

**The Living Values and Their Transmitting Approach on Parenting  
in the Novel “*The Little House in The Big Woods*”**

**A Thesis**



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# **The Living Values and Their Transmitting Approach on Parenting in the Novel “*The Little House in The Big Woods*”**

## **Abstract**

*The research aimed to investigate common values and their transmitting approach to instill the values to the children’ mind as seen in the novel entitled “The Little House in the Big Woods.” The data were gathered by a comprehensive reading and categorized based on common values released by Pew Research Centre survey and transmitting approaches by The Centre for Parenting Education. All data were then analyzed through descriptive qualitative method. The result shows that the common values appeared in the respective novel are being creative, religious, well-mannered, helpful, responsible and tolerant. The parents in the Ingals’ family tend to employ modelling as the most important approach in transmitting those values.*

**Keywords:** Parenting, Living Values, Transmitting Approach, Novel, “*The Little House in the Big Woods*”

## **1. Introduction**

Literature has been regarded as an effective means to deliver messages to its readers. Its specific feature of expressing them in artistic forms makes literature distinct from other written works. In addition to that, it also contains the record of people's value, thoughts, problems and conflict which are based on their experience. No wonder readers can learn moral values while enjoying literary works. When they also read literary works in other languages such as English, they can learn also values from people from different races, ethnic groups and cultures (Roe & Ross, 2006).

Novel is one of the literature forms which captures the human's interaction with their surroundings through the writer's point of view. It leaves reader's distinct impression toward life. In addition to that, readers could learn about moral values under a theme of a novel. Novels may also capture how values are transmitted in a family. Values that are given to the children at home are a basic life's principle for children. Every value transmitted to children affects how the children will behave and act as they are growing up. The children's characters are strongly shaped by what their parents taught and emphasized in their family. According to Long (2004), children who do not have proper parenting values will be more easily trapped into teen's pregnancy, the use of ecstasy, etc. In other words, values have a big deal in rearing the next generation.

The values have to be well-transmitted to the children. The researchers from The Centre for Parenting Education (2006) state there are four transmitting approaches. Those approaches are used by parents to pass on their values to their

children. Firstly, moralizing is the approach of transmitting the value through preaching and teaching. The second approach is modelling, the value that is transmitted through the act of parents to show the children what is right or wrong. Thirdly, clarifying the value is the method commonly used for growing-up children. Last but not the least, Baumrind (1967) states that permissive parents tend to follow a Laissez-faire approach, which is the fourth approach. Laissez-Faire is derived from French words which means “allow to do”. Usually parents use Laissez-Faire approach to let the children to think by themselves about what is right or wrong. In other words, the parents let the children have their own decision but in a right way.

The issue of values and their transmitting approaches on parenting are strongly shown in the novel entitled *Little House in The Big Woods*. The novel is a true story about the childhood of Laura Ingalls Wilder when she was still five years old. She and her family lived in a little log house in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. They had to survive in a shortage and wilderness as American pioneers. The ambience in Laura’s home, however, was very warm and intimate. Her parents affectionately shared so many positive values to Laura and her sisters. The story frequently captured their quality time to build a strong parent-children bond. When the writer read the novel, she was impressed by the warm relationship among Ingalls’ family members. There were several values shared by the parents in this novel. Therefore, the writer was interested in analyzing the dominant values in the novel *Little House in The Big Woods*. Thus, this research aimed to know what the parenting’s values were and how those value were transmitted in the novel entitled *Little House in The Big Woods*.

The data were gathered by a comprehensive reading and categorized based on common parenting values released by Pew Research Centre survey and transmitting approaches by The Centre for Parenting Education. All data were then analyzed through decriptive qualitative method. The method allowed the researcher to find the most frequent parenting values and transmitting approaches shown in the novel. And those were described thoroughly and supported with some examples taken from the novel *Little House in The Big Woods*.

## **2. Review of Previous Literature**

### **2.1 Values**

Values are something important in life. Based on Oxford dictionary, values could be defined as principles or standards of behaviour. It influences people's behaviour and attitude. And also, it influences people's life decision when they have a relationship. In a family, parents need to teach and instill values on children's mind so that the children could be a good person. Even more, if they really own a good value from their parents, the children can act properly and have integrity.

Concerning the importance of the living values on parenting, some institutions held research on which values were emphasized by parents to their children. One of the trusted institutions is Pew Research Centre. Pew Research Center has been established since in 1990. This centre does not use advocacy, profit, and partisan. Pew Research Center is an American trend panel that discusses about issues or information involving social science research, content analysis, and demographic research. It also has study about politics and policy of U.S., technology, religion, etc. To implement the research, Pew Research Center uses the highest methodological standards.

Based on the Pew Research Centre survey, Parker (2014) as a director of social trends research at Pew Research Center states that there are several living values of parenting such as being responsible, hardworking, helping others, being well-mannered, independence, creativity, empathy, persistence, tolerance, obedience, religious faith, and curiosity.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Description (based on Merriam Webster dictionary)</b>
1	Being responsible	Having the job or duty of dealing with or taking care of something or someone
2	Being hardworking	Using a lot of time and energy to do work
3	Being helpful	Willing to help other people
4	Being well-mannered	Having good manners, polite
5	Being independent	Not to be under the control of someone or something else
6	Being creative	Using the ability to make or think of new things : involving the process by which new ideas, stories, etc., are created
7	Being empathetic	To feel that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions
8	Being persistent	Continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop
9	Being tolerant	Be able to accept, experience, or survive something harmful or unpleasant
10	Being obedient	Willing to do what someone tells you to do or to follow a law, rule, etc
11	Being religious	Believing in a god or a group of gods and following the rules of a religion
12	Being curious	Having a desire to learn or know more about something or someone

In April 29 – May 27 2014, Pew Research Center conducted a survey in United States with 3243 adolescents, including 815 parents as the participants. Based on those values collected by Pew Research Centre, it showed that 94 percent of parents tended to choose ‘responsibility’ as the most important value taught to their children. The second rank was ‘being hard working’ which was stated by 92% of parents. Regardless of the age of the children, most parents concurred that those traits (being responsible and hard working) were the most essential values to transmit to their children. ‘Having religious faith’ was the third important value stated by the

respondents. It was related to the family size, 64 % of parents who have three or more children think that religious faith that is the most important value. Furthermore, for parents who have young children, said that creativity was also important value.

## **2.2 Transmitting Approaches of Values in Parenting**

Values in family needs to be transferred to the children. Usually children easily absorb the value by listening and looking at their parents as the ones who spend most of the time with them. Therefore, parents must be able to use appropriate transmitting approach so that their children could internalize the good values they will live by.

Based on the report from The Centre for Parenting Education (2006), there are several approaches to transmit parenting values. They are moralizing, modeling, clarifying the value, and Laissez-Faire approach. These transmitting approaches used by parents to instill their value on children' mind so that the children can understand well about the values given.

**Moralizing** - Parent will be so much involved because they have to give advice to their children. Then the parents have to have proper act and proper advice so advice and the act of parents are the same. However the scope of moralizing is not only this, the parents have to know the key to give advice to their children, they can not give long preaching to their children because their children will be bored and not focus on their values but on the other things. The example of moralizing: "When I go out of my way to take you to Sam's house, I expect and want you to say thank you for driving me rather than complaining that we are late."



In **Modelling** approach, parents get involved directly to transmit their values. They become a role model to their children. If there is no act from the parents, the children will not be interested in doing it because the children are more likely to do something that is opposed from parents' values. One of examples from modelling: "If a parent wants her child to be respectful when talking to people, one of the best ways to encourage that behavior is to be respectful herself – when talking to the child as well as to other people."

**Clarifying Values** means that children are required to have their own values through discussing and questioning about the values with parental involvement. For example: "What specifically can you do in your life to help these people?" and "What might be some of those situations?"

**A Laissez-Faire Approach** is used for teaching adolescents. Lombardo (2014) stated that Laissez Faire was derived from the French word meaning to 'leave alone.' In other words, the parents usually let the children endure some obstacles to reflect their values so that their mistakes become a lesson for them. Parents only give guidance by monitoring their child from the distance so that the children do not feel interfere and the values that have been instilled by the parents will be basic life principles for the children.

### 3. Findings of Living Values and Their Transmissing Approaches on Parenting in the Novel

Common values are distinctly seen through the plot of the story in the novel *Little House in The Big Wood*. Specifically, the values were investigated based on ‘the qualities given to children’ listed in the article issued by Pew Research Centre. The article reported the newest U.S. social and demographic trends using the highest methodological standards. Thus, some results from Pew Research Centre article were used in categorizing and reflecting the parenting values shown in the novel.

#### 3.1 Values of being creative transmitted through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/ Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The Little House in The Big Woods</i>
1	Pa lullabied his children by singing and playing fiddle	(page 73 paragraph 4)	It sang "Money Musk," and "The Red Heifer," "The Devil's Dream," and "Arkansas Traveler." And Laura went to sleep while Pa and the fiddle were both softly singing: "My darling Nelly Gray, they have taken you away, And I'll never see my darling any more...."
2		(page 130 paragraph below)	By the time Laura and Mary were snug in their trundle bed, Pa and the fiddle were both singing, while he kept time with his foot on the floor: "I'm Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines, I feed my horse on corn and beans, And I often go beyond my means, For I'm Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines, I'm captain in the army!"
3		(page 192)	Laura begged him to tell her about Old Grimes. So, though Pa was tired, he took his fiddle out of its box and played and sang for Laura: "Old Grimes is dead, that good old man, We ne'er shall see him more, He used to wear an old gray coat, All buttoned down before. "Old Grimes's wife made skim-milk cheese,

			Old Grimes, he drank the whey, Therecame an east wind from the west, Andblew Old Grimes away."
4		(page 236-238)	When Laura and Mary had said their prayers and were tucked snugly under the trundle bed's covers, Pa was sitting in the firelight with the fiddle.... But Laura lay awake a little while, <b>listening to Pa's fiddle softly playing and to the lonely sound of the wind in the Big Woods.</b> She looked at Pa sitting on the bench by the hearth, the fire-light gleaming on his brown hair and beard and glistening on the honey-brown fiddle.
5	Ma taught her children to make beautiful hats from simple materials	(page 214-215)	Ma sewed hats for Mary and Laura of the finest, narrowest braid. For Pa and for herself she made hats of the wider, notched braid.... <b>Ma could make beautiful hats.Laura liked to watch her, and she learned how to braid the straw</b> and made a little hat for Charlotte

Based on the analysis, it showed that the most frequently shown value in the novel firstly was being creative. Pa is the one who often shows his creativity to his children. It could be shown by the example below:

*"It sang "Money Musk," and "The Red Heifer," "The Devil's Dream," and "Arkansas Traveler." And Laura went to sleep while Pa and the fiddle were both softly singing: "My darling Nelly Gray, they have taken you away, And I'll never see my darling any more...."*

This statement could be classified as creativity because Pa was playing music and singing to help Laura go to sleep soon, instead of only instructing her harshly to go to the bed. He used his talent in music to comfort his children at night.

The value of creativity was transmitted also from Ma to her children. It could be shown by the example below:

*"Ma could make beautiful hats. Laura liked to watch her, and she learned how to braid the straw and made a little hat for Charlotte"*

This statement could be classified as creativity because Ma could use straw for a beautiful thing. Her creativity attracted Laura’s attention so that Laura could make a hat for her sister.

### 3.2 Values of being religious transmitted through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/ Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The Little House in The Big Woods</i>
1	The children prayed without their parents in Christmas	(page 67 paragraph 1)	They played so hard all day that when night came they were too excited to sleep. But they must sleep, or Santa Claus would not come. So they hung their stockings by the fireplace, and said their prayers, and went to bed—Alice and Ella and Mary and Laura all in one big bed on the floor.
2	Ma read the Bible for her children	(page 85 paragraph above)	They must sit quietly and listen while Ma read Bible stories to them, or stories about lions and tigers and white bears from Pa's big greenbook, <i>The Wonders of the Animal World</i> .
3	Pa prayed together with his children	(page 129-130)	They bounced up and down on Pa's knee, and asked questions about the dance until at last he said: "Now you girls run along to bed! You'll know all about the dance when you see it. I have to put a new string on my fiddle." There were sticky fingers and sweet mouths to be washed. Then there were prayers to be said.

The second frequent values are being religious and being well-mannered. Both parents equally teaches about faith to their children. It could be shown by the examples below:

*“They must sit quietly and listen while Ma read Bible stories to them....”*

*“They bounced up and down on Pa's knee.... Then there were prayers to besaid.”*

As can be seen, Ma and Pa taught their children about religious matter through daily bible reading and praying. They built their children’s religious faith by familiarizing them to those religious activities.

As a result, the children could intuitively be religious regardless their age. It could be shown by the example below:

*“They played so hard all day that whennight came they were too excited to sleep.But they must sleep, or Santa Claus would notcome. So they hung their stockings by thefireplace, and said their prayers, and went tobed—Alice and Ella and Mary and Laura allin one big bed on the floor.”*

The example showsthat the children prayed for what they wish in Christmas. Eventhough they were not guided by their parents, they all could spontaneously pray by themselves.

### 3.3 Values of being well-mannered through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/ Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The LittleHouse in The Big Woods</i>
1	Ma taught how to be a well-behaved girl	(page95-96)	Pa said, "you may find it hard to be good, but you should be glad that it isn't as hard to be goodnow as it was when Grandpa was a boy." "Did little girls have to be as good as that?" Laura asked, and Ma said: "It was harder for little girls. Because they had to behave like little ladies all the time, not only on Sundays. Little girls could never slide downhill, like boys. Little girls had to sit in the house and stitch on samplers."
2	Pa scolded the children to be well-mannered	(page 183-184)	"You remember," Pa said, "I told you girls you must never strike each other." Laura began, "But Mary said—" "That makes no difference," said Pa. "It is what I say that you must mind."
3	Ma explained table manner to	(page 217-218)	For dinner they ate the stewed pumpkin with their bread. They made it into pretty shapes on their plates. It was a beautiful color, and smoothed and molded so prettily with their knives. Ma never allowed them to

	her children		play with their food at table; they must always eat nicely everything that was set before them, leaving nothing on their plates. But she did let them make the rich, brown, stewed pumpkin into pretty shapes before they ate it.
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Beside being religious, the children in this novel were also taught to be well-mannered. Ma is the one who frequently taught about mannerism to his children. It can be seen from the examples below:

*Ma said: "It was harder for little girls. Because they had to behave like little ladies all the time, not only on Sundays. Little girls could never slide downhill, like boys. Little girls had to sit in the house and stitch on samplers."*

*Ma never allowed them to play with their food at table; they must always eat nicely everything that was set before them, leaving nothing on their plates.*

The first example shows that Ma taught how to be a well-behaved girl. The second example was about table manner. Ma always explained them in detail.

In fact, Pa also got involved in teaching mannerism to the children as shown in the example below.

*"You remember," Pa said, "I told you girls you must never strike each other." Laura began, "But Mary said—" "That makes no difference," said Pa. "It is what I say that you must mind."*

That example shows that Pa tried to share the value in more coercive way than Ma. He was not teaching as frequent as Ma, but he took control on serious matter.

### 3.4 Values of being helpful transmitted through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/ Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The LittleHouse in The Big Woods</i>
1	Ingal's family helped each other in kitchen	(page 63 paragraph 1)	One morning she boiled molasses and sugar together until they made a thick syrup, and Pa brought in two pans of clean, white snow from outdoors. Laura and Mary each had a pan, and Pa and Ma showed them how to pour the dark syrup in little streams onto the snow.

2	Ingal's family helped each other in garden	(page 216-217)	Everyone was busy now, for all the garden vegetables must be stored away. Laura and Mary helped, picking up the dusty potatoes after Pa had dug them from the ground, and pulling the long yellow carrots and the round, purpled-topped turnips, and they helped Ma cook the pumpkin for pumpkin pies.... Laura stood on a chair and watched the pumpkin for Ma, and stirred it with a wooden paddle. She held the paddle in both hands and stirred carefully, because if the pumpkin burned there wouldn't be any pumpkin pies.
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Other values seen in the novel are being helpful. Ma and Pa equally taught their children to be helpful person as shown by an example below.

*“Everyone was busy now, for all the garden vegetables must be stored away. Laura and Mary helped, picking up the dusty potatoes after Pa had dug them from the ground, and pulling the long yellow carrots and the round, purpled-topped turnips, and they helped Ma cook the pumpkin for pumpkin pies.... Laura stood on a chair and watched the pumpkin for Ma, and stirred it with a wooden paddle. She held the paddle in both hands and stirred carefully, because if the pumpkin burned there wouldn't be any pumpkin pies.”*

From the example, it can be seen that Ma and Pa did the household chores together with their children. They were hand in hand to help each other.

### 3.5 Values of being responsible transmitted through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The LittleHouse in The Big Woods</i>
1	Ma showed her responsibility toward Laura's health	(page 65 paragraph 2)	Alice said they must go outdoors to do it, and Ma thought it was too cold for Laura to play outdoors. But when she saw how disappointed Laura was, she said she might go, after all, for a little while. She put on Laura's coat and mittens and the warm cape with the hood, and wrapped a muffler around her neck, and let her go
2	Pa showed his responsibility toward his family's happiness	(page 108 paragraph 4)	They were all happy because Pa had got such good prices for his furs that he could afford to get them such beautiful presents

Both Ma and Pa also taught responsibility to their children. It is shown by the example below.

*“Alice said they must go outdoors to do it, and Ma thought it was too cold for Laura to play outdoors. But when she saw how disappointed Laura was, she said she might go, after all, for a little while. She put on Laura's coat and mittens and the warm cape with the hood, and wrapped a muffler around her neck, and let her go.”*

*“They were all happy because Pa had got such good prices for his furs that he could afford to get them such beautiful presents.”*

From the examples above, Ma and Pa showed how responsible they were as a mother and a father for their children. Ma did not let Laura, her daughter, become ill because of playing in the bad weather. Pa purchased the furs for his family, he tried to be a good husband and father to make his family happy.

### 3.6 Values of being tolerant transmitted through modelling approach

No	Events	Page/ Par	Examples from novel entitled <i>The Little House in The Big Woods</i>
1	Pa taught his children not to eat meat at that moment	(page 159 below)	"You wouldn't shoot a little baby deer, would you, Pa?" Laura said. "Nor its Ma, nor its Pa. No more hunting, now, till all the little wild animals have grown up. We'll just have to do without fresh meat till fall."
2	since they should learn to be tolerant with a baby deer	(page 232-233)	After supper Pa took Laura on his knee, while Mary sat close in her little chair. And Pa said: "Now I'll tell you why you had no fresh meat to eat today." When I went out to the deer-lick, I climbed up into a big oak tree. I found a place on a branch where I was comfortable and could watch the deer-lick. I was near enough to shoot any animal that came to it, and my gun was loaded and ready on my knee. "There I sat and waited for the moon to rise and light the clearing. "I was a little tired from chopping wood all day yesterday, and I must have fallen asleep, for I found myself opening my eyes. "The big, round moon was just rising. I could see it between the bare branches of the trees, low in the sky. And right against it I saw a deer standing. His head was up and he was listening.



			His great, branching horns stood out above his head. He was dark against the moon. "It was a perfect shot. But he was so beautiful, he looked so strong and free and wild, that I couldn't kill him. I sat there and looked at him, until he bounded away into the dark woods.
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However, tolerance is the value frequently shared by Pa. It was shown in an example below.

*"You wouldn't shoot a little baby deer, would you, Pa?" Laura said. "Nor its Ma, nor its Pa. No more hunting, now, till all the little wild animals have grown up. We'll just have to do without fresh meat till fall."*

It was clearly seen that Pa gave understanding to the children so that the children knew well about how to be a tolerant person, especially tolerant with animals. Pa asked their family to survive in unpleasant condition for something better.

#### 4. Conclusion

Parenting is the most important issue highlighted in this research. In order to excel in parenting, parents need to know what values they prioritize and how to transmit those values. Based on the previous research, there are twelve living values listed by Parker (2014). However, only six living values were clearly seen in the novel. Those are being creative, religious, well-mannered, helpful, responsible, and tolerant.

While Centre for Parenting Education lists that there are four approaches to transmit the values, the writer found that modelling was the most frequent transmitting approaches to instill those values in children's mind in the novel. This is in line with the institute's finding that modelling approach is the most commonly used for kids. This approach was also adopted by Ma and Pa in transferring their values to their little daughters, Mary, Laura, and Carrie.

From the analysis, the most frequent value found in the novel "*Little House in the Big Wood*" was being creative. It was matched by what was stated by the previous research conducted by Pew Research Centre, "creativity is an important value, especially for parents who have young children." In this novel, the parents were fostering three little daughters. They often showed their creativity to the children. For example, Pa lullabied the children by playing music and singing every night. Ma showed to the children how to make a hat from simple material. By doing those consistent activities, naturally the parents transmitted their creativity to their three little girls. It is not surprising that one of those girls, Laura, now becomes a well-known

writer of the children book. She could construct words to build interesting stories, known as *Little House* series.

The second value also vividly shared in this novel was religious faith. It was matched by what was stated by the previous research “64% of parents who have three or more children think that religious faith is the most important value.” In this novel, the parents have three children, named Mary, Laura, and Carrie. Since the parents followed the rules of Christianity, so the children did. The parents always asked them to pray and read the Bible before bedtime. As stated in the novel, it is not wondering that those little girls, Laura and her sisters, have been able to pray alone even if the parents could not lead them.

Thirdly, being well-mannered became a great concern of parents in this novel, either in subtle or harsh way. As shown in the novel, Ma daily taught the children to be well-mannered by giving clear explanation. On the other hand, Pa taught manner by disciplining the children only when they were almost out of the control. Regardless their intensity and their typical way of giving the value, the parents aimed to teach each of their children to be a polite person.

Overall, the novel entitled “The Little House in the Big Woods” is a good novel selected for teachers of English. The language used in the novel is easy to comprehend, especially for teaching the beginners. Moreover, the description of setting captured in the novel might broaden students’ perspective on natural view. And absolutely teachers could share good family values in the novel.

The novel is also useful for young men since it contains so many living values. The values was presented in a clear plot of story and simple language. Thus, this novel could be an entertaining book, and a guiding bookas well. Also, so many good illustrations are used to depict a healthy relationships between parents and children. Thus, it is highly-recommended for those who concern on family matters.

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