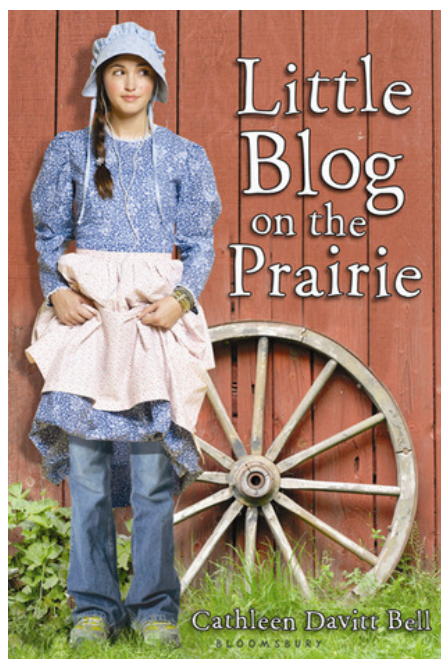




Little Blog on the Prairie

Cathleen Davitt Bell

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Gen's family is more comfortable spending time apart than together. Then Gen's mom signs them up for Camp Frontier—a vacation that promises the "thrill" of living like 1890s pioneers. Forced to give up all of her modern possessions, Gen nevertheless manages to email her friends back home about life at "Little Hell on the Prairie," as she's renamed the camp. It turns out frontier life isn't without its good points—like the cute boy who lives in the next clearing. And when her friends turn her emails into a blog, Gen is happily surprised by the fanbase that springs up. But just when it seems Gen and family might pull through the summer, disaster strikes as a TV crew descends on the camp, intent on discovering the girl behind the nationwide blogging sensation—and perhaps ruining the best vacation Gen has ever had.

Little Blog on the Prairie Details

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From Reader Review Little Blog on the Prairie for online ebook

Rhonda says

Well, since I grew up totally a Laura Ingall's fan, I could totally connect with this book. Loved it! I always "thought" I wanted to go back in time in live in those simplistic days. Ha, simplistic it was not. The hard work alone would have killed me. I do love the fact that it teaches you some greater values of life. I think it was a fun read and even my family put up with me reading it aloud to them. I did not add this to my literacy circles this year but I think it would make a fun lit circle book or for sure a shared reading. Since I didn't order extra copies, I think I will use it to share/compare the "Now and Then" and get my students blogging about their experiences with school and connections with their books!!! This book was so me!

Eti says

In the tradition of Feed, Very LeFreak, and Little House on the Prairie comes a tale of disconnecting from technology and getting back to our roots - whether we want to or not. A lovely book about the clash of cultures that occurs when Gen's family spends their vacation at a 1890's stylized farm (anyone else imagine Old World Wisconsin when reading this?). In the process, she learns more about her family, herself, and the world around her. A thought provoking novel that is sure to open up discussion and help us examine our own dependency to technology.

#Angela Zhou-OUAT4everafter says

We have the luxury of the modern world, but for Genevieve Welsh modern is far from true (at least in her case). This is an eye-opening story about a girl who's family thought it was for the best that they attend Pioneer Camp over the course of the summer. This book was very well written from the perspective of Gen as she tries to survive being in the "1890s." I really like this book because the description of everything Gen experiences is very vivid. I couldn't imagine having to spend my summer held up in a cabin next to the woods, sharing everything with my family, and having no screens to keep the bugs out. Also, reading Gen's thoughts helps me understand the story better. I would definitely recommend this book to people, seeing that it is an eye-opening story of how things were back in the 1890's.

Michele says

Predictable ending. Way too many unanswered questions: cell phone tower? no one else found the "electricity bldg"? Is Nora always this mean to her female guests? How do they advertise without e-mail, a web page, modern advertising?

May appeal to tweens, but not serious literature.

Marisa says

I was darn near enchanted by this cute, cute story of a 13 year old girl forced to go to an authentic 1890 frontier camp with her family for the summer, when really she should be splitting her time between soccer camp and the pool with her two best friends Kristin and Ashley. She manages to sneak her brand new cell phone into camp in her box of clearasil, the one luxury she convinces her mother and the camp director to let her keep. On it, she sends regular texts to Kristin and Ashley, who decide it would be great to turn the texts into a blog -- which gets a few hits the first day, a few hundred the next few weeks, and half a million by the middle of the summer. And then the poop really hits the fan. Or it would, if fans were allowed at camp.

Laugh out loud funny, with a great voice and a completely unique premise. At times Gen seems far too witty and mature to be only 13, I spent most of the book thinking she was more like 15 or 16, but I enjoyed it so much I didn't really mind. A few quotes:

"Here's what you need to do to make butter. After you get a bucket of milk, you let it sit on the counter for a day. Before long, some stuff starts to collect on the top -- a skin -- and then if you leave it, it gets thicker. That's how you get cream. I know, totally foul, but you spoon that into this big wooden bucket with a paddle in it called a butter churn. Then you sit there using the paddle to mix up the cream stuff until your arm feels like it's about to fall off. You lift the lid on the churn, check to see if you've got butter, and that no, it's not even close. So then you get really depressed. Being depressed is an enormously important part of the process; you can almost tell how thick the butter is just by how defeated and miserable you feel personally. But you keep stirring it some more anyway. It takes about five hundred million years before the stuff in the churn turns to butter, and by the time it has your arms are trembling, you have blisters on your hands, you hate your mom, and you promise that, to make it last longer, you will hardly eat any of this butter yourself. But it's so good, that's kind of a hard promise to keep, especially when everyone else is slathering it on everything like it's free."

"She sighed and closed her eyes and looked at me only out of the bottoms of them, like the conversation was making her exhausted. How could anyone learn to be this mean without having gone to middle school?"

"When she smiled at us, the two-bazillion-watt stadium lights shinging down on us were nothing compared to her inner glow. Her smile made you feel not that she must have been a cheerleader in high school, but like you yourself were a cheeleader in high school. Even if, like me, you haven't even started high school."

Chris says

Little Blog on the Prairie is a light mildly amusing read for tweens. The story of 14yr old Gen and her family at a "back to basics" (1890 basics)family camp is an interesting premise. Most of the characters are portrayed realistically. I was disappointed that the interaction between characters was very shallow. For instance, Gen is force to share a single bed with her little brother, you hear Gen complain but you never hear her brother Gavin complain. There was only a very little discussion of the use of an outhouse, and the story alludes to the difficulties in bathing but never addresses it. The author also never addressed topics such as what does a 15yr old in bloomers do when she gets her period? There are minor injuries, Gen's father gets blisters and open sores from manual labor and her brother gets splinters from gathering wood, but the author never talks at all about how a modern family deals with a lack of medicine.

The omission of depth in the story leaves this appealing mainly to a 12yr old and under audience.

Catherine Reed says

Little Blog on The Prairie is a realistic fiction book with some adventure in it too. It takes place at a camp called Camp Frontier. When you go to that camp, you stay on a farm with people pretending that they're from the 1800s on it.

Genevieve, the main character, has parents who won't let her have a phone until she is in college. But, they agreed to give her her phone early if she went to a Little House on The Prairie Camp with them. But the camp is supposed to last all summer, and they were going to give her the phone after camp. So she decides to bring the phone with her to camp.

I liked this book because it has a little bit of everything. It has a little action, adventure, mystery, and more. So if you like a book with a little action and adventure, this book is right for you. So read Little Blog on The Prairie to find out what happens.

Lillian Bittle says

Cute, quirky and a nice short read! The story of a teenage girl (Gen) who's mom decides the family should spend the summer together. So they go to a realistic-1890's-summer -camp where they do everything from wearing realistic clothing to milking cows to clearing lumber to baking in a wood oven to using an outhouse. The catch to this camp? Absolutely NOTHING modern is allowed! Yet, somehow, Gen manages to sneak a phone into the camp. She writes about her experiences and her friends start a blog for her. Yet, will it be worth it when she gets caught? And will more people than just her be affected? Plus, there's that cute boy, Caleb, to be thinking about.....

Margo Tanenbaum says

Recommended for ages 10 and up.

Eighth-grader Genevieve just wants to have a regular summer with her friends, going to the rec-center pool, to soccer camp, and hanging out and talking about cute boys. But when her mother gets the idea that the whole family should go to Camp Frontier, a "resort" in Wyoming where campers pay lots of money to faithfully re-enact the 1890's pioneer experience, Genevieve is far from thrilled. It's not just living without her I-pod, computer and lip gloss that gets her down...she also has to use an incredibly stinky outhouse, deal with killer mosquitos and attacking chickens, and horror of horrors--share a bed with her younger brother!

Her mother promises reluctant Genevieve her own cell phone at the end of the summer if she'll just cooperate for a few months with their little adventure. Little does her mother suspect that Genevieve has secretly hidden the cell phone and is using it to text her friends back home with laugh-out-loud updates on her pioneer experiences. Here's an example:

"Week 1 - Sunday. 2:27 pm. Help! I'm dressed up like an American Girl Doll minus the fashion sense. My sleeves are so tight I can't lift my arms above my head. Is this the new me?"

But when Genevieve meets the handsome Caleb, teenaged son of one of the other families at Camp Frontier, she wonders if the summer might be salvageable after all. Or is he already hooking up with Nora, the daughter of the couple who own the camp? And just when life at the camp seems to be getting more bearable (and Gen discovers she's actually good at milking their cow!)--her contraband cell phone is discovered. Will

her family be voted off of Camp Frontier?

In her acknowledgments, author Cathleen Davitt Bell acknowledges her debt to the PBS series Frontier House, in which three modern families were sent to Montana to experience life in 1883. She also was clearly inspired by Laura Ingalls Wilder's classic Little House series. Bell writes that she was eight years old when she opened Little House for the first time--"and by my tenth birthday I was knitting blankets, sewing doll clothes, baking my own bread, and making architectural sketches of a camp that would transport visitors to the frontier. Thank you, Laura Ingalls Wilder, for providing me with years of magic."

In addition to lacing the book with plenty of humor, Bell also demonstrates in her book some of the real rigors of frontier life, where ordinary chores like laundry took an entire day, there was no sun block or screen doors to protect from mosquitos, and bears might roam the woods! While the book does not include a formal bibliography, Bell does mention some of the sources she found most useful in researching pioneer life, particularly for women, in this time period.

This book is likely to be very popular with tween and teen girls, especially those who are or were fans of the still very popular Little House books, or who have enjoyed reruns of the TV series. For extra fun, the author has set up an actual blog that replicates the blog which plays such a key role in the story.

Angela says

A light hearted yet thoroughly entertaining book. I loved Gen - Bell found the perfect balance between whiny and likable. She's snarky and sarcastic where appropriate, but usually sucks it up and gets on with what needs to be done on the farm - until she takes a short break to text her BFFs back home about her ridiculous summer adventures.

Although Gen is only 13, I think this story will appeal to a wide range of MG and YA readers. Her younger age keeps her thoughts about the cute boy on a totally PG level (when she discovers an illicit 'electricity shack,' her first thought is charging her cell phone, not conspiring to be alone with the guy), but her attitude (a little sarcastic, but mostly sweet, even in the face of unfamiliar farm chores) will keep even teens used to edgier fare reading to see how Gen survives her summer on the farm.

There are some great supporting characters at frontier camp as well. It becomes pretty clear early on that this was the idea of the grown ups, and maybe some of the younger kids don't find it totally unfortunate, but everyone 10-14 thinks the summer is going to totally suck. Ka (short for Kate, rhymes with Saw, as in her favorite movie) is a goth in a recently blended family of perky blondes, adrift without her constant supply of black hair dye to keep her own blonde roots hidden. Also, a couple of the moms just about start a feminist uprising when the owner of the camp tries to keep them from speaking at a weekly meeting (Gen's mom is the first to point out that Wyoming, where the camp is located, had given women the right to vote well before 1890, so she had every right to talk when she wanted).

There's even a mini-lesson slipped in slyly by the end, that will hopefully get readers to think about what sort of privacy they can expect regarding text messages and e-mails.

Liz says

Exactly ten years ago, PBS was filming Frontier House, a show where three families went to Montana to live

in the same conditions as people would have in 1883. I loved that series – it's the only reality show I've ever been able to stand.

Keeping that in mind, you can see why my interest would be piqued by a book entitled Little Blog on the Prairie, which is about Gen Welsh who is forced to go on a family vacation to Frontier Camp, where she, her mother, her father, and her little brother Gavin will live as though it is 1890.

When Gen is told about these summer plans, she is horrified. She whines, cries, and argues until she is finally offered a bribe: a cell phone to be given when she gets home. Gen has wanted a cell phone for ages and finally agrees to go. However, the night before her family leaves, she sneaks downstairs, charges it, & learns to use it. The next day she managed to smuggle it into camp.

As the title suggests, a blog begins when her best friend back home begins to post each text message online in a blog she calls "Little Hell on the Prairie."

The first thing to go is the family's normal clothes. Initially, Gen is embarrassed by her prairie girl outfit, but the other teenagers are dressed just as badly, so this does fall on the wayside. She develops a crush on Caleb, another camper, and a dislike of the camp owners' daughter Nora, who seems determined to make Gen feel like a useless idiot. Additionally, Nora is a rival for the affections of Caleb.

Nora herself is a bit of a tragic figure, while the other kids are there for eight weeks in the summer, she lives with her Neo-Luddite parents on the farm year-round. She's home-schooled and sees only her parents in the winter. The only friends she makes are the ones in the summer whose families don't tend to make a second trip.

As the summer moves along, the kids have problems adjusting to life without their own *beds* let alone their own rooms. They aren't the only ones though, the adults are finding that their back-to-basics vacation isn't quite as picturesque as they'd imagined. Everything is a challenge; cooking, weeding, washing, ironing, and to top it off, the mention of a possible bear roaming around has Gen's father in a panic. I did appreciate that the characters aren't actively stupid; the mistakes made are more from lack of experience rather than ignorance.

There aren't a lot of surprises in this book as it goes along. The ending made me think of the end of the first act of *Into the Woods* when the Narrator declares "And it came to pass, all that seemed wrong was now right, the kingdoms were filled with joy, and those who deserved to were certain to live a long and happy life."

Bottom-line: I'd suggest this book for the tweens. I'd have probably read this book over and over when I was in sixth grade. However, a lack of sex, drugs, and extreme emotional problems would probably make fans of the Gossip Girl books or fans of the paranormal label this book boring.

Lonna Pierce says

Boy, this title hit close to home! My one-woman show, "A Visit With Laura Ingalls Willder" has taught me that while I enjoy telling & re-enacting the stories from the late 19th century, I enjoy my automatic washer too much to wish to live in that historical period! In Bell's revealing coming of age novel, 13-year old, Gen, and her family reluctantly go to a frontier camp one summer and discover that 21st century electronic devices are not allowed, and food, clothing, shelter, & survival must conform to circa 1890s regimes. It is a bone-crushingly difficult and exhausting existence, and Gen documents every bit of it via text from her

forbidden phone, with wit & humor. She has no idea that, after her friend posts these texts online in blog format, thousands of people are following her pithy comments. Of course, they all come back to bite her in the end, but it makes you think!

Lisa says

[Obviously, it went there. (hide spoiler)]

Westerville says

"I was darn near enchanted by this cute, cute story of a 13 year old girl forced to go to an authentic 1890 frontier camp with her family for the summer, when really she should be splitting her time between soccer camp and the pool with her two best friends Kristin and Ashley." - Marisa

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papasteve says

OK, so I'm so not the demographic at which this book is aimed. I bought it on an intuitional whim. There was something about it that was intriguing. I'm getting ready to embark on a huge reading journey with The Game of Thrones series (that I bought for my daughter KLuna, but bought them for her on our joint Kindle account so I could read them too--so it was kind of a selfish gift I gave her). I needed something to read that was a bit light and fluffy before I headed down the dark pathway of ...Thrones. Kind of like a wine taster does by cleansing the palate before swishing around a more "serious" glass of wine. Little Blog... was going to be that cleansing palate book for me. But the serendipity was it was a pretty tasty "wine" itself. Very fun to be thrown into an adolescent girls mind through her blog. And there were some fairly heavy family issues thrown in there as well. My intuition served me well on this one. Now, on to The Game of Thrones!
