ArtsPower
NATIONAL TOURING THEATRE
SINCE 1985

Study Buddy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This performance study guide published by ArtsPower National Touring Theatre is designed to help your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss **Laura Ingalls Wilder: Growing Up on the Prairie**. It contains background information and cross-curricular activities to complete both before and after the performance.

Inside this guide, you will find...

GARY W. BLACKMAN *Co-Founder, Managing Director*
MARK A. BLACKMAN *Co-Founder, Dir. of Development*
GREG GUNNING *Artistic Director*
KAREN BIBBO *Company & Production Manager*
KIM WOOD *Senior National Sales Associate*

Laura Ingalls Wilder: Growing Up on the Prairie; **Written and Directed** by Greg Gunning; **Musical Score** by Richard DeRosa; **Lyrics** by Greg Gunning; **Incidental Music** by Ron Drotos; **Costumes** by Fred P. Sorrentino; **Set** by Red Dot Studios.

Laura Ingalls Wilder

Growin' Up on the Prairie

ARTSPOWER 9 SAND PARK ROAD SUITE 6 CEDAR GROVE, NJ 07009 (973) 239-0100

FOR TEACHERS

Laura Ingalls Wilder: Growing Up on the Prairie is a musical play based on the childhood memories of American author Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Before the performance:

✳ Read "The Play's Story" to your class.

✳ Have students complete Reproducible Page 3 to become familiar with the play's geography.

✳ Introduce the cast of characters and the theatrical term "doubling" discussed below.

After the performance:

✳ Have students read Reproducible Page 4 to learn more about Laura Ingalls Wilder.

✳ Direct students to complete the writing activity on Reproducible Page 5, a personal reflection on a theme from the play.

The Play's Story

Pioneering Spirit. That's the feeling of adventure and curiosity that drives the Ingalls family Westward, searching for a place to live. **Laura Ingalls Wilder: Growing Up on the Prairie** follows the Ingalls family–Pa, Ma, Mary, and Laura–as they travel in a covered wagon through America's frontier land in the 1870's and 1880's. As they travel, the Ingalls family builds new homes, battles swarms of grasshoppers, fights illness, and welcomes a new baby. As Laura grows up, she compares herself to her smart older sister, Mary. Laura loves to fish and catch gophers, but compared to Mary, does not feel that she is as skilled at reading or writing. She seeks to discover what she can do well. Through her pioneering spirit, Laura overcomes obstacles with her family and learns that she, too, has special talents.

Doubling –

Theatre companies often employ actors to play more than one role in a performance. "Doubling" is a theatrical device you can introduce to your class. Before the performance, list the play's characters on the chalkboard.

Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

1. Laura Ingalls

2. Charles Ingalls - Laura's "Pa"

3. Caroline Ingalls - Laura's "Ma"

4. Mary Ingalls - Laura's older sister

5. Nellie Owens - Laura's rival, when she moves to the Dakota Territory

Tell students, *"During the performance, you will see four actors play five characters. One actor plays two characters. When an actor plays more than one character, we call that 'doubling.'"* Ask students to predict which roles are doubled. (The actor who plays Mary "doubles" as Nellie Owens.)

During the performance, direct your students, *"Watch for which roles are doubled and how the actor playing two roles shows that he or she becomes another character."*

After the performance, discuss ways the actor showed that she became another character.
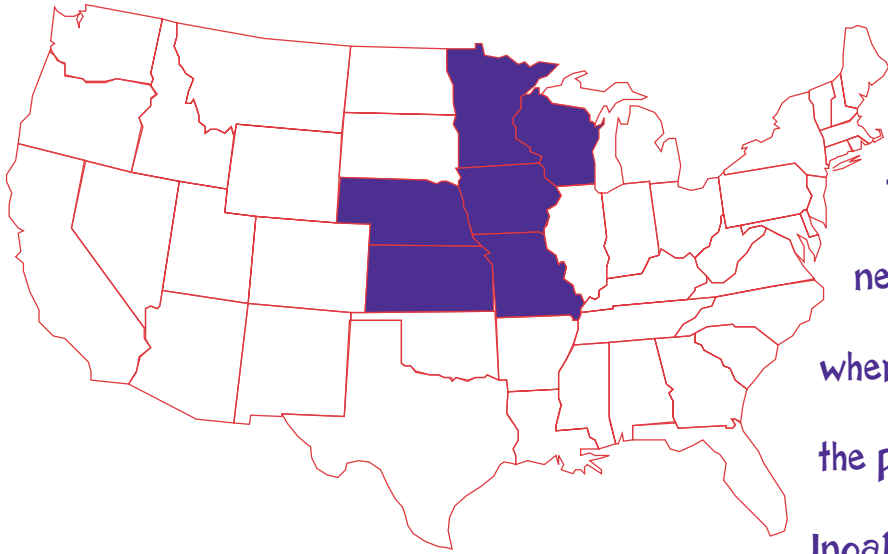
During the play, the Ingalls family travels by covered wagon to three new homes. Below is a map of the states where the family moves and lives during the play. Use a pencil to show the Ingalls family's travels.

1. Draw a little house in Wisconsin.

2. Trace a line to show the family's travels through Iowa and Missouri to Kansas.

3. Draw a little house in Kansas.

4. Trace a line to show the journey through Nebraska and Iowa to Minnesota.

5. Draw a little house in Minnesota. Connect it to a final little house in the Dakota Territory.
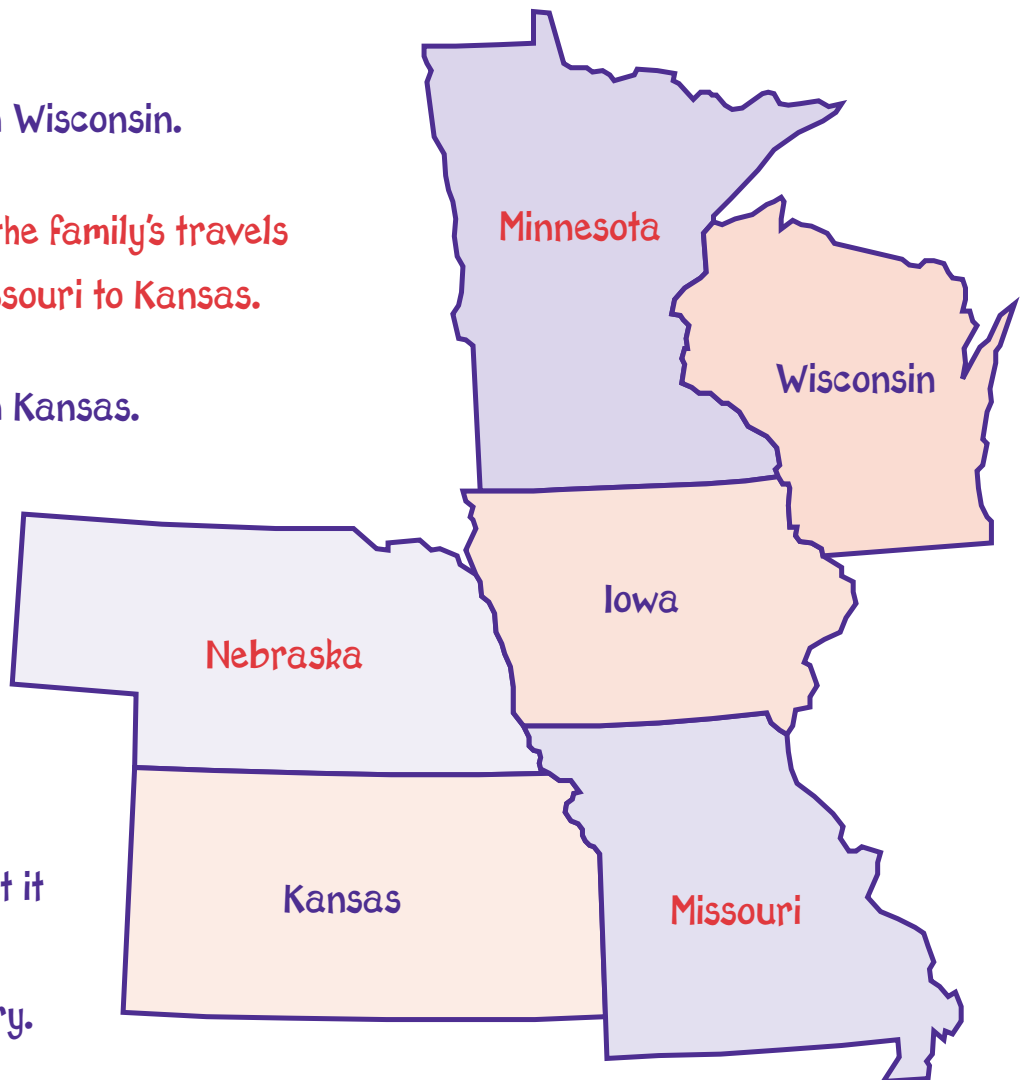
Laura Elizabeth Ingalls

Laura Elizabeth Ingalls was born in Wisconsin on February 7, 1867. Like her father, she loved to travel. Like her mother, she loved to read. Laura was the best student in her school. At fifteen years old, she was hired to be a teacher. Because she was younger than other teachers, she was not allowed to tell anyone how old she was. At eighteen, she married Almanzo ("Manly") Wilder, and at nineteen, she had her first child, Rose. When Laura was over sixty years old, she began to write about her childhood life on the prairie. These memories became the Little House books. The titles of her books are on the cut-out bookmark.

THE LITTLE HOUSE BOOKS

by Laura Ingalls Wilder

★ LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

★ LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

FARMER BOY

ON THE BANKS OF PLUM CREEK

BY THE SHORES OF SILVER LAKE

★ THE LONG WINTER

LITTLE TOWN ON THE PRAIRIE

★ THESE HAPPY GOLDEN YEARS

THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

ARTSPOWER 271 GROVE AVENUE, BLDG. A VERONA, NJ 07044 (973) 239-0100

To make your own bookmark, cut along the dotted line. Take your bookmark to the library. Find and enjoy Laura Ingalls Wilder's books!

Lines are words that actors memorize and speak to tell a play's story. Here are lines spoken by Laura and Pa during the play.

LAURA: Hey, Pa? What's the one thing I'm good at - that nobody else can do?

PA: Huh?

LAURA: Mary's the smartest. But who am I?

PA: *(teasing her)* You're a Half-pint!

LAURA: *(frustrated)* Pa!

Laura searched until she found that she was good at learning, writing, and teaching. What do you do well? Use the web, below, to organize your thoughts.

I AM GOOD AT:

_____

How I became interested in this:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How I learned to do this:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How I feel when I do this:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Theatre Collaborators

1. **List the following theatre jobs on the chalkboard:**
Writer/Lyricist, Composer, Producer, Director, Costume Designer,
Set Designer, Light and Sound Designer, Crew, Stage Manager

2. **Read the following paragraph to your class.**

"Theatre is a collaborative art: many people work together to create a play. The audience never sees many of the people who collaborate to make theatre. Collaborators include: the writer/lyricist, who writes the words the actors speak and sing; the composer, who writes the music; the producer, who provides money to fund the performance and supervises the play's creation; the director, who determines the overall desired effect/goal for the production; designers for costumes, scenery, lighting and sound; the crew who build and operate scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound; and the stage manager, who ensures that people and things get on and off stage at the proper time."

3. **Discuss:**
"What skills do you think are needed to perform each theatrical collaborator's job?
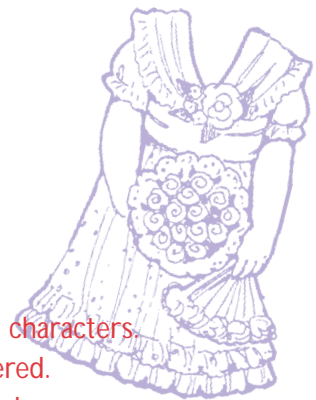Who would need to: be organized? draw well? enjoy hammering? speak well?
be creative? lead a group? be strong?"
(There may be more than one "correct" answer for each question.)
"What job would you enjoy? Why?"

Costume Design

1. **Read the following paragraph to your students.**

"Costumes support the play's setting in time and place, and provide clues about characters. Costumes tell the audience a lot about a character before a single word is uttered. They reveal a character's age, time in history, occupation, social status, and attitudes. The costume designer plans costumes that will support a character's development."

2. **Before the performance:**

Direct students to complete the activity on Page 7.
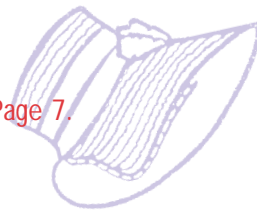
3. **After the performance:**

Discuss, "How were your drawings similar to/different from those seen in the play? How did the costumes you designed and those you saw in the play reveal characters' ages, time in history, social status and attitudes?"

Use the dress pattern, below, along with the character descriptions and lines from the play, to design a costume for either Laura Ingalls or Nellie Owens.

Think about the character's time in history, social status, attitudes, and age. Consider colors, patterns, and clothing accents, like buttons, lace, or ribbons. Feel free to add accessories like a hat, gloves, or fan, if it suits the character.

LAURA is an energetic tomboy: like-able, fun-loving, quick-paced, deter-mined and intelligent.
She loves new adventures and is always ready to meet new challenges.

NELLIE is a pretty, but stuck-up, snobbish, spoiled brat who "looks down her nose" at Laura.

BOTH GIRLS
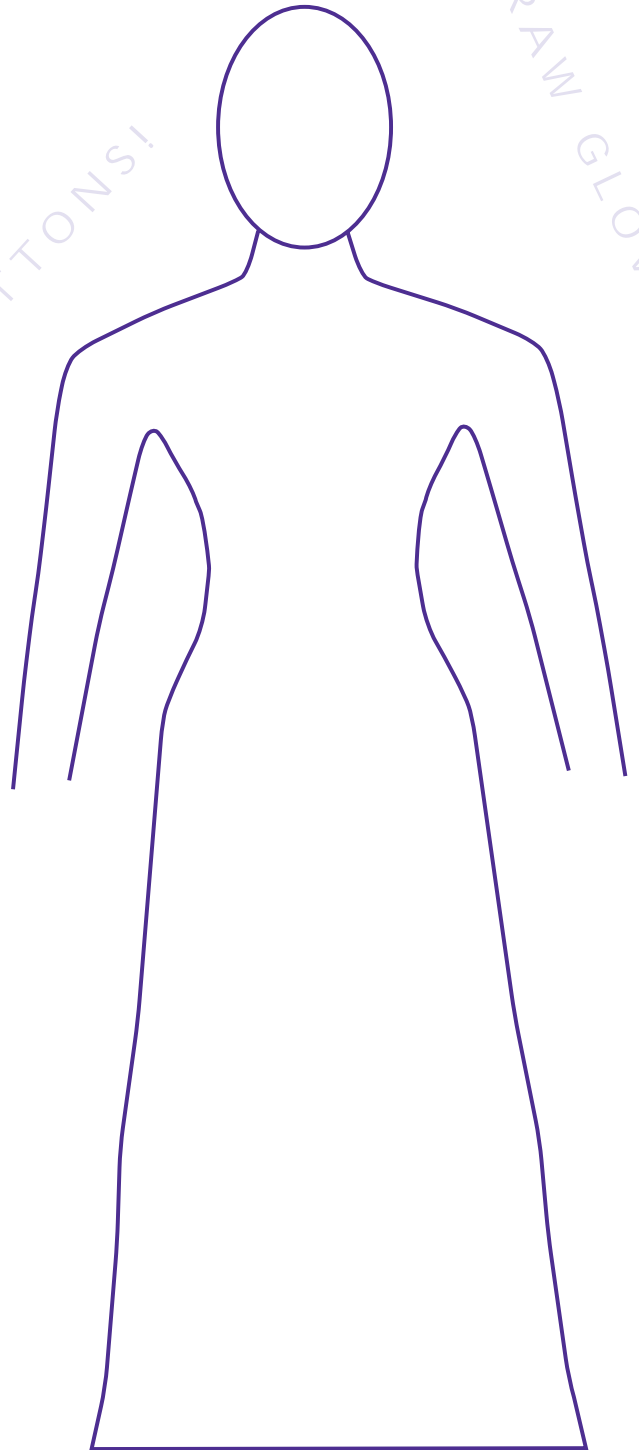are around eleven years old.

SCENE 4

LAURA

It was about a three mile walk into the town of Walnut Grove. The walk was no problem. Of course, I hated school. But it was in town that I had the real problem.

NELLIE

I don't associate with 'country girls' who live in sod-houses.

LAURA

Her name was Nellie Owens. Her father ran the general store. She ran the town.

DRAW A HAT!

DRAW GLOVES!

MAKE BUTTONS!

ADD A FAN!

MAKE A DRESS!

DRAW ON BOOTS!

HAVE FUN!

FINAL NOTES

The Audience

The audience is the final element in creating theatre. Until the audience arrives, a play is merely a rehearsal, not a performance.

"As an audience member, you play an important role. At the beginning of the play, the theatre will become dark. This is your cue to become very quiet. Because actors are in the same room, they–and other audience members–will become distracted if you make extra noise. During the play, feel free to laugh or even to cry at what's happening in the story. After songs and at the end of the play, clap to show your appreciation for the performers. Enjoy the play!"
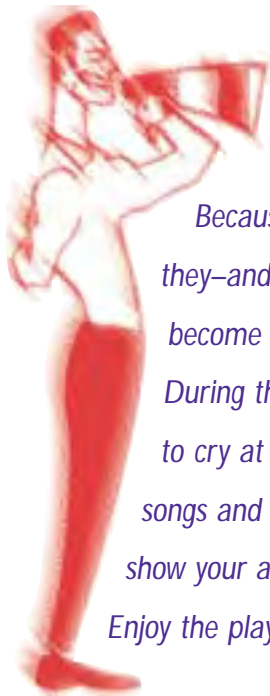
RESOURCES

Children's books about Laura Ingalls Wilder:

Anderson, William. Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Biography. New York: Harper Collins, 1992. (Grades 4-6)

Blair, Gwenda. Laura Ingalls Wilder. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981. (Grades 2-4)

Greene, Carol. Laura Ingalls Wilder: Author of the Little House Books. Chicago: Children's Press, 1990. (Grades 1-3)

Steine, Megan. Laura Ingalls Wilder: Pioneer Girl. New York, Dell Publishing, 1992. (Grades 3-4)

To obtain a mail order listing of classroom materials, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

> Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society
> Box 344
> DeSmet, SD 57231
> (605) 854-3383

Visit the Little House on the Prairie Home Page at: http://www.pinc.com/~jennslegg/index.htm.

To access ArtsPower's web site, type...
www.artspower.org

Did you laugh? Did you cry? Draw in the faces of all your friends in the audience.