



Teacher's Guide: Carrie Ingalls — The Forgotten Sister

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Overview

This teacher's guide supports instruction for the narrative nonfiction book "Carrie Ingalls: The Forgotten Sister." It offers objectives aligned to common literacy and social studies standards, lesson plans, discussion questions, formative and summative assessments, enrichment activities, cross-curricular connections, and differentiation strategies for diverse learners.

Recommended Grade Levels

- Grades 4–7 (adaptable for Grades 3 and 8)

Estimated Unit Length

- 5–7 class periods (45–60 minutes each) or a 2–3 week literature/social studies integrated mini-unit

Core Themes

- Resilience and perseverance
- Women's roles and contributions in the American West
- Homesteading and westward expansion
- Media and community building (the role of local newspapers)
- Family, loss, and responsibility

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Summarize key events in Carrie Ingalls's life and explain their historical context.

- Analyze how the setting (frontier, homestead towns, Dakota Territory) influences characters' choices and challenges.
- Compare and contrast the perspectives of Carrie and Laura Ingalls and evaluate how history is recorded and remembered.
- Explain the homestead process ("prove up," final proofs) and its impact on community development.
- Interpret primary-source style features (obituaries, legal notices, advertisements) and connect them to the newspaper industry of the period.
- Determine the meaning of domain-specific vocabulary in context (e.g., homesteader, final proof, tar-paper shack, typesetter).
- Produce short research, narrative, and informative texts that integrate evidence from the book.

Standards Alignment (suggested)

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4–7 (Key Ideas & Details; Craft & Structure; Integration of Knowledge)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4–7 (Informative/Explanatory; Narrative; Research)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4–7 (Discussion & Presentation)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4–7 (Vocabulary Acquisition)
 - NCSS C3 Framework: History, Civics, and Economics dimensions (migration, settlement, governance, markets)
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Unit Pacing Guide

- Day 1: Launch & Background**
 - Hook: Display a 19th-century newspaper page and ask: How did news shape communities?
 - Introduce author's purpose and the concept of "forgotten figures" in history.
 - Preview vocabulary (glossary) with a Frayer Model or word cards.
- Day 2: Chapters 1–3**
 - Focus: Push/pull factors of westward movement; risks of pioneer travel; family structures.
 - Close reading: The Osage reservation passage; ethical and legal complexities of land claims.
- Day 3: Chapters 4–6**
 - Focus: Community building (schools, churches), the railroad's impact, the blizzard of 1880–81.
 - Skill: Cause/effect mapping; text evidence for survival strategies.
- Day 4: Chapters 7–9**
 - Focus: Women in the workforce; apprenticeship; the rise of local newspapers and "final proofs."

- Skill: Primary source simulation—layout a proof notice; identify purpose, audience, format.
 - 5. **Day 5: Chapter 10 & Epilogue**
 - Focus: Life transitions, marriage, community leadership, Mount Rushmore connections.
 - Summative performance task launch (choice board).
 - 6. **Days 6–7 (optional): Projects & Presentations**
 - Student research mini-inquiries and presentations; peer review and reflection.
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Pre-Reading Activities

- **Anticipation Guide:** Present statements for agree/disagree and revisit after reading (e.g., “Westward expansion benefited all groups equally.” “Newspapers mainly report events; they don’t shape them.”)
- **K-W-L Chart:** Frontier life, homesteading laws, and women’s roles.
- **Map It:** Plot the Ingalls family’s travels (Wisconsin → Kansas → Minnesota → Iowa → Dakota Territory → South Dakota towns). Use modern and historical maps to compare distances and terrain.

During-Reading Strategies

- **Guided Notes:** Provide a chapter-by-chapter note-catcher for key events, new vocabulary, and questions.
- **Character/Setting Tracker:** Track how each location influenced the Ingalls family’s choices (jobs, housing, education).
- **Cause/Effect Chains:** Example: Grasshopper swarms → crop failure → migration decisions.
- **Text-dependent Questions:** Require evidence citations (page/section references).

Post-Reading Activities

- **Socratic Seminar:** “In what ways did Carrie ‘prove up’ not just land, but her identity?” “How do local newspapers create power for ordinary citizens?”
 - **RAFT Writing:** Role = typesetter; Audience = new homesteaders; Format = editorial; Topic = why accurate final proofs matter.
 - **Comparative Essay:** Compare Carrie’s trajectory with Laura Ingalls Wilder’s public legacy; discuss whose stories get preserved and why.
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Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Questions

Prologue

- Why might Carrie be considered “forgotten,” and how does the author establish purpose?
- How does media (books, TV) influence whose stories we remember?

Chapter 1: Uncle Sam Is Rich Enough

- What promises and problems came with the Homestead Act?
- How do the Osage reservation and census issues complicate the Ingalls’s claim?

Chapter 2: Wisconsin, Minnesota, and a Baby Brother

- What push/pull factors drove the return to Wisconsin and later moves?
- What does the first train sighting symbolize?

Chapter 3: Moving, Moving, Moving

- How did environmental disasters shape family decisions?
- What does the family’s response to grief reveal about resilience?

Chapter 4: The Last Move and the Next School

- How did safety and morality concerns (saloon, fire) affect housing choices?
- What roles did community institutions (church, school) play?

Chapter 5: The Railroad and Another New Town

- How did railroads transform settlement patterns and opportunities?
- Why was staking a claim both hopeful and risky?

Chapter 6: A Single Bag of Wheat

- Which survival strategies were most critical during the blizzards?
- How did scarcity impact health, education, and community cohesion?

Chapter 7: Carrie Grows Up

- What skills did Carrie develop as an apprentice?
- How did small-town papers differ from today’s media?

Chapter 8: The Landowner

- What made Carrie’s landownership unusual and significant?
- How did “prove up” requirements shape daily life?

Chapter 9: The Proof King of South Dakota

- Why were “final proofs” profitable for newspapers and vital for homesteaders?
- How did accuracy in print affect real people’s lives?

Chapter 10: A New Job and a New Life

- How did Carrie’s roles shift after marriage, and what stayed consistent in her character?
- What local connections exist between Keystone, Mount Rushmore, and the Swanzy family?

Epilogue/Poem

- How does the poem illuminate Carrie’s values and relationships?
 - What qualities define “quiet leadership” in the book?
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Vocabulary and Word Work

- Create a word wall from the glossary (apprentice, census, dugout, final proof, homesteader, obituary, pioneer, prove up, tar-paper shack, typesetter, Uncle Sam).
 - Context clue practice: Pull sentences from chapters; have students infer meanings before confirming with the glossary.
 - Morphology: Identify roots/prefixes (e.g., “type” in typesetter; “obit” in obituary).
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Assessments

Formative Checks

- Exit tickets: One new fact, one question, one connection
- Quick writes: “What would be hardest for you during a blizzard winter?”
- Two-Column Notes: Evidence on how newspapers shaped settlement

Summative Assessment (Choice Board)

1. **Historical Profile:** Create an illustrated profile of Carrie highlighting 5 pivotal decisions; include text evidence.
2. **Newspaper Project:** Produce a front page with a final proof notice, an obituary, an advertisement, and a short local report.
3. **Argument Essay:** Defend or challenge: “The Homestead Act ultimately created more opportunity than harm.” Use book evidence and one outside source.

4. **Museum Exhibit:** Curate a mini-exhibit with artifacts (map, coffee mill wheat, tar-paper model, linotype photo) and labels.
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Differentiation & Supports

- **Emergent/Striving Readers:** Audio read-aloud; chunked texts; visual timelines; sentence starters; jigsaw reading.
 - **Advanced Learners:** Primary source analysis (period ads, homestead applications); compare multiple biographies; author study (Laura vs. Carrie).
 - **ELLs/MLLs:** Bilingual glossaries; picture vocabulary; partner retells; frames for citation (According to...)
 - **Students with IEPs/504s:** Enlarged print; guided notes; alternate response modes (audio/video); extended time.
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Cross-Curricular Connections

- **Social Studies:** Homestead Act; Osage homelands and dispossession; railroads' economic effects; settlement patterns.
 - **STEM:** Weather science of blizzards; simple machines in printing; thermal efficiency of housing types.
 - **Math:** Map scale calculations; inflation comparisons (1911 \$45 \approx today's dollars); acreage and cost math (160 acres at \$0.50/acre).
 - **Art/Design:** Design a period-appropriate advertisement; create a linocut-style print.
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Media Literacy Mini-Lessons

- What is a primary vs. secondary source? Where does a "final proof" notice fit?
 - How do headlines and layout influence reader perceptions?
 - Ethics of publishing: accuracy, bias, and community impact.
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Timeline Activity

Students build a timeline from 1868 (move to Kansas) through 1930 (history of De Smet, poem). Include personal milestones (births, deaths, jobs) and historical events (railroad expansion, homestead policies).

Project Materials & Handouts (reproducibles)

1) Chapter Note-Catcher

- Key events
- New vocabulary
- Questions/Connections

2) Cause/Effect Organizer

- Cause → Event → Short-term effects → Long-term effects

3) Final Proof Template (Simulation)

Intent to Make Final Proof: [Homesteader Name], [Legal Land Description], will present proof on [Date] with witnesses [Names].

4) Rubrics (Brief)

Newspaper Project (20 pts): Accuracy (6), Completeness (6), Design/Layout (4), Conventions (4)

Argument Essay (20 pts): Claim/Counterclaim (6), Evidence (6), Reasoning (4), Conventions (4)

Sensitive Topics Guidance

- Discuss the Osage displacement and Native sovereignty respectfully and factually; include maps and primary sources where possible.
- Address infant loss and illness with care; provide opt-in alternatives for students who need them.
- Frame scarcity and disability (Mary's blindness) with strength-based language.

Extension & Enrichment

- Invite a local journalist or visit a small press.
- Research another “forgotten figure” of the frontier; produce a one-page bio or podcast.
- Build a scale model of a dugout or tar-paper shack; test insulation properties.

Family/Community Connection

- Send home a “Then and Now” comparison sheet (communication, housing, travel).
 - Encourage students to interview an elder about community news sources over time.
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Answer Key: Sample Responses

Ch. 1: Promise = 160 acres; Problem = legal/ethical issues (reservation land, misspelled census).

Ch. 6: Critical strategies = conserving fuel (hay twists), alternative flour (seed wheat), relocating for shelter.

Ch. 8–9: Newspapers enabled legal ownership via final proofs; accuracy mattered for deeds.

Poem: Values friendship, loyalty, perseverance.

Materials & Resources

- The book text (class set or read-aloud)
 - Maps of the Midwest and Dakota Territory
 - Chart paper, sticky notes, index cards
 - Access to library/databases for homesteading research
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Author’s Note to Educators

This guide is designed for flexible use: select the mini-lessons, assessments, and projects that best align with your learners. The story of Carrie Ingalls invites students to widen historical lenses to include overlooked contributors—particularly women whose quiet leadership sustained families and built communities across the American West.