

When is the last time you read the *Little House on the Prairie* series? This is our third time through the series, but it still holds my rapt attention as it appeals to the country girl in me. This time around I am reading it to Josiah, and he is enjoying every word. To make it more fun for him though, I decided that we would make a cabin-shaped book out of posterboard, shaped of course like Laura's *Little House on the Prairie*. Between its covers Josiah is filling its pages with all we are learning about wolves, bears, panthers, deer, trapping, furs, bees, honey, yellow jackets, wheat, oats, threshing machines, maple syrup, churning butter, smoking meats. After we read about some interesting topic in the book, Josiah and I find other books on that topic or look it up in our encyclopedia. Then Josiah draws a picture of the subject and writes a few sentences about what he learned.

For an easily assembled cabin-shaped book, take an 8 x 11 piece of paper. Turn it horizontally. With a ruler, mark a point at the top of the page at 5 inches. Then up each side mark a point at 4 inches from the bottom. From there take your ruler and connect the top point to the top of each side point, and draw straight lines. This will outline your roof. Cut out along these lines, and you now have a simple cabin template for making the cardboard front and back, and the cabin-shaped blank pages that will go in between the covers. Make sure to mark plenty of sheets for your research. We cut out 20 cabin-shaped pages for our cabin-shaped book.

After your cover and pages are cut out, hold them carefully together so that the holes are uniform, and hole punch two holes along the left hand side of pages. Then, using brass tacks, yarn, or rawhide, secure the inner pages to the outer covers.

To decorate, I used my ruler to mark off a door and two windows on the front of the cover, and then took the ruler and marked straight lines across the cabin and the roof using a brown colored pencil. Josiah then took the different hues of brown colored pencils and colored in between these lines to resemble the logs, coloring the doors and windows as well. Once this was completed, he could not wait for us to research wolves, bears, bees, and all the other interesting things that we had read about in the series.

At the conference, we had purchased Forest and Woodland animal stickers, which he used for the bear, deer, wolf, and owl. He just drew pictures for the other topics we researched. He then wrote down simple facts about each of these. For instance, when we studied about wolves, he wrote **Wolf** at the top of the page which happened to be at the tip of the roof of the cabin-shaped page, placed his sticker off to the side, and then wrote the following statements and sentences: Carnivorous mammal. Larger gray wolf or timber wolf. Smaller prairie wolf or coyote. Timber wolves hunt in pairs or in family groups. Coyotes hunt in larger packs. Prey on rabbits, rodents, deer, stock, and domestic animals. Litter from 5 to 13. Dens in caves or hollow trees.

This idea can be used to enhance the learning

experience for any book that you are reading. Josiah also really enjoyed the time we made a farm book while reading *Charlotte's Web*. We used the same method, but made it a barn-shaped cover and filled its pages with pictures and facts about farm animals. If you were studying the Middle Ages, you could make your book in the shape of a castle, or if you were studying Christopher Columbus, you could make your book in the shape of a ship and write a chronological diary of his journey within its pages.

For older children, instead of making a shaped book, just have them decorate their regular shaped 8 x 11 cover with whatever picture or design they deem appropriate to represent the theme of the book. Then fill the pages inside with facts about the theme, setting, and characters.

We are also getting ready to make our own model of the Little House on the Prairie by making a shell of a cabin out of heavy duty cardboard and then covering it with popsicle sticks painted brown, and gluing pebbles on for the chimney. We will then make Laura, her family, and Jack the dog, either out of sculpey clay or out of little wooden dolls, adding felt for clothes. Next week we intend to make butter out of cream to go with some homemade bread Josiah and I will make. The ideas keep coming to me as we read more about their life. Hopefully, I will write a little unit study on this series for some issue in the future.

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