

**Farmer Boy**  
by Laura Ingalls Wilder

**Classroom Favorites**

Teacher's Guide written by Irene Meiners

A Perma-Bound Production

**Biographical Sketch**

Born in Pepin, Wisconsin, on February 7, 1867, Laura Ingalls Wilder is the author of numerous books for young people which provide a firsthand picture of American pioneer life. These novels are a reflection of Mrs. Wilder's life. She stated, "I lived everything that happened in my books. It is a long story, filled with sunshine and shadow."

*Little House in the Big Woods* recounts Mrs. Wilder's earliest years in Pepin, Wisconsin, where her pa and ma farmed rough land on the edge of the big woods. From there, she traveled west by prairie schooner with her parents and sisters where they mistakenly settled on land belonging to the Indians, as described in *Little House on the Prairie*. Forced to leave Indian Territory, the family traveled back to western Minnesota, living in a dugout, then a frame house, near a creek, as related in *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. From there, the family traveled west again, to the shores of Silver Lake in Dakota Territory (*By the Shores of Silver Lake*) and lived in De Smet (*Little Town on the Prairie*). There Laura Ingalls married Almanzo "Manly" Wilder, as she records in *These Happy Golden Years*. It is her husband's childhood, growing up on his father's farm near Malone, New York, which Mrs. Wilder recounts in *Farmer Boy*. Almanzo and Laura had a daughter, Rose, and eventually moved to Mansfield, Missouri. On their beloved Rocky Ridge Farm in Mansfield, Mrs. Wilder wrote the set of eight "Little House" books and eventually died at the age of ninety on February 10, 1957.

Mrs. Wilder credited her parents for providing much of her talent in writing. "My education has been what a girl would get on the frontier," she said. "I went to 'little red school houses' all over the west and was never graduated from anything. The only reason I can think of being able to write at all was that father and mother were great readers and I read a lot at home with them."

Awards credited to Mrs. Wilder include runner-up for the Newbery Medal in 1938 for *On the Banks of Plum Creek*; runner-up for the Newbery Medal in 1941 for *The Long Winter*; Pacific Northwest Library Association Young Readers Choice Award in 1942 for *By the Shores of Silver Lake*; and *Book World Children's Spring Book Festival Award* in 1943 for *These Happy Golden Years*. In 1954, the American Library Association presented the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award for the "Little House" books. This award continues to be made every five years to an outstanding author or illustrator of children's books.

**Critic's Corner**

In an age of uncertain value systems, Laura Ingalls Wilder's books provide insight for today's youth. Qualities visible in her characters include a spirit of sturdy independence, a strong work ethic, honesty, courage, and happiness with simple pleasures. These qualities played a part in making the nation of America as our youth know it today.

Critics in the past provided a similar insight in their reviews of Wilder's *Farmer Boy*. "Almanzo was a real early American boy and it will do any boy of today a certain necessary good to learn in so happy a manner how Almanzo managed without radio or 'movies' or comics, or even, for the most part, money. At least fifty cents was so much it staggered him, and he saved it toward a pig." (*Books*, 12 Nov. 1933). "Not only is the story of Almanzo a delightful tale, but we have never read a more faithful account of life on a farm . . . before good farms . . . became mechanized and electrified." (*Boston Transcript*, 6 Dec. 1933). "A genuine bit of American life, vividly and charmingly described and centering about a very real and natural small boy." (*New York Times*, 26 Nov. 1933).

Modern reviews are equally positive in their critique of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books. "The finest firsthand picture of American pioneer life ever written for children" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). "If our country can become great in humility, and can work earnestly to solve its own problems at the same time that it carries its share of world responsibilities, it will be through vision of our children, their integrity and idealism, gained in homes like the home in the 'Little House' books" (*The Horn Book*).

**Instructional Objectives**

1. To present an authentic picture of farm life in the 1860's
2. To expose students to the values which played a part in making America the strong nation it is today
3. To expand vocabulary through the use of context clues, class discussion, word games, and various activities
4. To make responses on literal, interpretive, critical, and creative levels
5. To present a variety of experiences through writing, art, music, and drama in recognition of the different learning styles

### Malone, New York: The Setting for *Farmer Boy*

Malone can be found on a good map of New York State. It is located in the northern part of the state in the foothills of the Adirondacks near Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. Plattsburgh and Lake Champlain are fifty miles to the east. Ogdensburg and the Thousand Islands are located to the west.

Almanzo Wilder's boyhood home was built shortly after 1843, the year his parents, James and Angeline Wilder, were married. The house was actually in Burke, a small village near the Malone line. Malone was then the county seat, a thriving town of about 3,000 people. The Wilders went to Malone to attend church, shop, bank, collect mail, attend high school, and once a year for the County Fair.

The Wilder house itself has not changed substantially; the barn has undergone changes and additions. A beautiful maple tree stands beside the house, which could have been planted by Almanzo's parents. The countryside described in *Farmer Boy* remains virtually unchanged. The farm is still on a rise of ground and the St. Lawrence River can be seen fifteen or twenty miles in the distance. The Trout River, where the Wilders washed their sheep before shearing, is just across the road from the farm.

A trip into present day Malone reveals landmarks mentioned in *Farmer Boy*. The Fairgrounds, the site of Almanzo's beloved Country Fair, still stand. The race track, grandstand, and sheds are the same; the Fair is held in August now and is bigger than ever. The old Square, where important celebrations were once held, still exists. Some of the buildings on Main Street have been replaced or remodeled, but the overall appearance remains the same.

### Chapter 1: "School Days"

It is the first day of school for Almanzo, the youngest in a family of four children. He trudges through the snow with his older brother Royal and his two sisters, Eliza Jane and Alice. They arrive at their one room schoolhouse. Their teacher, Mr. Corse, is patient and gentle; some of the older, rough male students could be a threat to him.

1. As Chapter 1 opens, what year is it?  
(Hint: *Laura Ingalls Wilder* writes that the story took place sixty-seven years ago, but be sure to check the copyright date.  
1933 date book was written  
-67 years ago  
1866 the year in Chapter 1)
2. Sketch a picture of Almanzo in his warm, homemade clothes. Use the colors mentioned in Chapter 1 and label the specific articles of clothing.
3. What do you think could be done about the older, mean boys who might threaten Mr. Corse?  
(Answers will vary.)

### Chapter 2: "Winter Evening"

The children return home after school on a cool winter's evening. Royal and Almanzo attend to their chores in the barn while their sisters assist their mother in preparing dinner. Mr. Corse is presently a guest at the Wilder home.

1. Almanzo's family owned three of the finest barns in the area. Using the description given on pp. 14-16, sketch and label a simple diagram of the barn complex. Include the Horse-Barn, Buggy-House, Big-Barn, and South-Barn.
2. Why wasn't Almanzo allowed to care for the colts?  
(They were valuable; Almanzo's father feared a boy Almanzo's age might scare or tease a colt and that would ruin it. It would then bite, kick, and hate people.)
3. List the different chores Almanzo was expected to do in the barn after school.  
(Clean out soiled hay, spread fresh hay, pitch hay from haymows down into mangers below, and milk the cows, Blossom and Bossy.)

### Chapter 3: "Winter Night"

The family enjoys a cozy time around the big black stove on a very cold winter night. After sleeping in a cold bedroom, chores are done early in the morning followed by a huge country breakfast.

1. Why did Father get up at midnight on very cold nights?  
(He had to wake up 25 young cattle which were sleeping under a shed in the barnyard. Otherwise they would freeze to death.)
2. Compare the foods served at a typical, large, country breakfast in the 1860s with foods served at a large breakfast today.  
(Breakfast in the 1860s: Oatmeal, fried potatoes, buckwheat pancakes, sausages and gravy, jams/jellies, doughnuts, apple pie.  
Breakfast today: Juice, cereal with fruit, eggs and bacon, toast or muffin or pancakes, milk)
3. What worries Almanzo the most about returning to school?  
(He does not want to be there when the big boys thrash Mr. Corse.)

### Chapter 4: "Surprise"

The five older boys from Hardscrabble Settlement are ready to thrash Mr. Corse. The teacher pulls out a 15-foot blacksnake ox-whip. He whips Bill Ritchie and John, forcing them out the door. The three other boys escape through a window and run away.

1. How did Mr. Corse handle the older boys when they were ready to thrash him?  
(He whipped Bill Ritchie and then John with a 15-foot blacksnake ox-whip, forcing them both out the door. The other three boys escaped through a window and ran away.)
2. Why didn't the younger children know their lessons that day?  
(They were so interested and upset over the incident with the big boys that they couldn't concentrate.)
3. Do you think the way Mr. Corse handled the situation with the older boys was a good one?  
(Answers will vary.)

## Chapter 5: "Birthday"

It is Almanzo's ninth birthday. He receives a calf yoke so he can begin to break his young oxen, Star and Bright. Another surprise awaits him when his mother sends him to the woodshed after lunch. His father has made him a handsome new sled!

1. Almanzo did not have to go to school when there were more important things to do. Do you think this is right?  
(Answers will vary.)
2. What is the purpose of a "yoke" for oxen?  
(A yoke is used to train oxen. It keeps them together, thus they can be used to carry heavy loads.)
3. How were the gifts Almanzo received for his birthday different from those a boy might receive today?  
(They were homemade gifts. They gave the child pleasure, but were also practical [like the yoke].)

## Chapter 6: "Filling the Ice-House"

Almanzo is again excused from school in order to help his father and Royal obtain ice blocks from the frozen pond. After two Frenchmen cut the frozen blocks, they are transported to an ice-house where Almanzo and Royal carefully cover them with sawdust to prevent melting.

1. Why was the weather "perfect" for cutting ice blocks from the pond?  
(It was so cold that when the blocks were lifted from the pond, no water would drip from them.)
2. Why did Father have to stop and put his hands over the horses' noses?  
(Their breath had frozen over their nostrils, making it hard for them to breathe.)
3. On pp. 68 and 69, Laura Ingalls Wilder gives a description of the two Frenchmen as they cut blocks of ice out of the pond. With a partner, dramatize this action while you explain what is happening.
4. Why were the blocks of ice covered with sawdust in the ice-house?  
(The sawdust prevented the ice from melting, even during the hottest summers.)

## Chapter 7: "Saturday Night"

It is Saturday night, the night the whole family takes their weekly baths. Almanzo and Royal bring in a large tub of rain water. It is heated on the kitchen stove. Almanzo is the first to take his bath and put on clean clothes. The other members of the family each follow.

1. What is the "Saturday night feeling"?  
(This is the feeling Almanzo gets after he has had a bath and put on clean clothes.)
2. Compare a typical bath time in the late 1800s with modern times.  
(Bath time in 1860: heated rain water, once a week (Saturday), homemade soft-soap, taken in kitchen in front of stove.)

*Bath time today: hot & cold running water, several times a week or every day, commercial soap, taken in separate room called bathroom.)*

3. Even though Almanzo disliked taking baths, he did a careful job. Why?  
(He knew his mother would check to see that he had done a good job.)

## Chapter 8: "Sunday"

Sunday finds the Wilder family dressing in their best clothes, then riding the horse-drawn sleigh to church. Following a two-hour service, Mother serves a delicious Sunday dinner. Then the family settles down for an afternoon of quiet rest.

1. Each man who belonged to the church rented a "shed." What were they used for?  
(The team of horses and sleigh were stored in the shed during the church services. The sheds had a manger with feed-boxes and space for hay and oats.)
2. How does cousin Frank make Almanzo feel?  
(Frank makes Almanzo jealous because he has a store-bought hat. He also makes Almanzo anxious to be old enough to handle his driving — horses and colts.)
3. How was Sunday different from the other days of the week?  
(Working and playing were not allowed on Sunday. It was a day reserved for going to church and resting.)

## Chapter 9: "Breaking the Calves"

Almanzo is allowed another day off from school in order to train his calves. Father teaches him how to make a whip so he can train them to turn right or left. Almanzo attempts to give Pierre and Louis a ride on his sled pulled by his oxen.

1. What did Father teach Almanzo to make?  
(He taught him how to make a whip out of moosewood boughs.)
2. How was the whip used in training Star and Bright?  
(Cracking the whip on either side of the oxen caused them to turn to the right or left.)
3. Why did Pierre and Louis walk behind the sled, rather than ride it?  
(They were probably afraid the oxen might take off again and they might fall off.)

## Chapter 10: "The Turn of the Year"

Almanzo and Father collect the maple sap from trees; Mother turns the sap into sugar cakes and maple syrup. Father sells the family's stored potato crop to a New York potato-buyer and earns \$500. House cleaning, a family project, begins.

1. What two products did Mother make from maple sap?  
(She made solid cakes of maple sugar and jugs of maple syrup.)
2. How did Mother make wintergreen flavoring for her cakes and cookies?  
(Bottles were filled with wintergreen leaves and whiskey, and then they were set aside.)

- Almanzo even helped with the house-cleaning. List five of his house cleaning chores.  
(Remove and replace carpet and carpet tacks, pump water, fetch wood, spread clean straw, sort vegetable bins, and white-wash cellar.)

### Chapter 11: "Springtime"

Springtime means plowing and harrowing the fields for sowing. The Wilder family plants potatoes, wheat, rye, oats mixed with Canada peas (for the animals), carrots, and corn.

- What crops did the Wilder family sow in the springtime?  
(They planted potatoes, wheat, rye, oats mixed with Canada peas [for the animals], carrots and corn.)
- Overall, how did Almanzo feel about spring planting?  
(He enjoyed it but was anxious to be older so he could do more difficult jobs like sowing the grain.)
- How would this family feel about people who do not do their share of the work?  
(They would feel such a person is lazy and worthless. [Father told a story about a boy who went swimming instead of sowing the seed properly.]

### Chapter 12: "Tin-Peddler"

Nick Brown, the tin peddler, arrives. His bright red cart is full of tinware. He has dinner with the family and then entertains them with his funny stories and songs. Mother trades rags for tinware and each child receives a tin gift.

- What kind of a reception did Nick Brown receive at the Wilder home?  
(He was warmly received, invited for supper, and then invited to spend the night at the Wilder home.)
- Almanzo knew the "best time" was coming after supper. What happened after supper?  
(Nick Brown entertained the family with funny stories and sang songs.)
- Almanzo and his sisters were very appreciative of their small tin gifts. Would children today like such gifts? Why or why not?  
(Answers will vary.)

### Chapter 13: "The Strange Dog"

Father sells his two beautiful four-year-old colts to a horse buyer for \$200 in cash. Since the banks are closed for the day, the money is kept in the house overnight. Mother is terribly afraid that it will be stolen.

The family feeds a stray dog and it spends the night in the yard. Savage growling is heard during the night. In the morning, Father finds the boot tracks of two men in the yard.

- Why is Mother so worried about sounds outside?  
(She is afraid someone may try to steal the \$200 in cash.)
- How does the strange dog help the family?  
(It seems that he guards the house from thieves during the night.)

*Mother hears him growling savagely. The next morning Father sees the boot prints of two men in the yard.)*

- How could the horse buyer be connected to a pair of robbers?  
(The horse buyer makes deals with people late in the day so that they cannot put the money in the bank. Then he tells the two thieves with whom he has dealt. They steal the money during the night and split it with the horse buyer.)

### Chapter 14: "Sheep-Shearing"

The days are warm and it is time to shear the sheep. First the sheep are washed in the river. The next day their thick furry coats are sheared and the fleece is stored in the loft.

- Why does Father scold Almanzo in this chapter?  
(Almanzo takes time out from his job of carrying the fleeces up to the loft to see the cat's new kittens. Father does not believe in wasting time!)
- How do we know Father and Lazy John were good sheepshearers?  
(They sheared the fleece quickly, cutting it close to the pink, wrinkled skin, without harming or nicking the skin.)
- Explain how Almanzo tricks everyone after they tease him all afternoon about being last.  
(Almanzo coaxed a sheep up to the barn's loft. Then when the others thought they were finished, he proudly announced that he had the final fleece upstairs, but they hadn't sheared it yet!)

### Chapter 15: "Cold Snap"

After the wool is carded in Malone, Mother dyes the skeins of wool thread and hangs them to dry. She also makes soft-soap for the coming year.

Almanzo plants the pumpkin seeds and picks wild strawberries. A frost almost destroys the young corn crop, but the family is able to save most of it by watering the young plants before they are exposed to the sunshine.

- How is lye produced?  
(Water added to ashes produces lye.)
- What two ingredients are used to make soap?  
(Lye and fat are used to make soap.)
- How did the Wilders save most of the corn crop?  
(The Wilders save most of their corn crop by watering the frozen plants before the sun hits them.)

### Chapter 16: "Independence Day"

Independence Day is a holiday. All the families gather together in Malone for a celebration. Speeches, a picnic, marching band, and firing cannons are all part of the festivities.

- Does Almanzo make a wise decision with his 50¢ piece?  
(Yes, instead of wasting it on a glass of lemonade, he plans to buy a young pig. He will make more money by raising pigs.)

2. Do you agree with Father's statement that farmers made the country of America?  
(Answers will vary.)
3. Using a Venn diagram, compare an Independence Day celebration in the 1860s with a modern Fourth of July celebration.
3. How did Mother earn \$250 for her family?  
(She sold all the butter she had made to a butter buyer from New York City.)

### Chapter 20: "Late Harvest"

A final gathering of crops takes place before the first snowfall. Pumpkins, apples, onions, turnips, parsnips, carrots, and potatoes are all picked and safely stored for the winter. Almanzo's face is partially scalded by a roasting potato which bursts in the fire. Although painful, it is not a serious injury.

**Chapter 17: "Summer-Time"**  
Hot summer days mean the usual chores for Almanzo, but also include some happy times. He is milk-feeding a pumpkin for the County Fair. A rainy day means fishing with Father. The whole family spends one pleasant day picking berries.

1. How did Almanzo get his pumpkin to grow so large so quickly?  
(He fed it milk.)
2. Why did Almanzo take more food than he could eat?  
(He was anxious to grow quickly so he could help break the colts.)
3. What family outing was a lot of fun for many of the families in the area?  
(Berrying; picking wild huckleberries and blueberries was a special family outing.)

1. Why is it important to not bruise a perfect apple?  
(A bruised apple will rot and one rotten apple will spoil a whole bin.)
2. How did Almanzo get burned?  
(A potato roasting in the fire burst and scalded his face.)
3. All the harvest was in and the Wilders' barns were "stuffed to bursting." How do you think this made the family feel?  
(It probably made them feel satisfied, secure, and glad they had worked so hard as a family.)

### Chapter 18: "Keeping House"

Father and Mother go on a week's vacation to Uncle Andrew's. The children enjoy doing anything they feel like doing: making ice cream, eating watermelon, and making candy. They hurriedly clean the house and do their chores the day before their parents arrive home.

1. Where did Father and Mother go for a week?  
(They went on a vacation to visit Uncle Andrew. He lived ten miles away.)
2. How does Almanzo know that Eliza Jane really loves him?  
(She patches the wallpaper in the parlor and never tells Mother what happened.)
3. Do you think that Almanzo suffered the consequences of his bad behavior, even though his parents never found out?  
(Yes, he suffered because he lived in fear and dread of having his parents find out what he did.)
4. Illustrate one of the events in this chapter by drawing a funny cartoon.

### Chapter 21: "County Fair"

After the hard work of harvesting, the family spends three days at the county fair. They view various kinds of livestock, eat a delicious meal in the church dining hall, watch a horse race, and rejoice when Almanzo wins first prize for his enormous milk-fed pumpkin.

1. Why were Florida oranges such a special treat at the county fair?  
(They could not be grown locally since oranges require a tropical climate to grow. Florida was very far away from Malone, New York, in a time when transportation was not as fast as it is today.)
2. List the three types of horses Almanzo and his father saw at the fair.  
(Morgans, thoroughbreds, Belgians)
3. What types of cows did they see at the county fair?  
(Guernseys, Jerseys, Devons, and Durhams.)

### Chapter 22: "Fall of the Year"

Beechnuts are gathered on a chilly fall day before the first snowfall. Bitter cold weather arrives and it is time to butcher five hogs and a yearling beef. The family uses every part of these butchered animals to make a variety of food items and useful products.

1. The variety of food items and useful products the Wilder family makes from the six butchered animals is amazing. See how many you can list.  
(Lard, shoes, pork fat, hams and shoulders to be pickled, meat sections to freeze, sausages, cracklings, headcheese, mince-meat, and candles.)
2. What did French Joe and Lazy John receive for their help on butchering day?  
(They received some fresh meat.)
3. Of all the food items made from the animals, which would you

### Chapter 19: "Early Harvest"

The spring planting has resulted in a beautiful harvest. A three-week-long haying-time fills the haymows until they are ready to burst. The family worked long days to harvest oats, wheat, beans, pumpkins, carrots, turnips and potatoes.

1. How long did the haying-time last?  
(It lasted three weeks.)
2. What crops were harvested during harvesting time?  
(Oats, wheat, beans, pumpkins, carrots, turnips, and potatoes were harvested.)

most enjoy eating? Is it something that you normally eat at home?

*(Answers will vary.)*

### Chapter 23: "Cobbler"

The cobbler is late in arriving for his yearly visit so Royal, Eliza Jane, and Alice leave for Malone Academy in their old shoes. The cobbler arrives and spends two weeks with the Wilders, making shoes for the entire family. Almanzo receives his first pair of boots.

1. Why did Royal and the girls have to go to the Academy in their old shoes?  
*(The cobbler did not arrive when they thought he would. He had been delayed at a previous house where he made wedding shoes for the family.)*
2. What pleasant surprise does Almanzo receive after the cobbler arrives?  
*(Father says he is old enough for his first pair of boots.)*
3. Why does the cobbler spend two weeks with the Wilders?  
*(He makes custom-fitted shoes for the entire family.)*
4. After only a short time at Malone Academy, have the older children changed in any way? How?  
*(Yes, they have changed. We see them beginning to question their parents' way of doing things.)*

### Chapter 24: "The Little Bobsled"

Almanzo and Father search the forest for perfect wood to make a bobsled. They spend the afternoon making the sled which Almanzo will attach to Star and Bright and use to haul timber from the forest.

1. For what purpose will Almanzo use his bobsled?  
*(Almanzo will use his sled for hauling timber from the forest.)*
2. Father knows how to do many things. How do you think he learned to do so much?  
*(Answers will vary but may include the idea that he could have learned many things from his own father.)*
3. If you could make your own bobsled, what would it look like? Design your own sled. Make a sketch of it. If you are good with wood, create a small wooden model.

### Chapter 25: "Threshing"

On stormy winter days, Almanzo and his father thresh. They begin with the wheat crop, first flailing to beat the grains of wheat from their husks and then placing the grain into a fanning mill to separate the kernels from the chaff.

1. What is a flail used for?  
*(A flail is used to beat the grains of wheat from their little husks.)*
2. Why is wheat placed inside a fanning mill?  
*(The mill separates the grains of wheat into two parts: the useless chaff and the kernels of clean wheat.)*
3. How does Almanzo feel about the many days of threshing during stormy winter days?

*(Threshing seems to make him feel grown up; he feels capable.)*

### Chapter 26: "Christmas"

Long awaited Christmas Day finally arrives! The children are delighted with their gifts. A huge Christmas dinner is prepared for visiting aunts, uncles, and cousins. The boys enjoy a snowball fight after dinner.

1. What was the first thing Almanzo pulled out of his stocking? Why did it thrill him so much?  
*(This was the first store-bought hat Almanzo had ever received. All of his others had been homemade.)*
2. Do you think Almanzo was treated fairly for fighting with Frank?  
*(Answers will vary. [Almanzo had been trying to keep Frank away from the colt.]*
3. Using a Venn diagram, compare a Christmas spent in the 1860's with a modern Christmas.

### Chapter 27: "Wood-Hauling"

Almanzo is in the process of learning how to be a good ox driver and wood hauler. It is not easy and he has several accidents. After the year's supply of wood has been hauled, Almanzo returns to school.

1. What tools are used to lead the very heavy logs onto the bobsleds?  
*(Skids [stout poles to stick under the log] and cant poles [sharp-ended poles with big iron hooks].)*
2. Why do you think Father passed Almanzo and did not try to help him get his sled and oxen out of the ditch?  
*(Answers may vary but could include the fact that Father wanted Almanzo to solve this problem himself. It would make him strong and capable.)*
3. Almanzo thought that as soon as he learned how to do arithmetic well, he would no longer need to go to school. Do you agree?  
*(Answers will vary.)*

### Chapter 28: "Mr. Thompson's Pocketbook"

Father and Almanzo travel to town to sell their bales of hay. On the way, Almanzo finds a black pocketbook containing \$1,500. Father guesses the purse belongs to Mr. Thompson. When Almanzo returns the money, Mr. Thompson insults him. Mr. Paddock, the wagon-maker, is present and becomes furious. He insists that Mr. Thompson give Almanzo a \$200 reward.

1. Father says, "Learning is best put into practice." Give an example of how this is still true today.  
*(Answers will vary.)*
2. How does Mr. Thompson treat Almanzo when he returns his pocketbook with \$1,500 in it?  
*(He insults Almanzo. He calls him a "durn boy" and implies that he could have been a thief. Then he gives him only a nickel as a reward.)*

3. Do you feel that Almanzo should have received the \$200?  
(Answers will vary.)

### Chapter 29: "Farmer Boy"

Mr. Paddock makes Father an offer. He wishes to train Almanzo as a wheelwright, implying that someday he may take over the business. Mother is horrified; she feels the life of a farmer is the best possible life.

Almanzo makes his decision; he wants to raise a colt more than anything, demonstrating that he loves farm life. He admires his father and wants to be just like him, a free and independent man.

1. What kind of an offer does Mr. Paddock make Father?  
(He offers to take Almanzo on as an apprentice. He would thus be training him to become a wheelwright. One day Almanzo would take over the whole wagon-making business.)
2. What is Mother's reaction to Mr. Paddock's proposal?  
(Mother is upset; she thinks being a farmer on a good farm is the best possible kind of life. She doesn't want Almanzo catering to other people for the rest of his life.)
3. What is Almanzo's decision to this proposal?  
(Almanzo, in deciding that he wants to raise a colt more than anything, shows that he loves life on a farm. He wants to be just like his father, a free and independent man.)

### Other Books by Laura Ingalls Wilder

*By the Shores of Silver Lake*  
*The First Four Years*  
*Little House in the Big Woods*  
*Little House on the Prairie*  
*Little Town on the Prairie*  
*The Long Winter*  
*On the Banks of Plum Creek*  
*On the Way Home*  
*These Happy Golden Years*  
*West from Home: Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder, San Francisco 1915*

### Related Reading

*Caddie Woodlawn* (Carol Ryrie Brink)  
*A Day No Pigs Would Die* (Robert Newton Peck)  
*The Grasshopper Summer* (Ann Turner)  
*Lantern in Her Hand* (Bess Streeter Aldrich)  
*Let the Hurricane Roar* (Rose Wilder Lane)  
*Little House on Rocky Ridge* (Roger Lea MacBride)  
*Magical Melons* (Carol Ryrie Brink)  
*Thimble Summer* (Elizabeth Enright)

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A copy of the vocabulary list should be provided for each student, enabling them to do various exercises. Teachers often find it practical to make one copy of the novel a teacher's edition. Vocabulary words can then be underlined and additional notes made directly in the book.

### VOCABULARY LIST

Since the following vocabulary words from *Farmer Boy* should first be examined in context, pages numbers have been provided. Students should have the opportunity to discuss the meanings of these words.

- |                       |                            |                           |                         |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chapter 1:            | Chapter 6:                 | 65. shears 157            | 94. gnaw 280            |
| "School Days"         | "Filling the Ice-House"    | 66. Merinos 158           | 95. tallow 283          |
| 1. numbed 2           | 38. cross-cut saw 67       | Chapter 15:               | Chapter 23:             |
| 2. hulls 3            | 39. crevice 72             | "Cold Snap"               | "Cobbler"               |
| 3. fullcloth 3        | Chapter 7:                 | 67. card 164              | 96. cobbler 285         |
| 4. underdrawers 4     | "Saturday Night"           | 68. skeins of wool thread | 97. vise 293            |
| 5. thrash 5           | 40. welled up 77           | 164                       | 98. awl 293             |
| 6. boarded 6          | 41. scrolls of molasses 79 | 69. lye 164               | 99. last 295            |
| 7. rapped 6           | 42. crock 79               | 70. ewes 169              | 100. deportment 296     |
| 8. primers 7          | 43. wooden pannikin of     | 71. dislocated 169        | 101. mortified 296      |
| 9. fidgeting 8        | soft soap 80               | Chapter 16:               | Chapter 24:             |
| 10. woodhaulers 11    | Chapter 8:                 | "Independence Day"        | "The Little Bobsled"    |
| 11. bobsleds 11       | "Sunday"                   | 72. parasols 175          | 102. hewed 300          |
| Chapter 2:            | 44. hearth 84              | 73. fifes 175             | 103. auger 301          |
| "Winter Evening"      | 45. griddle 84             | 74. tariffs 179           | 104. pliable 302        |
| 12. eaves 14          | 46. lavishly 85            | 75. wads 186              | Chapter 25:             |
| 13. fringe 14         | 47. pantry 86              | Chapter 17:               | "Threshing"             |
| 14. sedate 16         | 48. crimped 86             | "Summer-Time"             | none                    |
| 15. placidly 16       | 49. sedately 90            | 76. balk 193              | Chapter 26:             |
| 16. gangling 16       | Chapter 9:                 | 77. placidly 194          | "Christmas"             |
| 17. frock 18          | "Breaking the Calves"      | Chapter 18:               | 105. switches 312       |
| 18. petrified wood 26 | 50. boughs 97              | "Keeping House"           | 106. scour 313          |
| Chapter 3:            | 51. bored 102              | 78. haymow 221            | 107. sage 314           |
| "Winter Night"        | 52. askew 107              | Chapter 19:               | 108. cravat 319         |
| 19. tallow 30         | Chapter 10:                | "Early Harvest"           | 109. whetstone 324      |
| 20. pannikin 31       | "The Turn of the Year"     | 79. scythes 228           | Chapter 27:             |
| 21. charred 31        | 53. intense 109            | 80. plumed 229            | "Wood-Hauling"          |
| Chapter 4:            | 54. sap 109                | 81. swathes 229           | 110. balky 336          |
| "Surprise"            | 55. caldron 110            | 82. bounty 233            | 111. wallowed 341       |
| 22. impudently 39     | 56. aromatic 112           | 83. sheaves 234           | Chapter 28:             |
| 23. trustees 40       | Chapter 11:                | 84. maul 236              | "Mr. Thompson's Pocket- |
| 24. swaggered 43      | "Springtime"               | Chapter 20:               | book"                   |
| 25. floundered 46     | 57. furrows 121            | "Late Harvest"            | 112. maul 344           |
| 26. bested 47         | 58. harrow 121             | 85. shocks 240            | 113. bale 345           |
| Chapter 5:            | 59. sowed 127              | 86. scalding 247          | 114. shinnied 349       |
| "Birthday"            | Chapter 12:                | 87. poultice 249          | 115. hames 349          |
| 27. yoke 50           | "Tin-Peddler"              | Chapter 21:               | 116. livery 350         |
| 28. curryings 50      | 60. soldered 138           | "County Fair"             | Chapter 29:             |
| 29. contradict 54     | 61. shrewd 139             | 88. crevice 261           | "Farmer Boy"            |
| 30. sullen 54         | Chapter 13:                | 89. sulkies 263           | 117. apprentice 363     |
| 31. lye 56            | "The Strange Dog"          | 90. tiers 263             | 118. keen 364           |
| 32. astraddle 58      | 62. stealthy 149           | Chapter 22:               | 119. catering 367       |
| 33. shuttle 61        | Chapter 14:                | "Fall of the Year"        |                         |
| 34. spinning wheel 61 | "Sheep-Shearing"           | 91. yearling beef 279     |                         |
| 35. loom 61           | 63. shear 154              | 92. carcass 279           |                         |
| 36. trough 62         | 64. bleated 155            | 93. lard 279              |                         |
| 37. stanchions 64     |                            |                           |                         |



FARMER BOY VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH

D	I	S	L	O	C	A	T	E	D	A	S	Z	F	Q	T	V	W	C	B	T	O
E	Z	A	Y	A	A	W	I	R	S	G	T	A	R	I	F	F	S	H	L	I	J
P	K	G	L	M	L	N	E	W	E	O	A	P	D	I	L	M	Z	U	A	W	L
O	S	E	T	U	D	V	R	W	C	E	N	F	O	P	R	U	V	Z	R	C	I
R	F	G	J	L	R	M	S	O	Q	R	C	O	B	B	L	E	R	T	D	U	V
T	A	C	D	F	O	G	H	L	E	M	H	N	Q	S	Y	T	V	E	W	X	E
M	A	U	L	Z	N	A	B	C	X	Y	I	Z	S	T	E	U	I	M	N	O	R
E	Y	S	U	M	N	B	I	A	D	E	O	F	H	I	L	F	M	Q	R	S	Y
N	C	D	B	A	F	T	N	O	P	A	N	N	I	K	I	N	M	N	V	U	Z
T	S	R	C	D	N	B	T	A	E	G	S	H	I	T	J	L	K	N	M	P	O
B	A	D	C	E	H	K	E	E	N	P	Q	S	R	T	R	V	V	Z	Z	T	O
H	O	U	R	S	E	B	N	Y	O	R	W	O	N	D	S	I	D	Z	O	R	O
C	A	P	L	L	E	D	S	L	A	S	M	T	N	I	T	N	F	O	Z	I	B
T	P	Z	P	L	U	M	E	D	L	I	M	E	T	E	S	F	O	R	T	N	B
A	P	Z	O	Q	R	T	T	B	A	D	G	I	O	S	U	T	Z	Y	X	O	L

DIRECTIONS: Twenty of your vocabulary words from *Farmer Boy* are hidden in this word search. Can you find them all?

## ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

After reading the words in context, the meanings of the vocabulary words should be discussed. Opportunities to use the words in oral and written sentences provide good practice. Any words difficult to decode should be examined for syllabication and pronunciation.

### Additional practice activities:

1. **Be A Detective:** Teacher gives definition for vocabulary word. Students find word on list. This can be done orally or students can write the word.
2. After making cards for the words, students can play such games as Concentration, Password, etc.
3. Use graph paper to make a word search using new words from the chapters. Exchange puzzles.
4. Use graph paper to create crossword puzzles using new words. Exchange puzzles.
5. **Select Ten Words:** Students write only every other letter and a synonym or definition for 10 words. Exchange papers with a classmate. Example: p\_\_a\_\_f\_\_r\_\_ a raised, level surface .
6. Divide the class into partners. Assign each pair a vocabulary word to act out in a brief skit. The rest of the class guesses the vocabulary word.
7. Draw a picture which represents one of the vocabulary words. The rest of the class tries to guess the word.
8. Have each student write a question that could be answered with a vocabulary word. The class supplies the missing word. Example: If a person has not had a proper diet, what might he be suffering from? Answer: malnutrition.
9. **Hangman:** play Hangman with the vocabulary words, either with teams, the entire class, or in pairs.

## HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?

In the left hand column are a list of behaviors which were expected of Almanzo and other children in the 1860s. Discuss them together as a group or class.

In the right hand column, list behaviors which are expected of you by your parents or other adults.

Behaviors Expected in the 1860s	Behaviors Expected Today
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stick to a job until you have finished it.</li><li>2. Do not contradict your elders.</li><li>3. Do not point at people.</li><li>4. Do not laugh or talk loudly on Sundays.</li><li>5. Do not waste money; use it wisely.</li><li>6. Do not talk at meals.</li><li>7. Eat all the food you put on your plate.</li><li>8. Do not spend your time in idleness.</li><li>9. Do not interrupt when others are speaking.</li><li>10. Do not waste anything; it is sinful.</li></ol>	

## COMPARISON CHART

*Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder takes place in the late 1860s. Using the information you have learned from this book, compare lifestyles then with present lifestyles. Use the following chart to record your comparisons.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>1860s</b>	<b>1990s</b>
Food		
Drink		
Clothing		
Transportation		
Type of Home		
Daily Chore		
Entertainment		
Pets		
Schooling		
Language (typical expression)		

## VOCABULARY TEST

Match the words on the left with their definitions on the right, placing the correct letter on each blank.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. gnaw

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. crevice

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. sullen

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. caldron

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. haymow

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. bounty

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. carcass

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. awl

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. pliable

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. cravat

a. large pot

b. hayloft

c. a crack

d. tool for piercing holes

e. easily bent

f. necktie

g. chew

h. dead body of an animal

i. gloomy

j. a bountiful yield

## COMPREHENSION TEST

### Part I: True/False (20 points)

Write a **T** in front of each statement if it is true or an **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Frank is Almanzo's older brother.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mr. Corse teaches in a one room schoolhouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Popcorn is a popular snack on cold winter evenings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Mr. Corse whips Bill Ritchie with an ox whip.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Starlight is Almanzo's calf.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sawdust prevents ice blocks from melting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Soft-soap is made from lye and fat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Milk-fed pumpkins can be enormous in size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The family spends one day at the County Fair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Cobblers often stayed with families for weeks to make shoes for the entire family.

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Read each description. Write the letter of the character who matches each description in the blank provided.

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| _____ 1. He was the oldest in the family.      |                |
| _____ 2. He was the schoolteacher.             | a. Almanzo     |
| _____ 3. She patched the wallpaper.            | b. Eliza Jane  |
| _____ 4. She planted potatoes with Almanzo.    | c. Father      |
| _____ 5. He was a tin peddler.                 | d. Mother      |
| _____ 6. He longed to have his own colt.       | e. the cobbler |
| _____ 7. She made soap and candles.            | f. Royal       |
| _____ 8. He made shoes for the family.         | g. Mr. Paddock |
| _____ 9. He offered to train Almanzo.          | h. Nick Brown  |
| _____ 10. He scolded Almanzo for wasting time. | i. Mr. Corse   |
|  | j. Alice       |

**Part III: Quotations (20 points)**

Match the following quotations with the person who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the blanks provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "Stay in at recess and learn it."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "It's a man's job, son. One little mistake'll ruin a fine colt."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "Well, ma'am, I'll trade you the milk-pans and pails, the colander and skimmer, and the three baking pans, but not the dishpan, and that's my last offer."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "There's the fleece! I've got it upstairs and you haven't sheared it! I beat you!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "... don't eat all the sugar!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "I got the scraps of wallpaper that were saved in the attic, and cut out the patch and put it on with flour paste."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "It was my potato that exploded. ... This one's yours because you're hurt ..."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "I never sewed a seam yet that wouldn't hold water."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "Let me catch you boys fooling around those colts again and I'll tell Father and Uncle Wesley."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "You'll have to think about starting Almanzo out in life, before long. Apprentice him to me, and I'll treat the boy right."

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| a. Almanzo     | f. Royal           |
| b. Mother      | g. the tin peddler |
| c. Eliza Jane  | h. Mr. Corse       |
| d. the cobbler | i. Mr. Paddock     |
| e. Father      | j. Alice           |

**Part IV: Sentence Completion (20 points)**

Use the following vocabulary words to complete these sentences.

curryings	frock	bobsleds	primers	fidgiting
pannikins	numbed	contradict	trough	boarded

1. The bitter cold \_\_\_\_\_ Almanzo's nose.
2. The children learned to read from books called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Every family \_\_\_\_\_ the teacher for two weeks.
4. No \_\_\_\_\_ or whispering was allowed in school.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ were used to haul timber.
6. Almanzo wore a barn \_\_\_\_\_ over his school clothes.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ held soap and even popcorn!
8. Star and Bright had sleek, silky fur from all of Almanzo's \_\_\_\_\_.
9. In the 1880s, a child would not \_\_\_\_\_ an adult.
10. Animals drink from a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Part V: Essay (20 points)**

Choose two of the following essays. Answer each in a paragraph.

1. Almanzo's chores begin at dawn and end at dinner time. They may vary according to the seasons. Follow Almanzo through a typical day and describe the chores he does.
2. In spite of all the hard work, Almanzo also finds time for fun. He enjoys himself without having a television, bike, or Nintendo. Tell about some of the things Almanzo does for fun.
3. Almanzo has to make a decision between becoming an apprentice to Mr. Paddock, the wheelwright, or remaining on the farm. Discuss all the advantages Almanzo would have if he remained on the farm and grew up to be a farmer.
4. Choose any one of the characters in *Farmer Boy* and give a complete description of this character. Include physical and personality traits as well as behaviors and interests.





**TEACHER'S NOTES**

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