

6th Grade Passages

End of Year (EOY) Student Packet

Passage 1 *Laura*

Passage 2 *Let's Do It Again*

Passage 3 *The Parthenon*

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Laura

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Laura Ingalls Wilder is a famous author. She wrote children’s books about pioneer life in the late 19th Century. Laura was born in 1867 in a log house in Wisconsin. She was the second daughter of Charles and Caroline Ingalls. Laura had an older sister named Mary. They were very close. The Ingalls family moved frequently. They went wherever their father could find a job. Shortly after Laura’s birth, the family moved to Missouri. A few years later, they moved to Kansas to start their own farm. A third daughter, Carrie, was born there. When Laura was 13, they left Kansas and returned to Wisconsin to be near family.

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The girls were happy to be there, but their father longed to farm again. So, four years later, in 1874, the family moved to Walnut Grove, Minnesota. They built a house and farmed the land. The three girls had many adventures there. But the family suffered many tragedies as well. During their first year there, Charles had grown a good wheat crop. It was destroyed by grasshoppers. This was repeated the next year as well. The family was blessed by a baby boy in 1875, but he died of an illness at only 9 months. The family suffered yet another tragedy when Mary lost her eyesight as a result of a stroke. That same year, Charles took a job with the railroad. They moved to De Smet in the Dakota Territories. When the railroad job was finished, they acquired some land. He began to farm again. A harsh winter made farming difficult that first year. But they persevered and were able to save enough money to send Mary to a school for the blind.

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When Laura was 15, she earned her teaching certificate. She began teaching at a small school several miles from her home. It was at this time that she met a farmer named Almanzo Wilder. They married three years later. They had a healthy baby girl named Rose. They had many misfortunes as well, however. Severe storms ruined their crops. This forced them into debt. Almanzo worked hard in the fields, but he got sick and became crippled. During this time, Laura was pregnant with their second child. He died shortly after birth, unnamed. Soon after, their house burned down when something in the kitchen caught fire.

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The family then moved to Florida, where the warm conditions improved Almanzo’s health. They eventually returned to De Smet. But, in 1894, they relocated to Missouri. Here they would spend the rest of their lives. They bought a farm there and prospered.

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Laura was a great storyteller. Her daughter Rose convinced her to write her stories so that other children could enjoy them too. Laura did so. In all, she wrote seven children’s books. These comprised her Little House series. They have been widely read and admired. She and Almanzo

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spent the rest of their lives at their Missouri farm. Laura died in 1957, at the age of 90. Their farm is now open for people to visit.

Let's Do It Again

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My heart was beating so loudly that I was sure everyone could hear it over the slow rumbling of the motor. I jumped into the water and put on my skis. Slowly the boat crept forward, tightening up the ski rope. I held on for dear life to the handle on the end of the rope while Mom smiled encouragingly at me from the back of the boat.

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I was trying very hard to recover my earlier feelings of excitement about learning to water-ski. “Whose bright idea was this anyway?” I asked myself anxiously. I sat in the cool water bobbing gently in my bright orange life jacket. I tried to keep the tips of my water skis pointing up out of the water as I had been shown. A wave of fear washed over me. There were just too many instructions to remember. My little sister Nikki cheered as she jumped up and down in the back of the boat next to Mom.

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Nikki had learned to water-ski at a very young age. I, on the other hand, always liked underwater sports such as scuba diving. Moving on top of the water was going to be very different for me. But once I mastered this, we would have another activity that the whole family could enjoy together.

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“Deep breath,” I reminded myself. Dad pulled back the lever to open up the throttle. The motor roared to life. “Here we go,” I thought wildly.

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Mom gave me a big thumbs-up, and the boat lurched forward and gave a mighty pull. I pushed up on my legs as hard as I could and let out a yell. I was actually standing on my skis, skimming across the water, but not for long. I fell forward and landed facedown in the water. Thank goodness I remembered to let go of the rope. My skis came off, and my life jacket kept me floating on the surface of the lake.

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“I don’t believe it,” I thought, flipping over to my back with a grin. “I almost felt like I was flying.”

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“Let’s do it again,” I called to Dad as he circled the boat around to pick me up.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon, a building in Athens, Greece, is perhaps one of the most memorable structures on Earth. Built 25 centuries ago, it is one of the great architectural achievements of the ancient world. There are many reasons for its greatness.

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Athens was the most important city in ancient Greece. In 480 B.C. Greece was under attack by both the Persian army and the Persian navy. The Athenian commander, Themistocles, knew that his forces could not defeat the Persian army then marching toward Athens. Hoping instead to make a stand against the Persians at sea, Themistocles and his forces fled Athens for a nearby island. Although the Persian army overwhelmed Athens and left it in ruins, the Greek navy, led by Themistocles, annihilated the Persian fleet. This victory by the Greeks led all Persian forces to retreat within one year. About 30 years later the building of the Parthenon began. Construction took place between 447 and 432 B.C. during the rule of Pericles. The Parthenon was constructed on the same site as an unfinished structure intended to honor the men who had lost their lives in an earlier battle against the Persians. The Parthenon would stand as a symbol of the strength and importance of the Greek people.

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Many important cities in ancient Greece had an acropolis, or “high city,” on which people constructed important buildings. The acropolis was the highest and most defensible location, so it also served as a fortress in the event of enemy attack. The Parthenon is located about 500 feet above the city of Athens. Before the Parthenon could be built, some areas of the acropolis had to be leveled down, and other areas had to be built up. Then a large, solid foundation was constructed out of limestone blocks. The entire area was buttressed by a reinforcing wall.

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The Parthenon is a rectangular structure consisting of two inner areas surrounded by columns. There are eight columns at each end and seventeen columns along each side. It is a large structure, considering when it was built. It is about 200 feet long and about 100 feet wide. It stands about 60 feet high.

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One extraordinary aspect of the Parthenon is its construction. It required between 20,000 and 30,000 tons of marble that had to be precisely carved so that huge blocks of it could be fitted together without mortar to form the columns and the interior walls.

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Perhaps even more impressive are the “optical corrections” that were used. The columns bulge slightly in the middle because experience had shown the Greeks that perfectly straight columns would not look straight to the viewer. Because corner columns normally appear smaller than

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others, the corner columns of the Parthenon were made slightly thicker and were placed closer to the other columns. The columns were also designed to lean inward slightly because perfectly perpendicular columns seem to slant outward. Furthermore, the platform on which the Parthenon sits was made to curve upward in the middle because a perfectly level floor would appear to sag in the center.

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The Parthenon stands today despite the centuries that have passed. It is a timeless tribute to the enduring culture of the Greek people and is considered a model of excellence in concept and construction. It established the classic style of architecture seen today in many public buildings, such as the White House and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. This architectural style is a lasting gift from the ancient Greeks to the modern world.