



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Skylark

Patricia MacLachlan



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Skylark

Patricia MacLachlan

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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, research,
visualizing

Writing

Journals, narrative,
newspaper

Comprehension

Predicting, inference,
comparison/contrast

Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms,
classifying

Listening/Speaking

Simulation, discussion

Literary Elements

Characterization, sequel,
similes, story elements, tone

Summary

A sequel to *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, this book describes the family's life in the year after Jacob and Sarah marry. Sarah adapts to the prairie and at the end scratches her name in the soil as she affirms her destiny as a prairie skylark. A severe drought imposes many hardships and forces Sarah to flee with Caleb and Anna to her aunts in Maine, leaving Jacob to tend the farm. Once reunited at the end, the prospect of a new baby in the spring and improved weather conditions lighten the family's spirits.

About the Author

Patricia MacLachlan was born in 1938 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and graduated from the University of Connecticut. She was the 66th Newbery Medal Winner for her book *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (Novel Units guides available).

Her other books include:

Arthur, for the Very First Time
Cassie Binegar
The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt (Novel Units guides available)
Journey (Novel Units guides available)
Mama One, Mama Two
Seven Kisses in a Row
The Sick Day
Three Names
Through Grandpa's Eyes
Tomorrow's Wizard
Unclaimed Treasures

Initiating Activities

1. Simulation of survival on the plains at the turn of the century: Teacher explains to class that certain things are the bare minimum for survival in the book's setting and situation—a prairie farm in 1900. These survival needs include: seed, fertile land, water for people, water for livestock, water for crops, sun/heat, and shelter. Prepare a pack of cards indicating these needs which the teacher places about the class, face down. Students (in family teams of four) seek out the necessary set of cards. The game can be played repeatedly with increasing scarcity in water resources. Discuss how a family would feel in such a situation, what they could do about it, and what to expect from a book centering on this scarcity situation. (See page 6 of this guide.)
2. Read aloud the italicized unnumbered page with "Papa...happy." What does "happily ever after" mean? Make some predictions for the book.

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could be either an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

The diagram consists of three boxes and one oval. The top-left box is rectangular and contains the text "Use the facts and ideas the author gives." The oval on the right contains the text "Use your own prior knowledge." The middle box is rounded and contains the text "Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind." Lines connect the bottom-right corner of the top-left box to the top-left corner of the oval, and the bottom-right corner of the oval to the top-right corner of the middle box. A vertical line extends from the bottom of the middle box down to the top-left corner of a larger rectangular box. This larger box is labeled "Predictions:" in the top-left corner and has four horizontal lines for writing.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

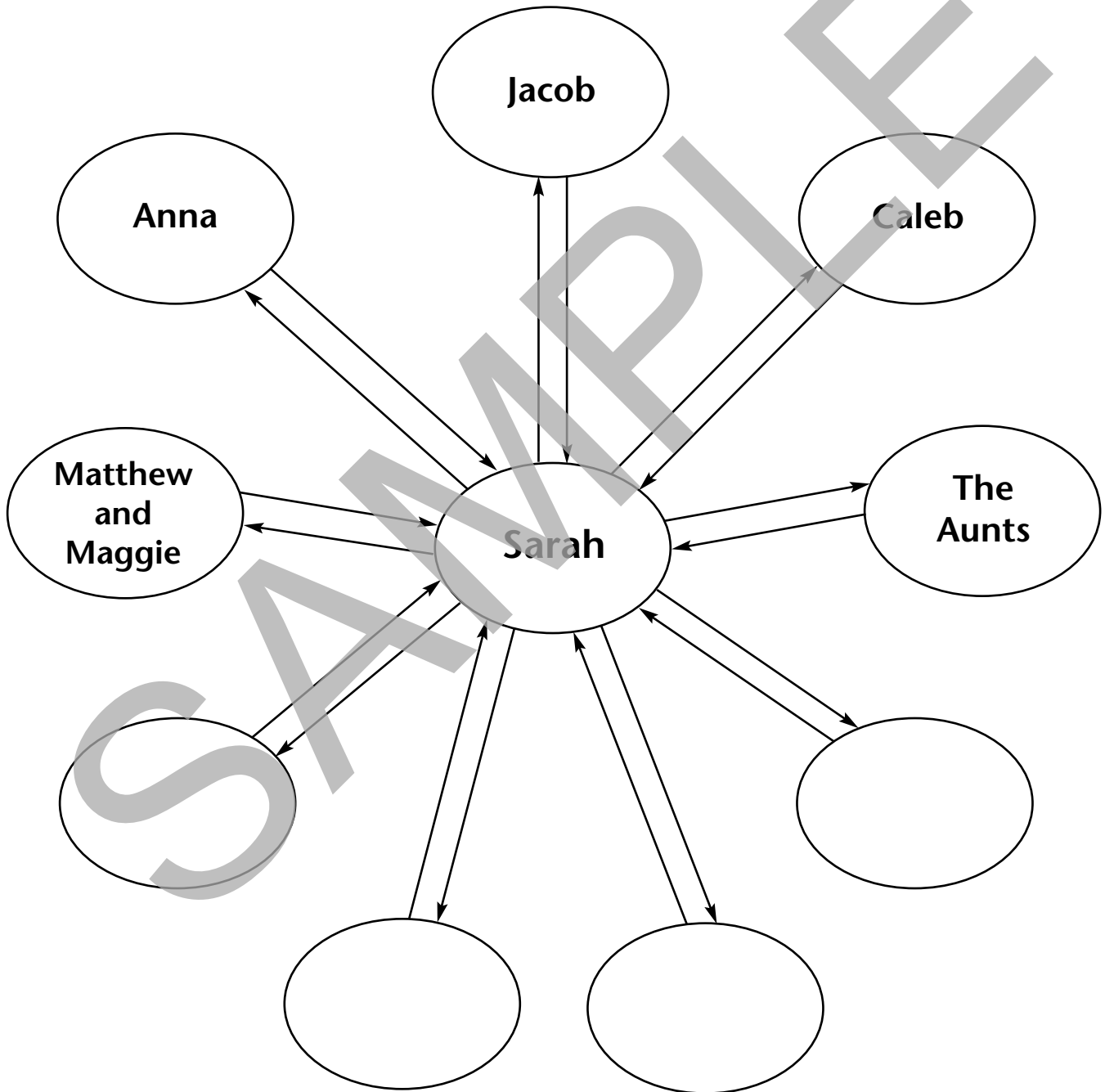
Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

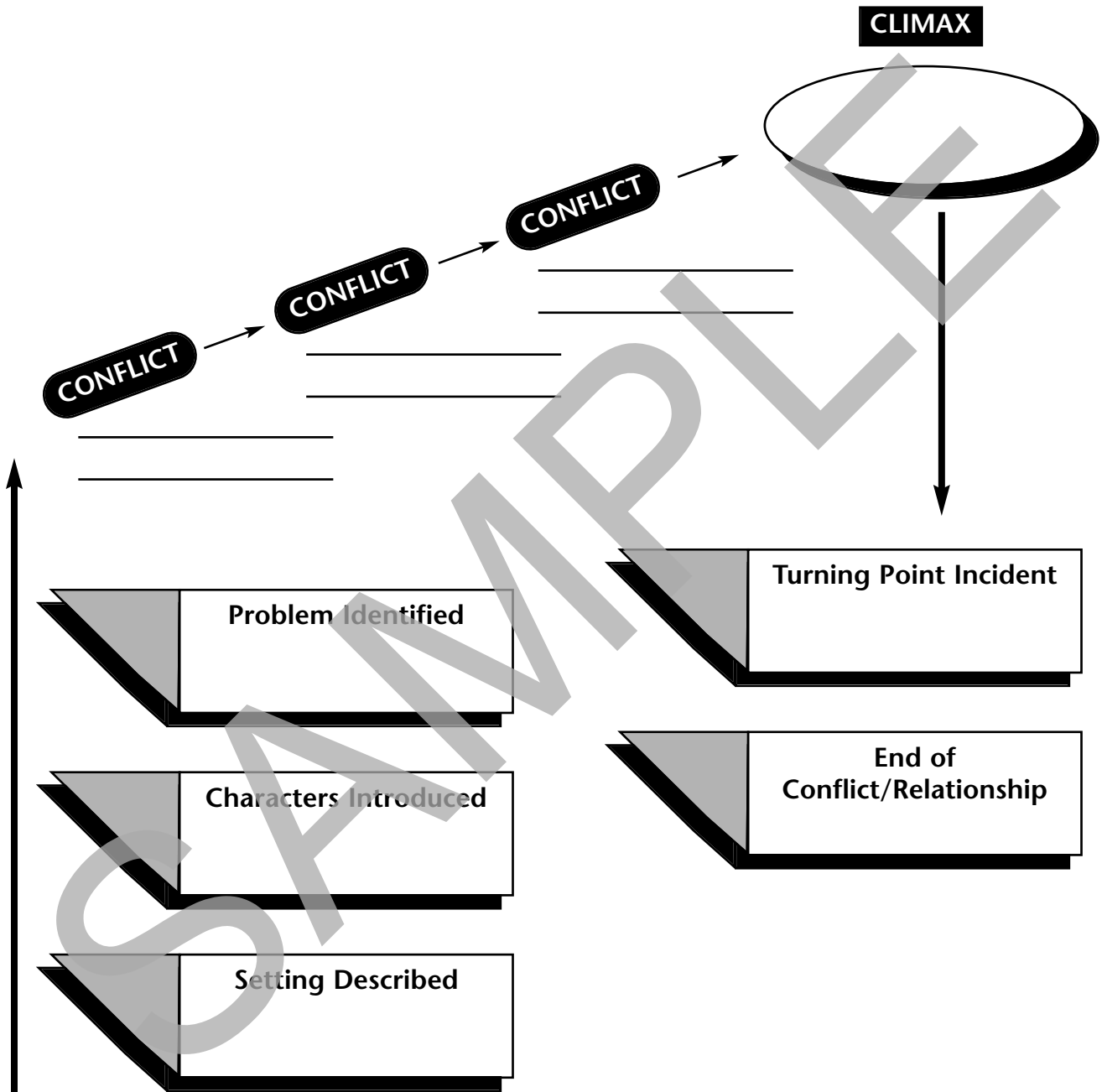
Predictions:

Sociogram

Directions: A sociogram shows the relationship between characters in a story. Think about Sarah and her relationships with the characters listed on the sociogram. Complete the sociogram by writing a word to describe the relationship between Sarah and each character. Remember, relationships go both ways, so each line requires a descriptive word. Add other characters to the sociogram and describe the relationship between them and Sarah.



Story Map



Chapter 1, Pages 3-6

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Who is telling the story? (*Anna, the older child—a daughter*)
2. How is the author foreshadowing the probable conflict of the story? (*preoccupation with rain*)
3. What is the author’s writing style used here? (*conversational, direct, clear, sparse*)
4. What is the emotional mood/tone as the book starts? (*downtcast, irritable*)

Chapter 2, Pages 7-12

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What kind of a man is Papa? (*solid, hard-working, a man of few words*)
2. What are the italicized parts of the book before the chapter? (*journal entries*)
3. Anna says that Sarah has “changed us all” (page 12). Explain. (*caring homemaker; love drew family together*)
4. What does Anna mean by saying that her ideas are clearer in her journal? (*Answers vary. Putting ideas into writing adds clarity and precision. The act of writing forces one to think.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Investigate journals.
 - a) Read some parts of books that are journals. (See page 27 of this guide.)
 - b) Collect ideas on how journals are special on an attribute web. (See pages 9-11 of this guide.)
2. Keep a daily journal. Variations include dialogue journals (which are shared with the teacher who writes back, possibly once a week) and partner journals (which are exchanged with a classmate).
3. Write about a family incident of yours. Use the *Skylark* writing style.
4. Create your vision of the family picture taken in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3, Pages 13-18

Vocabulary

favorite 13 surrounded 15