

8th Grade Passages

Between MOY and EOY Student Packet

Passage 1	<i>Laura</i>
Passage 2	<i>The Return of the Boomerang</i>
Passage 3	<i>My Invisible Summer</i>

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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 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

My Invisible Summer

When my application for an internship at the
8 local hard-rock radio station was accepted, I was
17 overjoyed. My friends would be flipping burgers at
25 fast-food restaurants all summer, but I was going
34 to be a disc jockey, a real DJ. I would use my best
47 DJ voice, and I would be admired by millions of
57 fans. In no time I would be on my way to fame and
70 fortune.

71 It didn't take me long to learn that working in
81 radio was not exactly the way I had pictured it.
91 In the movies, radio stations are always situated
99 in gigantic impressive structures in the middle of
107 bustling cities. The radio station where I worked
115 was located in a lonely-looking building on the
124 edge of town. Only the 361-foot antenna made it

134 look at all unusual. The boss explained that the
143 large antenna was necessary for broadcasting at
150 680,000 megahertz. I tried to look interested as
158 she explained frequency and other electrical terms,
165 but all I really wanted to do was meet the DJs.

176 When I was finally introduced to the DJs I had
186 idolized for years, I was shocked. For some reason
195 I had pictured DJ Kirk Krimson as the kind of
205 person who might star in an action movie, but he
214 didn't look much like a motion-picture star. He
224 told me that when he began in radio, disc jockeys
234 played music on vinyl records, not on compact
242 discs; that really made him seem old. I didn't have
252 much chance to be disappointed in my DJ heroes,
261 though, because I almost never saw him.

268 My job was to run the station from midnight to
278 6:00 A.M., and all the DJs worked during the day.
288 They recorded their shows, and I just played tapes

297 of their voices and song choices. Between tapes
305 I plugged in recorded commercials. My favorite
312 commercial was one about a new video game.
320 Three times a night I got to talk on the air for
332 five seconds—but only to read the call letters, the
342 four-letter name that the Federal Communications
349 Commission had assigned to the station. I never
357 even got to say my own name! Maybe I'll try
367 flipping burgers next summer.
371