Sarah, Plain and Tall

Stephanie Evans, Michele Gardner, Kelli Goza, Michelle Kaufman, Tamara Knox, Willike Schot

MacLachlan, Patricia. (1985). Sarah, Plain and Tall. New York: Harper.

Synopsis of book: This story is about two children, Anna and Caleb, who are being raised by their widowed father. Papa decides he needs a woman to help with the children and the household chores. He puts an ad in the newspaper asking for a wife and he receives a letter from Sarah Elisabeth Wheaton of Maine. Papa, Anna, and Caleb write letters to Sarah and ask her to come. Sarah said that she is coming by train and that she is plain and tall and will be wearing a yellow bonnet. Sarah tells the children all about her home in Maine, which is very different from her new home in the Midwest. During her visit, she realizes that she must decide if she will marry Papa and move there permanently. The children and their father are enchanted by Sarah and try to convince her that their home is as nice as the home that she would be leaving.

Newberry Award - 1986

Patricia MacLachlan

Born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Patricia graduated from the University of Connecticut. She later taught English, married and had three children. During this time, she wrote a series of journal articles on adoption and foster mothers that had a major impact on her life. She says, "It was clear to me that much of the focus of my writing was sharpened by my involvement and concern for families and children." She has written numerous critically acclaimed books for children of all ages. She states that good books have things for children, adoles cents, and adults in them. Her inspirations were from the books that she read as a child.

Journal Articles:

1. Brabham, E., Villaume, S. K. (2000). Continuing conversations about literature circles. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(3), 278- 80.

This article answers several questions about literature circles. Throughout it, the author tells the importance of literature circles in reading, how many students should be in a group, what texts should be used and how to prepare students for having literature circles in the classroom.

2. Buchoff, R. (1995). Family stories. *The Reading Teacher, 49*(3), 230-232.

This article encourages the use of family stories in the classroom. The author states that family stories allow students to learn more about their heritage, to acquire and refine literacy skills, and to develop greater respect for the multicultural differences that make them unique. It gives suggestions of books to use and how they could be used in the classroom.

3. Lehman, B. A., & Scharer, P. L. (1996). Reading alone, talking together: The role of discussion in developing literacy awareness. *The Reading Teacher, 50*(1), 26-35.

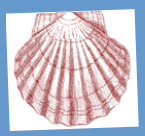
This article reviews a study of the ways that adults and children respond to the text in Sarah, Plain and Tall. The results of the study are used to make generalizations about the value of book discussions and the importance of literary conversations in order to foster literacy development.

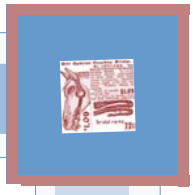
4. Saccardi, M. (1993). Children speak: Our students' reactions to books can tell us what to teach. *The Reading Teacher, 47*(4), 318-324.

This article advocates allowing students to choose the books read in literature circles as an incentive to involve the student in the literature process. The author states that teachers should listen to students in order to gain insight into their interests and make real-world connections between the students and books read in literature circles.

5. Whitin, P. (2002). Leading into literature circles through the sketch-to-sketch strategy. *The Reading Teacher, 55*(5), 444-450.

This article introduces a comprehension strategy called sketch-to-stretch. By sketching lines, colors, shapes, symbols, and/or pictures, students are able to better understand a piece of literature and express their thinking to others.





Themes:

*New beginnings *Family *Family structure *Change *Learning from one another

Resources

- Sarah, Plain and Tall Resource Guide by Scholastic Trade (ISBN#0590065726)
- A Guide for using Sarah, Plain and Tall/Journey in the Classroom by Kathee Gosnell.
- http://eduscapes.com/newbery/86a.html
- http://richmond.k12.va.us/readamillion/LITERATURE/literature_lesson_plans_s.htm
- http://www.proteacher.com/cgi-bin/outsidesite.cgi?external=http://www.nt.net/~torino/sarah.html&original=http://www.proteacher.com/070102.shtml&title=Sarah,%20Plain%20and%20Tall
- http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/sarah/sarahtg.htm
- http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/TNUwebquests/sarah/resources.htm#Here
- http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/grade5/Sarah_Plain.html
- http://libweb.uncc.edu/cimc/integration/Units/SaraPlai.htm
- http://teacher.esuhsd.org/webquests/webquests/sarah_plainand_tall/WQ059.htm

Other Books Written by the Author

All The Places To Love	It's Fine to be Nine	Caleb's Story
Tomorrow's Wizards	The Facts and Fiction of Minna Pratt	The Sick Day
Unclaimed Treasures	Cassie Bineger	Baby
What You Know First	Arthur, for the Very First Time	Three Name
Through Grandpa's Eyes	Seven Kisses in a Row	Skylark
Journey	Mama One, Mama Two	

Other Books the Reader Might Enjoy

Dear Mr. Henshaw Fair Weather

Activities/Ideas for Content Integration

Have students to pretend that they were moving from their home town/state. Ask students to bring items that are characteristics of or special to the state or town. Have students discuss and share the significance of each item. After doing so, ask the students to do a short writing activity describing it.

Language Arts

- Write a letter to a pen pal. Describe yourself. Tell what you look like, things you like, etc.
- Write your prediction about what happens after the story ends.
- Find similes and metaphors throughout the book.
- Write about how Caleb and Anna's typical day is different from yours? How is it similar?
- List all the flowers named, find photos of them. Write what you feel each flower could stand for.

Music

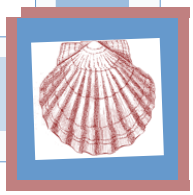
- Put a melody to Caleb's song on p. 24 about the "wholly ragwort".

Science/Mathematics Connections

- Graph the results of the students opinions on whether Sarah will stay or not.
- Classify and research seashells and sand dunes.
- Explain/discuss a front or storm and safety precautions in severe weather.

Social Studies

- Explain how Jacob used the available resources on his farm to satisfy his family's wants/needs.
- Explain how Sarah's lifestyle changed when she moved to the Midwest.
- Talk about families. Is your family similar to Anna and Caleb's family?
- Discuss frontier and pioneer life. How is it similar and different to the way we live today?

Geography & Math

- Draw a map showing the route that Sarah may have taken from Maine to Kansas. Calculate the distance. How long it would take to make the same trip today in a car or an airplane. How much would it cost?