

## *Little House on the Prairie*

### **The Basics**

#### **Subject Area**

6<sup>th</sup> Grade General Music

#### **Standards:** Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Arts

- 9.1.8.A. Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities (elements: duration, intensity, pitch, timbre and principles: composition, form, genre, harmony, rhythm, and texture)
- 9.1.8.B. Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review, and revise original works in the arts (sing, play an instrument, read and notate music, compose and arrange, improvise)
- 9.1.8.C. Identify and use comprehensive vocabulary within each of the arts forms
- 9.1.8.F. Explain works of others within each art form through performance or exhibition
- 9.1.8.J. Incorporate specific uses of traditional and contemporary technologies within the design for producing, performing and exhibiting works in the arts or the works of others (explain and demonstrate traditional technologies)
- 9.2.8.A. Explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts
- 9.2.8.B. Relate works in the arts chronologically to historical events
- 9.2.8.C. Relate works in the arts to the varying styles and genre and to the periods in which they were created
- 9.2.8.D. Analyze a work of art from its historical events and cultural perspective
- 9.2.8.E. Analyze how historical events and culture impact forms, techniques and purposes of the arts
- 9.2.8.F. Know and apply appropriate vocabulary used between social studies and the arts and humanities
- 9.2.8.G. Relate works in the arts to geographic regions
- 9.2.8.H. Identify, describe and analyze the work of Pennsylvania artists in dance, music, theater and visual arts
- 9.2.8.K. Identify, explain and analyze traditions as they relate to works in the arts
- 9.3.8.B. Identify and classify style, forms, types and genre within art forms
- 9.4.8.C. Compare and contrast the attributes of how the audience's environment influence aesthetic responses

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### **The Lesson**

#### **Introduction**

This will be a 3-4 week unit on the history, music and culture of The Little House book series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. I will see my students daily for 60 days total (trimester) for 45 minutes a class. Students will be exposed to and learn to sing a variety of songs from each of the 8 books in the series, learn about various historically important events during Laura Ingalls Wilder's life, learn popular dances and singing games of the time, and

participate in hands on activities that are similar to what Laura Ingalls Wilder would have done in her lifetime. The songs chosen include Scottish folk songs, children's singing games, popular dances and jigs, hymns, railroad songs, and songs sung at home for entertainment. These songs have been carefully selected so that each of the books are represented in a literary context, cover Laura's entire life in the books, and fit in with historical content in the world. My music class often "fills in the cracks" of language arts, social studies, art, and science by doing activities that fit in with both music and other subjects. Many of my students do not get exposure to Westward expansion or classic children's literature in their regular education classes, so this will serve as an exposure to this important topic. Because my students will learn to sing all of the songs in the unit, as well as learn piano accompaniments to several and learn dances, this definitely covers many of the Pennsylvania Standards for Fine Arts. The unit will culminate in a written and listening test on the material covered in the unit.

**Objectives:**

Students will have a deeper understanding of traditional American, Scottish, and Irish folk music from the 1830s through to the 1950s, essentially, the music of Laura's parents through to the end of her life.

Students will be able to sing and perform songs, dances, and singing games from Laura's lifetime.

**Resource Materials:**

Anderson, William, and Leslie A. Kelly. *Laura Ingalls Wilder Country: [the People and Places in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Life and Books]*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1990. Print.

Anderson, William, and Leslie A. Kelly. *The Little House Guidebook*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. Print.

Dale, Cockrell, ed. *The Ingalls Wilder Family Songbook (Music of the United States of America)*. 71st ed. Vol. 22. N.p.: A-R Editions, 2011. Print. Music of America.

Collins, Carolyn Strom., Christina Wyss. Eriksson, and Mary Collier. *My Little House Crafts Book: 18 Projects from Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House Stories*. [New York]: HarperTrophy, 1998. Print.

Garson, E., and G. Williams. *The Laura Ingalls Wilder Songbook: Favorite Songs from the "Little House" Books*. Ed. H. Haufrecht. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. Print.

Irwin, Margaret, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Mary Collier. *My Little House Sewing Book: 8 Projects from Laura Ingalls Wilder's Classic Stories*. [New York]: HarperFestival, 1997. Print.

McClure, Wendy. *The Wilder Life: My Adventures in the Lost World of Little House on the Prairie*. New York: Riverhead, 2011. Print.

Olney, David, Andrea Zonn, Pat Enright, Douglas B. Green, Butch Baldassari, Keith Little, Deborah Packard, John Mock, Jep Bisbee, and Dale Cockrell. *Happy Land. Pa's Fiddle Recordings*, 2005. CD.

Shepherd, Ashton, Rodney Atkins, Randy Travis, Ronnie Milsap, Natalie Grant, and Laura Ingalls Wilder. *Pa's Fiddle the Music of America*. Compass Records, 2012. CD.

Walker, Barbara M. *The Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods from Laura Ingalls Wilder's Classic Stories*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *By the Shores of Silver Lake*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *Farmer Boy*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *The First Four Years*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *Little House in the Big Woods*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *Little House on the Prairie*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *Little Town on the Prairie*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *The Long Winter*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Garth Williams. *These Happy Golden Years*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1953. Print.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, John Cowan, Butch Baldassari, Matt Combs, Byron House, Jeffrey Taylor, Elizabeth Cook, Mike Bub, Bob Carlin, Pat Enright, Buddy Greene, Pat Flynn, Deborah Packard, John Mock, Mike Eldred, Judith Edelman, Mac Wiseman, Mark Howard, David Schnaufer, Andrea Zorn, Alison Brown, Jeff Black, and Stanley Boyd Link. *The Arkansas Traveler*. Pa's Fiddle Recordings, 2006. MP3.

Zochert, Donald. *Laura: The Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1976. Print.

*Pa's Fiddle: Charles Ingalls, American Fiddler*.. 2012. CD.

## **Songs:**

“Buy A Broom”, “Camptown Races”, “Oh, Susanna”, “Buffalo Gals”, “Old Dan Tucker”, “Polly-Wolly-Doodle”, “Pop! Goes The Weasel”, “A Railroad Man For Me”, “Barbary Allen”, “Bonny Doon”, “There Is A Happy Land”, “Captain Jinks”, “Uncle John”, “Irish Washerwoman”, and “The Arkansas Traveler”

## **Background Sources:**

[Music From Laura Ingall’s Wilder Little House](#)

Website with all lyrics

[Little House On The Prairie](#)

Website with Laura Ingalls Wilder background and activities

[Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home & Museum](#)

Actual museum website of Laura Ingalls Wilder

[Laura Ingalls Wilder Frontier Girl](#)

Research and Information about Laura Ingalls Wilder

[Herbert Hoover Presidential Library](#)

Activities and information about Laura Ingalls Wilder

[The Little House Books](#)

Link to purchase actual [Little House Series](#)

[Laura Ingalls Wilder: William Anderson](#)

Biography about Laura Ingalls Wilder

## **Song Backgrounds:**

[Buy A Broom](#)

[Camptown Races](#)

[Oh! Susanna](#)

[Buffalo Gals](#)

[Old Dan Tucker](#)

[Polly-Wolly-Doodle](#)

[Pop! Goes The Weasel](#)

[A Railroad Man For Me](#)

[Barbary Allen](#)

[Bonny Doon](#)

[There Is A Happy Land](#)

[Captain Jinks](#)

[Uncle John](#)

Irish Washerwoman (Instrumental)  
The Arkansas Traveler (Instrumental)

**Lyrics:**

[Buy A Broom](#)  
[Camptown Races](#)  
[Oh! Susanna](#)  
[Buffalo Gals](#)  
[Old Dan Tucker](#)  
[Polly-Wolly-Doodle](#)  
[Pop! Goes The Weasel](#)  
[A Railroad Man For Me](#)  
[Barbary Allen](#)  
[Bonny Doon](#)  
[There Is A Happy Land](#)  
[Captain Jinks](#)  
[Uncle John](#)  
Irish Washerwoman (Instrumental)  
The Arkansas Traveler (Instrumental)

**Additional Resources:**

[Covered Wagon Project](#)  
Activity instructions to create a covered wagon out of a shoebox

[Packing Your Covered Wagon](#)  
Online resource listing items needed per person for packing a covered wagon

[Spelling Bee List](#)  
Spelling Bee Lists by grade level. I recommend choosing a few from each grade level to give students an idea about the types of words included.

[Laura Ingalls Wilder Mapping Activity](#)  
From Herbert Hoover Library - includes a timeline of events and a map

[How To Make Butter](#)  
Instructions for “shaking” butter in a mason jar

[Button String](#)  
How to make a button string, just like Carrie’s in [On The Banks Of Plum Creek](#)

[Craft A Clove Apple Pomander](#)  
Create a clove apple pomander similar to one in [Little House In The Big Woods](#)

### [Little House Lapbooks](#)

Create a homeschool lapbook resource

### [Arkansas Traveler Virginia Reel](#)

Video footage of the Virginia Reel danced to the Arkansas Traveler

### [Irish Washerwoman Dance](#)

Pairs dance to the Irish Washerwoman

## **Discussion Questions And Vocabulary:**

**Days One And Two:** What do you think the most important event during Laura's life is most important? Why?

**Vocabulary:** Wisconsin, Pioneer, Invention

**Day Three:** What was your favorite song when you were three or four?

**Days Four and Five:** How is Bruce Springsteen's cover of "Old Dan Tucker" different from what might have been heard during Laura's life? What items would you have to take on a covered wagon trip across country? What items would you want to take with you? What items would you have to leave behind?

**Vocabulary:** Prairie, Wagon, Pasture, Settler, Chores, Scarce, Campfire

**Days Six and Seven:** What games did you enjoy playing as a child? What do you think life was like in a one room schoolhouse? What fads are popular now?

**Vocabulary:** Name Cards, Autograph Books

**Day Eight:** Have you ever been on a train? Why were the railroads important during Laura's life?

**Vocabulary:** Rails, Caboose, Conductor, Velvet, Engine, Engineer, Railcar, Yard, Switch

**Days Nine, Ten and Eleven:** What chores are you responsible for at home? How long does it take you to prepare dinner at night? How long does it take you or your parents to re-decorate a room?

**Vocabulary:** Churning, Butter Pat, Calico

**Days Twelve and Thirteen:** What dances do you like to do? Why do people enjoy going to dances?

**Vocabulary:** Jig, Fiddle, Reel

## **Procedures/Extension Activities:**

**Days One and Two** - Introduction to Laura Ingalls Wilder, Little House books, and our unit. Begin by handing out timeline activity worksheet. Open up Keynote presentation and go through presentation with students. Explain my reasoning for this entire unit (love Little House, students don't usually read them anymore, living history is much more memorable, music in books contains an amazing rich tradition in the United States). Reminder that this Keynote is not verbatim what I will be saying, but will contain additional anecdotes. While students are watching and listening, they should be filling in their timeline worksheet. See resources below. Allow students some time to complete their timeline. With a large roll of whiteboard contact paper, allow students to fill in their information on the wall of the music room. As a closing activity, students will write on a paint chip (color swatch samples from home improvement stores - they're free!) what they feel the most important event they wrote down and why *or* what connection have you made that seems similar to life today and a big difference that is different from life today.

**Day Three** - Ask the students what their favorite song from when they were 3 or 4 years old. Explain that after a long day of hunting and trapping, Pa would play Laura and Mary's favorite song, "Pop! Goes The Weasel". Sing through the song with the students and explain it's origin from around 1855 in England. Ask students where they have heard this song before (Jack In The Box and ice cream truck). Project the words and piano chords and send students to the keyboards. Review the positions for C, G7, and F chords and invite the students to play the chords while I sing the lyrics. Play the chords while students sing the lyrics and as a final activity, have students play and sing at the same time.

Begin the first day of the circulator letter. Explain concept - a round robin sort of letter sent from family to family with new information added. I will have a beginning introduction done, student in seat number one should add 3-4 lines and turn it in. Circulator will be done during every class until every student has a chance to write their news. At the end, I will add my final news and share the entire letter with students.

**Day Four and Five**- As students enter the room, have Bruce Springsteen's cover of "Old Dan Tucker" playing. Ask students how might this sound different during Laura's time (fewer instruments, less rowdy, Pa's fiddle). Listen to a more traditional recording and have students complete a Venn Diagram with similarities and differences. Explain that this song was sung in the book The Little House On The Prairie as the Ingalls were traveling into Indian territory by covered wagon. Model the song for the students and have them pat the steady beat as they learn the song.

Have students create their own covered wagon using a shoe box. Students will follow the directions with teacher guidance and write out on construction paper the items their family would need to take with them, the items they would want to take if they have room, and the items that they would have to leave behind (need: food specifics and clothes, want: toys, leave behind: furniture)

**Days Six and Seven:** When students enter the room, they will need to answer the following question: What games did you enjoy playing as a little child? Take them through “Uncle John” as it appears in On The Banks Of Plum Creek. Play through a few rounds (essentially “Ring Around The Rosy”) and have the students take turns. Describe what a one room schoolhouse would be like and take students through Laura’s education and her time as a teacher. If time permits, hold a brief spelling bee using actual spelling bee lists of the time.

Talk about fads in school and what items are popular now versus Laura’s time. Read the passages in Little Town On The Prairie and These Happy Golden Years regarding autograph books and name cards. Give students the opportunity to create their own autograph books and/or name cards using instructions. Explain that the autograph books are different from a yearbook as the point was to write specific verses or poetry that suited that friend. Students will have time to exchange name cards and write in each other’s autograph books.

**Day Eight:** Music of By The Shores Of Silver Lake. Take students through “A Railroad Man For Me”. Students will learn song line by line. Read passage in the book about Laura watching the railroad men build a track as well as her first railroad ride. Using the laptop cart, have students create a map with dates of all of her travels.

**Days Nine, Ten and Eleven:** Songs at Home. Using passages in Little House In The Big Woods, describe what chores Laura would have to do and what kind of work Ma did at home. Teach students “Buy A Broom” - concentrating on the waltz rhythm. If time allows, show students a basic waltz step. Butter churning - I will bake a traditional white bread. Students will churn butter by shaking it in a mason jar (shaking). If every student shakes for a minute, we should have butter by the end of class.

Take students through the song “Bonny Doon”, explaining that it was a favorite of the Ingalls family, particularly when they were sewing, mending and decorating. Have students sing the song. Pass out recorders and have students play the first two lines of the song. Pass out manila construction paper and have students create starry shelf papers to decorate the classroom shelves. Students will also receive a piece of maple sugar candy, which would have been a rare treat for Laura.

After learning the song “Buffalo Gals”, another domestic song, students will have their choice of creating a button string or a clove apple. Remind students that bathing was far less frequent (once a week) and that the clove apple would be used to help scent the house.

**Days Twelve and Thirteen:** Dance music. Play through Irish Washerwoman and Arkansas Traveler. Explain that these songs would be used at local dances. Dances were very popular as it gave members of the opposite sex a chance to mingle. They also only happened after a big event, in the case of Little House In The Big Woods, after the maple sugaring. Teach the students a basic circle dance (jig style) to the Irish Washerwoman.

Day Thirteen will be spent teaching the students a simplified Virginia Reel. If time permits, show several dances from Youtube.



**Days Fourteen and Fifteen:** will be spent creating a lapbook of materials culled from the internet. This will give the students a permanent resource of Little House materials.

**Closure:** Closing activity will be creating the lapbook (a homeschool interactive notebook resource), running through all of the songs learned and reviewing materials.

**Evaluation:** Students will take a 25 point quiz on all of the material learned. Quiz to be written at a later date.

**Reflection:** I am excited to start this lesson with my 6th grade students. We will probably start on this in the 2nd or 3rd week of the trimester (I see my students for 60 class periods every day, 45 minutes a day). I think that I will find certain songs will fall flat for my students, which may give me an opportunity to choose different songs, and certain activities may be too time consuming and may need to be cut. I look forward to the trial and error in further refining this unit.

## **TIMELINE ACTIVITY WORKSHEET**

From this time in history, research and list:

2 to 5 events in Laura's family.

3 to 5 events in U.S. or world history.

A U.S. President/First Lady fact.

An invention or technology fact.

Include three illustrations to go with your some of your facts. These may be hand drawn or computer made and may include one photocopy per group. Illustrations will be added to the class timeline.

## **CIRCULATOR LETTER**

Dear Mod 3 Music Class,

It's been a busy summer and time for me getting ready for music class. I spent most of the summer in Pittsburgh studying American Music. You can definitely see how those 5 weeks inspired me! I also met and worked with many great teachers and had some great experiences, including seeing one of my favorite bands, Great Big Sea. After I got home, I worked very hard to make the music room look great and prepared music for our 2 choruses. I also started sewing 4 new costumes, 1 for my husband, 1 for my best friend Jenn, 1 for the Renaissance Faire and 1 that you might see here at school fairly soon! I look forward hearing from all of you in this letter and to hear how your school year is going.

Fondly,  
Mrs. Pugs

## **AUTOGRAPH BOOK**

"In Laura's package was a beautiful small book, too. It was thin, and wider than it was tall. On its red cover, embossed in gold, were the words, AUTOGRAPH ALBUM. The pages, of different soft colors, were blank."

You will need:

4 sheets of legal-size paper,  
8 1/2" x 14" (plain or colored)  
Piece of construction paper,  
4 1/4" x 14" (for the cover)  
Pencil  
3 pushpins  
Heavy thread, embroidery floss, or thin ribbon  
Scissors  
Ruler  
4 large paper clips  
Cork board Needle

Cut the pieces of paper in half lengthwise, so that you have 8 sheets that are 4 1/4" x 14". Stack the sheets on top of the construction paper. Fold the stack in half with the construction paper on the outside and crease. Unfold and paper clip the pages and cover together at the four corners.

With a ruler, measure along the crease and mark a dot 1 1/8" from the top edge. Make another dot 1" from the first dot. Mark a third dot 1" from the second. The third dot should be 1 1/8" from the bottom edge of the paper.

Place the clipped, marked booklet on the cork board, making sure the crease rests on the cork board. Pierce the pages at the dots with the pushpins. Twirl the pushpins to make sure all pages have been pierced.

Thread the needle and make a knot about 5" from the end of the thread. Remove the pushpins but do not remove the paper clips.

Hold the stack so that the construction paper is on the top. Run the thread down through the second hole and up through the first hole. Then run the thread down through the second hole again and up through the third hole. Then run the thread across to the second hole and tie the two ends of the thread together. Make a bow.