

On the Banks of Plum Creek

“小屋”丛书

在李子河的岸上

● 英语注释读物 ● 上海教育出版社



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The Little House Books



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[美] 劳拉·英格尔·维尔德著

刘葆宏 万培德主编 张慧芬注释

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前 言

“小屋”丛书是美国著名的儿童文学作品，是描述十九世纪中叶美国拓荒者一家的生活的长篇家世小说。全套共八册，每册都有独立完整的内容。这八册书是：

1. LITTLE HOUSE IN THE WOODS 大森林里的小屋，
2. LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE 大草原上的小屋，
3. FARMER BOY 农家子，
4. ON THE BANKS OF PLUM CREEK 在李子河的岸上，
5. BY THE SHORES OF SILVER LAKE 在银湖畔，
6. THE LONG WINTER 漫长的冬天，
7. LITTLE TOWN ON THE PRAIRIE 大草原上的小镇，
8. THESE HAPPY GOLDEN YEARS 欢快的黄金年代。

“小屋”丛书初版以来，已经再版几十次，拥有许多读者，并且已制成了优秀的电视系列片广泛放映。此外，还引起许多人对它的内容和主人公进行专门研究。

本书作者就是书中的主人公劳拉·英格尔·维尔德夫人。她是美国著名的儿童文学作家。1967年劳拉生于威斯康星州一个拓荒者的家庭里。她从小跟随父母亲坐着大蓬马车先后在美国中西部明尼苏达、堪萨斯、达科他等州的未开发地区进

行拓荒。她在致读者的信中自述她是“经历了书中发生的每一件事。”自从1894年她的一家定居在密苏里后，她陆续回忆写出了“小屋”丛书及其他回忆过去年代的生活的书籍，深受美国读者的欢迎。

劳拉在密苏里的旧居现今已成为“劳拉·英格尔·维尔德故居和博物馆”，对外开放。馆内至今保持着同她生前完全一样的布置，并陈列着书中提及的许多物品。劳拉的家庭当时在达科他州德斯梅的土地、界石、供观察测量用的棚屋、劳拉读书的学校等也都辟作游览地点，供人参观，深受人们的欢迎。

维尔德夫人的这套小说是现实主义自传体小说，基本如实地描写了美国历史上一个特定阶段的某个侧面。维尔德夫人卒于1957年，享年九十。但本丛书所写仅限于她的前半生，即十九世纪后半期的拓荒情景。

英国人在北美移民定居起于十七世纪初，早期移民受英皇统治，北美还是英国的殖民地。但是，他们于1776年宣布独立，成立了美利坚合众国。到了十九世纪初，美国北方出现了资本主义的工业革命，但是南方还是蓄奴制的农业社会。南北矛盾不断加剧，最终导致了1861—1865年的南北战争。这场内战以北方胜利告终。从此，资本主义生产方式不但在北方占优势，而且向南方和中西部迅速扩展。在这以前，经济、政治、文化都集中在东部沿海，但是，此后中西部在全国所起的作用越来越大了。小说描写的就是在南北战争以后向中西部移民拓荒的生活。读者可以从中看到早期拓荒者以一家一户为单位开荒种地、伐木建屋的情景，也能看到后来的城镇在大草原上兴起以及农业开始实现机械化的景象。

这套丛书还带有强烈的理想主义色彩。它以深厚的感情

歌颂了普通美国人的勤劳、勇敢、诚实和乐观主义的品质，歌颂了亲人之间的爱和邻居、朋友、甚至陌生人之间的互助精神。理想与现实有时难免有距离，但它却有鼓舞人们前进和启示人们探索、追求美好生活的积极作用。因此，这套丛书长期以来受到人们的特别爱好。

本书内容生动活泼，文字朴实流畅。作者在描述生活方式、劳动过程时，十分具体精确；在抒情写景时，却又细腻深刻。读者可以从中学到广泛涉及生活各方面的用语和地道的表达方式，以提高自己的英语水平。同时，又可以从这套书中学到一些美国的历史和地理知识，了解到美国人民在早期开荒移民时期与自然界的暴风雨、蝗虫、野兽等作斗争的情形；了解到他们砍伐森林、开垦土地、种植作物、畜养牛羊、建造自己家园的艰苦劳动；以及拓荒者日常家庭生活、文娱活动、节日团聚的欢乐情景。书中确如作者所说“既有阳光，又有阴影。”读者还能从中体会到美国劳动人民不畏艰难、勇敢创业的精神，他们诚实、耐劳、勤奋，俭朴而又充满欢乐的乐观精神。

这套丛书适合高中或大学低年级学生作为课外泛读材料，对于英语爱好者当然同样适用。为了便于读者独立阅读，我们对原文进行了比较详细的注释，书后并附有词汇表。本丛书图文并茂，插图如实地反映了当时的真实情景。参加注释工作的有：陈黛云同志及上海外国语学院附属上海外国语学校叶永、翁鹤年、张慧芬、杨性义、荣新民、姚颖白、忻韦廉等老师。我们还请华东师范大学外语系俞苏美副教授对全书进行了仔细的审校。

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Chapter 1.

THE DOOR IN THE GROUND

THE dim wagon track went no farther on the prairie,¹ and Pa stopp'd the horses.

When the wagon wheels stopp'd turning, Jack² dropp'd down in the shade between them. His belly sank on the grass³ and his front legs stretch'd out. His nose fitted in the furry hollow.⁴ All of him rested, except his ears.

All day long for many, many days, Jack had been trotting under the wagon. He had trotted all the way from the little log house in Indian Territory⁵, across Kansas,⁶ across Missouri,⁷ across Iowa,⁸ and a long way into Minnesota.⁹ He had learned to take his rest whenever the wagon stopp'd.

In the wagon Laura¹⁰ jump'd up, and so did Mary. Their legs were tired of not moving.

"This must be the place," Pa said. "It's half a mile up the creek from Nelson's.¹¹ We've come a good half-mile,¹² and there's the creek."

Laura could not see a creek. She saw a grassy bank, and beyond it a line of willow-tree tops,¹³ waving in the

gentle wind. Everywhere else the prairie grasses were rippling far away to the sky's straight edge.¹⁴

"Seems to be some kind of stable over there,"¹⁵ said Pa, looking around the edge of the canvas wagon-cover. "But where's the house?"

Laura jumped inside her skin.¹⁶ A man was standing beside the horses. No one had been in sight anywhere,¹⁷ but suddenly that man was there. His hair was pale yellow, his round face was as red as an Indian's, and his eyes were so pale that they looked like a mistake¹⁸. Jack growled.

"Be still, Jack!" said Pa. He asked the man, "Are you Mr. Hanson¹⁹?"

"Yah," the man said.

Pa spoke slowly and loudly. "I heard you want to go West²⁰. You trade your place²¹?"

The man looked slowly at the wagon. He looked at the mustangs,²² Pet²³ and Patty.²⁴ After a while he said again, "Yah."

Pa got out of the wagon, and Ma said, "You can climb out and run around, girls, I know you are tired, sitting still."

Jack got up when Laura climbed down the wagon wheel, but he had to stay under the wagon until Pa said he might go. He looked out at Laura while she ran along a little path that was there.

The path went across short sunny grass, to the edge

of the bank. Down below it was the creek, rippling and glistening in the sunshine. The willow trees grew up beyond the creek.

Over the edge of the bank, the path turned and went slanting down, close against the grassy bank that rose up like a wall²⁵.

Laura went down it²⁶ cautiously. The bank rose up beside her till she could not see the wagon. There was only the high sky above her, and down below her the water was talking to itself.²⁷ Laura went a step farther, then one more step. The path stopped at a wider, flat place, where it turned and dropped down to the creek in stair-steps.²⁸ Then Laura saw the door.

The door stood straight up in the grassy bank, where the path turned. It was like a house door, but whatever was behind it was under the ground.²⁹ The door was shut.

In front of it lay two big dogs with ugly faces. They saw Laura and slowly rose up.³⁰

Laura ran very fast, up the path to the safe wagon. Mary was standing there, and Laura whispered to her, "There's a door in the ground, and two big dogs—" She looked behind her. The two dogs were coming.

Jack's deep growl rolled from under the wagon.³¹ He showed those dogs his fierce teeth.³²

"Those your dogs?" Pa said to Mr. Hanson. Mr. Hanson turned and spoke words that Laura could not

understand. But the dogs understood. One behind the other, they slunk over the edge of that bank, down out of sight.³³

Pa and Mr. Hanson walked slowly away toward the stable. The stable was small and it was not made of logs. Grass grew on its walls and its roof was covered with growing grasses, blowing in the wind.

Laura and Mary stayed near the wagon, where Jack was. They looked at the prairie grasses swaying and bending, and yellow flowers nodding³⁴. Birds rose and flew and sank into the grasses..³⁵ The sky curved very high and its rim came neatly down to the faraway edge of the round earth.³⁶

When Pa and Mr. Hanson came back, they heard Pa say: "All right, Hanson. We'll go to town tomorrow and fix up the papers.³⁷ Tonight we'll camp here."

"Yah, yah!" Mr. Hanson agreed.

Pa boosted Mary and Laura into the wagon and drove out on the prairie. He told Ma that he had traded Pet and Patty for Mr. Hanson's land. He had traded Bunny³⁸, the mule-colt, and the wagon-cover for Mr. Hanson's crops and his oxen.

He unhitched Pet and Patty and led them to the creek to drink. He put them on their picket-lines³⁹ and helped Ma make camp for the night. Laura was quiet. She did not want to play and she was not hungry when they all sat eating supper by the camp fire.

"The last night out,"⁴⁰ said Pa. "Tomorrow we'll be settled again. The house is in the creek bank, Caroline." "Oh, Charles!" said Ma. "A dugout. We've never had to live in a dugout yet."⁴¹ "I think you'll find it very clean," Pa told her. "Norwegians⁴² are clean people. It will be snug for winter, and that's not far away." "Yes, it will be nice to be settled before snow flies," Ma agreed.

"It's only till I harvest the first wheat crop," said Pa. "Then you'll have a fine house and I'll have horses and maybe even a buggy. This is great wheat country, Caroline!"⁴³ Rich, level land, with not a tree or a rock to contend with.⁴⁴ I can't make out⁴⁵ why Hanson sowed such a small field. It must have been a dry season, or Hanson's no farmer,⁴⁶ his wheat is so thin and light."

Beyond the firelight, Pet and Patty and Bunny were eating grass. They bit it off with sharp, pulling crunches, and then stood chewing it and looking through the dark at the low stars shining. They switched their tails peacefully. They did not know they had been traded.

Laura was a big girl, seven years old. She was too big to cry. But she could not help asking,⁴⁷ "Pa, did you have to give him Pet and Patty? Did you, Pa?"

Pa's arm drew her close to him in a cuddly hug.

"why, little half-pint,"⁴⁸ Pa said. "Pet and Patty like to travel. They are little Indian ponies, Laura, and

plowing is too hard work for them. They will be much happier, traveling out West. You wouldn't want to keep them here, breaking their hearts on a plow.⁴⁹ Pet and Patty will go on traveling, and with those big oxen I can break up a great big field and have it ready for wheat next spring.

"A good crop of wheat will bring us more money than we've ever had. Laura. Then we'll have horses, and new dresses, and everything you can want."

Laura did not say anything. She felt better with Pa's arm around her, but she did not want anything except to keep Pet and Patty and Bunny, the long-cared colt.

Chapter 2.

THE HOUSE IN THE GROUND

EARLY in the morning Pa helped Mr. Hanson move the wagon bows¹ and cover onto Mr. Hanson's wagon. Then they brought everything out of the dugout house, up the bank, and they packed it in the covered wagon.

Mr. Hanson offered to help move the things from Pa's wagon into the dugout, but Ma said, "No, Charles.² We will move in when you come back."

So Pa hitched Pet and Patty to Mr. Hanson's wagon.³ He tied Bunny behind it, and he rode away to town with Mr. Hanson.

Laura watched Pet and Patty and Bunny going away. Her eyes smarted⁴ and her throat ached. Pet and Patty arched their necks⁵, and their manes and tails rippled in the wind. They went away gaily, not knowing that they were never coming back.

The creek was singing to itself down among the willows, and the soft wind bent the grasses over the top of the bank. The sun was shining and all around the wagon was clean, wide space to be explored.⁶

The first thing was to untie Jack from the wagon

wheel. Mr. Hanson's two dogs had gone away, and Jack could run about as he pleased. He was so glad that he jumped up against Laura to lick her face and made her sit down hard. Then he ran down the path and Laura ran after him.

Ma picked up Carrie⁷ and said: "Come, Mary. Let's go look at the dugout."⁸

Jack got to the door first. It was open. He looked in, and then he waited for Laura.

All around that door green vines were growing out of the grassy bank, and they were full of flowers. Red and blue and purple and rosy-pink and white and striped



flowers all had their throats wide open as if they were singing glory to the morning⁹. They were morning-glory flowers.¹⁰

Laura went under those singing flowers into the dugout. It was one room, all white. The earth walls had been smoothed and whitewashed. The earth floor was smooth and hard.

When Ma and Mary stood in the doorway the light went dim. There was a small greased-paper¹¹ window beside the door. But the wall was so thick that the light from the window stayed near the window.¹²

That front wall was built of sod.¹³ Mr. Hanson had dug out his house, and then he had cut long strips of prairie sod and laid them on top of one another, to make the front wall. It was a good, thick wall with not one crack in it. No cold could get through that wall¹⁴.

Ma was pleased. She said, "It's small, but it's clean and pleasant." Then she looked up at the ceiling and said, "Look, girls!"

The ceiling was made of hay. Willow boughs had been laid across and their branches woven together, but here and there the hay that had been spread on them showed through.¹⁵

"Well!" Ma said.

They all went up the path and stood on the roof of that house. No one could have guessed it was a roof¹⁶. Grass grew on it and waved in the wind just like all