CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

# Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm

**Kate Douglas Wiggin** · *1903 · original English text*

The old stage coach was rumbling along the dusty road that runs from Maplewood to Riverboro. The day was as warm as midsummer, though it was only the middle of May, and Mr. Jeremiah Cobb was favoring the horses as much as possible, yet never losing sight of the fact that he carried the mail. One passenger is a small dark-haired person in a glossy buff calico dress. The hosted text is Wiggin's original English, Project Gutenberg #498, complete. For grades 4–8.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What becomes of a talkative, gifted child sent from Sunnybrook to live with two aunts in Riverboro, and how should a school read her growing-up without turning it into mere brightness?

*"The old stage coach was rumbling along the dusty road that runs from Maplewood to Riverboro."*
I, "We Are Seven"

Rebecca Rowena Randall is going to her aunts Miranda and Jane. Miranda is severe; Jane is kinder; Mr. Cobb is the first grown person on the road to be won. The book is a long growing-up: school, friendship, disappointment, and a later responsibility at home. Teach the gift of speech and of heart, the discipline of a strict house, and the cost of growing older, for grades 4–8. Chapter I is titled "We Are Seven." Keep "stage coach" as two words.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Rebecca Rowena Randall**
*The child on the stage coach, whose talk, heart, and later duty are the book's center*

**Mr. Jeremiah Cobb**
*The stage-driver who carries the mail, and who is the first to be won*

**Aunt Miranda Sawyer**
*The sharp mistress of the Riverboro house, whose apology will matter at the close*

**Aunt Jane**
*The kinder aunt, a shelter in a strict house*

A DUSTY ROAD IN MAY

> *"The old stage coach was rumbling along the dusty road that runs from Maplewood to Riverboro."*
> I, "We Are Seven"

Grades 4–8
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

## The Stage Coach to Riverboro

I, "WE ARE SEVEN"

*Mr. Jeremiah Cobb lolls back, the reins loose, the mail still in his care. There is one passenger: a small dark-haired person in a glossy buff calico dress, so slender and so stiffly starched that she seems to rustle.*

- The first sentence is exact, including "stage coach" as two words, and the road from Maplewood to Riverboro
- The chapter title, "We Are Seven," already hints at a family of children left behind
- Rebecca will talk; Mr. Cobb will listen; that conversation is the first friendship
- A Wordsworth poem stands as a dedication in the file; it is not Chapter I

> *"The old stage coach was rumbling along the dusty road that runs from Maplewood to Riverboro. The day was as warm as midsummer, though it was only the middle of May, and Mr. Jeremiah Cobb was favoring the horses as much as possible, yet never losing sight of the fact that he carried the mail."*
> I, "We Are Seven"

02

## The Aunts of Riverboro

THE EARLY CHAPTERS

*Aunt Miranda Sawyer is sharp and managing; Aunt Jane is quieter and more tender. Rebecca's relations, and a difference in hearts, are the first education of the house.*

- Do not flatten Miranda into a mere scold; she is a character, and she will have a later word
- Jane's kindness is a shelter; it is not the only law of the house
- Sunnybrook, the family left behind, remains Rebecca's first loyalty
- For grades 4–8; a child in a strict, decent New England house

03

## School, Friends, and a Gift of Words

THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK

*Rebecca goes to school, makes friends, writes, and sometimes stumbles. Mr. Aladdin, the banquet lamp, and the seasons of growth belong to this stretch. Her gift is real, and it must be trained.*

- The book is funny and exact about a child's talk; it is also serious about a vocation of words
- Disappointments ("Ashes of Roses," "The Hill Difficulty") are part of the growing
- Do not treat every episode as a mere set-piece of charm
- Riverboro secrets and a wider sky line come in time

04

## Home, and a Last Apology

THE LATER CHAPTERS, AND THE CLOSE

*Sunnybrook calls her back to responsibility. Mother and daughter, a good-by, and Aunt Miranda's apology close the book. Growing up here is a duty as well as a gift.*

- The later titles in this file include "Mother and Daughter," "Good-by, Sunnybrook!" and "Aunt Miranda's Apology"
- Teach the close as responsibility and as a hard kindness, not as a mere success story
- Miranda's apology matters; do not skip it
- Do not invent a last-page prize the book does not give

05

## The Hosted File

PG #498

*The hosted text is complete, original English, 1903. For grades 4–8.*

- Keep "stage coach," "Riverboro," "Sunnybrook," and the chapter title "We Are Seven"
- A Wordsworth dedication stands first; quote Chapter I as the opening of the story
- Rebecca's talk is the book's delight, and her growing-up is the book's work
- Later sequels, if any, are not this file

A Gift of Words · Growing Up · A Strict House, and Kindness · Loyalty to Home · Duty · Friendship on the Road

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 4–8

1. The story opens: "The old stage coach was rumbling along the dusty road that runs from Maplewood to Riverboro." Keep "stage coach" as two words. Chapter I is titled "We Are Seven." A Wordsworth dedication stands first; it is not the opening of the tale.
2. This is Wiggin's original English, 1903, PG #498, complete. For grades 4–8.
3. Rebecca is sent from Sunnybrook to aunts Miranda and Jane in Riverboro. Miranda is severe; Jane is kinder; Mr. Cobb is the first friend on the road.
4. The book is a long growing-up, including disappointment and a later duty at home. Aunt Miranda's apology matters. Do not treat the story as mere brightness.
5. Rebecca's gift of talk is real, and it must be trained. Growing up here is a duty as well as a gift.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #498, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/rebecca-of-sunnybrook-farm/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.