

7th Grade Passages

Beginning of Year (BOY) Student Packet

Passage 1 *Laura*

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Laura

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

109 The girls were happy to be there, but their father
119 longed to farm again. So, four years later, in 1874,

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

283 When Laura was 15, she earned her teaching
291 certificate. She began teaching at a small school

299 several miles from her home. It was at this time
309 that she met a farmer named Almanzo Wilder.
317 They married three years later. They had a healthy
326 baby girl named Rose. They had many misfortunes
334 as well, however. Severe storms ruined their
341 crops. This forced them into debt. Almanzo worked
349 hard in the fields, but he got sick and became
359 crippled. During this time, Laura was pregnant
366 with their second child. He died shortly after birth,
375 unnamed. Soon after, their house burned down
382 when something in the kitchen caught fire.

389 The family then moved to Florida, where the
397 warm conditions improved Almanzo's health.

402 They eventually returned to De Smet. But,
409 in 1894, they relocated to Missouri. Here
416 they would spend the rest of their lives.

424 They bought a farm there and prospered.

431 Laura was a great storyteller. Her daughter
438 Rose convinced her to write her stories so that
447 other children could enjoy them too. Laura did
455 so. In all, she wrote seven children's books.
463 These comprised her Little House series. They
470 have been widely read and admired. She and
478 Almanzo spent the rest of their lives at their
487 Missouri farm. Laura died in 1957, at the age of
497 90. Their farm is now open for people to visit.
507

A Wonderful Friendship

Helen Keller was a young girl who couldn't
8 see or hear. Alexander Graham Bell was
15 the famous scientist who invented the
21 telephone. These two famous people not
27 only knew each other, but together they also
35 opened up new worlds of conversation.

41 Helen Keller was born in 1880. When she was a
51 baby, she lost her sight and hearing. Because of her
61 inability to hear, she did not learn how to speak.
71 Even so, it was clear that she was an intelligent
81 child and was eager to learn. Keller's family did
90 everything they could to find a way to educate her.

100 When Helen Keller was six years old, her
108 parents took her to see Alexander Graham Bell.

116 He was well known for his inventions. He was
125 also a teacher of deaf people. He considered
133 teaching to be his most important work.

140 Bell recognized Keller's intelligence. At his
146 suggestion her parents hired a private teacher
153 named Anne Sullivan. She worked with Keller
160 every day. Through her persistence Sullivan was
167 able to teach Keller words and their meanings.
175 With a great deal of constant work, Sullivan
183 taught Keller how to read and write. One of
192 the first letters Keller wrote was to Bell.

200 Bell encouraged Keller to learn as much as she
209 could. Sometimes they would go on rides or
217 visit the zoo. They also shared a love of books.
227 Bell would tell her stories by using his fingers
236 to spell the letters of words in her hand.

245 One day Bell told Keller about his invention
253 called the telephone. He explained how it
260 was enriching lives. People all over the world
268 benefited by being able to talk to each other
277 when they were in separate places. Although
284 Keller could not use the phone without help,
292 she understood that it was important.

298 Bell opened a school for deaf students and formed
307 an information center to help people understand
314 the needs and abilities of deaf people. Keller was
323 very interested in Bell's work with deaf children.

331 Keller had worked hard and set goals for herself.
340 Because she wanted to help Bell by telling
348 other people about his work, she decided to
356 take lessons to learn to speak. When she felt
365 comfortable speaking in public, she gave a
372 speech at Bell's information center. She told the

380 audience how happy she was to be able to speak
390 to them about Bell's work with deaf people.

398 Bell's invention of the telephone helped hearing
405 people talk to each other. His teaching helped
413 deaf people talk to each other and to the
422 hearing world. His support and instruction
428 helped Keller express herself by writing and
435 even speaking. Helen Keller went on to finish
443 college and became a well-known writer.

450 When she wrote a book about her life, Helen
459 Keller dedicated it to Alexander Graham Bell.
466 This was a symbol of their lasting friendship.

474

Spreading Wildflowers

Claudia Taylor was born in Karnack, Texas, in 1912.

9 As a young child she was given the nickname Lady
19 Bird. She grew up in the country, and it was there
30 that her lifelong love of nature began. Throughout
38 her childhood and adult years, she has enjoyed
46 being outdoors, looking for the beautiful flowers
53 that grow naturally in open fields.

59 In 1929 the state of Texas started a wildflower
68 program. The highway department waited for the
75 flowers to go to seed before they were mowed.

84 Then the seeds would spread and grow into plants
93 the next year. Lady Bird enjoyed exploring the
101 countryside in search of different wildflowers. She
108 continued to do so after moving to Austin in 1930

118 to attend the University of Texas. Four years later
127 Lady Bird married Lyndon B. Johnson.

133 In 1964 Lyndon Johnson was running for President
141 of the United States. As he and his wife traveled
151 around the country, Lady Bird saw beauty as
159 well as blight. Some areas suffered from neglect
167 and ugliness. When Lady Bird's husband won the
175 election, she wanted to do something to make the
184 nation's capital look more beautiful. The following
191 year she found a way to do that.

199 Lady Bird helped set up the Committee for a More
209 Beautiful Capital. She was chosen to head the
217 group of volunteers. They met once a month at
226 the White House to discuss ideas and make plans.
235 They decided their program could be successful
242 only if people in the community were willing to get
252 involved. To attract attention, volunteers planted
258 flowers around the city in hundreds of places that

267 many people passed each day. They encouraged
274 businesses to plant grass, shrubs, and flowers.
281 They organized cleanups and fix-up projects in
289 neighborhoods. They also tried to improve school
296 yards and playgrounds. The committee gave awards
303 each year to neighborhoods, businesses, and public
310 spaces.

311 The ideas of the committee quickly spread across
319 the country. Some states began setting up their
327 own programs to preserve flowers and to plant new
336 ones. Thanks to Lady Bird, many of these programs
345 included wildflowers. In the state of Texas, people
353 continued to strengthen the program that had been
361 adopted almost 40 years before the committee
368 began its work.

371 The Johnsons returned to Texas in 1969. Lady Bird
380 wanted to do something to encourage more people
388 to plant wildflowers. She knew that little was known

397 about growing these flowers in gardens and that
405 more research needed to be done.

411 In 1970 Lady Bird began a project to make the city
422 of Austin more lovely. A variety of colorful flowers
431 and trees were planted along the banks of a major
441 river. Trails for hiking and biking were also added.
450 This project helped inspire the idea for building a
459 center for studying native plants. In 1982 Lady
467 Bird gave a large sum of money and 60 acres of
478 land near Austin to build the National Wildflower
486 Research Center. The purpose of the center was to
495 learn about wildflowers and share new information
502 with interested people everywhere. In 1998 Lady
509 Bird was honored for her tireless efforts to make
518 our nation more beautiful. The name of the center
527 was changed to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower
535 Center.

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