

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "Winter Tidings" with your readers. It's the third in the Prairie River series. I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added a recipe, some activities, and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.

*Sincerely,
Kristi*

Prairie River #3: Winter Tidings:

About this book:

Nessa is feeling at home in Prairie River until one blustery night. Reverend McDuff arrives unexpectedly at the Lockett's door. At once Nessa's hopes of leaving her past behind are shattered. She had told only Ivy and Mrs. Lockett her secret -- her reason for fleeing Missouri.

Now the whole town will find out.

Nessa keeps remembering that Albert had promised to warn her if the reverend headed west, but she hasn't heard a word from her dear friend. Now she will have to face Reverend McDuff on her own. In what promises to be a long and fierce winter, she must be stronger than ever.

For ages 10 up.

ISBN 9781507562697

Discussion ideas:

<> Part I: [Chapter 1-21]

1. Describe several ways to be safe in a blizzard.
2. If you had no money for a Christmas present, what is something meaningful you could give to a friend?
3. What does it mean when two people who love God, believe they hear different things from Him on the exact same subject?

<> Part II: [Chapter 22-42]

1. Describe a difficult situation or person in your life that is challenging you to become kinder or more patient.
2. Explain what Nessa meant by having only "a small seed of faith."
3. How would you answer Mr. Applewood, when he asked Nessa, "What's so blame important about a girl being able to read?"

Activity suggestions:

<> **Write** - These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I could play hooky on a snowy day I would ..."
2. Tell about an interesting winter experience.
3. Describe a gift you've received but did not want to accept, and why.

<> **Draw**

1. The inside of the fort's barracks
2. A view from Mrs. Lockett's front porch
3. A Christmas scene

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of Nessa's schoolhouse
2. A box to hold something special

<> **Read** - Prairie River # 4: Hope Springs Eternal
ISBN 9781507562857

<> **Cook**

Hurtigbagt Kringle - Quick Pretzel -- When Nessa found a Danish cookbook in her trunk, she was eager to try things her mother had cooked. This recipe for pretzels seems easy and delicious. It's from my great-grandmother's cookbook. Here we go!

Ingredients:

3/4 cup butter

3/4 cup sugar

2 eggs

1 cup milk

4 cups flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Pinch of salt

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1. Sift flour, baking powder, salt. Mix in order given; beat well.
2. Form into two strips 1-inch thick. Place on buttered cookie-sheet.
3. Bake 20-30 minutes in 375 degree oven.

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

During research I read about some Idaho homesteaders on a remote sheep ranch. Their baby had been born during a blizzard and was thought to be too sickly to survive. While a midwife tended to the mother, the father put the infant in a box and set it on the warming rack over their large iron stove, as he had done for orphaned lambs. As the night wore on the baby perked up and by the next day he was thriving. I loved this account and thought it perfect for Fanny Jo that wintery night at Mrs. Lockett's boarding house.

**A secret about the author:**

My siblings and I grew up without grandparents, and we knew little about our aunts, uncles or cousins. I hungered for a close family and dreamed of relatives out there somewhere, searching for us, just as Nessa fantasized. As adults we were shocked to learn that our paternal grandmother, an artist, had only recently died. Why she hadn't made contact while we were growing up is a mystery. Later we learned that our Danish great-grandmother had run a boardinghouse in Wisconsin for immigrants fresh from Denmark. I was thrilled to find her cookbook!

These experiences of loss, longing, and family are woven into Nessa's story.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!