

Caroline ~ Sarah Miller

Page Turners Meeting – January 9, 2018 @ 6:30

Discussion Questions:

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 if 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 hadn'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?
6. Given the choice, do you think that Caroline would have stayed in Wisconsin?
7. Characterize Caroline's perspective on the Osage. Is her view of Indians justified?
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?

JOTTINGS...