

# *Little House in the Big Woods*

COMPREHENSION GUIDE



# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

Comprehension Guide  
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Designed by Ned Bustard



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *How to use this Guide*

This guide is intended to help you study, understand, and enjoy *Little House in the Big Woods*. You might ask if a guide is really necessary to read a book. Is the student not just working to improve reading skills while being taught to enjoy reading a book? Certainly, it is the case that the more a child reads, the more he should improve his skills, but quantity is not the only issue. Once a child has received adequate phonetic training, he should learn how to read a book. Most educators using this guide will be teaching children in the grammar stage, generally understood to be during the elementary years in a classical education. (For a thorough understanding of classical Christian education we recommend reading *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* or *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, both by Douglas Wilson.) The basic goals of reading in the grammar stage are as follows:

The student should be able to:

1. Fluently read a given selection orally.
2. Show an increased desire for reading.
3. Show comprehension on a literal and inferential level.
4. Demonstrate an increased vocabulary.
5. Identify basic Biblical values in the literature being read.
6. Identify various styles (myths, poems, fantasy, fiction, nonfiction, etc.)

Answers to the questions are found in the back of the guide. The students' answers should be in complete sentences, and they should restate the question in their answer.

*Example:*

**Question:** How did Laura become Mary's eyes?

**Answer:** Laura became Mary's eyes by describing to her sister what she saw.

Such writing practice trains the student to answer thoroughly, completely, and with proper grammar. Another reason is to encourage integration. We want students to understand that how they write something is as important as what they write. After the grammar stage, students enter the dialectic stage, where they develop an interest in logic, analysis and critical thinking. *Little House in the Big Woods* is a good book to start transitioning students into this stage.

You may wonder how to grade the student's work in this guide. Keep it simple. Unless otherwise indicated you should assume that each question is worth ten points.

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *About Laura Elizabeth Ingalls Wilder (1867–1957)*

### PIONEER GIRL

Laura Elizabeth Ingalls was born in Pepin, Wisconsin, on February 7, 1867. Her parents were Charles Ingalls and Caroline Quiner Ingalls. Mary, Carrie and Grace were her three sisters. Her brother Charles died when he was an infant.

The Ingalls family moved many times. We know what their family life was like when we read books from the Little House series. There were many happy times and some sad times.

One of the sad times was when Laura's sister Mary became ill with scarlet fever, which left her blind. As a result, Laura became Mary's eyes. She described things that she saw to Mary, which brought Mary much joy.

Laura finished school and became a teacher.

### FARMER'S WIFE

On August 25, 1885 Laura married a homesteader named Almanzo Wilder. They loved each other very much and looked forward to farming the Prairie. But farming was very difficult for them.

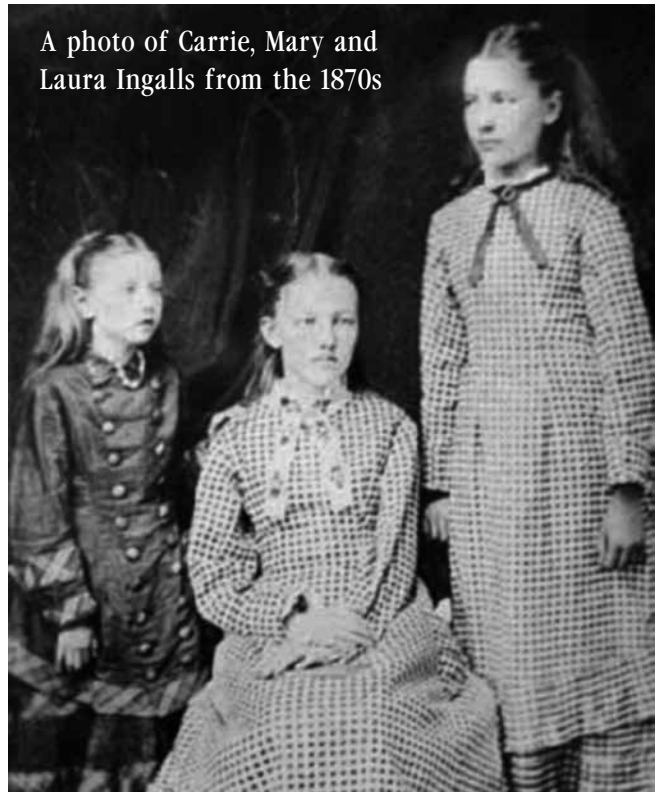
Hail, fire, illness and debt caused them to have to move many times. Crops were destroyed by hail, their house burned and Almanzo nearly became lame by an illness.

They finally settled on a forty-acre farm in Mansfield, Missouri. They called their home Rocky Ridge Farm and lived on this farm until their deaths. One of their great joys was their only daughter Rose.

### MOTHER

On December 5, 1886 in De Smet, Dakota Territory, Rose Wilder was born. She grew up to become a very talented student and writer. She was sent to a rigorous high school in Louisiana and soon became a well-paid writer. She encouraged her mother to write down stories from her childhood.

A photo of Carrie, Mary and Laura Ingalls from the 1870s



### AUTHOR

Rose loved listening to her mother's stories about her family and what life was like when Laura was a little girl. At age 65 Laura started to write down those stories. She wrote with a pencil on a lined school tablet. She told things as she remembered them.

She was able to paint a picture with words as she had done for her sister Mary. Reading her vivid descriptions, one can imagine what life was like for her. She recorded time-order descriptions of how things were done. Writing in ways that were easy for readers to understand, her word pictures came alive.

The experiences of her family's pioneer life tell the history of America from the perspective of one who lived that history. Living and recording her love for her country, people and the grace of Providence brought her national and worldwide acclaim.

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *About the Author, Page 2*

1. What was Laura Elizabeth Ingalls' birth date?

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2. How did Laura become Mary's eyes?

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3. Whom did she marry?

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4. What did Laura's daughter encourage her to do?

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5. What special skill did Laura Ingalls Wilder have that made her an excellent writer?

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6. If you became a writer, what would you write about?

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 1—Little House in the Big Woods*

1. Did the story being told in this book happen 60 years ago from today? Explain your answer.

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2. What made Laura feel safe from the wolves?

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3. How did Pa make the little smoke house?

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4. How were fish kept for the winter?

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5. Who came to help butcher the pig?

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6. How did Mary and Laura use the pig's bladder?

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 1, Project—Cornhusk Doll*

### *Supplies*

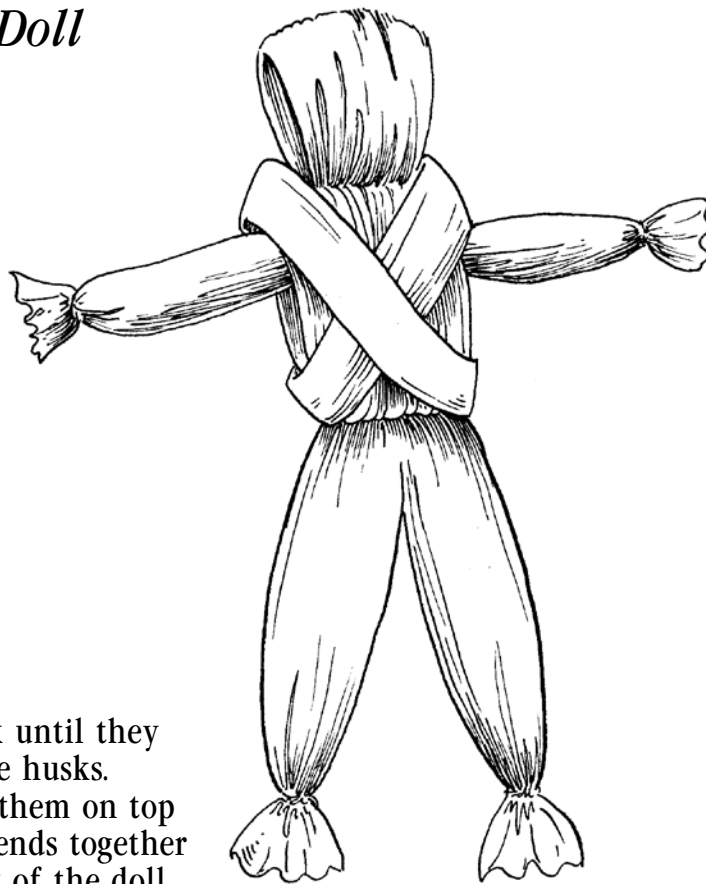
10 cornhusks (available at craft stores or in many supermarkets)

pan of water (large enough to hold the corn husks)

string

scissors

scraps of cloth, corn silk or yarn (optional)



### *Directions*

Place cornhusks in a pan water and soak until they are soft and bendable. Carefully separate the husks. Choose four husks about the same size. Lay them on top of one another. With string tie the pointed ends together close to the top. These husks make the body of the doll. Divide the husks in half and fold them over the string so that the string is inside. This will form the top of the doll's head. Wrap a string around the husks to form the head.

For the arms, flatten another cornhusk. Trim the pointed end straight across with a scissors. Then roll the husk into a tight tube. Or, you can cut the cornhusk lengthwise into three equal pieces and braid to form the arms. Tie each end of the arm tube or braid with a piece of string. Place the arm between the body husks below the head so that an arm sticks out on each side. With string, tie a waist around the body just below the arms. This will also help the arms stay in place.

For the shoulders, take another husk. Wrap it around the back of the neck and criss-cross it across the chest. Tie it to the doll around the waist.

For the legs, separate the body husks below the waist into 2 parts, tearing from the bottom if necessary. Tie each section at the ankle to make legs and cover with a small strip of husk tied over the string. Or leave the main husks untied to make a skirt.

Although the cornhusk doll's face is usually left blank other decorative touches can be added. You can cut other pieces of husk or scraps of cloth for clothes or to add hair with corn silk or yarn.



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 2—Winter Days and Winter Nights*

1. List the proper work for each day, according to Ma.

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

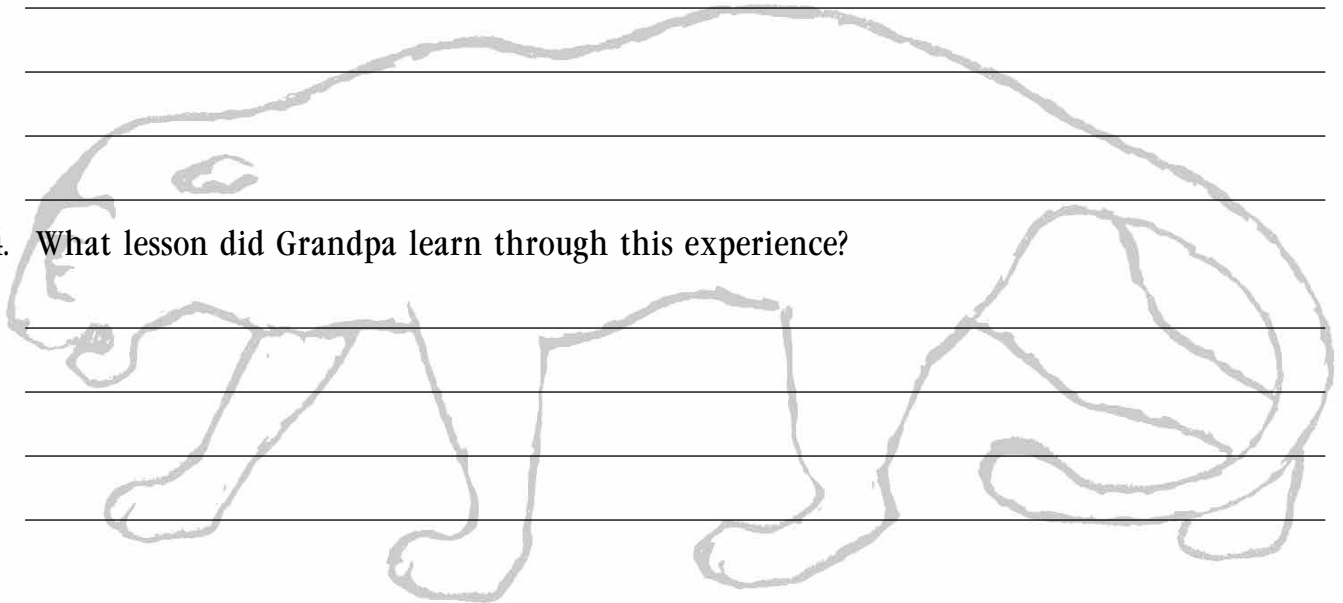
Saturday:

Sunday:

2. Describe how butter was made.

3. How was the panther killed?

4. What lesson did Grandpa learn through this experience?



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 2, Project—Making Butter*

*In Laura's day, people prepared just about everything they ate themselves. In Little House in the Big Woods, Laura describes how Ma made butter. You can also make butter at home.*

### *Ingredients*

1 pint heavy cream

large glass with tight-fitting lid

strainer

spoon

small cup

salt (optional)

crackers

### *Directions*

Pour the pint of heavy cream into the glass jar. Screw on the lid tightly. Working with a partner, take turns shaking the jar until bits of butter are seen. This will take at least 15 minutes. Refrigerate the jar for an hour. Holding a strainer over the sink, pour the contents of the jar into the strainer. Take turns rinsing the butter with cold, clean water until it firms up. Spoon the butter into a small cup. Add a little salt, if desired. Spread butter onto crackers and enjoy!

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 3—The Long Rifle*

1. Describe how Pa made bullets.

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2. What was in the patch box?

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3. When Pa was at home, where was the gun always located?

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4. How was Pa a naughty little boy?

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5. How was Pa disciplined by Grandpa?

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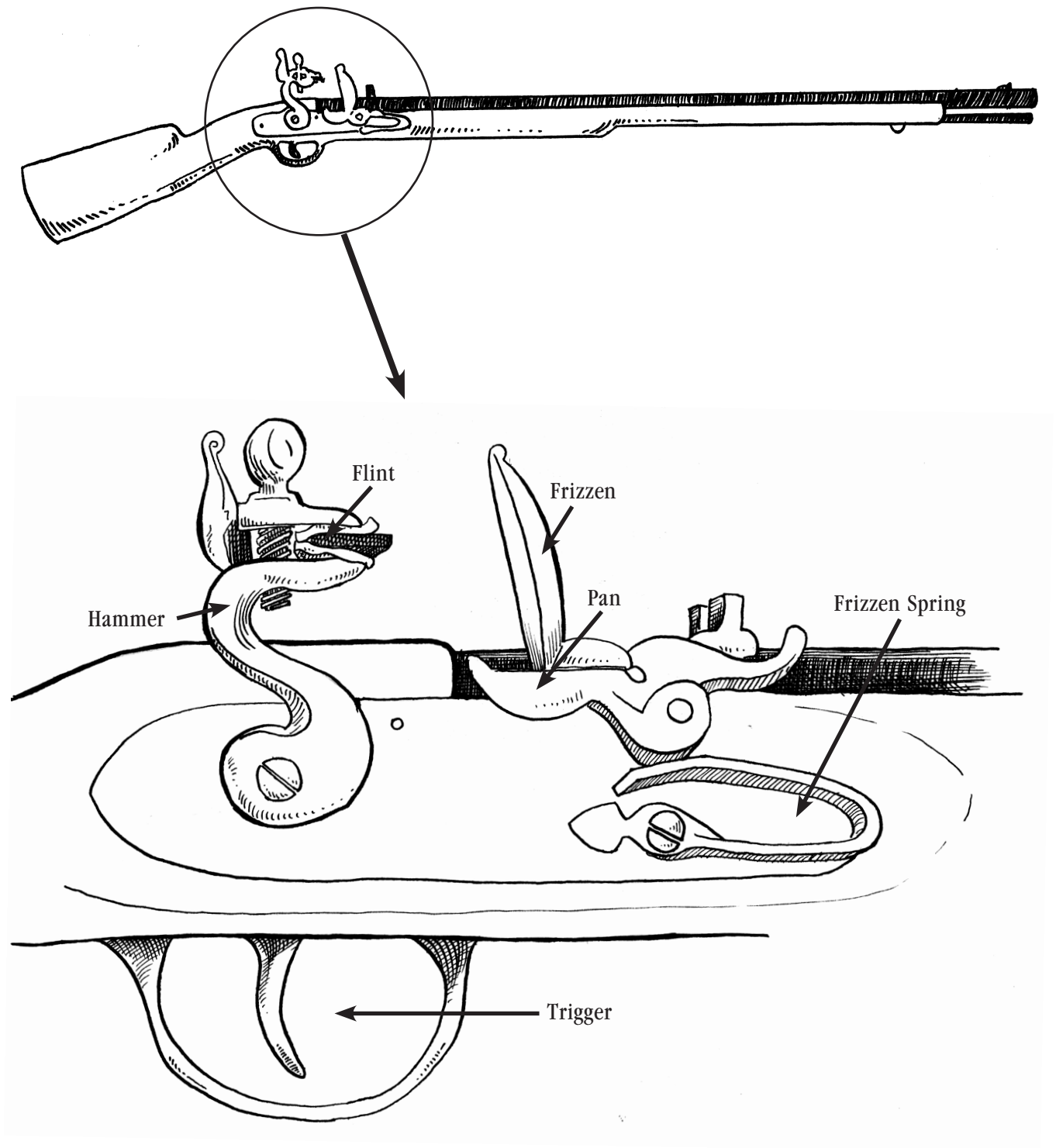
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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## Chapter 3, Project—Coloring Page

*Color this page.*



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 4—Christmas*

1. What was the weather like as Christmas was coming?

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2. What did Pa make as a Christmas present for Ma?

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3. What good things did mother cook for Christmas?

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4. How did the children make pictures?

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5. Why did Prince growl at Aunt Eliza?

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6. List all of the things that were in Laura's stocking.

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7. How did the cousins stay warm on their trip home?

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## Chapter 4, Project—Apple Pomander Ball

*Your kitchen will smell as sweet as Laura's with this apple pomander ball.*

### Supplies

whole cloves

apple

cinnamon

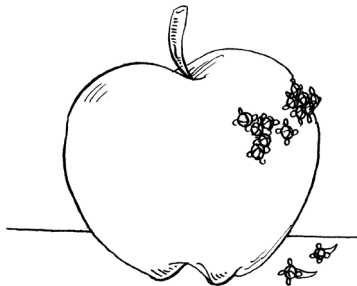
plastic bag (large enough for the apple)

ribbon or wide yarn

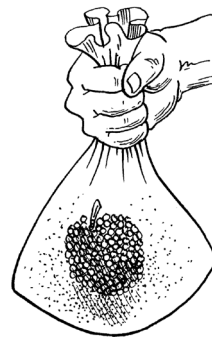


### Directions

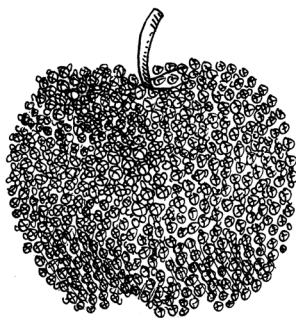
1. Holding the round part of the clove, push the stem of the clove into the apple.
3. Pour cinnamon into the plastic bag. Place the apple in the bag and close the bag tightly. Shake the bag well.



2. Continue pushing cloves into the apple until the apple is completely covered by cloves.



4. Remove the apple from the bag and tie two pieces of ribbon or yarn around the apple so that they criss-cross at the bottom. Tie a knot at the top. Then tie a third piece of ribbon or yarn to the top of the apple so that you can hang it in your kitchen. See above for completed project.



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 5—Sundays*

1. Which is the fourth commandment? Write your answer using fewer than ten words.

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2. What was Laura's favorite picture in the big Bible?

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3. What did Grandpa and his brothers study all the long Sunday afternoon?

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4. What could they see through the window as they sat still as mice on the bench?

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5. What did the boys do when they heard their father snore?

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6. How did their father know that the boys were outside sledding?

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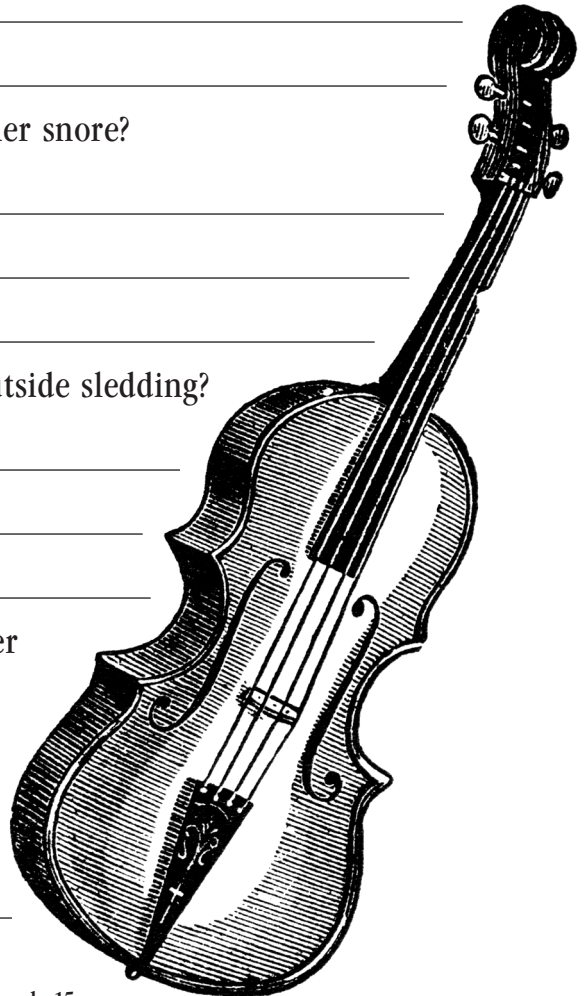
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7. What does it mean when the text says their father  
"tanned their jackets"?

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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 5, Project—Pop! Goes the Weasel*

*“Pop Goes The Weasel” is a nursery rhyme which dates back to 17th-century England, and was spread by colonists. Although, the meaning of “Pop Goes the Weasel” has been debated, children throughout generations have enjoyed this tune.*

A penny for a spool of thread  
Another for a needle  
That’s the way the money goes  
Pop! goes the weasel!

All around the cobbler’s bench  
The monkey chased the weasel  
The preacher kissed the cobbler’s wife  
Pop! goes the weasel!

*Additional lyrics:*

A half a pound of tupenny rice,  
A half a pound of treacle.  
Mix it up and make it nice,  
Pop! Goes the weasel.

Up and down the London road,  
In and out of the Eagle,  
That’s the way the money goes,  
Pop! Goes the weasel.

I’ve no time to plead and pine,  
I’ve no time to wheedle,  
Kiss me quick and then I’m gone  
Pop! Goes the weasel.



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# LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

## *Chapter 6—Two Big Bears*

1. What were the signs of spring in the Big Woods?

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2. Why was Pa going to town?

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3. What did Ma slap when she thought she was slapping Sukey's shoulder?

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4. What did Ma do that she had never done before?

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5. List the things that Pa brought from town.

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6. What did Pa hit when he thought he was hitting a bear?

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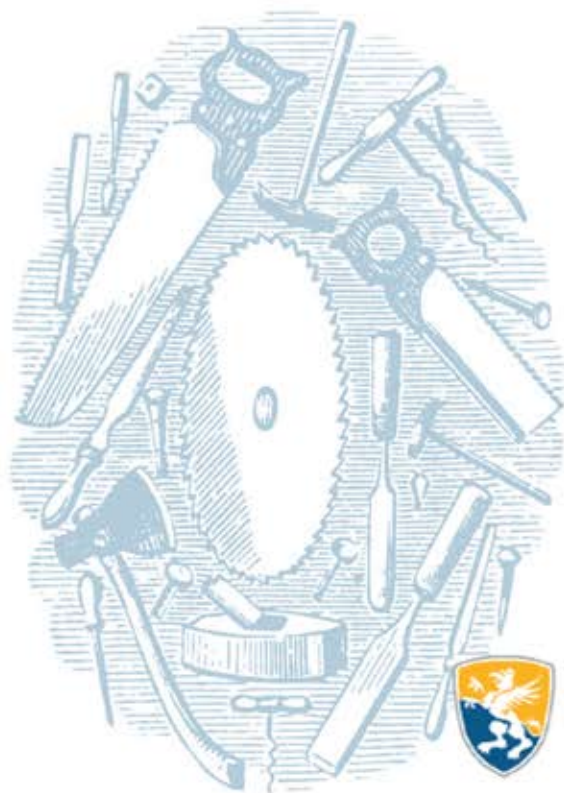
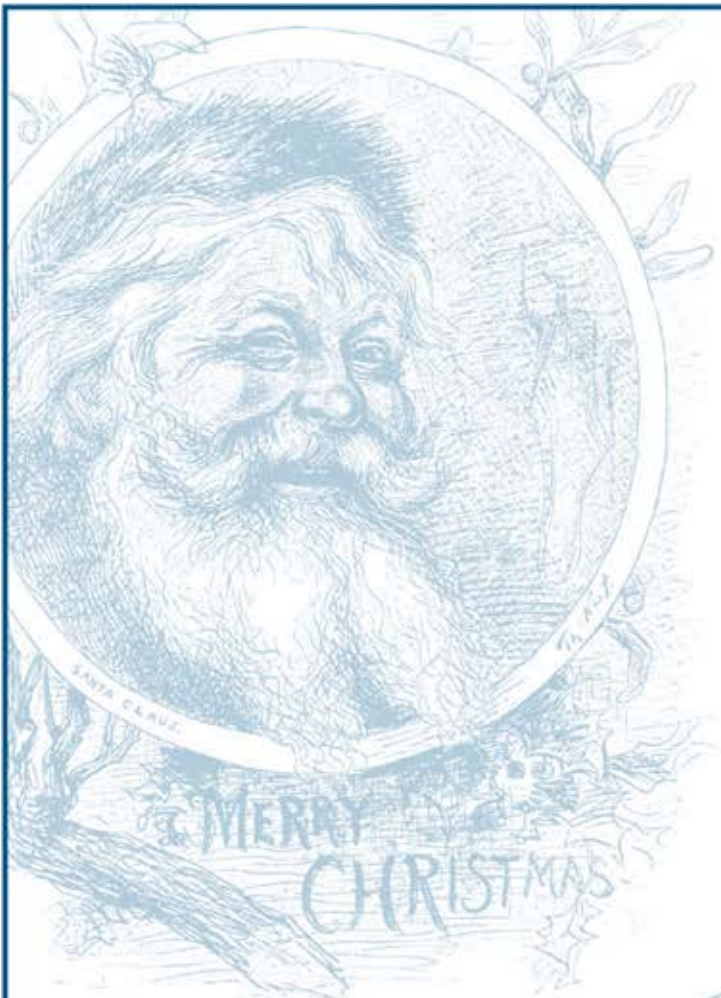
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7. Why do you think this chapter is called "Two Big Bears"?

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