

Traveling to Walnut Grove
A Reader's Theater Script
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Characters:

Ma

Pa

Laura

Mary

Carrie

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Narrator 1: This story takes place in 1874 on a dusty path somewhere on the prairie in southern Minnesota. The Ingalls family had packed all they could into a covered wagon and left their home in Wisconsin, heading for a new place to live and farm on the open prairie land near Walnut Grove, Minnesota.

Pa: (Leading the horses and covered wagon) Looks like there's a creek a couple miles ahead. That might be a good place to stop for a rest.

Ma: Yes, Charles. The girls are getting tired.

Narrator 1: Traveling by covered wagon was very different from traveling by cars, buses, or trains. For one thing, there was no air conditioning.

Carrie: (Riding in the wagon - whiney- just learning to talk) I'm hot!

Mary: I can't wait to rest in the shade.

Laura: I'm not going to rest. I'm going swimming in the creek!

Narrator 2: On the prairie, in their wagon, the Ingalls family could only travel around 10 miles each day. The Ingalls family had already been traveling for 14 days. The landscape around them changed as they headed West, out of the tree-filled Woods of Wisconsin and into the flat prairie lands of southern Minnesota. The wagon was needed to carry supplies, so much of the time, Laura and Mary would have to walk beside the wagon along with their trusty bulldog Jack.

Laura: Doesn't a swim in the creek sound good, Jack?

Mary: You'll get all muddy again, Laura.

Laura: So what? I'm already dusty, at least I'll be cool! (WOULD SHE SAY SO WHAT TO HER MOM?. I am soooo warm.)

Ma: Laura, you won't step one foot into that creek until Pa says it's alright. Creeks can be dangerous, so one must always be careful.

Laura: Yes, Ma.

Narrator 1: The Ingalls family had high hopes for what their lives would look like in Walnut Grove, and they were anxious to arrive. The wagon and its team of horses seemed to the children as if they could hardly travel fast enough.

Mary: How many more days do we have to travel, Pa?

Pa: Well, if we don't run into any trouble, I'd say we'll be there by the end of the week.

Ma: Oh Charles, that sounds wonderful! I can't wait to unpack this wagon and get settled in a house again and don't forget your promise that if we're close enough to town, the girls can go to school.

Narrator 2: It was very important to Caroline Ingalls that her children receive an education. In fact, Caroline had been a school teacher before she and Charles were married. Among the family treasures carefully packed into the wagon were books that she hoped the girls would one day be able to read and enjoy.

Pa: I won't forget! Don't worry Caroline. We'll have a house and we'll be able to make far more money farming the good, flat, rich soil I've heard about in Minnesota. You can have a new dress and the girls can all get new coats and shoes.

Carrie: I want candy!

(Ma and Pa Laugh)

Ma: Well, I'll just be happy to have a roof over our heads at night, Charles.

Narrator 1: The Ingalls family approached the creek, Charles worried the spring rains may have made the water so high they'd need to ford the wagon across; however, this creek was low and only a few feet deep. The problem was that the bank of the creek was high, forming a drop off, not an easy slope to simply cross. (it would have been late spring a little before May 24, 1874)

Pa: It's a good thing I was walking ahead of the horses. There is about a five foot drop off on the edge of the bank. It must have washed away when the creek was high weeks ago.

Ma: We will just have to find a different place to cross, Charles. We've had to do that many times.

Laura: Which way should we go Pa?

Narrator 2: Charles looked far to the north and far to the south. Then he noticed a small path in the tall grass.

Pa: You see that little trail Half-pint? That's a game trail. The animals in this area know more about this place than we do. I think if we follow their trail, we will find a place where they've been crossing the creek. If they've been able to cross, then we will be able to also.

Mary: I see it too, Pa!

Carrie: I can see it!

Narrator 1: The family turned the wagon north and followed the trail.

Laura: Did wolves make this trail, Pa?

Pa: No, Laura. There aren't wolves out here on the prairie like we had back in Wisconsin. This trail is probably from deer, muskrats, fox, or badgers. Along with farming, I'll also be able to sell furs that I get trapping.

Ma: I think this new land will be full of great opportunities for us.

Laura: The trail turns toward the creek ahead!

Ma: It looks like it does! Hopefully this will be a place that's easy to cross.

Pa: The animals were right. This part of the creek has a nice sloped bank that eases into the water. It's not deep at all. Laura and Mary, you can just walk across. When we cross to the other side, we will stop for a rest.

Mary: (crossing the water, holding up the bottom of her dress) Oh, it's so cold!

Laura: (letting the bottom of her dress get all wet, splashing) It's not cold! It feels nice!

Ma: Laura, since you like the water, I'll have you fill the buckets with water when we stop. You can also help Pa with the horses. Mary, I'll have you help me watch Carrie and unload what we need from the wagon.

Narrator 2: When pioneer families traveled, it was hard work. There were miles after miles of walking, food to be made from scratch, animals to take care of, and there were still chores to be done in order to keep camp and the wagon in order. There wasn't fast food or drive throughs, there weren't gas stations for treats, or hotels to rest for the night. The kids didn't have entertainment from phones, movies, or videogames on devices. The days were long. They traveled no matter if it was hot, cold or rainy.

(The family is sitting on a quilt on the ground, relaxing and eating from tin plates and cups).

Pa: Packing and moving is hard Caroline, but I believe it will all be worth it.

Ma: I believe you're right, Charles. Girls, you wash the dishes. Pa will hitch up the horses and we'll be on our way again.

Pa: Yes, let's get going. We will have to head south again to get back to the place where we should have crossed. That put us behind by a couple miles today. I'm hoping we can go about another five miles before we need to stop and rest for the night.

Mary: Pa, will you play your fiddle tonight?

Laura: Oh, please, Pa?

Carrie: Peeze?

Pa: (laughing) Well now, how can I say no to the three sweetest girls in Minnesota? Let's get going girls. I can't wait to start our new life and adventures together in Walnut Grove.