



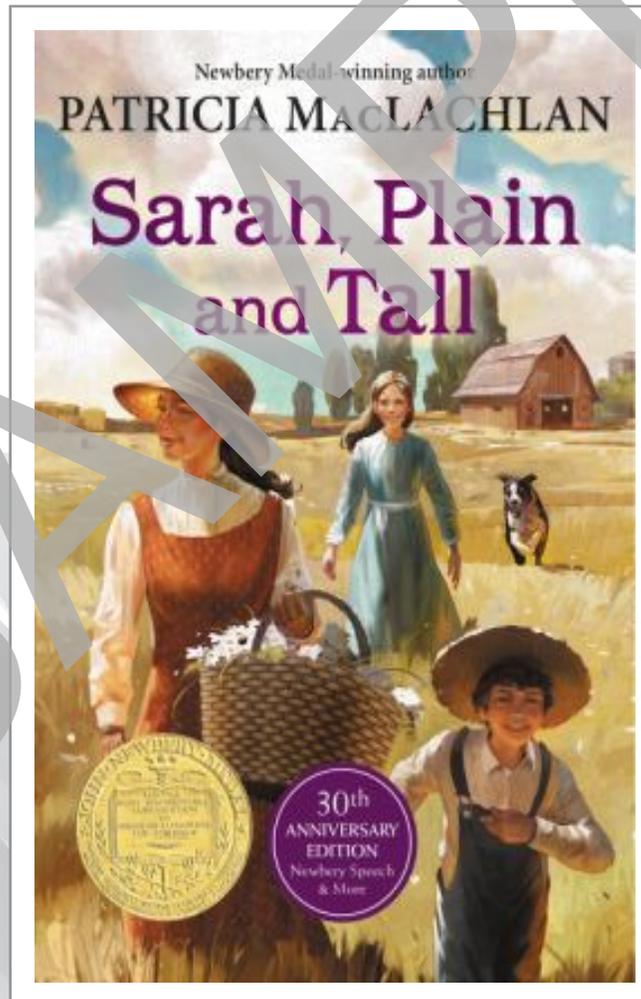
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **Sarah, Plain and Tall**

Patricia MacLachlan



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Sarah, Plain and Tall

Patricia MacLachlan

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, comparing  
and contrasting, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot  
development, figurative  
language

### Vocabulary

Compound words, prefixes/  
suffixes, synonyms

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect, inference

### Writing

Narrative, descriptive

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion  
and cooperative groups,  
entertain others with  
dramatic activities

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## Summary of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*

*Sarah, Plain and Tall*, a Newbery Award winner, details the courtship of a mail-order bride. Sarah responds to a newspaper advertisement placed by a plains farmer with two young children. The efforts by the children and Papa to make the prairie appealing to a plain and tall Sarah from a Maine seacoast town are delightful. The story is written for 8- to 10-year-olds in a simple style, developing the growing personal relationships and revealing quite a bit about late-19th-century prairie life.

## About the Newbery Award

The medal is named for eighteenth-century British bookseller John Newbery. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

## About the Author

Patricia MacLachlan graduated from the University of Connecticut. She was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming and lives in western Massachusetts with her husband and three children. She says that the idea for *Sarah, Plain and Tall* came from a family incident. Other books by Patricia MacLachlan include *Arthur, For the Very First Time*, *Cassie Binegar*, *Unclaimed Treasures*.

## Initiating Activities

1. "Did Mama sing every day?" asked Caleb—the first sentence of the book—gives us some clues about *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Put on your detective hat and try to answer the following who, what, where, when, and why questions.

Who is Caleb?	(boy)
What is his situation?	(doesn't know his mother)
Where does he live?	(not sure)
When did he ask the question?	(at dusk)
Is Caleb a common name?	(no, not very popular)
When was it popular?	(late nineteenth century)

Why would he ask the question? (*His mother is not available to answer herself. She is dead.*)

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## Chapter 1, pp. 3-10

### Vocabulary

hearthstones 3	troublesome 4	homely 5	holler 5
horrid 5	wretched 5	prairie 5	advertisement 8
shuffling 8	energetic 9	opinions 9	

### Discussion Questions

1. Why didn't Papa sing anymore? (*His wife had died when his younger child was born.*)
2. What does Anna think is the worst thing about Caleb? (*Mama died the next morning after Caleb was born.*)
3. What is the setting of this story? When and where did it occur? (*late-nineteenth-century prairie*) Support your answer with evidence from the book.
4. Explain why "tears came" to Anna on page 6. (*She remembered her mother and was sorry for Caleb who didn't remember her.*)
5. What does Mr. Witting think might be a way to remember the old songs? (*to find a mail-order bride and mother for Caleb and Anna*)
6. Who is telling the story? (*Anna*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Attribute Web: Start attribute webs for each of the characters in the book. (See activity sheets on pages 28-31.)
2. Writing: Write a set of questions which others reading the book should be able to answer. Then exchange your questions with another student who will find answers.
3. Writing: If you were going to write a story about your family or your grandparents or great grandparents who lived during the early 1900s, how would you start the story? Discuss the ways stories start and then write a first paragraph for your own family saga (story).

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## Plants and Animals Mentioned in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*

flounder	sea bass	bluefish	seal	lambs
Russian Olive	woodchuck	blue-eyed grass	sheep	cows
turtles	gulls	moon snail	dogs	sea clam
oyster	Indian paintbrush	cat	razor clam	marsh hawk
conch	scallop	clover	bride's bonnet	goldenrod
asters	woolly ragwort	tansy	spruce	zinnias
marigolds	feverfew	dahlias	columbine	nasturtiums
pine	spruce	killdeer	banty chickens	dandelions
horses	corn	wild roses	prairie violets	meadowlark
buzzards	whales	crows	wild daisies	prairie grass