can see the equipment and tools mentioned in the stories.
6. The Slate Stories are wonderful story starters based upon the content of each chapter from the book. These interesting story starters provide students an opportunity to write summaries and personal responses to events in Laura’s life. Several of the stories allow the student to assume a different character while writing their response. These stories may be assembled into a book suitable for display at end-of-school-year events.
7. An answer key is provided at the back of the book. This answer key is designed to assist in the grading process. Although the exact answers may not be required, the key elements in each answer should be present.

Chapter 1: The Door in the Ground

1. The Ingalls family began their trip in Indian territory. What states did they travel across?

2. In which state did the family finally settle down? _____

3. Who owned the property near the creek? _____

4. What did Pa trade for the new property? _____

5. What kind of house was on the property? Of what is it made? _____

6. Laura is _____ years old in this story.

7. Laura was sad to lose Pet and Patty. Why was it better for Pet and Patty to keep traveling with Mr. Hanson? _____

8. Pa followed the dim wagon track. Using a dictionary, define dim. _____

Chapter 2: The House in the Ground

1. What kind of flower vines were growing around the front door of the dugout? What colors were the flowers? _____

2. Why was Ma pleased with the new house? _____

3. Laura was a big help to Pa when he was building things for the house. What had Laura helped him build? _____

4. Describe the two oxen now owned by the Ingalls family. _____

5. Laura is still sad about Pet and Patty. What is Pa's advice to her? "We must do the best we can Laura, _____, What must be done _____;"
6. Use a dictionary to define: a whitewashed wall _____

7. Footbridge over the creek. Using a dictionary, define footbridge. _____

Chapter 3: Rushes and Flags

1. What chores were Mary and Laura required to do before they could go play? _____

2. What plants grew along the creek? _____

3. What insects did they see at the creek? _____

4. What sound did the rushes make when Laura pulled on them? _____

5. What did they do with the rushes? _____

6. Ma said the girls were going to turn into _____.
7. Where must Mary and Laura never go? _____

8. The little fishes swarmed around their feet. Using a dictionary, define "swarmed". _____

Chapter 4: Deep Water

- 1. What is tableland? _____

- 2. Laura uses three adjectives to describe the creek. "Everything was _____"

- 3. "Something" grabbed Laura's foot and pulled her down. The "something" was really "someone".
Who was it? _____

- 4. Why did Pa duck Laura? _____

- 5. After she got over being scared, what did she want Pa to do? _____

- 6. What was Pa's final instruction about the swimming-hole? _____

- 7. Pa jerked on Laura's foot. Using a dictionary, define "jerked". _____

Chapter 5: Strange Animal

- 1. What did Laura remember all the next day? _____

- 2. Even though she remembered her father’s instruction, what did Laura do? _____

- 3. What did she plan to do at the swimming hole? _____

- 4. Describe the creature that stopped Laura in her path. _____

- 5. Laura had broken Pa’s trust. What must be done to someone who cannot be trusted?

- 6. How did Laura describe the day on which Ma watched her? _____

- 7. Find and finish this sentence: “Once you begin being naughty, _____

On the Banks of Plum Creek: Answer Key

Chapter 1: The Door in the Ground

1. The Ingalls family traveled across Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota. p. 1
2. The family finally settled in Minnesota. p. 1
3. Mr. Hanson owned the property near the creek. p. 2
4. Pa traded Pet and Patty for the land. He traded Bunny and the wagon cover for the crops and oxen. p. 5
5. A dugout house was on the property. p. 5. A dugout is made of sod (dirt and grasses). p. 6
6. Laura is 7 years old in this story. p. 6
7. Pet and Patty should travel with Mr. Hanson because they are Indian ponies that travel well and like to keep traveling. p. 7
8. Pa followed the dim wagon track. Using a dictionary, define dim.

Chapter 2: The House in the Ground

1. Morning glory vines are growing around the front door of the dugout. p. 9 The flowers are red, blue, purple, rosy-pink, white, and striped. p. 9
2. Ma says the house is small, but clean and pleasant. It has good thick walls with no cracks. p. 11
3. Laura helped Pa hang the door on the house in the Indian Territory, and she helped make the bed in the dugout. p. 14
4. One ox is huge and gray with short horns and gentle eyes. The other ox is smaller with fierce, long horns and wild eyes. p. 14
5. "We must do the best we can Laura, and not grumble. What must be done is best done cheerfully." p. 15
6. Use a dictionary to define: a whitewashed wall
7. Use a dictionary to define: footbridge over the creek

Chapter 3: Rushes and Flags

1. Mary and Laura were required to do the dishes, sweep the floor, and make the beds. p. 18.
2. Rushes and blue flags grew along the creek. p. 19
3. The girls saw bumble-bees, butterflies, dragonflies, and water bugs at the creek. p. 19
4. The rushes made a squeaking sound when Laura pulled on them. p. 20
5. Mary and Laura made the rushes squeak. They also made necklaces and long tubes for blowing bubbles and getting drinks. p. 21
6. Ma said the girls were going to turn into water bugs. p. 21
7. Mary and Laura must never go near the hole of deep water in the creek. p. 21
8. The little fishes swarmed around their feet. Using a dictionary, define "swarmed".

Chapter 4: Deep Water

1. Tableland is a high, almost straight up wall of earth where no grass grows. p. 22
2. "Everything was watery, cool, and unsteady." p. 23
3. Pa was the one who grabbed Laura's foot and pulled her down. p. 24
4. Pa ducked Laura to scare her, and she deserved ducking as a consequence for her disobedience. p. 26
5. Laura wanted Pa to duck her again and again. p. 26
6. Pa's final instruction to Mary and Laura was to not go near the swimming-hole without Pa. p. 27
7. Pa jerked on Laura's foot. Using a dictionary, define "jerked".