

8th Grade Passages

Between BOY and MOY Student Packet

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Laura

9 Laura Ingalls Wilder is a famous author. She wrote
18 children's books about pioneer life in the late 19th
29 Century. Laura was born in 1867 in a log house in
37 Wisconsin. She was the second daughter of Charles
45 and Caroline Ingalls. Laura had an older sister
53 named Mary. They were very close. The Ingalls
60 family moved frequently. They went wherever their
69 father could find a job. Shortly after Laura's birth,
78 the family moved to Missouri. A few years later,
88 they moved to Kansas to start their own farm. A
96 third daughter, Carrie, was born there. When Laura
105 was 13, they left Kansas 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.
136 They built a house and farmed the land. The three
146 girls had many adventures there. But the family
154 suffered many tragedies as well. During their
161 first year there, Charles had grown a good wheat
170 crop. It was destroyed by grasshoppers. This was
178 repeated the next year as well. The family was
187 blessed by a baby boy in 1875, but he died of an
199 illness at only 9 months. The family suffered yet
208 another tragedy when Mary lost her eyesight as a
217 result of a stroke. That same year, Charles took a
227 job with the railroad. They moved to De Smet in
237 the Dakota Territories. When the railroad job was
245 finished, they acquired some land. He began to
253 farm again. A harsh winter made farming difficult
261 that first year. But they persevered and were able
270 to save enough money to send Mary to a school for
281 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. They
318 married three years later. They had a healthy baby
327 girl named Rose. They had many misfortunes as
335 well, however. Severe storms ruined their crops.
342 This forced them into debt. Almanzo worked hard
350 in the fields, but he got sick and became crippled.
360 During this time, Laura was pregnant with their
368 second child. He died shortly after birth, unnamed.
376 Soon after, their house burned down when
383 something in the kitchen caught fire.

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

431 Laura was a great storyteller. Her daughter Rose
439 convinced her to write her stories so that other
448 children could enjoy them too. Laura did so. In all,
458 she wrote seven children's books. These comprised
465 her Little House series. They have been widely
473 read and admired. She and Almanzo spent the rest
482 of their lives at their Missouri farm. Laura died in
492 1957, at the age of 90. Their farm is now open for
504 people to visit.
507

The King's Gold

10 The king's castle was only a day's walk from the
17 edge of the forested mountains. Everyone who
27 lived in the area had heard stories of the king's
36 great wealth. One morning the king woke to find
45 that many of his gold coins were missing. He
52 immediately summoned every guard and soldier in
his castle.

54 "Search the countryside!" demanded the king.
60 "Some of my gold has disappeared, and I want
69 the thief brought to justice. I will greatly reward
78 the one who brings me the wrongdoer." The room
87 quickly cleared as every guard and soldier left to
96 find the guilty person.

100 One of the castle guards went to search the king's
110 cocoa plantation. He angrily questioned dozens of
117 workers as they snipped ripe cocoa pods from the
126 trees. Then he marched over to two men who were
136 breaking open cocoa pods and placing the beans in
145 baskets.

146 "What are you doing?" the guard asked the first
155 man, who sat quietly next to his basket.

163 "I am opening cocoa pods," he answered. "I am
172 weak, so it takes me a long time to fill one basket.
184 I cannot move about as quickly as my partner."

193 "I see," snapped the guard. He watched the second
202 man moving busily from one basket to the next and
212 slipping cocoa beans into his pockets. "These two
220 baskets are completely filled with beans. And your
228 pockets are quite heavy."

232 "It takes several hundred beans to make a pound of
242 chocolate, so I must work quickly," the second man
251 said, nervously moving away from the guard.

258 "Not so fast," the guard ordered. "Empty
265 your pockets!" The man followed the guard's
272 instructions, and hundreds of cocoa beans spilled to
280 the ground.

282 "You thief!" the guard shouted. "How dare you steal
291 the king's cocoa beans!"

295 "No, please listen. There are not enough baskets,"
303 the man stammered. "I don't want to stop working,
312 so I often fill my pockets with beans until the
322 wagon comes. Then I empty everything and begin
330 again."

331 "I find your methods extremely questionable," said
338 the guard. "And you're as jumpy as a cat."

347 "I am just a simple peasant, and I am not used to
359 being questioned by guards," the man replied.

366 Just then the guard spotted a gold coin lying on the
377 ground between the two men. "Aha! This proves it!"
386 shouted the guard as he picked up the coin. "Come
396 with me, thief," he demanded. "The king will want
405 to know where you've stashed the rest of the gold."
415 The guard left hastily with the second man. The
424 guard was eager to receive the great reward the
433 king had promised.

436 The first man watched until the two men had
445 vanished into the distance. Then he stood up and
454 slowly walked away, careful not to spill the heavy
463 gold coins he had hidden in his pockets.

471

The Return of the Boomerang

Nothing says “Summer is here!” quite like the
8 smack of a baseball as it is caught in a baseball
19 glove. But what if no one is available to play catch?
30 Then maybe it’s time to trade in the baseball and
40 glove for a boomerang. Over the past decade
48 boomeranging has become increasingly popular.
53 All over the world, this activity is capturing the
62 interest of young and old. Even those who have
71 seen a boomerang still marvel that a curved stick
80 can circle back to the person who threw it.

89 Boomerangs have been around for thousands
95 of years. Many peoples, including the ancient
102 Egyptians, the people of southern India, and the
110 Hopi Indians, used throwing sticks that were similar
118 to boomerangs. But it was the natives of Australia,

127 known as Aborigines, who developed the amazing
134 returning version. The Aborigines used boomerangs
140 for hunting and as digging tools.

146 It wasn't until the mid-1800s that people
153 began to study the scientific principles behind
160 boomerang flight. Perhaps one reason it took so
168 long to understand the science of boomerangs is
176 that not all boomerangs fly in exactly the same
185 way. Because early boomerangs were made by
192 hand, it was virtually impossible to produce two
200 boomerangs with exactly the same wing surface.
207 The ability of all boomerangs to return results
215 essentially from two scientific principles.

220 The first of these principles is that the shape
229 and curve of a boomerang produce lift. Much like
238 airplane wings, a boomerang is flat on one side and
248 curved on the other. As air flows over the slope
258 of the curved surface of the boomerang's wing, it

267 forces the curved edge upward. At the same time,
276 the air flowing under the wing's flat surface pushes
285 it up from the bottom. The result of these forces
295 is lift. Thus, the principles of aerodynamics can be
304 applied to the boomerang to help understand its
312 flight.

313 The second factor affecting the boomerang's ability
320 to return is that it spins like a gyroscope. A good
331 example of a gyroscope is a toy top. Tops are easily
342 set to spinning, but once spinning, they are very
351 hard to move. In fact, if pushed while spinning,
360 a gyroscope will twist at a right angle from the
370 direction in which it was pushed. For instance, a
379 spinning top pushed to the north will actually tilt to
389 the east. When a boomerang is thrown, the force
398 of the lift causes it to turn toward one side rather
409 than straight up. As it spins and moves forward, air
419 flows faster over the top surface of the boomerang
428 and gives it more lift. This extra lift tries to twist

439 the boomerang off course. Since it is spinning very
448 fast, the boomerang begins turning away from
455 the twisting force. As a result, it arcs back to its
466 thrower with relative exactitude.

470 Just because a well-designed boomerang can
477 return nearly to its point of origin does not mean
487 that it automatically does so. Learning to throw
495 a boomerang so that it will return is a challenge.
505 Catching a boomerang spinning at speeds of up
513 to 60 miles per hour takes even more practice.
522 For anyone who masters the art of throwing
530 and catching a boomerang, playing catch with a
538 baseball may have forever lost its thrill.

545