



## Little House in the Highlands

By Melissa Wiley  
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### About This Guide:

For decades, Laura Ingalls has captured the hearts of young readers as the original American pioneer girl and heroine of the beloved Little House books. Now, in *Little House in the Highlands*, discover another remarkable pioneer girl from America's favorite family--Martha Morse, Laura's great-grandmother.

This reading group guide is for *Little House in the Highlands*, the first in a series of books about Martha. It is intended to provoke discussion of the issues and themes raised in *Little House in the Highlands*, a delightful and informative look into life in late 18th century Scotland. Readers are invited to make connections between Martha's life, Laura's life, and their own.

### About The Book:

In *Little House in the Highlands*, we meet Martha Morse, a spirited six-year-old Scottish girl who will grow to be the great-grandmother of American pioneer and writer, Laura Ingalls Wilder. But, as a child, Martha's main concern is how to cope with her life as a laird's daughter. Martha has a restless spirit and would rather be running barefoot through the fields of heather and listening to magical tales about fairies and other Wee Folk than learning to sew like a proper young lady.

Sprinkled with 18th-century Scottish vocabulary and filled with details of everyday life, Martha's story will transport you to a time and place when fairies were rumored to roam the hills of Scotland and ever-curious little girls hoped to catch glimpses of them.

### Questions For Discussion:

1. In the Little House books, Laura's father is a farmer. But Martha's father is Laird Glencariad, a Scottish aristocrat. As a laird's daughter Martha must follow specific codes of behavior. How does Martha's life, a child of an aristocrat, differ from Laura's, a child of a farmer?
2. Adults often talk about how things have changed since they were young. Martha was born over 200 years ago. How is Martha's childhood different from yours? How is it similar?
3. At the beginning of the story, we learn the legend of how Glencaraid, Martha's home, was named. Are there any legends of how the area where you live got its name? Who were the first people to settle there?
4. The magical world of fairies and brownies is very important and very real to Martha and the people around her. Do you believe in magic? How important do you think magic is in today's world?
5. Martha is very aware of the traditions a person must follow in order to avoid bad luck. For example, the Hogmanay bannocks must be baked by Martha's mother's own hands to bring good luck to all who eat them. What were some of the other traditions mentioned? Can you find any traces of these old Scottish traditions in traditions we follow today?
6. When Martha sullies her dustgown and hides it in the guest bed, Lord Alroch does not reveal her naughtiness to her parents. Instead, he hides the dustgown in a new place and tells her where she can find it before someone else discovers it. Have you ever done something naughty that someone else has kept a secret? What does Martha's reaction to Lord Alroch's kindness tell us about her character? What does Lord Alroch's act of hiding the dustgown tell us about him?
7. When Martha's brother, Duncan, allows Martha's beloved doll Flora to sink in the lake, she cannot forgive his carelessness. Even when her mother reminds Martha that it's not good to carry a grudge, she is unable to quickly forgive her brother. Why is Martha so upset about losing the doll? What makes her eventually forgive Duncan?