



Little Town on the Prairie

Laura Ingalls Wilder , Garth Williams (Illustrator)

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Based on the real-life adventures of Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little Town on the Prairie* is the seventh book in the award-winning Little House series, which has captivated generations of readers. This edition features the classic black-and-white artwork from Garth Williams.

In *Little Town on the Prairie*, the young town of De Smet has survived the long, harsh winter of 1880-1881. With the arrival of spring comes invitations to socials, parties, and “literaries.” Laura, who is now fifteen years old, attends her first evening social.

In her spare time, she sews shirts to help earn money to send Mary to a college for the blind. Laura also receives her teaching certificate and can work at a school. And, best of all, Almanzo Wilder asks permission to be walking her home from church. Life in the little town certainly is exciting!

The nine books in the timeless Little House series tell the story of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s real childhood as an American pioneer and are cherished by readers of all generations. They offer a unique glimpse into life on the American frontier and tell the heartwarming, unforgettable story of a loving family.

Little Town on the Prairie Details

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From Reader Review Little Town on the Prairie for online ebook

Elizabeth says

I kind of don't know how to deal with the casual racism in these books. The minstrel show in the chapter "The Madcap Days" *appals* me as an adult. As a child, living in Jamaica, sharing homes with Jamaican families and running in a pack with Jamaican kids, I actually didn't know what the "darkies" of this chapter were supposed to be. Clearly they were men making music and singing, their faces disguised with black polish. I neither knew nor would have understood what they were supposed to be. They might as well have been Morris dancers or chimney sweeps. I don't think this excuses what's going on here, but I do think it shows that A) what you read doesn't necessarily damage you for life, and B) children are very good at blocking out the things they don't get. I wish it wasn't like this: but the book was published in 1941 and is set in 1882, so we're stuck with it.

And for a long time, as a child, this book was my favorite of the series. In many ways it's straight-up YA, though it was published so long ago. I'm astonished, now, at how much of the book is focused on Laura being dissatisfied with her looks and struggling to be stylish. Some of the little conversations about style are wonderful – Ma is constantly, gently disapproving of Laura's newfangled notions, and Laura does a fair bit of eye-rolling over Ma's old-fashionedness. The crowd of high school kids sledding together, jockeying for social position, experimenting with electricity, eying up each other's clothes, the first hints at romance, Laura's burn-out with school, are absolutely timeless. The battles with Eliza Jane Wilder and Nellie Oleson are so frustrating and yet so *satisfying*, and Laura is no angel. (I love that when she writes the mean verse about Eliza Jane she excuses herself: "She meant only to please Ida, and perhaps, just a little, to show off what she could do." I know this feeling *so well*. Also – wow, her verse GOES VIRAL! The innocence with which the teasing starts and the anonymous rapidity with which it tears through the town is all Laura's fault and she knows it and feels terrible about it. It is fascinating to see how bullying has not really changed much.)

Timeless, too, are moments such as Laura's struggle to do the fall housecleaning and discovering how some projects always take six times as long as you think they will: "It was amazing, too, how dirty they all got, while cleaning a house that had seemed quite clean. The harder they worked, the dirtier everything became."

Quotations I like:

"There is no comfort anywhere for anyone who dreads to go home."

"This earthly life is a battle," said Ma. "If it isn't one thing to contend with, it's another. It always has been so, and it always will be. The sooner you make up your mind to that, the better off you are, and the more thankful for your pleasures."

"I don't see how anybody can be prepared for anything," said Laura. "When you expect something, and then something else always happens." [Ma responds:] "Even the weather has more sense in it than you seem to give it credit for. Blizzards come only in a blizzard country. You may be well prepared to teach school and still not be a schoolteacher, but if you are not prepared, it's certain that you won't be."

SO TRUE.

This is also where I first read the Declaration of Independence. She quotes an awful lot of it.

Maria Elmvang says

This is one of my favourite LIW books. I'm fascinated by the descriptions of life in town. Two things that struck me in particular were a) how modestly they lived and b) how quickly they had to grow up. Just think of Laura, going off to teach at age 15. I was no where near mature enough for that at that age. And they all seemed so selfless too - always passing on things to each other, because they didn't need them themselves, and thought the other person would like them more.

Margaret says

I have read this perhaps for the third time in my life. I needed to read a book in a series and of course it seemed that a Laura Ingalls Wilder book would be perfect. Having not read one in hmm, almost 30 years I wasn't sure if it would be as wonderful as I remembered. It was! In fact it was one of the most enjoyable reading that I have had for a long time. I now want to continue on and see what happens with Laura now being certified as a teacher. Her books will always be a favorite of mine and I hope that my granddaughter when she becomes of reading age will read them.

Luann says

Why, why, why did I never read this when I was younger? Well, I missed out! But I'm VERY happy to have read this now. I was enthralled with the classroom drama that happened while Miss Wilder (Almanzo's sister) was teaching school. I sure sympathized with her! Although she brought a lot of her troubles upon herself with her "we will all be happy and friends all the time" style of classroom management.

This is just a wonderful continuation of the story told in The Long Winter. And even though it is just over 300 pages, I wasn't ready for it to be over when it ended! I'm glad to know I can jump right into These Happy Golden Years! I'm probably the only person in the world who hadn't ever read this, but just in case, I highly recommend the entire series! Don't stop with reading just the first few books like I always did when I was younger.

A favorite quote: "'This earthly life is a battle,' said Ma. 'If it isn't one thing to contend with, it's another. It always has been so, and it always will be. The sooner you make up your mind to that, the better off you are, and the more thankful for your pleasures.'"

Michelle says

I flew through this one, maybe because I was so happy not to be stuck in a blizzard anymore, freezing and starving. Things are really looking up for the Ingalls family--they get a kitten, Mary finally goes off to

college, there are parties in town, and by the end of the book, Laura gets her teaching certificate. The most extravagant thing is when Pa allows Laura to buy name cards (they're the latest thing and cost 25 cents!). I actually squealed, "Oh, Pa! Letting Laura buy name cards!", eliciting an eyeroll from my husband. Laura always works so hard and tries to be so good, so it's nice to see the little rewards.

There are a couple of moments that make you stop and think as an adult. One, Pa and some buddies in town put on a show wearing blackface, which is pretty cringeworthy. Two, as much as we all love Laura, you start to wonder about how Laura writes about herself--is she this good? That whole thing with Nellie and Miss Wilder kind of makes you wonder who really is the petty person.

Another thing, I love Almanzo as he begins to court Laura (maybe I squealed more). But as Ma exclaims, Laura's only 15! And Almanzo's 10 years older. I know at the time that was fine, but you could say the same for blackface. Of course, Laura doesn't marry him until she's 18, so I guess that makes it less creepy? Also making it less creepy, Laura's maturity--she even helps Ma and Pa get the money to send Mary to college. Making it creepy again--Laura's innocence. She can't figure out why Almanzo wants to walk her home after the church revival. We see more of their slow courtship in the next book (more squeal-worthy moments).

Miranda Reads says

How would you like to work in town, Laura?

When Mary lost her sight, she **lost all hope** of continuing her education. A kindly reverend tells the Ingalls family of a college for the blind. It goes without question that Mary will attend the seven years of school.

Now, the Ingalls family **desperately needs money** to cover school costs for Mary. Laura takes up work in town - *sewing buttons* of all things. While she *hates* it, she wants Mary to go to college far mor. The Ingalls family's crops are set upon by **great swarms of pests**.

And, to top it all, Eliza Jane (Laura's future sister-in-law) teaches their one-room school - and **she's terrible** at it. No discipline, belittling students and extreme favoritism. Even Laura cannot stand her. When Eliza Jane unjustly punishes Carrie, Laura escalates until she is thrown out of school.

Laura gets the last laugh. She pens this poem and publishes it in her autobiographical novel - for *thousands* of children to read and remember:

*Going to school is lots of fun,
From laughing we have gained a ton,
We laugh until we have a pain,
At Lazy, Lousy, Lizy Jane.*

She is my petty-revenge goals.

Audiobook Comments

Read by Cherry Jones and accompanied by Paul Woodiel on the fiddle. Love this dynamic duo!

Philip says

Eleanor and Gwennie are both here, but before we begin, I want to tell *MY* favorite part... and I have to write it quietly because it's not *quite* appropriate.

Laura had just started working in town, when she saw these two men get kicked out of a bar. They were sloshed, and singing an old church hymn. They went through the town punching holes in the screens of local businesses, and Laura thought this was funny.

Laura got in trouble when she got home for thinking this was funny, but the last line of the chapter read: "*Pa looked at Laura, and his eyes were still twinkling. Laura knew that he didn't blame her for laughing.*"

Maybe I'll add some more things I thought about as a grownup at the end of the review, but for now, I think the girls are ready to give their input. They're here talking about a baby-doll being allergic to babies. Before I start typing the review, I might just wait to see how this conversation plays out...

...

Dad: Ok ladies, are you ready to start the review?

... (They continue talking and counting...)

Dad: Ladies?

Ladies: Yes?

Dad: You ready?

Ladies: Yes!!!

Eleanor: Dad, are you writing equations?

Gwennie: He's writing too much!

E: Dad?

D: So lets talk about the book.

E: The first thing I want to talk about was that the men were saying, "I'm Tay Pay Pryor and I'm DRUNK! I'm Tay Pay Pryor and I'M DRUNK!"

D: (not outloud): ...Huh... I guess that part stuck with her too. It's weird that *THAT'S* the first part she mentioned, even though I don't think she understands what "drunk" is. ...Although, maybe I explained it to her in the reading... (outloud): Hey El, do you know what it means to be drunk?

E: It means.... I don't remember... I don't remember, Daddy. And DON'T put that in the review, either. What? I don't remember what being drunk means? OOOOOOOOOOooooooooohhhhhh.... If you drink too much wine, or alcohol, it makes you a little goofy - but goofy in a *bad* way.

D: Huh... you're right. Did I tell you that?

E: I think so, yeah.

D: Did you ask me about it?

E: Yes. When we got to that part in the book.

D: Well, what else did you like?

E: Well, maybe I can whisper in Gwennie's ear, and then she can tell you! That way she can help with the review!!!! *Whispers something to Gwen.*

G: I liked that Laura was able to become a teacher!!!!

D: Do you want to talk about anything else in the book?

E: Laura felt nervous a bunch of times - when she started working in town, when she was going to do mental math in front of the class, when she was going to the Thanksgiving party, when she was going to the birthday party, when she was going to the social, when she did the histories at the school exhibition...

D: That's an interesting observation, Eleanor. Nice job.

E: Thanks.

D: No, seriously. I'm not sure what to make of that, but I bet it's important. Let me also say, that *I* liked the race,

E: The 4th of July race?

D: Yeah... and that they got a cat, and I thought it was interesting that Laura got suspended.

E: Why is it interesting? It wasn't good for Laura and Carrie.

D: I know it wasn't good for them.

E: Then why were you saying it was interesting?

D: Maybe because I always hear people talk about how good people were back then, but it seems like even the best people got in trouble sometimes, you know?

E: *I* thought it was interesting when Pa got a mouse in his hair!

D: What did it do again?

E: It **CUT** off his hair, and made **TOOTH-MARKS** in his head!!!

D: HA! That's right! That was crazy!

E: Daddy, why don't we ever have a mouse in our hair?

G: (very scared) Can we not talk about it? I don't want to get scared.

D: Don't worry, it won't happen to us. We've got a cat that likes to catch anything that moves.

G: Do cats eat mouses?

D: It's not "mouses." Do you know how to say it?

E: YEAH! Do you want me to tell Gwennie?

D: mm-hmm

E: It's mice.

G: Ohhhh...

E: Can I talk about the Happy Days, quick? Actually, I want to talk about how each walk they took seemed like the last walk they would have together.

D: Who?

E: Mary and Laura.

D: Was that part sad?

E: Yep.

D: Because their time together was ending?

E: Mm-hmmmm...

D: Well, all good things come to an end. And, maybe that's a good place to end this review too, because I think Gwennie's getting bored. :)

Sarah says

I squeezed one more book into 2012! The characters are the same as in all the books, of course--Pa is the greatest and a hero among men, Ma is uptight and kind of racist, Laura is rebellious but good at heart. Everything is described in such loving detail. I do feel like I should have reread The Long Winter before this one because the relative plenty in LTotP is in such contrast to those poor people starving around the stove.

Notes of note:

- I liked the conversation when Mary admitted that she was being good partly to show off. It really made her more likable. I wonder if that really happened.
- Almanzo makes his move on Laura! And she seems completely confused at first. That was cute. But she held up her end of the conversation. That's why we like her.
- It's interesting how close the family was out of necessity. Like, they'd miss Pa when he was out working in town all day. I guess if you're used to being around someone 24/7, it's pretty strange when they're gone. And of course, Mary went to college and they were too despondent to have Christmas. It makes Laura's already understandable unhappiness at the crazy Brewsters' in the next book even more poignant (and Almanzo's kindness at bringing her home every weekend even more touching).
- Related to the above, Laura and Carrie absolutely freaked out whenever they went into town. There were almost 20 students at the school! And not having a clue how to act at a party. What if they'd never moved to town, as I'm sure a lot of people didn't? Who did those people marry?
- For someone who hated to sew, Ma sure did a damn good job of it. Can you imagine doing all that by hand? I'm sure a lot of women just ran around in big old sack dresses. But Ma had a bit of upper-class striving that makes Laura's scorn of Nellie Oleson a little funny, IMO.
- Good Lord, the blackface. Progress is good.

Tatiana says

Most problematic of the bunch so far.

Minstrel show? Lunatic fringe? Half-wit? 23-year old Almanzo slithering around 15-year old Laura?

And why is Ma so keen on Laura becoming a teacher? It seems to be a one-year-of-teaching-and-then-get-married sort of enterprise. Why even bother?

Kelly says

So "The Long Winter" is about 7 months that were very long.

"Little Town on the Prairie" is about 3 years, most of the winters unworthy of mention.

But at the end, Laura is now a teacher and is being courted by Almanzo (even though she's clueless about that being the case). Also, Mary's at college and hasn't been home in a few Christmases.

The school scenes are excruciatingly boring. No wonder Laura hated going so much. And yet.

Jaime says

When I was younger, I distinctly remember not enjoying the later books in this series as well because Laura grew up and the events weren't as exciting. But now, as I re-read it, I eagerly keep reading and lavish over the events of her young adult years. I love these books, every single one, every age, aspect, and adventure of Laura's life. It's just so exciting.

Plus I embarrass myself by my reaction to Almanzo's appearances. What a dreamboat! :)

Bethany says

I tend to forget how much I love these books (and especially this one) until I re-read them for about the 60th time!! Now it's even nicer because I'm able to read them for the first time to my little sister who is loving them just as much as I did!

Jane Greensmith says

Always a comfortable treat to read--one of my favorites in the series.

Kricket says

oh, this one is so good. the ingalls family is no longer starving/freezing, so things are starting to look up for them.

highlights:

- they get a cat!!
- mary goes away to college in an extremely pretty dress
- almanzo wilder starts sniffing around
- they have enough to eat
- it does not snow inside the house
- they get chickens

low points:

- miss wilder being a real jerk. although, as evidenced by laura's own teaching certificate, teachers were only tested on knowledge and not classroom-management skills.
- pa participating in a racist literary minstrel show. i love garth williams but i cringed so hard when i saw that illustration.
- ma continuing to hate indians
- i'm really worried about carrie's headaches
- kinda bummed me out that even in the 1880s Laura was looking in the mirror and wishing she could be tall and willowy like Nellie Oleson.

Michaila says

Love this book just as much as always. Good ol' American heart, ethics, and Christianity <3 So fascinating to see what we were like 100+ years ago.

Nova says

I loved the sense of re-birth. After reading The Long Winter, it felt great to be warm and light-hearted again.

Catherine ? says

I feel like my favorites in this series were Little House on the Prairie and Farmer Boy. I liked the others, but they simply couldn't match up to those two.

Lynn says

Love love love these books!! Absolutely wonderful! What will happen with Almanzo and Laura now that she'll be teaching school 12 miles away? Carrie will be lost without her big sister Laura around! Laura and Pa and Ma are all smart! I love the Literaries the town does! What neat community-building!

Diane says

About two years ago I started rereading the Little House books. It started as a whim after visiting Minnesota and driving by one of the places where Laura Ingalls used to live. I had read these books with my mother when I was a child, and I grew up with the popular TV show based on the series, so there was a hefty dose of nostalgia whenever I reread one of the books.

Now that nostalgia has become even more powerful, because book seven, *Little Town on the Prairie*, was the first one that I read aloud to my mother. My mom suffers from brain cancer and has trouble communicating, but she was so delighted to hear these stories again! She smiled and laughed, and enjoyed looking at the illustrations of life on the prairie.

Little Town takes place in De Smet, South Dakota, when Laura was 15. She wants to study hard so she can earn a teacher's certificate and help pay for her blind sister, Mary, to go to college. Laura gets her first taste of adulthood when she gets a job working as a seamstress in town, and she also gets attention from a young man named Almanzo Wilder. The stories are mostly sweet and charming, with the exception of mean Nellie Oleson and a bad teacher. Luckily Pa and Ma always have some wisdom and comfort to give.

Overall this was a joy to read, and I was happy to again share this story with my mother.

Favorite Quote

"This earthly life is a battle," said Ma. "If it isn't one thing to contend with it's another. It has always been so, and it always will be. The sooner you make up your mind to that, the better off you are, and the more thankful for your pleasures."

Celeste says

This installment was much more fun than the last. There were no crazy blizzards that resulted in near starvation and a level of cold that sinks into your bones and seems like it will stay there forever. In this book we see the Ingalls family experiencing more prosperity than ever before in the series. While their preparations for winter are much more thorough, they find themselves enjoying a mild winter almost completely free of the blizzards that plagued them the year before. The family has plenty to eat, plenty of fuel for their stove and hearth, and plenty of new and exciting entertainments when they move back into town for the winter.

Laura is now a young lady, and is getting closer and closer to becoming a teacher so that she can help support Mary, who leaves for college in this book. Laura develops friendships and starts to grow into herself, attracting the attention of her future husband. I enjoyed getting more details of life in town, from the birthday parties to the Literary meetings, from the current fashions to the autograph books and name cards that become so popular. Laura experiences so many tremendous changes in this book, but we are shown that even greater changes will be coming in the next installment.

I can't believe I'm nearing the end of Laura's story. Only two books left in the series!
