

“Going West” through “The House on the Prairie”

Vocabulary:

Synonyms:

A *synonym* is a word that means the same or nearly the same as another word. Using a thesaurus and/or a dictionary, find a synonym for each of the following underlined words.

1. Big logs of wood stood among the stumps.
2. One day, while they were waiting, a tall, lean man came out of the woods, riding a black pony.
3. She sat and thought complaints to herself.
4. Purple shadows were gathering over the land, and the wind was mourning.
5. Only the wind moved stealthily through the grass, and the large low stars hung glittering from the great sky.

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6. “We might go farther and fare worse,” Ma replied.

7. Ma brought the wooden pannikan of soft soap from the wagon.

8. She kilted up her skirts and rolled up her sleeves, and she knelt by the tub on the grass.

9. It was Providential that the foot was not crushed.

10. The sky was so full of light that not one star twinkled in it, and all the prairie was a shadowy mellowness.

Similes and Personification:

An author sometimes uses *similes* or *personification* to make writing more descriptive. A simile is a comparison that shows how two different things are alike. It uses the words *like* or *as* to compare. For example: “The moon glowed *like* a lantern.”

Personification gives human characteristics to animals, objects, and ideas. For example: “The door of the house closed with a sad little sigh as they left for the day.” In this sentence, the door is given the imagined ability to sigh sadly like a human.

Each of the following sentences contains either personification or a simile. Finish each sentence from the book and label with a **P** for personification, or an **S** for simile.

- ___ 1. (“Going West”) The shutters were over the windows, so the little house _____.

- ___ 2. (“Prairie Day”) These little creatures looked _____.

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- ___ 3. (“Prairie Day”) Their hind legs folded under their haunches, their little paws folded tight to their chests, and they looked exactly _____.
- ___ 4. (“Camp on the High Prairie”) Only the wind _____
_____ and the large, low stars hung glittering from the great sky.
- ___ 5. (“The House on the Prairie”) She wanted to hide and be still in the tall grass _____.
- ___ 6. (“The House on the Prairie”) He danced _____,
_____ while Pa’s fiddle kept on rollicking and his foot kept tapping the ground, and Laura’s hands and Mary’s hands were clapping together and their feet were patting, too.
- ___ 7. (“The House on the Prairie”) The sky was _____
_____ on the flat black land.
- ___ 8. (“The House on the Prairie”) A few notes fell _____
_____ into the stillness.

Questions:

1. Why did the Ingalls have to leave Wisconsin in the winter?

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2. What did Pa promise Laura she would see when they came to the west?

3. In the chapter “Camp on the High Prairie,” Pa is careful when preparing to make a fire. What does he do? Why does he do this?

4. What happens to Jack when they cross the creek?

5. Who is Mr. Edwards? How do he and Pa help each other?

Think About the Story:

6. Laura must say goodbye to her grandparents, her aunts, uncles, and cousins. Have you ever moved and had to say goodbye to family and friends? What are two ways to stay in touch with them?

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7. When Pa carefully builds a campfire on the prairie, he says, “Best be on the safe side, it saves trouble in the end.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not? Does Pa always do things the safest way?

Dig Deeper:

8. When the family was traveling, Laura gets tired of riding and starts complaining. Ma says, “Laura,” which meant she must not complain anymore. Though she doesn’t complain out loud anymore, Laura continues to complain in her head. Was complaining in her head wrong? Was she really obeying her mother? Why or why not? (You may wish to look at Proverbs 16:2 and Jeremiah 17:10.)
9. When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, one of them was “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” Is there a difference between obeying and honoring? Look up *obey* and *honor* in a dictionary, then define them in your own words.
10. Define *providence* in your own words. Read Matthew 6:25–34. Paraphrase these verses. To paraphrase something means to write it in your own words.

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11. List two or three incidents in these chapters that might show God's providence for the Ingalls.

12. In the chapter "Crossing the Creek," the Ingalls get into a lot of trouble when the creek suddenly rises. Do you think Pa made a wise decision when he decided to cross the creek? Sometimes when something is over and past, we can look back and see what we should have done, but how do we choose or make decisions in the first place?

13. List two instances when Laura was afraid. What gave her courage or made her feel safer? Read Isaiah 41:10, Roman 8:38, 39. What can we rely on when we feel frightened?

14. In the chapter "The House on the Prairie," Mr. Edwards and Pa help each other do things that they would have had difficulty doing alone. Read Proverbs 3:27, 28; Matthew 5:42; and Luke 3:11. What do these verses say about helping other people?

Class Debate:

Does God protect us from all danger and sickness? Why or why not?

Optional Projects and Activities:

1. *Cook:* Make cornbread. Serve it with butter, honey, or molasses like Laura did.

Corn Bread

4 teaspoons dry yeast
1 cup lukewarm water
1 cup corn meal (white or yellow)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unbleached white or whole wheat flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup skim milk powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (optional)
2 tablespoons honey
3 tablespoons oil
2 eggs, beaten

1. Dissolve dry yeast in lukewarm water and allow to stand for 10 minutes.
2. Combine in a mixing bowl: corn meal, white or whole wheat flour, skim milk powder, salt, and nutritional yeast (if desired).
3. Combine honey, oil, and beaten eggs and add to dry ingredients, mixing well.
4. Gradually add dissolved yeast mixture, blending well into other ingredients.
5. Pour batter into a well-oiled 9×9-inch square pan. Place pan in warm area and allow corn bread to rise 30–40 minutes. Preheat oven to 350° F.
6. Bake in preheated oven for 30–35 minutes.

Yield: 6–8 servings.

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2. *Cook:* Taste molasses. Try this special treat:

Molasses Milk

1 1/2 cup cold milk

1–2 teaspoons dark molasses

Mix molasses into milk until frothy and well-blended. Delicious served with cookies.

3. *Creative writing:* Write a fictional letter from Laura back home to her Grandma and Grandpa. Tell them all she has done so far. Remember the five elements of a good letter.

	1) Heading: Date Your address
2) Greeting,	
	3) Body of the letter
	4) Closing, 5) Signature

4. *Mapping:* Use the map you made in the Ideas for Pre-reading Activities section or find a map of the midwestern United States and mark the Ingalls' route west. We can't be precise, but we know they traveled across the Mississippi River near Pepin, Wisconsin; went southwest through Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri; then crossed into Kansas. They stopped near the Verdigris River, 40 miles from Independence. [*Optional:* Use a map or atlas and estimate how many miles they traveled.]

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5. *Art Project:* Make a star mobile. Using white or silver paper, cut out 5–10 large stars. [*Optional:* Buy a package of plastic glow-in-the-dark stars.] Cut varying lengths of thread or fishing line and tie or tape them to each star. Tie or tape the hanging stars to a clothes hanger, a small branch, or some other type of hanger, and hang your star mobile up somewhere in your bedroom so you can watch them as you fall asleep.

6. *Music:* Try to find some recordings of the songs Pa played for the family and Mr. Edwards. If you have difficulty finding recordings of fiddle music, you may wish to check out the website

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/hrhtml/hrhome.html>

which contains the period fiddle music of Henry Reed. Look for the titles under “Musical Genres,” then “Fiddle Tunes.” Another site is

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/1867/fiddle.html>

which gives samples of songs Pa played, but the samples are of varying quality and different instruments. If you can find music to the songs you may wish to try singing them or playing them yourself.

7. *Writing:* Start a journal in which you list the ways people help each other in *Little House on the Prairie*. Record who helped who and what might have happened if they had not helped.

8. *Writing:* Remember to continue updating your keepsake journal from the “Ideas for Pre-reading Activities” section.