

Lesson 1: Introducing the Story

Getting Started

? Questions to Explore

- How are people dependent on their environments?
- Why were people in the past so dependent on the environment?



Facts and Definitions

- A **historical fiction** book is one where the characters or events are fictional, but the setting and other details are based on actual history.
- The **setting** of a book is the time and place where the events in the story occur.

⦿ Skills

- Interact with the text by making connections, answering questions, and locating information. (LA)
- Consider the difference between fiction and nonfiction using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes. (LA)
- Conduct research (with assistance) for assigned and self-selected projects from a variety of sources. (LA)
- Use oral and written language to present information in a sequenced, logical manner in order to support the following skills: discuss and sustain conversation on a topic, share information and ideas, recount or narrate, and share written and oral products in a variety of ways. (LA)

✂ Materials

- *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Age 8-10 Timeline
- blank paper
- colored pencils or markers
- U.S. map

Introduction

Ask your child if he knows anything about the pioneers. Let him share what he knows. If your child read *Sarah, Plain and Tall* in last year's program, discuss the lives and experiences of the characters in the book. Discuss how the pioneers were the first European people to settle in places in the western part of our nation. Explain that the pioneers were dependent on the environment to meet their needs.

NOTE: *Little House in the Big Woods* was written in the early 1930s and deals with frontier life in the 1870s. Some references may now be considered backwards or even offensive. We encourage you to read this book with your child and discuss or explain problematic elements as needed.

Activities

Activity 1: The Author

Tell your child that today, he will begin reading a book about pioneer life. This book is about a family who lives in Wisconsin, and it is based on the life of a real person who was born in the late 1800s. Explain that the girl's name was Laura Ingalls and that the story is about her life with her family as a young girl.

Little House in the Big Woods — 1: Introducing the Story

Review the definition of a **historical fiction** book — a book where some characters or events are fictional, but the setting and other details are based on actual history. If you are using the Beyond the Page social studies program, you will have an Age 8-10 Timeline. Ask your child to add the date when the story begins (1871) to her timeline.

In addition, on the timeline, ask your child to record the birth of Laura Ingalls (Wilder) in 1867. Explain to your child when she lived and show him where she lived on a U.S. map (Wisconsin). Tell him about her family members (an older sister, Mary, and a younger sister, Carrie) and how she wrote these books so that children would know more about pioneer life. Let your child look at the cover and point out clues that indicate that the book took place many years ago.

Note: To make this introduction even more interesting for your child, dress up as a pioneer woman and pretend to be Laura Ingalls Wilder. Introduce yourself and tell about your family and your life as a pioneer.

You and your child can learn more about Laura Ingalls Wilder's life at the following websites:



About Laura Ingalls Wilder

www.beyondthepage.com/link/5623/



Laura Ingalls Wilder

www.beyondthepage.com/link/3795/

Activity 2: A Memory

Discuss how the story is based on the author's memory of her childhood in the woods of Wisconsin. Tell your child that often authors write stories about events that happened in their lives. Sometimes, the easiest thing to write about is your own experience. Ask your child to think about one of his earliest memories. It can be a cheerful memory, a fearful memory, or a depressing memory. Then let him write an account of a memory that he thinks might make a good story. Finally, on a separate piece of paper, he can illustrate the memory.

Select one of the following options for your child.

Option 1

For this option, give your child the pre-writing organizer, "A Memory" (Option 1). This page will help him think about the details related to the memory he will write about.

Option 2 (Advanced)

If your child is an advanced writer, he can write about his memory without using the graphic organizer provided for Option 1. He can record his ideas and begin writing.

Activity 3: Setting: Wisconsin

Ask your child to define the word **setting**. Review that the setting of a story is the time and place where a story happens. Tell your child that the setting of this story is the woods in Wisconsin. Locate pictures of and read about Wisconsin online or in reference books. Discuss the state's environment focusing on the vegetation, animals, and temperature of the state. As your child reads about Wisconsin, he can record examples of plants and animals that can be found in the state on the page "Setting: Wisconsin" page.

After your child has read about Wisconsin and recorded the names of some plants and animals on the chart, ask him if he would want to live in Wisconsin. Ask him how Wisconsin is similar to and different from the state in which he lives.



National Geographic Kids — Wisconsin

www.beyondthepage.com/link/9305/

This webpage provides general information about the state.



Wisconsin Native Plant Guide

www.beyondthepage.com/link/9306/

This site has links that show plants native to Wisconsin.



Wisconsin Animals

www.beyondthepage.com/link/9304/

Click on a link to view a picture of an animal and learn more about it.

Wrapping Up

Ask your child to describe what he learned about the author, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and the state of Wisconsin.

Life Application

Read about your own state online and discuss the variety of plants and animals that can be found in your state. Ask your child to think about how some of the first people to live in your state used resources in their environment to meet their needs.

A Memory^o

Directions: Write a story about one of your earliest memories. Use this pre-writing organizer to think about the details related to the memory you choose to write about.

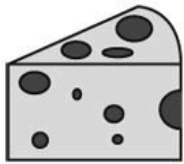
Briefly describe the memory: _____

Who was involved? _____

What feelings do you get when you think about the memory? _____

Why does this memory stand out among others? _____

What did you learn and/or what could someone else learn from your memory?



Setting: Wisconsin



Directions: As you read about Wisconsin, record examples of plants and animals that can be found in the state on the chart provided.

Plants

Animals
