

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Grades 4-6

Written by Kimberly Clarke
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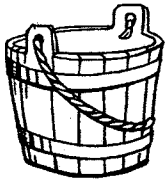
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By Patricia MacLachlan

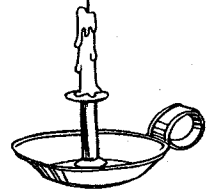
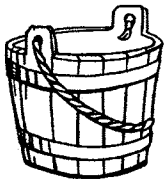


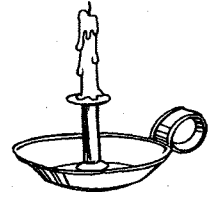
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Expectations

The student will:

- develop an appreciation of family relationships and their development.
- become more aware of the lifestyles of early settler life.
- become involved with the writings of Patricia MacLachlan.
- develop a variety of reading and writing skills using a novel study.

Summary of the Story

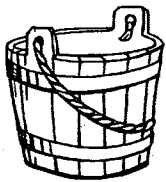
The story is based on a true event in the history of the family of the author, Patricia MacLachlan. It begins with young Caleb asking his older sister to describe their mother who died the day after he was born. Anna tells Caleb that their parents sang every day. Now Papa doesn't sing at all.

Papa places an advertisement in the newspaper for a wife and he receives an answer from Sarah who lives near the sea in Maine. They all write to Sarah, eager to get to know her and to describe themselves. They all learn that Sarah braids hair, has a cat named Seal, likes to build things and most importantly, loves to sing.

Sarah plans to visit for a month in the spring and tells Papa that he will recognize her at the train station because she will wear a yellow bonnet and she is plain and tall.

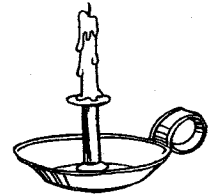
The children love Sarah immediately but are worried because Sarah misses her brother, her three crazy aunts and the sea. She learns to drive the wagon, to plough the fields and to ride a horse. One day she hitches up the wagon and goes to town leaving Papa, Anna and Caleb worried that she is so lonely that she is going to buy a train ticket to return to Maine and the sea.

When Sarah returns that night she brings colored pencils to draw pictures of the sea. She tells the family that if she left, she would miss them more than she misses the sea. They plan for a summer wedding.



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About the Author

Patricia MacLachlan was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She graduated from the University of Connecticut and worked as an English teacher. She was also an active member of the board of a local family service agency. She frequently tours the United States giving lectures and conducting workshops on children's literature at universities and colleges. She lives in western Massachusetts with her husband and three children. She loves to spend the summers with her family on Cape Cod. Besides writing, she enjoys playing the cello and birdwatching. Patricia MacLachlan is the author of several picture books and novels. She received the Newberry Award for *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

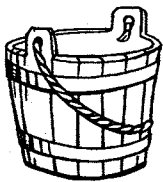
Other Books Written

Arthur, For the Very First Time
Through Grandpa's Eyes
Cassie Binigar
Mama One, Mama Two
Tomorrow's Wizard
Seven Kisses in a Row
Unclaimed Treasures
The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt

Teaching Methods

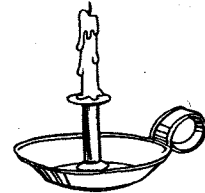
To the Teacher:

It is the teacher's responsibility to read the novel well in advance and to make up discussion questions that may be used in conjunction with the suggested ones in this unit. The questions should revolve around the plot, setting, turning point, characters and the climax of the novel. Your interest and knowledge of the story is essential in order to maintain the enthusiasm of the students.



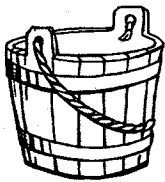
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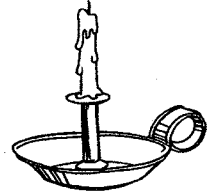
Directed Reading Approach

1. Distribute the books to the designated group of students or to the entire class. Allow them time to examine the cover and to make predictions about the story. List the predictions on the chalkboard or on chart paper.
2. Discuss the title and the author. Using the All About the Author information, relate interesting facts about the author to your students. This knowledge will help your students to relate to the author.
3. Duplicate the sheet called "Characters in the Novel". Distribute the sheets to your students; instruct them that they are to fill out the sheet each time they meet a new character. On the sheet, in point form, they will record information on the character's appearance, personality and make personal comments.
4. Duplicate and distribute the sheet called "Remembering and Predicting" to each student. On this sheet the student will summarize each chapter or selection and predict what will happen next.
5. Have your students read the first chapter with you. Make sure that they understand how to complete both sheets. These sheets will be a useful tool during discussions.
6. The study guide could be reproduced, collated and given out to the students who will be reading the novel. Responses to the different activities could be recorded in the study guide, in a workbook, or a Reading Log or Journal.
7. The exercises in the study guide could be put on the chalkboard for the students to record in a workbook. This could be done chapter by chapter.
8. Independent workers could read the novel and work on the study guide at their own pace.
9. If your students do not have independent work habits you may want to use a more guided or directed reading approach. With this method, the students will read the chapter(s) designated by the teacher, and then complete the activities for the chapters.
10. Students' work should be marked and evaluated as soon as possible.



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Informal Reading Approach

1. This approach to reading usually works well with students who have the ability to read and work independently.
2. Each day the students spend time reading chapters and completing the sheets called "Characters in the Novel" and "Remembering and Predicting".
3. Daily discussions should take place in small or large groups. The discussion questions supplied in the novel are a guide to follow. There may be other questions you may want to ask and other concerns discussed.
4. The activity cards found at the end of the unit may be placed on a special center and worked on either during the novel or after it has been completed.

Teacher Input Suggestions

1. Incorporate the novel "Sarah, Plain and Tall" into a pioneer or early settler theme unit. After a week of introducing pioneer life, students will have a better understanding of the setting of the story and the hardship suffered by many pioneers. The unit entitled in "Pioneer Days", SSF1-06, published by S&S Learning Materials may also be used.
2. Set aside approximately thirty to forty minutes per day for fifteen days to work on the novel study.
3. Assign a chapter per day for the students to read and discuss. Use the questions provided during discussions as a guide. Worksheets in the reproducible student booklet should be assigned and completed by the students.
4. The enrichment activities could be used after the novel has been read and the student booklet has been completed.
5. Consider using Response Journals (see section on Response Journals).
6. The TVO series entitled "Tomothy Pilgrim" is a good way to introduce pioneer or early settler life. This program compares life in the late 1800s to life in the late 1900s. The television series "The Road to Avonlea" gives students a good perspective of Canadian life in the past.