



Resource Guide: Carrie Ingalls, The Forgotten Sister

by Clarissa Willis

Overview

'The Forgotten Sister' by Clarissa Willis recounts the story of Caroline "Carrie" Ingalls Swanzey, Laura Ingalls Wilder's lesser-known sister. Through Carrie's point of view, students examine themes of resilience, family, westward movement, and the developing role of women in American history. This guide equips educators with resources to promote discussion, understanding, and connection with the text.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the historical context of westward expansion and homesteading.
- Analyze the challenges faced by pioneer families, especially women and children.
- Develop empathy by viewing history through the eyes of a "forgotten" figure.
- Strengthen reading comprehension and vocabulary skills.
- Encourage connections between historical events and students' lives.

Pre-Reading Activities

- **Background Knowledge:** Discuss what students know about the Ingalls family and westward expansion.
- **Map Activity:** Locate key places from the book (Wisconsin, Kansas, South Dakota) on a U.S. map.
- **Vocabulary Preview:** Introduce terms such as homesteader, dugout, census, and "prove up." Refer to the book's glossary.

Discussion Questions (by Chapter)

- **Ch. 1-2:** What motivated the Ingalls family to move west? What risks did they face?
- **Ch. 3-4:** How did loss and hardship shape Carrie's early life?
- **Ch. 5-6:** In what ways did the railroad and weather impact the family's journey?
- **Ch. 7-8:** How did Carrie's experiences reflect the opportunities and limitations for women at the time?
- **Ch. 9-10:** What does Carrie's work in newspapers and land ownership say about her character and the changing world?

Classroom Activities

- **Timeline Creation:** Have students create a timeline of Carrie Ingalls' life events using details from the book.
- **Role Play:** Assign students different family members or historical figures for a class discussion or skit on homesteading life.
- **Creative Writing:** Ask students to write a diary entry from Carrie's perspective during a pivotal moment in the book.
- **Compare & Contrast:** Compare Carrie's story to Laura Ingalls Wilder's more famous accounts. What is similar or different?
- **Research Project:** Have students research another "forgotten" figure in history and present to the class.

Assessment Ideas

- Short quizzes on reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- Student presentations or essays on the significance of Carrie Ingalls Swanzeay.
- Group projects such as poster boards or digital slideshows about pioneer life.

Extension Activities

- **Field Trip:** Visit a local historical society or pioneer museum.
- **Guest Speaker:** Invite a historian or author to discuss women's roles in the American West.
- **Book Pairing:** Read a chapter from "Little House on the Prairie" and discuss different perspectives.

Resources

- Book glossary and resource list (pp. 41-43)
- [Little House on the Prairie: About Carrie Ingalls Swanzeay](#)
- [South Dakota Historical Society](#)
- [Www.clarissawillis.com](http://www.clarissawillis.com)

About the Author

Clarissa Willis is an award-winning author of children's books, including "Bloomers on Pike's Peak" and "Fast as the Wind." She is passionate about making history accessible and joyful for young readers.

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