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SHELL
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Instructional Guides
for Literature

Sarah,
Plain and Tall
Patricia MacLachlan



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How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages will make clear how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 59). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Analyzing the Literature

After you have read each section with students, hold a small-group or whole-class discussion. Provided on the teacher reference page for each section are leveled questions. The questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. These questions are focused on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.

Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion. Before students write, you may want to allow them time to draw pictures related to the topic. Book-themed writing paper is provided on pages 69–70 if your students need more space to write.

Guided Close Reading

Within each section of this guide, it is suggested that you closely reread a portion of the text with your students. Page numbers are given, but since some versions of the books may have different page numbers, the sections to be reread are described by location as well. After rereading the section, there are a few text-dependent questions to be answered by students. A graphic organizer has been provided to help students prepare for the group discussion. They should record their thoughts and ideas on the graphic organizer and refer to it during your discussion. Rather than just taking notes, you may want to require students to write complete responses to the questions before discussing them with you.

Encourage students to read one question at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Guided Close Reading *(cont.)*

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support . . . ?
- What text helps you understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why _____ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, . . . ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports
- Use the text to tell why

Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

Language Learning

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

word	definition	Sentence about Text
dusk (ch. 1)	partial darkness between day and night	It is dusk , and the dogs lay beside Caleb on the warm hearthstones.
hollow (ch. 1)	not solid; empty	The chair makes a hollow scraping sound on the hearthstones.
wretched (ch. 1)	terrible; very bad	Anna thought Caleb looked wretched when he was born.
feisty (ch. 1)	full of energy; troublesome; difficult	Papa’s horse, Jack, is a feisty animal.
advertisement (ch. 1)	a paid announcement; a public notice	Papa places an advertisement in the newspaper for a new wife.
shingle (ch. 2)	a thin piece of wood, slate, or metal laid in rows to cover the roofs of buildings	Sarah describes her house as tall with gray shingles .
pitchfork (ch. 2)	a large, long-handled fork used for lifting hay	Papa stops cleaning the stalls and leans on his pitchfork .
grin (ch. 2)	to smile	Anna grins as she tells her father to say yes to Sarah’s letter.
damp (ch. 2)	slightly wet; moist	It is rainy and the house is cool, damp , and quiet.
bonnet (ch. 2)	a hat, usually tying under the chin	Sarah writes that she will wear a yellow bonnet .

Name _____ Date _____

Vocabulary Activity

Directions: Choose at least two words from the story. Draw a picture that shows what these words mean. Label your picture.

Words from the Story

dusk	hollow	wretched	feisty	advertisement
shingle	bonnet	grin	damp	pitchfork

Directions: Answer this question.

1. Who will be wearing a yellow **bonnet** at the train station?

Guided Close Reading

Closely reread the last two pages of chapter 2. Start where it says, "One morning, early, Papa and Caleb . . ." Read to the end of the chapter.

Directions: Think about these questions. In the chart, write ideas as you think about the answers. Be ready to share your answers.

1. What text supports the idea that the Witting family is excited to ask Sarah to visit?

2. Find the part in the story that describes how the family feels while waiting for Sarah's reply.

3. Use the text to tell why Papa smiles before holding up the letter for the children to see.

Story Elements-Plot

Directions: Papa teaches Sarah how to plow the fields. Sarah teaches Caleb how to swim. Describe three things that someone has taught you. Include a picture for each lesson you've learned.






