## LITTLE BLOG ON THE PRAIRIE

## BY CATHLEEN DAVITT BELL

## LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS’ CHOICE NOMINEE 2013

**GRADE 6-8**

Submitted by Debbie Henson, School Librarian,

Live Oak Middle School, Watson, LA

**Title: Little Blog on the Prairie**

**Author: Cathleen Davitt Bell**

**Publisher: Bloomsbury USA**

**Pages: 288**

**SUMMARY**

Gen and her family live a modern life of conveniences including cell phones and computers. The benefit of these modern conveniences comes to a screeching halt when Gen's mom enrolls the family in Camp Frontier for the summer. This "vacation" consists of building your own fire to cook food, actually cooking the food, chopping wood, and other forms of "recreation" (read: work) that is supposed to be an exercise in family bonding. During the family's stay, Gen comes across her cell phone and begins texting her good friend who, unbeknown to Gen, turns the texts into a blog. The blog goes viral and turns the camp into a whirlwind of activity and exposure to the world. This fun read will delight audiences of all ages.

**AWARDS**

Texas Lone Star Reading List

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Cathleen Davitt Bell writes short stories and young adult books from her apartment in Brooklyn, New York where she lives with her husband, two children and her dogs Oscar and Oprah. She has written two young adult novels, Slipping and Little Blog on the Prairie.

Sources of Author Information:

Cathleen Davitt Bell Official Website: <http://www.cathleendavittbell.com/>

biography

Pen Parentis: <http://www.penparentis.org/member-author-pages/cathleen-davitt-bell>

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

**Unraveled** (The Amanda Project Series #4) by Amanda Valentino, Cathleen Davitt Bell. HarperCollins Publishers. 6/26/2012. 352 pages.

**Slipping** By Cathleen Davitt Bell. Bloomsbury USA. 2009. 224 pages.

**RELATED TITLES** (Students may enjoy these as well.)

**Little House on the Prairie** by Laura Ingalls Wilder. HarperCollins. 75th Anniversary Edition 2010. 368 pages. (any books in the **Little House** series)

**A Year Down Yonder** by Richard Peck. Penguin Group USA. 2002. 144 pages.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Art**

If your school has a "Pioneer Day" or similar activity, have students create advertising posters for the day or activity. Use themes from the book, such as "Put down your cell phone and come outside" or "Get off Facebook and give some Face Time." Have students create written ads before illustrating.

**Health**

Enlist the help of parent volunteers to bring in food for a "taste fair" of pioneer food. Compute the nutritional value of the food. Discuss how natural exercise was a part of making the food. For ideas of pioneer food, go to Pratt's Pioneer Resources at <http://general.fastq.com/~jbpratt/lds/resources/pioneers.html>

**Language Arts**

Introduce proper techniques for writing a friendly letter and a business letter. Have students write a letter from Gen to her friends detailing life at Camp Frontier for the friendly letter. Instruct students not to use texting language or symbols. Have students write a letter from Gen to a business or corporation asking for donations for the camp.

**Science**

Start a small vegetable bed in the classroom with just a few plants. Enlist the help of 4-H students or collaborate with the 4-H sponsor. Discuss the need to depend on the elements and the pioneers' need to depend on what they grew or raised for food. For ideas for vegetable beds on a larger scale, see the gardening link for The Pioneer Woman at [http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeandgarden/](http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeandgarden/category/gardening)

[category/gardening](http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeandgarden/category/gardening).

**Social Studies/Louisiana History**

Plan a field trip to the Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum. Have students journal how actual pioneer life was different from the life Gen experienced as a "vacation." Give students a Venn diagram to complete with Rural Life Museum and Camp Frontier differences and similarities. for information on the Rural Life Museum, go to <rurallife.lsu.edu>.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the pioneer experience that Gen, her family, and the other families at Camp Frontier would have had if they were allowed to keep the modern conveniences they brought to the camp. Elaborate on the different experiences each group had and how the modern conveniences would have played a part in that experience. Explain which opportunity would be better: the experience they had or the experience with modern conveniences.

2. How did the Camp Frontier vacation change Gen in a permanent way, if it changed her at all?

3. Do you think the author intended to have Gen give more thought to having a more simple life every day when she arrived home from Camp Frontier? Why or why not?

4. What are the reasons for Ron and his family taking the camp experience to such as extreme?

5. Who do you think had a better life growing up, Gen or Nora? Why?

**WEBSITES**

**Cathleen Davitt Bell**

http://www.cathleendavittbell.com/

This is the official website for Cathleen Davitt Bell.

**Little Blog on the Prairie Book Trailer**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPH7EpV71zQ

This is a book trailer by S. Hinton.

**Little Blog on the Prairie Book Trailer**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHnapo5j3kY&feature=related

This is a book trailer by Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library.

**Louisiana State University Pioneer Heritage Center**

http://www.lsus.edu/offices-and-services/community-outreach/pioneer-heritage-center

This is the Pioneer Heritage Center located in Shreveport, Louisiana.

**Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum**

rurallife.lsu.edu

This is the Rural Life Museum sponsored by LSU.

**Old Oak Ranch**

http://oldoak.com/educational-programs/pioneer-camp/

This is a pioneer camp intended to give participants a taste of the pioneer experience.

**PBS Frontier House**

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/project/index.html

This is the PBS website for Frontier House.

**The Pioneer Woman**

http://thepioneerwoman.com/

This is the website for Ree Drummond, a self-proclaimed "accidental" pioneer.