

**Hard Times on the Prairie A Little House Book written by Laura Ingalls Wilder and illustrated by Renee Graef comprehension packet includes vocabulary strategies, identifying events, comprehension questions, predictions, and using descriptive words. A key is also available for this packet.**

# Hard Times on the Prairie (L) A Little House Book

## Chapter 1

prairie- grassland

prowl- looking around, hunting

narrow- a long, skinny ditch

billow- to puff up

bounding- leaping

flare- a flame that is pushed around by the wind

tremble- to shake

choked – completely covered

- 1) Circle two things that happened to Laura and her family on the trip to Kansas.

They were in a bad thunderstorm.

The whole family got sick

They ran out of food.

Wolves were sometimes nearby.

- 2) What did Pa have to do to get the ground ready for planting.

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- 3) What caused huge black clouds to rise in the sky?

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- 4) What did Pa do to save their house from the fire.

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## Chapter 2

plank- a piece of wood to walk on

thicket- a place where small trees grow close together

swollen- grown very large

thrust – pushed

current- the speed of moving water

1) After living in Kansas for a short while, Pa moved the family to \_\_\_\_\_.

2) What noise woke Laura up in the middle of the night?

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3) Pa shouted, "It's raining fishhooks and hammerhandles." What does this sentence mean?

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4) What did Laura do that got her into terrible danger?

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5) Why do you think that Ma did not scold Laura?

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### Chapter 3

ox- cowlike animal used for heavy farmwork

bellow- to make a loud noise

bawl- to cry loudly

towered- very tall

1) What type of animals are Pete and Bright?

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2) What was Johnny Johnson's job on Ma and Pa's farm?

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3) What did Pete accidentally do?

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## Chapter 4

ripening- getting ready to be gathered and eaten

debt- owing money to someone

dim- not very bright

rasping- a rough, grating sound

shawl- a light blanket worn around the shoulders

1) How is the new house better than the house they used to live in?

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2) What are two things they hope to buy with the money Pa will get for this wheat?

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3) What are three bad things that the grasshoppers did?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

Predict: What do you think the family will do now that the grasshoppers ate all of their wheat?

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## Chapter 5

seep- to leak through a small opening

harness- leather straps used to fasten an animal to a wagon or a plow

1) What did Laura and Pa find in the ground?

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2) Why is this such bad news?

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3) Where did Pa go and what will he do?

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4) What did the crazy grasshoppers do that surprised everyone?

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Chapter 6

whirling- spinning around in circles  
shriek – a loud, high pitched scream  
porridge- a cooked cereal (like oatmeal)

1) How did Ma and Pa keep themselves safe when they had to go to the barn?

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2) What do you suppose Laura is thinking while she waits for Ma to come back?

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3) ma says she put the lantern on the windowsill because it looks pretty. Why do you think she really put it there?

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Chapter 7

slate- chalkboard  
pussy- cat  
gasp- to make a surprised noise, a breath in  
homesteader- a piece of land given to someone to make into a farm  
tadpole – a baby frog

roly-poly- chubby

thimble – a small cap of metal, worn to protect your finger while pushing the needle in sewing

1) Why do you think it was smart for Ma to let the girls play instead of doing homework?

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2) By the end of Ma's story, what did the picture look like?

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3) Pa has been gone for several days now. If you were Ma, what thoughts and feelings would be going through your head?

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## Chapter 8

1) Was there really a bear at the door?

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2) What was Pa wearing?

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3) How did Pa survive in the storm?

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4) List three words that describe Pa.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

## Hard Times on the Prairie (L) A Little House Book Key

### Chapter 1

prairie- grassland

prowl- looking around, hunting

narrow- a long, skinny ditch

billow- to puff up

bounding- leaping

flare- a flame that is pushed around by the wind

tremble- to shake

choked – completely covered

- 1) Circle two things that happened to Laura and her family on the trip to Kansas.

They were in a bad thunderstorm.

\*The whole family got sick

They ran out of food.

\*Wolves were sometimes nearby.

- 2) What did Pa have to do to get the ground ready for planting.  
Pa had to plow the field to get the ground ready for planting.

- 3) What caused huge black clouds to rise in the sky?  
There was a fire.

- 4) What did Pa do to save their house from the fire.  
He lit another fire or a fire line so the ground around their house wouldn't be able to catch on fire.

### Chapter 2

plank- a piece of wood to walk on

thicket- a place where small trees grow close together

swollen- grown very large

thrust – pushed

current- the speed of moving water

- 1) After living in Kansas for a short while, Pa moved the family to Minnesota.
- 2) What noise woke Laura up in the middle of the night?  
The creek was making a roaring sound.

3) Pa shouted, "It's raining fishhooks and hammerhandles." What does this sentence mean?

It is an expression that means it is raining very hard.

4) What did Laura do that got her into terrible danger?

Laura played by the roaring creek.

5) Why do you think that Ma did not scold Laura?

Ma was just happy that Laura was safe.

Answers may vary.

### Chapter 3

ox- cowlike animal used for heavy farmwork

bellow- to make a loud noise

bawl- to cry loudly

towered- very tall

1) What type of animals are Pete and Bright?

Pete and Bright are big oxen.

2) What was Johnny Johnson's job on Ma and Pa's farm?

Johnny Johnson was a boy who looked after the herd.

1) What did Pete accidentally do?

Pete accidentally jumped on the dugout and his hind leg went through the roof.

### Chapter 4

ripening- getting ready to be gathered and eaten

debt- owing money to someone

dim- not very bright

rasping- a rough, grating sound

shawl- a light blanket worn around the shoulders

2) How is the new house better than the house they used to live in?

The new house was made of straight boards, had two rooms, an attic, and glass windows.

3) What are two things they hope to buy with the money Pa will get for this wheat?

Pa wants to get a buggy. Ma can get a silk dress. The girls can get new shoes. They also hope to pay for the house.

4) What are three bad things that the grasshoppers did?  
Ate grass, leaves, the garden, wheat, as well as went in their milk, etc.

Predict: What do you think the family will do now that the grasshoppers ate all of their what?

Answers will vary.

## Chapter 5

seep- to leak through a small opening

harness- leather straps used to fasten an animal to a wagon or a plow

1) What did Laura and Pa find in the ground?

Laura and Pa found grasshopper eggs.

2) Why is this such bad news?

This could mean that the grasshoppers will be back again and eat their crops again.

3) Where did Pa go and what will he do?

Pa went east to get a job.

5) What did the crazy grasshoppers do that surprised everyone?

The grasshoppers flew west.

## Chapter 6

whirling- spinning around in circles

shriek – a loud, high pitched scream

porridge- a cooked cereal (like oatmeal)

1) How did Ma and Pa keep themselves safe when they had to go to the barn?

They tied a rope from the house to the barn to guide them.

2) What do you suppose Laura is thinking while she waits for Ma to come back?

She is hoping Ma is not hurt and will return safely. Answers may vary.

6) Ma says she put the lantern on the windowsill because it looks pretty.

Why do you think she really put it there?

So Pa could see where the house was through the snow.

## Chapter 7

slate- chalkboard

pussy- cat

gasp- to make a surprised noise, a breath in

homesteader- a piece of land given to someone to make into a farm

tadpole – a baby frog

roly-poly- chubby

thimble – a small cap of metal, worn to protect your finger while pushing the needle in sewing

1) Why do you think it was smart for Ma to let the girls play instead of doing homework?

Playing kept the girls' minds off what was really happening.

2) By the end of Ma's story, what did the picture look like?

A bird.

3) Pa has been gone for several days now. If you were Ma, what thoughts and feelings would be going through your head?

I would be wondering if he was okay and wondering when he would be coming back. Feelings: scared, worried, nervous, etc. Answers will vary.

## Chapter 8

1) Was there really a bear at the door?

No, it was Pa.

2) What was Pa wearing?

A fur coat.

3) How did Pa survive in the storm?

He found shelter near the side of a bank that protected him.

4) List three words that describe Pa.

Nice, Hard Worker, Strong, Good, etc. Answers will vary.

