Little House in the Big Woods: A 4th grade Pioneer Focus Unit  
Created by Kelly Harp

Featured Selection:
Title: Little House in the Big Woods  
Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder  
Publisher: Harper Trophy  
Copyright Year: 1933

Summary: Little House in the Big Woods is a children's book by Laura Ingalls Wilder and was published in 1933. This book was a part of the series of books known as the Little House series. The story is classified as historical fiction and told in the third person, with Laura Ingalls acting as the central character and protagonist. Laura Ingalls's story begins in 1871 as a four-year old girl living with her older sister Mary, baby sister Carrie, her Pa, and her Ma. The story tells the way of life for the Pioneer family. Little House in the Big Woods tells about what happened after the family's stay in Kansas in their return to Wisconsin.

Related Materials:
Title: A Frontier Fort on the Oregon Trail  
Author: Scott Steedman  
Publisher: Peter Bedrick Books  
Copyright Year: 1993

Reading Level: 5th-6th grade
Relation to Unit: A Frontier Fort on the Oregon Trail describes life in a frontier fort on America's Great Plains during the 19th century. The use of cutaway illustrations provides insight into the challenges faced by the pioneers.

Title: The Little House Cookbook  
Author: Laura Ingalls Wilde  
Publisher: Harper & Row  
Copyright Year: 1979

Reading Level: 2nd and up
Relation to Unit: This book is filled with over 100 unique recipes celebrating the foods and cooking techniques of Laura's pioneer childhood. The Little House Cookbook is written in such a way to entice young readers to try out cooking, while learning the importance food was to the Pioneer lifestyle. What better way to understand Pioneer life, than feast on the same type of cuisine?
Title: Daily Life in a Covered Wagon  
Author: Paul Erickson  
Publisher: Puffin Books  
Copyright Year: 1997  
Reading Level: ages 10 and up  
Relation to Unit: In 1853, the Larkin family loaded their covered wagon and headed west on the Oregon Trail in search of a new life. The story answers questions such as: how did they do it, what did they eat, how did they dress, how did they survive sickness or attacks from cattle thieves? Drawing on diaries and letters, and illustrated with photos of actual objects from the past, Daily Life in a Covered Wagon explores what life was really like on the wagon train.

Title: Kitty of Blossom Prairie  
Author: Eakin Press  
Publisher: Eakin Press  
Copyright Year: 1992  
Reading Level: 4th-6th  
Relation to Unit: Kitty and her family struggle to create a homestead on the prairie in northeast Texas. The story gives an insightful depiction of the hardships most Pioneers endured.

Title: Little House on the Prairie  
Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder  
Publisher: Harper Trophy  
Copyright Year: 1935  
Reading Level: 4th  
Relation to Unit: The Little House series is based on decades-old memories of Laura Ingalls Wilder's childhood in the Midwest region of the United States during the late 19th century. The best-known of the books is Little House on the Prairie. The story, like the featured selection, is an account of pioneer life.

Goals:  
- Students will gain a better understanding about Pioneer life.  
- Students will examine tactics for survival.  
- Have fun!

Specific Skills and Strategies:  
- Predicting  
- Understanding others reasoning  
- Using context clues to decipher words  
- Researching  
- Reflection

State Standards Covered:  

Language Arts:  
4.1.7 Use context to determine the meaning of unknown words.  
4.2.3 Draw conclusions or make and confirm predictions about text by using prior knowledge and ideas presented in the text itself, including illustrations, titles, topic sentences, important words, foreshadowing clues (clues that indicate what might happen next), and direct quotations.
Mathematics:
4.2.2 Represent as multiplication any situation involving repeated addition.
4.2.3 Represent as division any situation involving the sharing of objects or the number of groups of shared objects.

Social Studies:
4.3.8 Identify the challenges in the physical landscape of Indiana to early settlers and modern day economic development. (Individuals, Society and Culture)

Science:
4.3.12 Investigate, observe, and explain that heat is produced when one object rubs against another, such as one's hands rubbing together.

Unit Plan:

Prereading:

The teacher will bring in pictures, music, and artifacts from the Pioneer era for the students to look at. Also, have a volunteer from the community come to the class and put on a monologue for the students.

- Grouping: Whole Group
- Assessment: Write five learned facts

Reading:

The teacher will begin by reading the first chapter of the novel aloud. The students will continue reading the text in variation: individually, with buddies, and as a class. Throughout the reading the teacher will stop to let the students make connections to the reading as well as examining key elements aloud. The teacher will check for understanding by asking a variety of Bloom’s level questions.

- Grouping: Independent/ Small Group/ Whole Group
- Assessment: Ask questions that check for understanding and involvement.

Have the students write down words from the reading that they are unsure of the meaning. Next have the students revisit the reading and see if they can figure out the meaning of the word based on the context (Language 4.1.7). Have the students grab a dictionary and look up the meaning. Then, create a Pioneer themed word wall. Discuss as a group the words.

- Grouping: Independent/ Whole Group.
- Assessment: Check to see who is contributing words and looking up definitions.

Responding:

After every chapter the students will have some time to reflect on the reading for the day. The students will do this by doing quickwrites in their journals. Have the students make at least one prediction about what they think will happen in the next chapter
They will also do reading logs to keep track of key events in the story. Using a teacher made handout, the students will answer about 5 questions in written form based on the reading for the day.

- **Grouping:** Independent
- **Assessment:** Teacher will collect reading logs and question handouts. The students will receive a completion for doing a quickwrite about the reading, making a prediction, and keeping a list of key points about the chapter. A check for understanding is done on the answered questions.

**Exploring:**

Have the students look at a relief map and identify five features that would hinder the travel of the Pioneers (Social Studies 4.3.8).
- **Grouping:** Independent
- **Assessment:** Collect listing of features.

Discuss weather patterns and the difference in weather across the US. Then discuss the climate change Pioneers would have to endure on their trip on the Oregon Trail, as well as, why they may have decided to settle in certain areas. Have each student do a short oral presentation on the weather in a certain state.
- **Grouping:** Whole Group/ Independent
- **Assessment:** Presentation

Have the students see if they can think of ways they can create heat. Have the students rub their hands fast together for 15 seconds to demonstrate that heat can be created through the fiction of objects (Science 4.3.12).
- **Grouping:** Whole Group/ Independent

Take the students to Pioneer Days. Have a scavenger hunt with questions the students must find the answer to.
- **Grouping:** Whole Group (class split into small groups with a chaperone in each)
- **Assessment:** Completed scavenger hunt.

Like the toys the Pioneer children use to make and play with, have the students make a cornhusk doll or a buzz saw.
- **Grouping:** Whole Group
- **Assessment:** Completion of cornhusk doll or buzz saw

**Applying:**

Since building shelters were important for Pioneers to survive, have the students build forts. Then have the students reflect on why they did what they did in a short writing. What kinds of things did they notice while they were making a shelter? Any problems they endured or could see the Pioneers may have endured.
- **Grouping:** Small Group/ Independent
- **Assessment:** Check for depth of reflection, have a teacher made rubric to follow.

First have the students find out how much an acceptable amount of weight two horses can pull. Then have the students find a list of things mentioned in the book and
elsewhere that Pioneers would have to carry in a wagon. As a class, brainstorm a list of all the things the horses would have to pull in the wagon. Then have the students split up into small groups and pretend they are making a trip across the country. Have them decide what they would and could take in their wagons, based on the weight and necessity. The students will need to make a list of all the items they would take and the estimated weight of each item (Mathematics 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

- Grouping: Whole Group/ Small Group
- Assessment: The teacher will collect the lists made by students and check the mathematic work.

**Time Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Introduce</td>
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<td>Show artifacts, music, pictures</td>
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<td>Teacher reads ch.1 aloud to class</td>
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<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Monologue</td>
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<td>Ch. 2</td>
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<td>Quickwrite &amp; predictions</td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Reading log, Answer questions</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Ch. 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quickwrite &amp; predictions</td>
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<td>Relief Map</td>
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<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Reading log</td>
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<td>Heat lesson</td>
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<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
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<td>Quickwrite &amp; predictions</td>
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<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Ch. 7</td>
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<td>Reading log, answer questions</td>
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<td>Weather lesson</td>
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<td>Day 8</td>
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<td>Quickwrite &amp; predictions</td>
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<td>Day 9</td>
<td>Ch. 9</td>
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<td>Reading log, answer questions</td>
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<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Ch. 10</td>
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<td>Math activity</td>
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<td>Quickwrite &amp; predictions</td>
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<td>Day 11</td>
<td>Reading log, Answer questions</td>
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<td>Day 12</td>
<td>Quickwrite</td>
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<td>Art activity</td>
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<td>Day 13</td>
<td>Build Forts, write reflection</td>
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<td>Day 14</td>
<td>Weather presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 15</td>
<td>Pioneer Days (scavenger hunt)</td>
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**Assignment Checklist:**

- Five Facts (Prereading)
- Contribution to Word Wall
- Reading Logs
- Quickwrites
- Predictions
- Reading Questions Answered
- Relief Map Features
Presentation

Scavenger Hunt

Cornhusk doll/ buzz saw

Fort building reflection

Math work