

# Caddie Woodlawn

by Carol Ryrie Brink

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Wanda Miller

A Perma-Bound Production

*This guide is not intended to be followed exactly. Feel free to pick and choose from the suggested activities based on the interests and needs of your students.*

## Synopsis

*Caddie Woodlawn* is a collection of adventures that happened during one year in the life of an eleven-year-old girl from the fall of 1864 to the fall of 1865. She and her family live in the woods of western Wisconsin. Because she is frail, her father convinces her mother to allow her to grow up as a tomboy. Caddie is a girl who would rather hunt than sew, rather plow than bake. Caddie and her two older brothers have many exciting adventures.

The book is based on the childhood of Carol Brink's grandmother, Caddie Woodhouse. The book emphasizes the delights of being an American pioneer. It closes with the news that Mr. Woodlawn has inherited an estate in England. The family decides unanimously to stay in Wisconsin, since going to England would mean giving up United States' citizenship.

Mrs. Brink's other novels include *Magical Melons* (1944), which is a sequel to *Caddie Woodlawn*.

## Biographical Sketch

Carol Ryrie Brink was born on December 28, 1895 in Moscow, Idaho. She was given the family name of Caroline, which had been shortened to Kitty, Carrie, and Caddie in other generations. Because her birthday came near Christmas, her mother decided to call her Carol. By the time she was eight years old she had lost both of her parents. She went to live with her grandmother and aunt. Her grandmother, Caddie Woodhouse, was a fine storyteller. *Caddie Woodlawn* is based on the stories she told.

Carol Brink received her B.A. degree from the University of California (Berkeley). After graduation she married Raymond Brink and had two children. While her children were young, Mrs. Brink began to write stories for them. These stories grew and eventually turned into books. Her writing stems from personal experience. She wrote a total of 27 books for both children and adults. A number of these have been translated into foreign languages. She died in 1981 at the age of 85.

## Critic's Corner

Carol Ryrie Brink has been called one of the best known and most distinguished American writers for children. She was a remarkably versatile author, who has written with equal success both for children and adults.

She received many awards for her books: 1936 Newbery Medal for *Caddie Woodlawn*; Friends of American Writers Award 1955; National League of American Penn Women Fiction Award, 1966 for *Snow In The River*; and the 1978 Kerlan Award sponsored by the Kerlan Collection (Research Center for Children's Books) at the University of Minnesota.

Her most widely known book is *Caddie Woodlawn*. It has been reprinted many times in America. *Caddie Woodlawn* is included as a recommended book in Jim Trelease's *The Read Aloud Handbook*. Mr. Trelease says, "You take *Little House On The Prairie*, I'll take *Caddie Woodlawn*. Ten times over, I'll take this tomboy of the 1860's with her pranks, her daring visits to Indian camps, her one-room schoolhouse fights and her wonderfully believable family."

## Notes To The Teacher

More information on Carol Ryrie Brink may be found in: *Something About The Author* and *The Oxford Companion To Children's Literature*.

The following are quotes taken from *Something About The Author* which Carol Brink wrote. You might want to share this with your class.

"I sometimes tell children that the way an author mixes fact and fiction in a book is like the blowing up of a balloon. First you take a small scrap of red rubber, which is your fact and then you blow it full of your own breath which is your fancy. You blow and blow and blow, and if it doesn't break, you will soon have a fine big red balloon, and that is your book."

"The greatest joy for an author is when his writing is really going well. At a moment like this I sometimes feel that I am only a hand that moves to set down words coming from nowhere. Then my characters take over and speak for themselves, and we are all happy together."

## Objectives

1. The students will come to understand what it was like for Caddie and her brothers and sisters to grow up in this time period in western Wisconsin.
2. The students will be able to see likenesses and differences between the Woodlawn children's family responsibilities and their own.
3. The students will come to understand the Woodlawn's love for their country, freedom to make their own choices and their pride in making a life for themselves in America.

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to the book.

1. Describe Caddie Woodlawn. (p. 1)  
*(She is an eleven-year-old girl with golden red hair.)*
2. Why did Caddie wish her mother would let her wear boy's clothes? (p. 5)  
*(Boy's clothes are so much quicker.)*
3. What do Circuit Riders do? (p. 16-17)  
*(They are traveling ministers who cover a large territory and ride from place to place holding services in cabins or schoolhouses. Mr. Tanner covered most of western Wisconsin.)*
4. What did Mr. Tanner and Mrs. Woodlawn have in common? (p. 17)  
*(They are both from Boston.)*
5. What does Mr. Woodlawn do for a living? (p. 18)  
*(He is a master mechanic at the mill, he runs their farm, and repairs clocks.)*
6. What are the northern lights? (p. 20)  
*(“Northern lights” is another name for “aurora borealis”—high altitude, many-colored lights visible in night skies—thought to be caused by injections of charged particles into the earth's magnetic field.)*
7. What is abolition? (p. 22)  
*(The movement calling for the termination of slavery and the slave trade in the United States.)*
8. Where do the people of Dunnville hold their church services? (p. 24)  
*(Services are in the schoolhouse.)*
9. Why did Caddie feel bad for the pigeons? (p. 27)  
*(Because she knew that wherever they went, they were harassed and driven away or killed.)*
10. Describe the town of Dunnville. (p. 30)  
*(Dunnville consisted of a schoolhouse, a few log cabins, a store, and two taverns.)*
11. What is the schoolteacher's name? (p. 56)  
*(Miss Parker)*
12. When is Caddie's birthday? (p. 95)  
*(It's February 22, the same as George Washington's.)*
13. What is an eclipse? (p. 109)  
*(An eclipse is the partial or complete obscuring of one celestial body by another.)*
14. Why did Sam Hankinson's wife leave? (p. 141)  
*(She was an Indian. She and Sam were married when there were very few white people in the area. Now that there were more and more white settlers, he was ashamed that his wife was an Indian, and sent her away.)*
15. Why did Caddie spend her whole silver dollar on the three Hankinson boys? (p. 142-146)  
*(She wanted to drive the “awful lonesome look out of their eyes” after their mother left.)*
16. What would you have done when the storm was coming at the end of Chapter 16? Would you have waited for it to pass at the schoolhouse, stayed under the tree, or run for home as the Woodlawn children did? Why?  
*(Accept all reasonable answers.)*
17. What news did the Little Steamer bring upon its return in Chapter 18? (p. 178-180)  
*(General Lee had surrendered, and President Lincoln's side had won the war.)*
18. What news did Mr. Tanner, the circuit rider, bring when he returned to Dunnville? (p. 184-185)  
*(President Lincoln had been shot.)*
19. Who saved the schoolhouse from the prairie fire in Chapter 19, and how? (p. 194-197)  
*(Obediah saved the school by shoveling a trench around the schoolhouse before the fire could reach it.)*
20. How did Cousin Annabelle react to the tricks Tom, Caddie and Warren played on her? Why did they feel she had these tricks coming to her? (Chapters 20-21)  
*(She handled them very well until Caddie slipped the egg down the back of her blouse. They felt she deserved it because she acted as if she were better than them.)*
21. Why did Mrs. Woodlawn punish Caddie for playing tricks on Annabelle and not her brothers? (p. 212)  
*(She felt that Caddie had neglected her proper duties as a lady.)*
22. At the end of Chapter 21, what did Caddie discover when she woke up in the morning?  
*(She was no longer afraid of growing up. According to father it was a “beautiful and precious responsibility,” and Caddie was ready to go and meet it.)*
23. In Chapter 22 when Caddie began to take interest in needlework and housework, why did the boys do the same? (p. 221)  
*(“The three of them had had their fun together for so long that it was hard to break the habit.”)*
24. When Mr. Woodlawn received a letter from England, why were the children surprised that he called their mother into the parlor? (p. 222)  
*(“The parlor was a sacred room, used only for weddings, and funerals, or Christmas day, special visitors,” or when the circuit rider came to hold services. The only other function it served was a place for Caddie's mother and father to speak privately about important matters.)*

25. What news did the letter from England bring? (p. 224)  
(*Mr. Woodlawn's uncle in England had died and he was to become the next Lord Woodlawn if they chose to go to England.*)
26. Why did the Woodlawns choose to stay in Wisconsin, rather than go to England and become British royalty? (p. 224-237)  
(*If they had gone to England, it would have meant giving up their American citizenship and all American connections.*)
27. What travelers returned to Dunnville in Chapter 24?  
(*The Indians, their dog Nero, and the circuit rider returned.*)
15. Have a "speaking day." Students could recite poetry or a favorite excerpt from *Caddie Woodlawn*.
16. Read *Introducing Shirley Braverman* to your class. This book covers slightly less than a year in the life of a Brooklyn, N.Y., girl during World War II. This book makes a good comparative study with *Caddie Woodlawn*. Many similar family and community situations appear in the two novels and the nearly 100-year difference in their settings offers a unique social and cultural study.
17. Read the sequel to *Caddie Woodlawn*, *Magical Melons*, which is more stories about Caddie.
18. Have the students estimate how much the things that Caddie bought for the Hankinson boys would cost today. Then, using the following prices, have them see how close they were.

hoarhound - \$.65	peppermint - \$.65
pink wintergreens - \$.65	3 tops - \$.30 each
3 small combs - \$.25 each	3 handkerchiefs - \$.45 each

### Student Involvement Activities

1. Locate the Menomonic or Red Cedar River on a map of the United States.
2. Involve your school art teacher in this unit. See if he/she might be willing to make canoes in art class with your students (out of birch bark if possible).
3. Bring in some clothing from that time period (tight-waisted dresses with many small buttons, etc.). Perhaps your local historian might be able to bring things in to show and discuss.
4. Using descriptions of Caddie and her family from Chapter 1, have your students illustrate her and her family.
5. Bring in some Indian relics or visit a nearby museum that has an Indian exhibit.
6. Read some nonfiction books on the Civil War with your class.
7. Have your students write research papers on the Civil War, slavery, or abolition.
8. Make chicken pot pies in your classroom (instead of pigeon pies). Ask parent volunteers to come help with this project. Parents could pre-measure all ingredients to save the classroom time. Recipe: Betty Crocker Cookbook, page 87.
9. On a map of the United States, have your students outline and label with a marker Uncle Edmund's journey home. Down the Menomonic River to the Chippewa, down the Chippewa to the Mississippi to the St. Louis where he lives.
10. Mrs. Woodlawn raises turkeys on their farm. Acquire some chicken and/or turkey eggs from a local farmer and an incubator, so that you can hatch the eggs in your classroom.
11. Visit an old schoolhouse in your community or check with your local or school librarian to have someone come to your classroom and bring old reading books, etc., to discuss what school was like in that time period.
12. Have your own "spelledown," like they do during each week of school in *Caddie Woodlawn*. The two best spellers are to choose teams. The teams then compete using your spelling words for the week or vocabulary words from *Caddie Woodlawn*.
13. Have your students research their family history. By interviewing family members, they could attempt to find out who in their family was alive in 1864 when *Caddie Woodlawn* takes place. Have the students find out what life was like for them, where they went to school, what their school was like, how parents provided for their families, etc. Students could also write and publish their own books based on experiences of their grandmothers, parents, or other relatives.
14. Make your own butter as Mrs. Woodlawn does.
19. Upon completion of Chapter 17, have a storyteller visit your room to tell stories and to teach your students some of the basics of storytelling. This could be followed by a storytelling day with stories told by students.
20. Mr. Tanner brings news to the Woodlawns at the end of Chapter 18 of President Lincoln's assassination. This would be an opportune time to read an actual account of the assassination to your class, such as in Chapters 11 and 12 of *The Historian's Lincoln*, Gabor S. Boritt, editor.

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## CADDIE WOODLAWN TEST

### Part I: Vocabulary

Match the definition to the correct word. (2 points each)

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. escapade       | a. anger aroused by something unjust, mean, or unworthy                 |
| _____ 2. victuals       | b. an insignificant or pretentious person                               |
| _____ 3. nosegay        | c. a hayloft  |
| _____ 4. whippersnapper | d. primitive or uncivilized people                                      |
| _____ 5. abolition      | e. held spellbound, captivated  |
| _____ 6. irksome        | f. dull, continuous sound   |
| _____ 7. savages        | g. a carefree or reckless adventure                                     |
| _____ 8. pandemonium    | h. savage and indiscriminate killing                                    |
| _____ 9. indignation    | i. to enter or interrupt without permission                             |
| _____ 10. aristocrats   | j. a small bunch of flowers   |
| _____ 11. intrusion     | k. typical of country life  |
| _____ 12. lull          | l. causing annoyance or bother  |
| _____ 13. massacre      | m. a calm interval  |
| _____ 14. hot pitch     | n. meat, cut up, stewed, and served with a thick gravy                  |
| _____ 15. enthralled    | o. provisions, food supplies  |
| _____ 16. rustic        | p. members of the nobility  |
| _____ 17. unfathomable  | q. not readily understood   |
| _____ 18. haymow        | r. heated resin derived from the sap of coniferous trees, such as pines |
| _____ 19. drone         | s. the termination of slavery and the slave trade in the United States  |
| _____ 20. fricassee     | t. wild uproar or noise   |

**Part II: True or False**

Mark each sentence with a **T** if it is true or **F** if it is false. (2 points each)

- \_\_\_ 1. Annabelle is the Woodlawns' cousin from Boston.
- \_\_\_ 2. Warren saves the schoolhouse from the prairie fire.
- \_\_\_ 3. The children go to school for five months a year.
- \_\_\_ 4. Mrs. Woodlawn raises turkeys on their farm.
- \_\_\_ 5. The schoolteacher's name is Miss Porter.
- \_\_\_ 6. Indian John gave Caddie his dog and his scalp belt for safekeeping.
- \_\_\_ 7. Tom is the middle brother in the Woodlawn family.
- \_\_\_ 8. Caddie is an eleven-year-old tomboy with golden red hair.
- \_\_\_ 9. Mr. Tanner is the circuit rider who rides from place to place holding church services.
- \_\_\_10. Mr. Woodlawn sang as a child to support his mother and himself.
- \_\_\_11. Maggie Bunn is Caddie's best friend.
- \_\_\_12. Caddie loved her father the best because whatever he said was true.
- \_\_\_13. Uncle Edmond beat Caddie fair and square when they raced across the lake.
- \_\_\_14. *Caddie Woodlawn* is mostly a true story.
- \_\_\_15. The red-haired Woodlawns are better behaved than the dark-haired Woodlawns.

### **Part III: Essay Questions**

Choose two of the following questions to answer. Write one or two paragraphs to answer each question. (10 points each)

1. Describe the school the children attended. Discuss any advantages or disadvantages.
2. Imagine that you are a member of the Woodlawn family, growing up in the 1860's. Discuss advantages and disadvantages.
3. If you were Caddie or Tom, how would you have voted regarding going to England or staying in Dunnville? Explain your answer.

## CADDIE WOODLAWN ANSWER KEY

### Part I: Vocabulary (2 points each)

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. g | 6. l  | 11. i | 16. k |
| 2. o | 7. d  | 12. m | 17. q |
| 3. j | 8. t  | 13. h | 18. c |
| 4. b | 9. a  | 14. r | 19. f |
| 5. s | 10. p | 15. e | 20. n |

### Part II: True or False (2 points each)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  | 11. T |
| 2. F | 7. F  | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. T  | 13. F |
| 4. T | 9. T  | 14. T |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. F |

### Part III: Essay Questions (10 points each)

Answers will vary.



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