

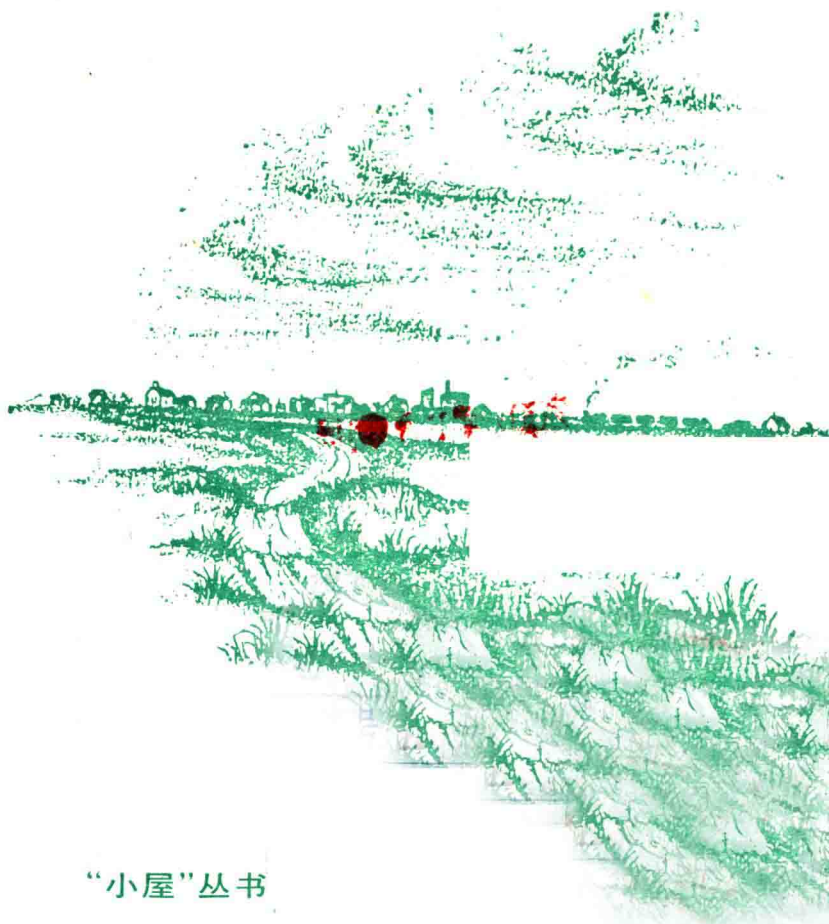
# 大草原上的小镇

“小屋”丛书

• (英语注释读物)

LITTLE TOWN  
ON THE PRAIRIE





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〔美〕劳拉·英格尔·维尔德著 刘葆宏 万培德主编 姚颖白注释  
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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 BIG WOODS 大森林里的小屋，
2. LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE 大草原上的小屋，
3. FARMAR 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 大草原上的小屋，
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。1867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篷马车先后

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”丛书及其它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却越来越大了。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法，以提高自己的英语水平。同时，从这套书中还可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、俭朴而又充满欢快的乐观精神。

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合。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。

**上海外国语学院附属上海外国语学校校长 刘葆宏**

**华东师范大学外语系副教授 万培德**

1984年3月

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## SURPRISE

ONE evening at supper, Pa asked, "How would you like to work in town, Laura?"

Laura could not say a word. Neither could any of the others. They all sat as if they were frozen<sup>1</sup>. Grace's<sup>2</sup> blue eyes stared over the rim of her tin cup, Carrie's teeth stayed bitten into a slice of bread, and Mary's hand held her fork stopped in the air<sup>3</sup>. Ma let tea go<sup>4</sup> pouring from the teapot's spout into Pa's brimming cup<sup>5</sup>. Just in time<sup>6</sup>, she quickly set down the teapot.

"What did you say, Charles?" she asked.

"I asked Laura how she'd like to take a job in town," Pa replied.

"A job? For a girl? In town?" Ma said. "Why, what kind of a job—" Then quickly she said, "No, Charles, I won't have Laura working out in a hotel among all kinds of strangers<sup>7</sup>."

"Who said such a thing?" Pa demanded. "No girl of ours'll do that, not while I'm alive and kicking<sup>8</sup>."

"Of course not," Ma apologized. "You took me so

by surprise<sup>10</sup>. What other kind of work can there be? And Laura not old enough to teach school yet."

All in the minute<sup>11</sup> before Pa began to explain, Laura thought of the town, and of the homestead claim<sup>12</sup> where they were all so busy and happy now in the springtime, and she did not want anything changed. She did not want to work in town.

## SPRINGTIME ON THE CLAIM

AFTER the October Blizzard<sup>1</sup> last fall<sup>2</sup>, they had all moved to town and for a little while Laura had gone to school there. Then the storms had stopped school, and all through that long winter the blizzards had howled <sup>howled</sup> between the houses, shutting them off from each other<sup>3</sup> so that day after day and night after night not a voice could be heard and not a light could be seen through the whirling snow<sup>4</sup>.

All winter long, they had been crowded in the little kitchen, cold and hungry and working hard in the dark and the cold to twist enough hay <sup>干草</sup> to keep the fire going<sup>5</sup> and to grind wheat in the coffee mill for the day's bread<sup>6</sup>.

All that long, long winter, the only hope had been that sometime winter must end, sometime blizzards must stop, the sun would shine warm again and they could all get away from the town and go back to the homestead claim.

Now it was springtime. The Dakota<sup>7</sup> prairie lay so



of the warm new milk into the calf's pail. The rest she strained through a clean white cloth into tin milk pans<sup>17</sup>, and Laura carefully carried them down <sup>cellar</sup> ~~cellar~~ while Ma skimmed thick cream from last night's milk<sup>18</sup>. Then she poured the skimmed milk<sup>19</sup> into the calf's pail, and Laura carried it to the hungry calf. #18 / kant 1

Teaching the calf to drink was not easy, but always interesting. The wobbly-legged baby calf had been born believing that it must butt hard with its little red pot to get milk<sup>20</sup>. So when it smelled the milk in the pail, it tried to butt the pail. #19 / 11 / 15

Laura must keep it from spilling the milk, if she could, and she had to teach it how to drink; because it didn't know. She dipped her fingers into the milk and let the calf's rough tongue suck them, and gently she led its nose down to the milk in the pail. The calf suddenly snorted milk into its nose, sneezed it out with a whoosh that splashed milk out of the pail, and then with all its might it butted into the milk<sup>21</sup>. It butted so hard that Laura almost lost hold of the pail. A wave of milk went over the calf's head and a splash wet the front of Laura's dress. #20 / 11 / 15 #21 / 11 / 15

So, patiently she began again, dipping her fingers for the calf to suck<sup>22</sup>, trying to keep the milk in the pail and to teach the calf to drink it. In the end, some of the milk was inside the calf<sup>23</sup>.

Then Laura pulled up the picket pins<sup>24</sup>. One by one,

she led Ellen, the baby calf and the yearling calf<sup>25</sup> to fresh places in the soft, cool grass. She drove the iron pins deep into the ground. The sun was fully up now, the whole sky was blue, and the whole earth was waves of grass flowing in the wind. And Ma was calling.

"Hurry, Laura! Breakfast's waiting!"

In the shanty, Laura quickly washed her face and hands at the washbasin. She threw out the water in a sparkling curve falling on grass where the sun would swiftly dry it<sup>26</sup>. She ran the comb through her hair, over her head to the dangling braid. There was never time before breakfast to undo the long braid, brush her hair properly, and plait it again. She would do that after the morning's work was done.

Sitting in her place beside Mary, she looked across the clean, red-checked tablecloth and the glinting dishes<sup>27</sup> at little sister Carrie and baby sister Grace, with their soapshining morning faces<sup>28</sup> and bright eyes. She looked at Pa and Ma so cheerful and smiling. She felt the sweet morning wind from the wide-open door and window, and she gave a little sigh.

Pa looked at her. He knew how she felt. "I think, myself, it's pretty nice," he said.

"It's a beautiful morning," Ma agreed.

Then after breakfast Pa hitched up the horses, Sam and David<sup>29</sup>, and drove them out on the prairie east of the shanty, where he was breaking ground for sod corn<sup>30</sup>.

Ma took charge of the day's work for the rest of them<sup>31</sup>, and best of all Laura liked the days when she said, "I must work in the garden."

Mary eagerly offered to do all the housework, so that Laura could help Ma. Mary was blind. Even in the days before scarlet fever had taken the sight from her clear blue eyes<sup>32</sup>, she had never liked to work outdoors in the sun and wind. Now she was happy to be useful indoors. Cheerfully she said, "I must work where I can see with my fingers<sup>33</sup>. I couldn't tell the difference between a pea vine and a weed at the end of a hoe<sup>34</sup>, but I can wash dishes and make beds and take care of Grace."

Carrie was proud, too, because although she was small she was ten years old and could help Mary do all the housework. So Ma and Laura went out to work in the garden.

People were coming from the East now, to settle all over the prairie. They were building new claim shanties to the east and to the south, and west beyond Big Slough<sup>35</sup>. Every few days a wagon went by driven by strangers going across the neck of the slough<sup>36</sup> and northward to town, and coming back. Ma said there would be time to get acquainted when the spring work was done<sup>37</sup>. There is no time for visiting in the spring.

Pa had a new plow, a breaking plow<sup>38</sup>. It was wonderful for breaking the prairie sod. It had a sharp-edged wheel, called a rolling coulter, that ran rolling and cutting

through the sod ahead of the plowshare<sup>39</sup>. The sharp steel plowshare followed it, slicing underneath the matted grass roots, and the moldboard lifted the long, straight-edged strip of sod and turned it upside down<sup>40</sup>. The strip of sod was exactly twelve inches wide, and as straight as if it had been cut by hand.

They were all so happy about that new plow. Now, after a whole day's work, Sam and David gaily lay down and rolled, and pricked their ears<sup>41</sup> and looked about the prairie before they fell to cropping grass<sup>42</sup>. They were not being worn down, sad and gaunt<sup>43</sup>, by breaking sod that spring. And at supper, Pa was not too tired to joke.

"By jingo<sup>44</sup>, that plow can handle the work by itself," he said. "With all these new inventions nowadays, there's no use for a man's muscle. One of these nights that plow'll take a notion to keep on going<sup>45</sup>, and we'll look out in the morning and see that it's turned over an acre or two after the team and I quit for the night<sup>46</sup>."

The strips of sod lay bottom-side-up over the furrows, with all the cut-off grass roots showing speckled in the earth<sup>47</sup>. The fresh furrow was delightfully cool and soft to bare feet, and often Carrie and Grace followed behind the plow, playing. Laura would have liked to, but she was going on fifteen years old now, too old to play in the fresh, clean-smelling dirt<sup>48</sup>. Besides, in the afternoons Mary must go for a walk to get some sunshine.

So when the morning's work was done, Laura took



Mary walking over the prairie. Spring flowers were blossoming and cloud-shadows were trailing over the grassy slopes<sup>9</sup>.

It was odd that when they were little, Mary had been the older and often bossy, but now that<sup>50</sup> they were older they seemed to be the same age. They liked the long walks together in the wind and sunshine, picking violets and buttercups and eating sheep sorrel. The sheep sorrel's lovely curled lavender blossoms, the clover-shaped leaves and thin stems had a tangy taste<sup>51</sup>.

"Sheep sorrel tastes like springtime," Laura said.

"It really tastes a little like lemon flavoring<sup>52</sup>," Laura," Mary gently corrected her. Before she ate sheep sorrel she always asked, "Did you look carefully? You're sure there isn't a bug on it?"

"There never are any bugs," Laura protested. "These prairies are so clean! There never was such a clean place."

"You look, just the same," said Mary. "I don't want

