

Teaching Geography Through Literature

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J. WESTON
WALCH
PUBLISHER

Portland, Maine

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TEACHER'S GUIDE

UNIT 5: *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan



MacLachlan, Patricia. *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1985. (ISBN 0-06-024101-2)

Description

Jacob Witting's wife died soon after giving birth to their son Caleb. This is the story of how Sarah Elisabeth Wheaton answered an advertisement and changed the lives of four people.

Classroom Applications

This is a very short book (58 pages), but it is full of history and geography. The details of prairie life contained within make excellent fodder for a comparative approach. For example, a standard lesson (see Lesson 2, *Here, and Far Away*) would be to compare the prairie (also known as “the breadbasket of the U.S.,” “the Heartland,” the “Upper Midwest,” or the “North Central Region”) with Maine or the New England states in terms of climate, resources, animal life, and vegetation.

Introduce the story as an example of historical reality, although this specific incident did not happen. Wives were often solicited by men via newspaper ads. The students should be informed that the book is as much a comparison between two ways of life (Midwestern and New England) as it is a geographic comparison.

To assist students through the book, they should complete a flowchart for each chapter they read. This will help them to organize their thinking and keep track of the story’s progress. The reproducible flowchart on the following page can be photocopied for all of the students in your class for this purpose.

Name _____ Date _____

Sarah, Plain and Tall Flowchart

Directions: Complete this flowchart for each chapter of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* as you read the book.

Central Issue

Characters Involved

Where?

Outcome

What Happens?



Lesson I: States and Regions of the United States



I. **Time:** one class period (45 minutes) or homework

II. Frameworks/Standard Connection

Standard 1—how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective

III. Materials

- class set of These Are the Places reproducible student worksheet 1A
- class set of atlases and outline map of the United States (p. 80)

IV. Objectives—Students should be able to:

- locate and identify states, regions, and physical features in the United States

V. Procedures

1. Prior to the students reading the book, this mapping exercise will help place the story in geographic context.
2. Distribute the United States political maps and the These Are the Places student worksheet. Have students complete the mapping exercise either as classwork or homework. Remind them to construct a key for their map, to include a compass rose, and to label neatly.
3. Collect the finished maps for review; return them to students for later use.

The Continental United States

