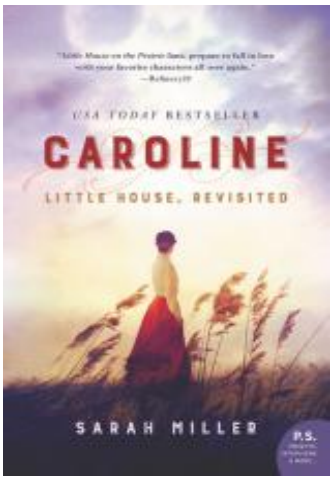
# Caroline: Little House, Revisited

by Sarah Miller




## About the Book

In this novel authorized by the Little House Heritage Trust, Sarah Miller vividly recreates the beauty, hardship and joys of the frontier in a dazzling work of historical fiction, a captivating story that illuminates one courageous, resilient and loving pioneer woman as never before --- Caroline Ingalls, "Ma" in Laura Ingalls Wilder?s beloved *Little House* books.

In the frigid days of February 1870, Caroline Ingalls and her family leave the familiar comforts of the Big Woods of Wisconsin and the warm bosom of her family for a new life in Kansas Indian Territory. Packing what they can carry in their wagon, Caroline, her husband Charles, and their little girls, Mary and Laura, head west to settle in a beautiful, unpredictable land full of promise and peril.

The pioneer life is a hard one, especially for a pregnant woman with no friends or kin to turn to for comfort or help. The burden of work must be shouldered alone, sickness tended without the aid of doctors, and babies birthed without the accustomed hands of mothers or sisters. But Caroline?s new world is also full of tender joys. In adapting to this strange new place and transforming a rough log house built by Charles? hands into a home, Caroline must draw on untapped wells of strength she does not know she possesses.

For more than 80 years, generations of readers have been enchanted by the adventures of the American frontier?s most famous child, Laura Ingalls Wilder, in the *Little House* books. Now, that familiar story is retold in this captivating tale of family, fidelity, hardship, love and survival that vividly reimagines our past.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** CAROLINE presents the events of Laura Ingalls Wilder?s *Little House on the Prairie* from the perspective of Caroline Ingalls. How would the story be different told from the perspective of Charles? Of Mary? Of an Osage Indian living near the cabin?

**2.** Laura Ingalls Wilder?s *Little House* books, as well as other works of historical fiction, tend to sanitize and simplify the past. In CAROLINE, Sarah Miller partially addresses how dirty, dangerous and desperate life on the frontier really was. What instances and events brought the grittiness of frontier life alive for you? What surprised you about the challenges Caroline faced throughout the novel?

**3.** What is your favorite moment in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*? Does it correspond with your favorite moment in CAROLINE?

**4.** What aspects of Caroline Ingalls?s life do you find appealing? Repugnant or distressing? Which aspects of her life do you wish we haven?t ?lost along the way? as technology, communication, etc. have advanced over the last 150 years?

**5.** Caroline Ingalls, the actual woman, has been romanticized and mythologized as the result of her daughter?s *Little House* novels, the long-running television series, and countless other adaptations of the *Little House* and pioneer woman myth. She is frequently characterized as submissive and subservient to her husband. How does CAROLINE maintain --- or upset --- this perspective? How does the Caroline Ingalls of this novel exert power or agency?

**6.** Given the choice, would Caroline have stayed in Wisconsin? Why or why not? What would you have chosen to do in her place?

**7.** Characterize Caroline?s perspective on the Osage. Is her view of Indians justified? Why or why not?

**8.** What aspect of the Ingallses' journey and life in Kansas is most difficult for Caroline? How has seeing Caroline?s point of view changed or reinforced the way you envision the pioneer experience?

**9.** Does the Caroline Ingalls of this novel have a favorite child? Who? How would you characterize her relationship with each of her daughters?

**10.** What attracts Caroline to her husband? What faults, if any, does she see in him? Has the fictional Caroline?s view of her husband affected your own feelings toward ?Pa? Ingalls?

**11.** Ma Ingalls of the *Little House* books often comes across as the embodiment of 19th-century feminine virtue: gentle, composed, competent and pious. By contrast, what faults does Sarah Miller?s version of Caroline Ingalls see in herself? Are they the same or different from what you perceive as Caroline's weaknesses?

## Author Bio

Sarah Miller began writing her first novel at 10 years old and has spent half her life working in libraries and bookstores. She is the author of MARMEE: A Novel of Little Women; CAROLINE: Little House, Revisited; and MISS SPITFIRE: Reaching Helen Keller, which was named an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and nominated for numerous state award lists. Sarah lives in Michigan.

## Critical Praise

?Peeling back the layers of Laura Ingalls Wilder?s *Little House on the Prairie* series allows Miller to reveal the real Caroline Ingalls, Wilder?s mother. Not to be missed by Wilder?s grown-up fans or those who enjoy historical fiction about the settling of the American West in the late 1800s.?

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