

Activity 2: A Letter from the Author

Tell your child that some letters are informal — for example, when a friend writes to another friend — while some are more formal. Ask him what he thinks the differences between formal and informal letters might be. (Answers may vary, but informal letters often use more slang, the writing may sound more like everyday speech, and the writers probably don't worry as much about perfect spelling, grammar, and punctuation.) Now ask your child to read aloud "A Letter from the Author," which was written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. When he's done, ask him whether he thinks the author's letter was formal or informal and why. (It is more formal because she is writing to the public.)

Now ask him to write a letter to children in the future describing what life is like today for your family. Just as Laura's life is very different from his own, his life will be very different from life for children in 200 years. Review the rubric with your child (found on the page "A Letter to Children in the Future"), outlining and explaining the criteria for his letter. Let him write his rough draft.

Before he begins, explain that letters have dates and that the comma comes after the day and before the year (e.g., January 11, 2020). Explain that he must also use a comma after the greeting and name and after the closing greeting but before the name (e.g., Dear Sarah, and Sincerely, Emma).

February 19, 1947

Dear Children,

I was born in the "Little House In the Big Woods" of Wisconsin just eighty years ago the 7th of February. Living through all the Little House books, as told in those stories, I came fifty years ago with Almanzo and our little daughter, Rose, to live on our farm in the Ozarks. Rose, now Rose Wilder Lane, grew up and went away. Her home is in Connecticut.

Almanzo and I still live on the farm but are not farming now. We care for our pet bulldog, our comical Rocky Mountain burro and our milk goats. We no longer keep horses but still go driving together in our car. Schoolmates and friends of the "Little Town on the Prairie" are scattered. Perhaps you would like to hear about them. Ida married her Elmer and went to California, where her children and grandchildren are now.

Mary Power married the young banker and did not live many years. Nellie Oleson married in the East; later separated from her husband and died long ago. Cap Garland was killed in an explosion of a threshing machine soon after Almanzo and I were married.

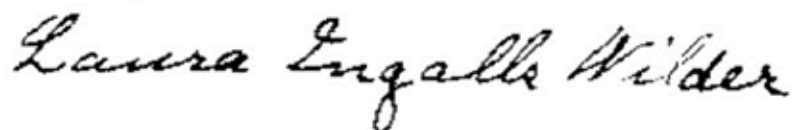
Sister Mary lived at home after graduating from College. She never recovered her sight but was always cheerful and busy with her work, her books and music. Carrie married a mine owner in the Black Hills. Her home was near Mt. Rushmore where statues of our presidents are carved in the solid rock of the mountain top. Grace married a farmer and lived only seven miles from De Smet.

Pa and Ma died years ago and Mary soon after. Grace followed them several years ago and Carrie died last June, so I am the only one of the family left. Pa's fiddle is in Memorial Hall of the museum of the state historical society at Pierre, South Dakota. And every year at their public concert someone will play on it the songs Pa used to play.

The Little House books are stories of long ago. The way we live and your schools are much different now, so many changes have made living and learning easier. But the real things haven't changed. It is still best to be honest and truthful; to make the most of what we have; to be happy with simple pleasures and to be cheerful and have courage when things go wrong.

With love to you all and best wishes for your happiness, I am,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Ingalls Wilder". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large, stylized 'L' at the beginning.

A Letter to Children of the Future



Directions: Write a letter to children in the future describing what life is like today for your family. Use this organizer to think of ideas for your letter.

Paragraph 1: Who you are, how old you are, and where you live:
Paragraph 2: Jobs and responsibilities of people in your family:
Paragraph 3: Types of entertainment and hobbies the people in your family enjoy:
Paragraph 4: The environment and how your family is dependent on it:

Letter Rubric

	needs improvement	meets expectations	exceeds expectations
Grammar and Spelling			
Are words spelled correctly?	☐	☐	☐
Do you use correct punctuation for sentence endings?	☐	☐	☐
Do you use commas correctly for the date, greeting, and closing?	☐	☐	☐
Content			
Do you follow the formal letter format (date, greeting, closing)?	☐	☐	☐
Do you accurately describe your life today?	☐	☐	☐
Do each of the four paragraphs stay focused on the main idea of that paragraph?	☐	☐	☐
Do your sentences vary in length and in the way they begin?	☐	☐	☐
Creativity			
Do you use interesting words and phrases?	☐	☐	☐
Do your descriptions create images in the reader's mind?	☐	☐	☐