

Name _____

Little House on the Prairie

Complete these activities after reading:

- (1) "Myth vs. Reality - *Little House on the Prairie*," and
- (2) "White Savagery and *Little House on the Osage Prairie*"



I. Interpreting Myths

The following passages from *Little House on the Prairie* are examples of the myths of the frontier discussed in the "Myth vs. Reality - *Little House on the Prairie*." Match the passage to a related myth element (each is used once) and write a sentence explaining the connection:

Myth Elements

- Sets out to establish a [presumably legal] home
- Idyllic and isolated small farm
- Indians' neglecting the land
- Feed multitudes
- Threat of unfriendly Indians
- Indians' departure is sad but necessary



Read and Interpret Passage from Book	Write the related Myth Element, & write a sentence explaining the connection.
EX: "A pasture that stretched much farther than a man could see, and there were no settlers. Only Indians lived there." (2)	EX: <i>Idyllic and isolated small farm.</i> <i>This is a myth since even though there are no white settlers doesn't mean the land is isolated. Osage Indian people already lived there. [Answers below may vary - different myths than those below can be cited if sentence provides reasonable explanation.]</i>
"When white settlers come into a country, the Indians have to move on." (237) and "As far as [Laura] could see to the west and as far as she could see to the east there were Indians. There was no end to that long, long line. Then the very last pony went by...[they] stayed looking, till that long line of Indians slowly pulled itself over the western edge of the world. And nothing was left but silence and emptiness. All the world seemed very quiet and lonely. (310-311)	Indians' departure is sad but necessary <i>This is a myth because the Indians' leaving was not necessary. The Indians only had to leave because white settlers stole their lands and made their lives impossible.</i>
Neighbor Mrs. Scott says: "Land knows, [the Indians] would never do anything with this country themselves. All they do is roam around like wild animals. Treaties or no treaties, the land belongs to folks that'll farm	Indians' neglecting the land <i>This is a myth because the Indians actually took great care of the land by migrating to the buffalo herds in the west, and leaving the tallgrass prairie ecosystem intact.</i>

<p>it. That's only common sense and judgement." (211)</p>	
<p>"They were going to the Indian country" (1). Ma says, "The Indians would not be here long. Pa had word from a man in Washington that the Indian territory would be open to settlement soon" (47). Pa says, "The government is going to move these Indians farther west, any time now. That's why we're here, Laura. White people are going to settle all this country, and we get the best land because we get here first and take our pick" (273).</p>	<p>Sets out to establish a [presumably legal] home Their establishment of a legal home is a myth: Ma and Pa know their claim is not yet legal, and they are counting on obtaining their land through unfair treatment of the Indians - resulting from pressure of illegal settlement by whites such as themselves.</p>
<p>Laura described the Osage as "thin" (134). She noticed one with "leanness under his ribs" (228). When the Osage came for food, they "ate every morsel of it, even picked up crumbs from the hearth" (140)</p>	<p>Feed multitudes [except Indians] The idea that settlers care about feeding multitudes is a myth for the Indians because they are in starvation conditions at this time.</p>
<p>"These Indians were dirty and scowling and mean. They acted as if the house belonged to them." (233) "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," Mr. Scott said. Pa said he didn't know about that. He figured that Indians would be as peaceable as anybody else if they were let alone. On the other hand, they had been moved west so many times that naturally they hated white folks. But an Indian had to have sense enough to know when he was licked." (p. 284).</p>	<p>Threat of unfriendly Indians It is a myth, first, because the house <i>did</i> belong to the Osage - it was on <i>their</i> land. It is also a myth that the Osage were naturally unfriendly. They were unfriendly because they were under violent attack by many people who thought they should be wiped out.</p>

Source: Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1935.

II. White Savagery - Little House on Osage Prairie

Dennis McAuliffe's accounting of the white violence against the Osage is disturbing to read, but such anti-Indian violence was common across the United States during the settlement period.



Write a paragraph discussing the following questions: (answers will vary)

- What was the **purpose** of the white violence - how was it a form of **terrorism**?
- What **ideology** makes this type of behavior possible?
- Could this happen again **today**?
- What could **prevent** it?