

# Passports to Knowledge

A travel companion for the book:

**Sarah, Plain  
and Tall**

**by Patricia MacLachlan**

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# A Travel Itinerary

## Unit Overview



Anchored in Patricia MacLachlan's novel *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, this journey explores the pioneers and the prairie in the nineteenth century. Students will delve into relevant reading and language skills by traveling through online and offline activities. Throughout their adventure, students will **interpret the actions of characters**, **understand and identify adverbs**, and **analyze imagery**. Integrated into these skill-based activities are multiple opportunities for writing, researching, and higher-order thinking.

In the online portion of the unit, students are introduced to the time period and setting of the novel in *Life on the Frontier*. Students can then read, with or without audio support, chapters 8 and 9 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Other online learning activities include: *Back on the Trail* (characters and setting); *Rowdy Barn Roundup!* (adverbs); and *Paint a Picture* (imagery). In these three activities, instruction is provided prior to assessment. Students also have the option to visit the compass for extra instruction at any time during the activities. Some online learning activities prompt students to either jot down an idea or answer an open-ended question in their notebooks.

Offline materials extend and reinforce the unit concepts, providing guided practice and independent application of themes and skills addressed in the online curriculum. Many opportunities for producing authentic writing are provided. A creative plan for introducing the unit is a part of the teacher materials. Also included in the teacher materials are lesson plans for bringing each highlighted skill into the classroom, an informational handout for parents, a list of additional literature titles for further study, and a teacher preparation guide for the final project. In the final project, students will have the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in a culminating fashion. In addition, multiple student work pages challenge students to think about what they have read and apply the skills highlighted in the unit through reading, researching, and writing. All of the work pages are linked to the book and its main ideas.

Saddle up and grab onto the reins for this exciting journey!

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# Transportation

## *Story Synopsis of Sarah, Plain and Tall*



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A widowed farmer and his two children experience loss, love, and life on the prairie in this novel set in Midwest America in the late nineteenth century.

Caleb and Anna's mother died very shortly after giving birth to Caleb. Wanting desperately to find a connection to his mother, Caleb asks his sister to share stories of her. One of Anna's most vivid memories is of her mother and her father singing. When Caleb questions his father about why he no longer sings, his father supposes that he has forgotten the songs, but that he may have found a way to remember them. Father then tells his children that he placed an ad in the paper for a wife and that a woman from Maine named Sarah has answered his request.

The prospect of a mother is almost too good to be true for Caleb and Anna and they have many questions, hopes, and dreams about Sarah. They correspond with Sarah via letters and before too long, Sarah plans to visit the prairie for a month. Caleb and Anna are very excited about Sarah's visit, but wonder whether or not she'll like life on the prairie or like being a part of their family.

Sarah is plain, tall, and very independent. She has many useful talents and learns the ways of the prairie very quickly. The children grow quite fond of her and hope she will stay, but they worry that her longing for the sea will pull her away from them. When Sarah goes into town by herself, the family, especially Caleb, worries that she will not return. But Sarah does return with colored pencils to accurately illustrate the sea. Upon her return, Sarah also promises to stay, for Sarah admits that although she misses her home, she would miss Father, Anna, and Caleb more.

*Sarah, Plain and Tall* is the first novel in a series. *Skylark* and *Caleb's Story* complete the series.

# Road Map

Vocabulary List for for Chapters 8 & 9 of Sarah, Plain and Tall



<b>ayuh</b>	an informal way to say yes
<b>bleat</b> <b>bleating</b>	the characteristic cry of a sheep, goat, or calf
<b>carpenter</b>	a skilled worker who makes and repairs wooden objects and structures
<b>crisp</b> <b>crisply</b>	to be clear; firm
<b>cross</b> <b>crossly</b>	to be cranky, quick-tempered, or touchy
<b>dusk</b>	the darker part of twilight before the day becomes night
<b>eerie</b>	mysterious, strange, or unexpected (as to send a chill up your spine)
<b>hail</b>	precipitation in the form of small balls or lumps of snow
<b>hailstone</b> <b>hailstones</b>	a small ball or pellet of hail
<b>hiss</b>	a sharp whistling sound, similar to a long s sound
<b>hitch</b> <b>hitched</b>	to connect, fasten, or attach with or by using a loop, hook, or knot
<b>mill</b> <b>milled</b>	to walk around in no particular direction or with no specific purpose
<b>murmur</b> <b>murmured</b>	to say something with a soft or gentle voice
<b>nasturtium</b>	a plant having bitter-smelling seeds, rounded leaves you can eat, and usually yellow or red flowers
<b>nudge</b> <b>nudged</b>	to touch or push against gently, especially when trying to get someone's attention
<b>peer</b> <b>peering</b>	to look curiously at something that might be difficult to see
<b>pesky</b>	troublesome, annoying
<b>portion</b>	a part of a whole
<b>pungent</b>	having an unpleasantly sharp or bitter taste or smell
<b>rein</b> <b>reins</b>	a strap fastened to a bit used by a rider or a driver to control an animal
<b>rumble</b>	a deep, long, rolling sound
<b>scuttle</b> <b>scuttling</b>	to run hastily, scramble

# Road Map

Vocabulary List for for Chapters 8 & 9 of Sarah, Plain and Tall



<b>sly</b>	clever, tricky, playfully mischievous
<b>squall</b> <b>squalls</b>	a sudden violent storm or wind, often with rain or snow
<b>squint</b> <b>squinted</b>	to look with the eyes partly closed
<b>stern</b>	hard or severe in character or manner
<b>stubborn</b> <b>stubbornly</b>	persistent, determined to do one's will
<b>unhitch</b>	to unfasten or detach an animal from a post, wagon, or any other item
<b>wail</b> <b>wailed</b>	to cry loudly, to express sorrow
<b>weary</b> <b>wearily</b>	tired; expressive of tiredness
<b>windbreak</b>	a fence, hedge, or row of trees serving to lessen or break the force of wind
<b>wisp</b> <b>wisps</b>	a small bunch or bundle; a small handful (as of hair, hay, or straw)

# Gearing Up

Prior Knowledge / Schema Activation



## Purpose:

To engage students in the novel, offer them an opportunity to make predictions about the novel. Students can then confirm or adjust their predictions as they read. The following lesson can be done to introduce the novel, and students can use the accompanying work page to record their confirmations or adjustments as they read.

## Lesson:

### I. Pre-Reading: Introduce the Setting and Activate Prior Knowledge

Because the historical and geographical setting plays an important role in this novel, have students activate their prior knowledge about the setting.

- Tell students the story takes place in the late 1800's on a farm in the Midwestern United States. Ask for a student volunteer to point out the geographical setting on a map of the United States. Confirm or adjust student's response.
- To provide a visual example of the setting, show a short clip from the film version of the novel (*Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Hallmark Home Entertainment) or, if you'd prefer not to show a clip of the movie, any of the *Little House on the Prairie* videos (such as *Little House on the Prairie—The Premier Movie*, Goodtimes Home Video) will work well as a visual representation of the setting. You can also use photographs and storybook pictures of this time and place to visually prompt students.
- After students have seen the video clip and/or studied the photographs, have students articulate the details they observed in the visual prompt(s). Then, engage students in an informal discussion about other things they already know about this time and place.
- Tell students that there are four main characters in the novel: Papa, Anna, Caleb, and Sarah. Tell students that based on their observations of the video and/or photographs and on their existing knowledge of the time and place in which the story is set, they are going to make some predictions about the novel. Go over the questions in the first column of the chart on page 7. Then, have students fill in the second column with their predictions.

### II. During Reading: Confirm or Adjust Predictions

At different points throughout the reading of the novel, have students return to their charts and fill in the third column, using descriptions and quotes from the novel as evidence to make confirmations or adjustments from their predictions. (Depending on when students are prompted to return to their charts, they will probably not be able to confirm or adjust all of their predictions.)

# Gearing Up

Prior Knowledge / Schema Activation



## III. Post Reading: Confirm or Adjust Predictions

After completing the novel, have students complete the final column on their charts. At this point, all of the students' original predictions should be confirmed or adjusted, using quotes and descriptions from the novel as evidence.

## IV. Post Reading: Make Meaning

Offer students opportunities to make meaning of what they have read and to draw personal connections to the literature by having them complete some or all of the questions and activities below:

### Open-Ended Questions

1. Which character is most like you? Why?
2. If Sarah were living today, do you think she would be more similar or more different from other women her age? Explain.
3. What if Anna and Caleb's father had died instead of their mother? How would the story be different? Explain.
4. What are some of the advantages of living in a time without television, phones, and computers?

### Activities

1. Plan a wedding for Sarah and Jacob. Consider: What type of wedding will Sarah want? Who will be invited? What will she wear? Create an outline of the guest list, the activities on the day of the wedding, and the gifts the couple will receive. Include drawings or pictures of the bride and groom's clothing for the special day.
2. Create a diorama of the farm where the story takes place. Show the picture you have formed in your mind of the inside of the house and the outside of the house.
3. Create a wedding card for Sarah and Jacob. Write a poem to congratulate and celebrate the couple.
4. Use pictures and words to create a chart to show the similarities and differences between the lives of children in the late 1800's and the lives of children today. Think about their chores, activities, and relationships with other family members.

## V. Post Reading: Comparison of Novel and Movie

If desired, view the movie version of the novel (*Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Hallmark Home Entertainment) as a class. Divide the class into four groups and assign each group a character to analyze in the film. After viewing the film, have each group create a compare and contrast poster, depicting the similarities and differences between their interpretation of their assigned character and the film director's interpretation of their assigned character. Students should use pictures and words to present their conclusions. Have each group present its poster to the rest of the class. Use the posters to springboard discussions about the positive and negative aspects of making a book into a movie.

# Gearing Up

*Prior Knowledge / Schema Activation*



Question	Pre-Reading Prediction	During Reading: Confirm or Adjust (Use quotes and descriptions from book as evidence.)	Post-Reading: Confirm or Adjust (Use quotes and descriptions from book as evidence.)
The two children in the story have lost their mother. Do you think they want a new mother?			
Sarah travels from Maine to the Midwest. What do you think she will miss about her home in Maine?			
What types of chores do the children do?			
What types of activities do the characters do?			
What events happen on the prairie?			

# Taking the Next Step

*Bringing Setting and Characters into Your Classroom*



## Why is Setting Important?

- Review with students the definition of setting as an element of fiction (where and when the story takes place).
- In pair-share discussions, have students discuss the following question: How is setting important to a story?
- Have pair-share teams share their responses. Use responses to help students understand that the setting of a story can help the reader better understand the characters, the plot, and the conflict.
- Offer *Sarah, Plain and Tall* as an example of how the setting of a story impacts the characters and their actions. Ask students if they think Anna and Caleb's father would put an ad in the paper for a bride if the story took place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Have students offer other examples of how the story would be different if it were set in modern times.

## Who is My Favorite Character?

- Have each student brainstorm a list of his or her favorite story characters.
- Have students choose one character from their lists. Instruct students to create a web to describe the character they chose. On their webs, students should include personality traits, appearance, and the character's significant actions in the plot of the book. Then, have students draw a picture of the character they chose.
- Have students recall the story from which their characters are taken and write a brief summary of its plot. (In this summary, instruct students to include details about the setting of the story.) Have students display their webs, pictures, and summaries on **one side** of a large piece of construction paper.

## How Does the Setting Affect a Character's Actions?

- Have students study their displays from the previous activity. Present the next activity as a fun challenge.
- Tell students they have been given the power to drastically change a story by changing one element in it. Instruct students to change the setting of the story highlighted in their displays. Challenge students to consider how this change will affect the plot of the story and one of its characters. Have students brainstorm some of their ideas about how the character and story will change.
- Have students create a web of the *new* character, an illustration of the *new* character, and a summary of the *new* story. Have students display their webs, pictures, and summaries next to the original one they created. (You may wish to offer students an example by creating a similar side-by-side display of a character and story with which students are familiar. For example, you can create a web, picture, and summary of Little Red Riding Hood from the famous fairy tale. Then, change the setting from a forest to a desert and alter the picture, web, and summary accordingly.)
- Have students share their side-by-side displays with the rest of the class.

# Taking the Next Step

*Bringing Adverbs into Your Classroom*



## What is an adverb?

- Introduce or review adverbs by giving each student two index cards. Have students write the word *quickly* on one card and the word *slowly* on the other card.
- Instruct students to answer the following questions by holding up the appropriate card:
  - How do you get ready for school in the morning?
  - How do you ride your bike?
  - How do you eat your lunch?
  - How do you do your homework?
- Explain that *quickly* and *slowly* are adverbs because they describe *how* something is done. Further explain that adverbs can also tell when and where something is done.
- Write the following definition on the board: *Adverbs are words that describe verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.*

## Reciting Adverbs Aloud

- Write the following sentences on the board:
  - The cows mooed happily.
  - I finished my book today.
  - I will eat my lunch here.
- Read each sentence aloud and have students repeat each sentence chorally. Repeat each sentence three times.
- To reinforce the adverb in each sentence, ask the questions listed below after each sentence, respectively. Have students answer each question chorally. (Student answers are in parentheses.)
  - **How** did the cows moo? (happily)
  - **When** did I finish my book? (today)
  - **Where** will I eat my lunch? (here)

## Ideas for Practice

- Have students search magazine ads and newspapers for examples of adverbs. Have students create an adverb collage with the adverbs they find.
- Have each student create an adverb book. Instruct students to create six sentences with adverbs. Have students underline the adverb in each sentence and circle the word it modifies. Students can then illustrate each sentence.
- Create a cloze passage with missing adverbs and distribute to students. Have students fill in the missing adverbs and then read their creations aloud. Students will enjoy hearing how word choice can impact a piece of writing.
- Have students write mock "For Sale" ads for an item that pioneers may have bought and sold. Instruct students to use adverbs in their ads. You may wish to provide the example below:

**Winter Quilt:** This is a **beautifully** hand-made masterpiece! This quilt will help you sleep **happily** and **peacefully**! Buy it **today**!

# Taking the Next Step

*Bringing Imagery into Your Classroom*



## Paint a Picture

- Introduce or review the concept of imagery by displaying a painting. Explain to students that in the same way an artist paints a picture with different colors, textures, and brush strokes, a writer can create a picture with words. Ask students to try to explain *how* a writer can paint a picture with words.
- Use student responses to produce a definition of imagery (an author's use of words that creates a picture in the reader's mind).
- Ask students to name the five senses. Write the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) on the board.
- Explain that writers use imagery in hopes of creating a very detailed picture in the reader's mind that can grab the attention of the reader's senses. Explain that writers want their readers to feel as if they are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling the details of the story.
- Ask students to discuss why they think writers want their readers to feel as if they are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling the details of the story. Students should understand that using imagery makes stories more alive and more appealing. Imagery can help a reader become more involved with a story, and thus have a better understanding of its characters, conflicts, and themes.

## Practice with Popcorn

Prepare for this activity by bringing a large bucket of buttered popcorn to class (bring enough for each student to have a handful).

- On a blank piece of paper, have each student list the five senses, leaving a couple of lines between each sense.
- Give each student a handful of popcorn with the instruction to not eat it yet. Instruct students to describe in great detail how the popcorn looks, smells, and feels. Challenge them to draw on their own experiences to create each description. Have them record their descriptions next to each respective sense. (You may wish to offer some examples to get students started: (smell)—*The popcorn smells like rich butter; it reminds me of cold Sunday afternoons in front of the fireplace with my family.* (sight)—*The look of the popcorn reminds me of my first carnival—vendors in red and white striped aprons selling boxes and boxes of popcorn.* (touch)—*The popcorn feels gritty and sharp, like when you get a potato chip stuck in your throat.*)
- When students have finished their first three descriptions, instruct them to eat some of the popcorn and create descriptions for how it tastes and sounds.
- Have each student select his/her favorite description to read aloud to the class. Commend students on creating imagery!

## Apply with Writing

Have students use one of their descriptions as a story starter. Instruct students to create a fictional story using their chosen description as the first line of the story.

# Laying the Tracks for the Final Destination

Teacher Guide for *Go the Distance*



To best prepare your students for the *Go the Distance* project, you may supply them with the following materials:

**Materials for Research:** books by Patricia MacLachlan and Laura Ingalls Wilder, short stories, storybooks, reference books, Internet access.

**Samples:** examples of short stories and storybooks (targeted for different age groups 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade and younger students), books by Patricia MacLachlan and Laura Ingalls Wilder, examples of stories written by other students, examples of checklists or rubrics showing the components of a good story.

**Materials for illustration and cover:** construction paper, cardstock (for children's book), access to word processing or writing paper, colored pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, and any other materials students may wish to use to create their illustrations.

## I. Learn about an author

Students will research one of the following authors: Patricia MacLachlan or Laura Ingalls Wilder. Students may need a brief introduction to the books that these authors wrote and assistance in locating information in books or on the Internet regarding the author they choose to research.

## II. Choose an audience and story setting

Students will gather information for their stories. They will decide on an audience, a time period and a setting for the story. Students may need direction when researching the setting and time period, and in creating a web diagram of these. Students will be able to refer back to this diagram when they write their story.

## III. Decide who the characters will be and describe them

Students are prompted to fill in a chart with information on their characters. Students will be able to refer back to this chart when they write their story.

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# Laying the Tracks for the Final Destination

Teacher Guide for *Go the Distance*

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## IV. Decide on a problem and the solution

Students will write a few lines that describe the problem, or challenge, that the main character in their story will face and the proposed solution. Students may need a few examples of how story characters typically face a challenge and grow from it.

## V. Draft your story

Students will begin drafting their stories. A list of hints is provided on page 34.

## VI. Revise your draft

Students will complete their drafts, using the checklist on page 34 to keep them focused, and then refine their stories.

## VII. Edit your draft

Students will edit their drafts. A student checklist is provided on page 35. You may want to involve students in peer editing at this time. Pair students and provide extra copies of the edit checklist and revision checklist so they can check each other's work.

## VIII. Design a cover and illustrate your story

Students will design a cover and illustrate their stories. A sample story cover may be needed as well as drawing and compilation materials.

## IX. Publish your story

Students will finalize their projects. If possible, allow students to share their projects with a peer prior to turning it in. You may want to organize a time when students can share their *published works* with the rest of the class. Students may also enjoy inviting family to school to share their stories.

### Assessment:

Students may need to see an anchor story or example of a story that includes the elements of time, place, characters, and a challenge. Students will brainstorm to create a checklist or rubric that reflects the elements of a good story. This rubric or checklist can be used as a guide for students in creating their stories as well as a tool for final evaluations of student work.

If you use your state's standard writing rubric or the rubric that you have developed with your class, share this rubric with your students. Similarly, if you use a standard project-based rubric in your classroom, share this with students as well, for the projects require both forms of assessment. If you use a different form of assessment, make sure students are aware of the criteria.

# The Road Home

## Parent Page

### What's New?

In class your child is reading the novel, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. This fictional book takes place during the late nineteenth century. Although fictional, it highlights some of the aspects of pioneer life. The story focuses on a widowed farmer and his two children, Caleb and Anna. The other main character, Sarah, is plain, tall, and from Maine. She travels to the Midwest to meet the family after answering an ad in a newspaper for a bride. A story about love, loss, and life on the prairie emerges, as Sarah must define the meaning of *home*.

### Walk Like a Pioneer

In the story, Caleb explains that he walks three miles to school. Go for a three-mile walk with your child and have your child discuss his or her opinions about what it must have been like to walk that distance to and from school every day.

### Action Items

#### Pull the Plugs

To gain an appreciation for a simpler time in history, designate a one or two-day period where TVs and computers are off limits. Encourage your child to find other activities to occupy his or her free time. Suggest that the family play a game or share stories. At the end of the off limits period, discuss with your child some of the advantages of not having access to TVs and computers.

#### A Family Mobile

Although it is set during a different time period, this book is very much about family life and some of the activities that bring family members together. Create a family mobile with your child. Create or cut out pictures to represent each family member. Use other objects or drawings to represent some of the activities that the members of your family do together.



### Book Bag

The following are books you may want to obtain from the library to read and use with your child.



#### ***A Pioneer Sampler: The Daily Life of a Pioneer Family in 1840***

by Barbara Greenwood

A fictional family living in a factual time engages readers with fascinating facts and interesting stories about life in the mid-1800s.

#### ***Pioneer Days: Discover the Past with Fun Projects, Games, Activities, and Recipes***

by David King

Enjoy learning about pioneers with this fun, fact-filled book.

### **Homework:**

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# Travel Guide

## Answer Key



### Student Work Page 18 *Prairie Words*

1. rumble
2. Dusk
3. hailstones
4. bleating
5. squall
6. wisps
7. shelter
8. flower

### Student Work Pages 19-20 *Traveling West*

#### Part I

1. jobs, gold, land, new life

#### Part II

Answers will vary. Verify student work.

Possible answers: food, clothes, water, furniture, household items, small pets, musical instruments

#### Part III

Verify student work.

### Student Work Pages 21-22 *Pending Ending*

Story endings will vary. Verify student work.

### Student Work Pages 23-24 *Adverbs in Action*

Page 23: Please see answer key on page 15.

Page 24:

1. crisply
2. frankly
3. sheepishly
4. pointlessly
5. coldly
6. absently

### Student Work Page 25 *My Special Place*

Answers will vary. Verify student work.

### Student Work Pages 26-27 *Find Your Way*

#### Part I

1. An atlas is a collection of maps.
2. Look at the symbol key.
3. Find the symbol N. Colorado
4. Look at the listings and coordinates.

#### Part II

- 1-6. Answers will vary. Make sure boxes are checked.
  7. Approximately 1500 miles (depends on the states)
  8. Students should draw a route from Maine to a prairie state in the Midwest or West.
- Verify student work.

### Assessment of Writing

There are many opportunities for students to produce original writing throughout the unit.

When assessing student writing, use your state's standard writing rubric or a rubric that you have developed for your class. It is best if students are familiar with the rubric and understand each of the criteria on the rubric and the method used for arriving at a score. Similarly, project-based activities and assessments can be scored with a project-based rubric with which the students are familiar.

# Travel Guide

Answer Key



## Student Work Page 23

*Adverbs in Action*

How	Where	When	To What Degree
proudly happily cheerfully wildly softly quietly	there here outdoors	finally tomorrow now later always today soon immediately then	very almost

# Future Travels

## Additional Literature



The historical and geographical setting of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* can be used to extend the novel. The following are reading suggestions to pair with the novel. These can be acquired ahead of time to use in the classroom library, to assign students to literature circles, or as a transition into a new theme.

### Launch a Further Study of Jacob, Sarah, Anna, and Caleb

**The following books are a part of the series that begins with *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.**

*Skylark* by Patrician MacLachlan

(Ages 9-12) When a drought threatens the farm, Sarah takes Anna and Caleb to Maine. While the children are somewhat happily distracted by their new surroundings, they still worry about the farm and they miss their father. They worry, too, that Sarah will not feel the same bond to the farm as their father. The multi-leveled conflicts are pacified when after it finally rains on the prairie, Papa fetches his wife and children from Maine and they return to the prairie where Sarah writes her name in the soil.

*Caleb's Story* by Patrician MacLachlan

(Ages 9-12) When Anna leaves home to work in town, Caleb is given the responsibility of recording the family events, and thus, he narrates this third and final book in the series. When the new member of the family, Cassie, daughter of Jacob and Sarah, sees an unknown man on the farm, the family dynamic is disturbed. The man turns out to be Jacob's father. Family problems are once again addressed as a theme in this novel as old conflicts between Jacob and his father resurface and are healed with the help of Caleb.

### Launch a Study of Pioneers

*Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder

(Ages 9-12) Perhaps the most famous of pioneer stories, this novel centers on young Laura Ingalls and her family. The family sets their sights on Kansas as they say goodbye to their home in Wisconsin. Although different obstacles challenge them as they make their way and build their *little house on the prairie*, they are excited about the possibilities of a new life in a new setting. (This is just one of the many stories written by Laura Ingalls Wilder about life on the prairie.)

*Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink

(Ages 9-12) Although this Newbery Medal Winner was written in 1935, its main character and action-filled plot still holds the interest of its readers. Set in 1864, Caddie and her brothers engage readers with their many adventures in the forests and rivers of Wisconsin. The full-spirited Caddie is based on the real-life grandmother of the author. (The length of this novel—288 pages—may be too challenging to be read independently by some readers.)



*Ellen's Story* by Susan Kirby

(Ages 9-12) Similar to Anna and Caleb in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Ellen has lost her mother and must adjust to a new mother. Ellen's father leaves for town one day in 1830 and returns to the farm with a new wife and a new stepson. The new family is forced to deal with the new family dynamic and the typical challenges, like storms, floods and fires, faced on a farm in the 1800s.

*Pioneer Cat* by William H. Hooks

(Ages 9-12) This action-filled adventure highlights three memorable characters: two young girls and one feline. The two young girls, Kate and Rosie, are determined to keep the feline, Snuggs, a secret while they travel in a wagon train with their families to Oregon. (The readability, quick-paced plot, and length of this book (62 pages) make it appropriate for independent reading and/or for less independent readers.)

*Rachel's Journal: The Story of a Pioneer Girl* by Marissa Moss

(Ages 9-12) Through Rachel's prose, notes, and colorful drawings, readers will feel as if they are traveling with ten-year old Rachel in a covered wagon from Illinois to California.

*Westward to Home: Joshua's Diary, The Oregon Trail, 1848* by Patricia Hermes

(Ages 9-12) Through the young voice of Joshua McCullough, readers will be transported to 1848 to travel from Missouri to Oregon with Josh and his family. Readers will get a vivid and accurate account of the daily routines and obstacles faced by wagon train travelers.

## Launch a Study of Settings in the United States

*Stories from Where We Live: The North Atlantic Coast* by Sara St. Antoine (Editor)

(Ages 9-12) Accompanied by pictures depicting natural settings, these stories, folktales, essays, journal entries, songs and poems about the people, places, and lifestyles indigenous to the North Atlantic coast will both teach and entertain readers.

*Stories from Where We Live: The California Coast* by Sara St. Antoine (Editor)

(Ages 9-12) The diversity of the California coast is echoed in the diverse nature of the inclusions in this anthology. Historical and modern stories, poems, essays, and autobiographical vignettes will provide a thorough introduction to this expansive setting. Appendixes, including maps, climates, parks and preserves, may work well to augment a cross-curricular social studies unit.

*One Morning in Maine* by Robert McCloskey

(Ages 4-8) The loveable and charming young character in this simple story parallels the equally charming setting of the story. Young Sal experiences a myriad of adventures growing up on the coast of Maine.

# Prairie Words

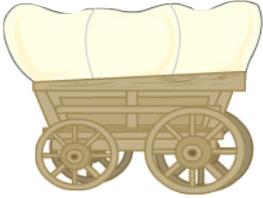
## Vocabulary Activity



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** The words in the word bank below are from the book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Choose the best word to fill in each blank



rumble

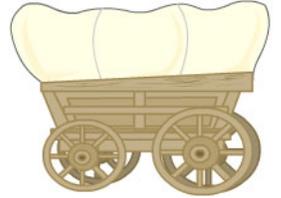
squall

wisps

hailstones

bleating

dusk



1. Coming down the road, we could hear the \_\_\_\_\_ of the wagons over the dirt.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a quiet time of the day, just before darkness.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ fell from the sky, hit the hard ground, and bounced.
4. The sheep were \_\_\_\_\_ in the barn.
5. It was a \_\_\_\_\_, not an ordinary storm.
6. On the sunny, summer day, the sky was filled with white \_\_\_\_\_ of clouds.



**Directions:** Circle the correct answer.

7. A **windbreak** is most like a \_\_\_\_\_ .

shelter

raincoat

damage

8. A **nasturtium** is a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ .

tree

flower

goat

# Traveling West

Content Activity: Pioneer Life



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Part I

**Directions:** Think about some of the things you learned about pioneers in the background activity *Life on the Frontier*, and answer the following questions. What are three reasons the men and women left the cities in the 1940s to become pioneers and go West?

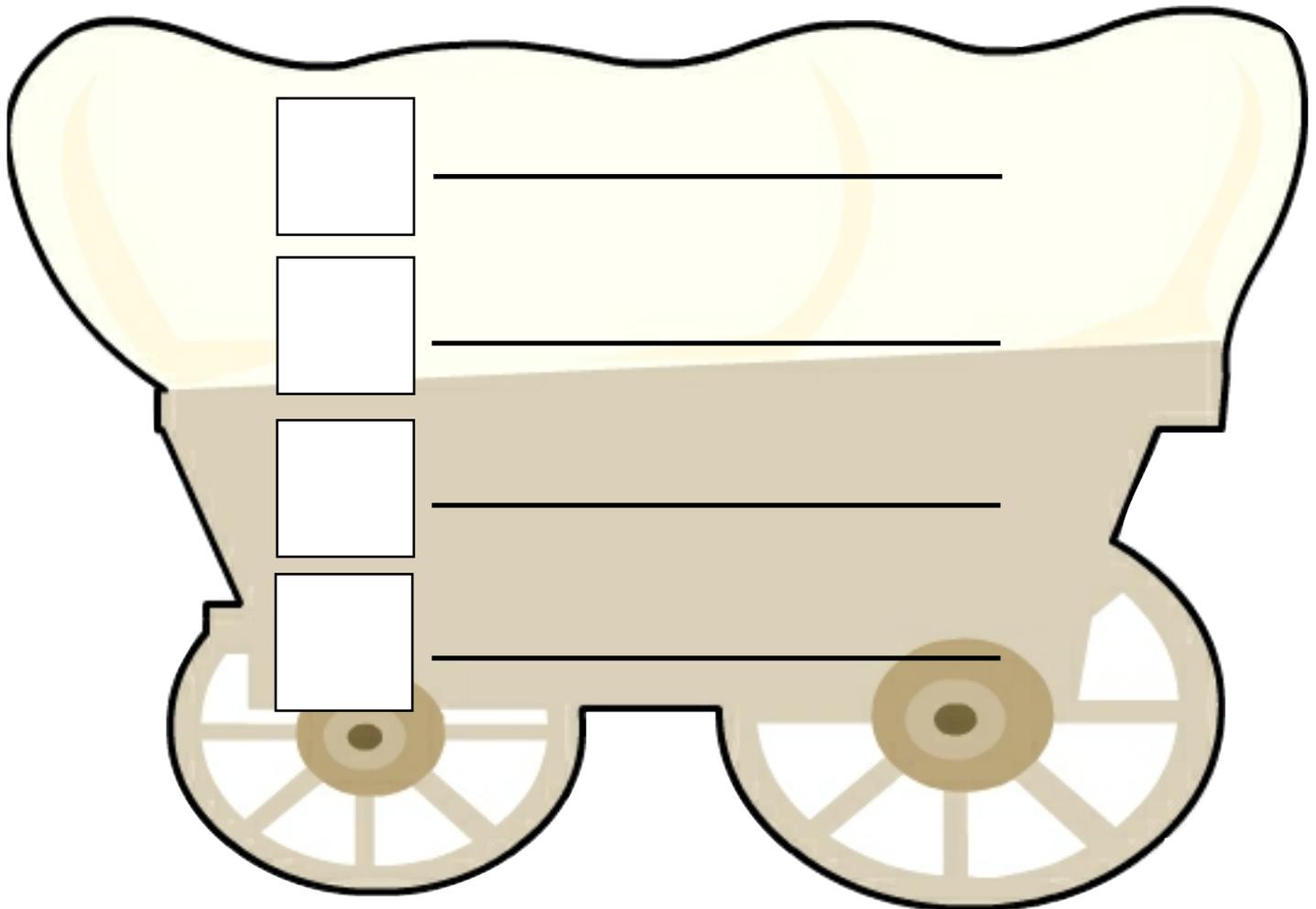
1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II

**Directions:** In the covered wagon below, list some of the things that the pioneers took with them when they traveled West. Draw pictures of these items.



# Traveling West

Content Activity: Pioneer Life



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Part III

**Directions:** Create an advertisement for a mail order bride, husband, brother, or sister to come to where you live. Be sure to use descriptive words to describe your setting. Where do you live? What plants and animals are there? What activities do you do?

WANTED

# Pending Ending

Comprehension Activity: Story Development



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions:** In most stories, the characters face a challenge or a problem. Read the sections of the stories below. Write your own solution to the problem each character faces. Remember the setting when writing your story ending and how it affects the characters.

1. Katie could not decide whether to travel West with her father and her brother or to stay behind and live with her Aunt Maggie. Katie liked the big city where she had grown up. She loved her school and her friends, but she also loved her father and brother. Now, her father had his heart set on heading out to see the West and to start a farm on the prairie—a place where they could have animals and many acres of land. This would be quite a change from the large house they had in town. She would have to trade in her frilly dresses and bonnets for plain traveling and working clothes. Whatever she decided, the decision would change her life. Katie kept hearing her father say, "It's time for you to decide, girl. We have to make arrangements soon, one way or the other." Katie thought long and hard. She...

Write a story ending.

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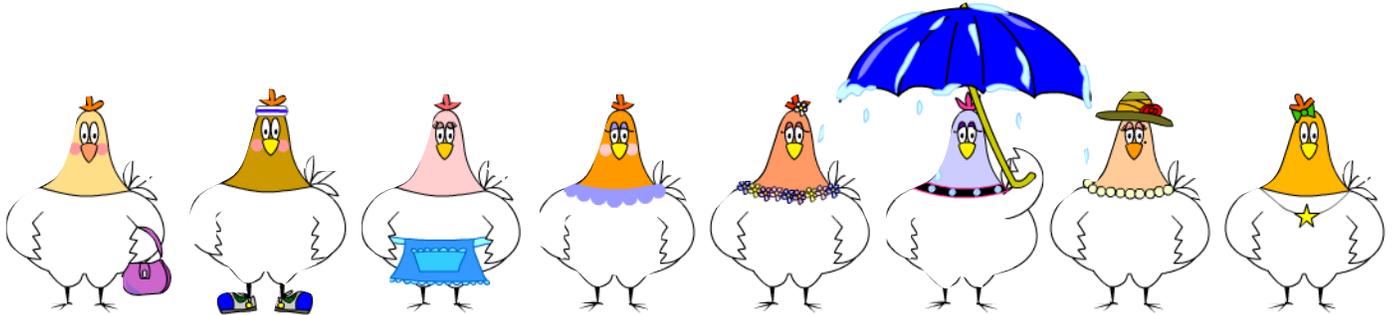
# Adverbs in Actions

Word Analysis Activity: Adverbs



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions:** Sort the adverbs in the box by writing them under the correct categories: How, Where, When, or To What Degree. (See the example below.)

finally	almost	always	proudly
outdoors	immediately	there	now
softly	then	tomorrow	today
later	here	happily	cheerfully
wildly	quietly	soon	very

How	Where	When	To What Degree
proudly			

# Adverbs in Actions

Word Analysis Activity: Adverbs



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**"Tom Swifties"** are sentences that contain an adverb that plays on the subject of a sentence. Tom Swifties can be clever and funny.

Here are some examples of **"Tom Swifties"**:

"That's a tiny dog," he said shortly.



"What a beautiful blanket," she said, warmly.



**Directions:** Fill in the blanks with the words below to make a "Tom Swiftly" sentence:

sheepishly

pointlessly

coldly

frankly

crisply

absently

1. "I'm really sunburned," Mary said \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. "I'll have a hot dog," Juan said \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. "It's your turn to round up the flock," Anna said \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. "You broke my pencil!" Samara said \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. "My snowman is better than yours," Tyrone said \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. "John will not be at school today," Mrs. Feldman said \_\_\_\_\_ .



## Take A Step Beyond

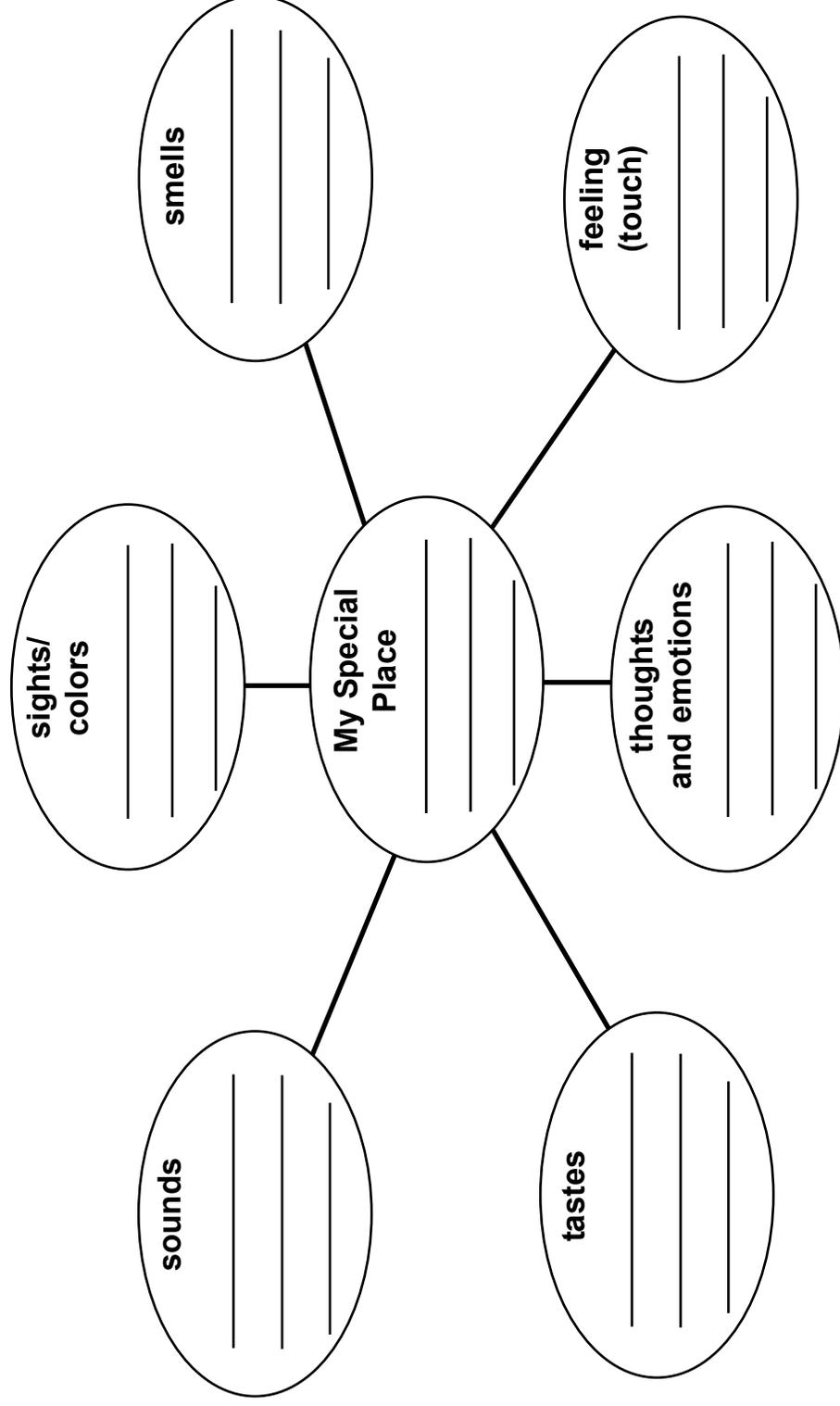
Make up some of your own "Tom Swifties". Have a contest with a friend and see how many you can create.

# My Special Place

Language Analysis Activity: Imagery



**Directions:** In the story *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Sarah was homesick for a special place—her home by the sea in Maine. She described the colors of the place and how it looked. Think about special places you have known. Maybe your special place was a place you lived, a place where you took walks or played, or a place you only experienced once and never forgot. Use the web to describe your special place using all the senses. Imagine what you would see, hear, taste, smell, and feel if you were there. Use the web to jot down ideas; and then draw a picture of this place on a separate piece of paper. Present your web and picture to the class. Share your special place and tell why it is special.



# Find Your Way

Study Skills Activity: Using Atlases and Maps



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part I** **Atlas and Map Exploration**

A map or atlas can help you find locations anywhere in the world. Complete the activities below, using a map or atlas.



**Directions:** Ask your teacher for permission to use a map of the United States and an atlas. Spend some time exploring them with a partner. Answer the following questions.

1. What is the difference between a map and an atlas?

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2. How can you tell what the symbols stand for in a map or atlas?

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3. Find the symbol for north on a map. Write the symbol below. Find New Mexico on the map. What state is north of New Mexico?

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4. If you wanted to locate a specific location, how would you find it in the map or atlas?

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# Find Your Way

Study Skills Activity: Using Atlases and Maps



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II

**Directions:** Ask your teacher to give you a map of the United States. With a partner, find these places that are mentioned in the book, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Your partner will make sure you followed the directions. Check each box when you're done.

- 1. the state of Maine
- 2. the seaside closest to Maine
- 3. the prairie states (Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Wyoming)
- 4. the state of Tennessee (where Caleb's neighbor, Maggie, came from)
- 5. the direction west of Maine

6. We know that this story takes place in one of the prairie states. In which state do you imagine the story takes place?

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7. Look at the location of Maine and the location of the prairie states. About how many miles do you think Sarah had to travel?

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8. On the back of this sheet of paper, draw a rough map of the United States. On your map, draw the route that you think Sarah would have traveled from Maine to the prairie where Caleb and Anna's house was located.



### Take A Step Beyond

Plan an imaginary trip from where you live to a place you would like to travel. Use the numbers or charts on your map or atlas to determine what the distance is in miles. Predict how long it would take you to get there traveling by car, and how long it might take if you were traveling by a horse-drawn wagon.



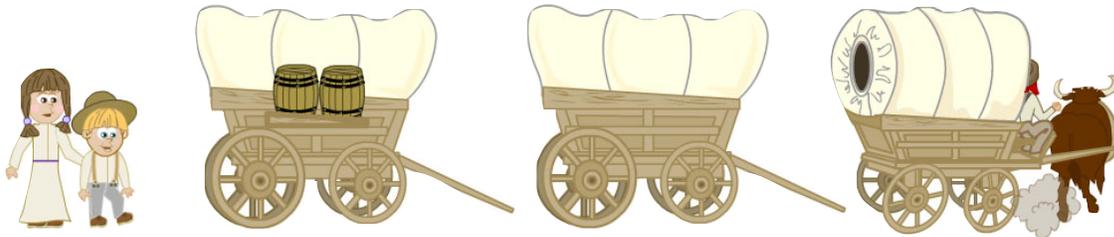
# Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Writing Activity



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions:** Put yourself in Anna's or Caleb's shoes. Your father has just arranged for a mail order bride to visit your family. Write Sarah a letter to find out more about her. Tell her about yourself, too. Be sure to use the style for a friendly letter. You can write here or use this as a guide and write on a separate sheet of paper.

Greeting

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

April 10, 1886

Date

Body

Salutation  
Closing

Your friend,  
\_\_\_\_\_

# On the Write Path

## Writing Activity



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions:** On a separate sheet of paper, respond to two of the prompts below.

1. People thought differently during the time period of this story. Sarah wears overalls to fix the roof. Why do you think wearing overalls and fixing a roof were unusual things for a woman to do?

**Suggested Pre-Writing:** brainstorm, list, web diagram

2. In the story, Sarah talks about the place she is from. This is a place where the land, the sea, the animals, and the plants are familiar to her. Do you have a place that is very familiar to you? Describe that place.

**Suggested Pre-Writing:** list, web diagram

3. Why do you think Anna and Caleb were concerned that Sarah might not come back from town?

**Suggested Pre-Writing:** brainstorm, list

4. If you had to choose between day-to-day life on the prairie and life by the sea during the time of this story, which would you choose? Why?

**Suggested Pre-Writing:** list, T- chart

# Go the Distance

Culminating Project



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**In this Go the Distance project, you will learn about some famous authors and become an author by writing your own story!**

## I. Learn about an author

Patricia MacLachlan and Laura Ingalls Wilder are famous children's authors who have both written about pioneers. Patricia MacLachlan won the Newbery Medal (this is a medal for excellent writing of children's books) for her book, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. She also wrote two stories that followed this book (sequels) titled: *Skylark* and *Caleb's Story*. Laura Ingalls Wilder is famous for her book *Little House on the Prairie* and other "Little House" books about the life of her pioneer family in different geographical areas.

Using the Internet, or your local library, choose one of these authors and research what they have said about being a writer. Find out where they got their ideas, and what they found easy or difficult when writing a story. Learn how they decided upon the settings for their stories, and how their stories developed.

Make a list of three interesting things you learned about your author to share with the class.

Three things I learned about the author \_\_\_\_\_ :  
(Fill in author's name here)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Go the Distance

## Culminating Project



### II. Choose an audience and story setting

#### • Choose an audience

Your writing will depend upon your audience. Is this a story for very young children who do not yet read well, someone your age, or an adult? Your words and how you present them will have to match your audience.

My audience: \_\_\_\_\_

#### • Choose a story setting

Pick a place (or places) where your story will take place. Choose a place you are familiar with or would like to research and know more about. Spend some time thinking about your setting and what is in it. You will have to describe the setting well in your story and it will influence your characters. Choose a time period when your story takes place. Remember, California in the 1800s would be very different from California at a later time. This will affect your characters' actions and their viewpoints.

You may choose to gather information on places from all types of sources, including encyclopedias, books, and the Internet. Choose at least two different sources.

My setting: \_\_\_\_\_

My sources:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### • Create a web

Use another piece of paper to make a web that describes your setting during the time period you chose. Include any descriptive words that will help your audience visualize your setting. Use this web to help you draft your story.

# Go the Distance

## Culminating Project



### III. Decide who the characters will be and describe them

Make a list of your characters. Think about what makes each character a special person. Then, decide on their characteristics. Are they male or female? How old are they? What do they like and dislike? What are their situations in life? What is a typical day like? What friends and family do they have? Do they have pets and hobbies? Do they have past experiences that affect them? Do they have future goals? Who will tell your story? Will you tell it, or will one of the characters tell it?

On a separate piece of paper, create a character map for your characters that briefly describes each one. Draw a chart like this, or one you design yourself.

Character	Age	Appearance	Personality	Family & Interests

### IV. Decide on a problem and the solution

Create a problem or challenge that your characters must face. This should be something that causes them to have to use what they know to resolve a situation. Usually, in the end, the main character learns something, or grows in some way, from handling this problem.

The main problem or challenge my character faces is:

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My character will solve this problem or challenge by:

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# Go the Distance

## Culminating Project



### V. Draft your story

Now that you have chosen an audience, a setting, characters, a problem and a possible solution, you are ready to begin the draft of your story. Here are some helpful hints to keep in mind when writing your draft:

- Use the notes you took about your topic.
- Keep your audience in mind. Keep your ideas clear and your language understandable for your audience.
- Do not worry about grammar and punctuation—save that for later. Focus now on getting your ideas presented clearly.
- When your draft is complete, read through it to check that it makes sense and flows nicely.

### VI. Revise your draft.

Read your draft. Pay close attention to the details of your story and your organization. Do not worry about grammar and punctuation yet. Use the revision checklist below to help you.

✓	Revision Checklist: Story Writing
	Did I describe the setting and the time period well? If not, add details that describe the setting or time period.
	Did I include enough details to explain my characters? If not, add new sentences to tell more about your characters, their personalities, likes and dislikes, and the problems they face.
	Did I include a beginning, middle, and end? If not, revise your draft to include a better sequence of ideas.
	Did I write my story to match my audience? If not, revise your draft to better match the vocabulary and level of understanding of the audience you chose.
	Did my main character solve a problem or a challenge? If not, revisit your draft and try to include a problem or a challenge your main character must overcome.
	Did I use interesting language, such as language that uses images, so that the reader feels that he or she is there? If not, add more colorful language that describes your setting and the characters.

# Go the Distance

## Culminating Project



### VII. Edit your draft

Now it's time to make any editing changes. Use the editing checklist below to help you.

✓	<b>Editing Checklist: Story Writing</b>
	Did I begin each sentence with a capital letter and end with correct punctuation? If not, edit your draft for correct use of capitalization and end punctuation.
	Did I use correct punctuation in characters' speech (correct use of quotes, periods, question marks, and exclamation marks)? If not, edit your draft for correct use of sentence punctuation in quotes.
	Did I use adverbs to describe action? If not, edit your draft for correct use of adverbs.
	Did I make all of my sentences clear? If not, check for fragments, run-ons, or awkward sentences. Edit those sentences for clarity.
	Did I spell all the words correctly? If not, or if you're not sure, use a dictionary to check your spelling.

### VIII. Design a cover and illustrate your story

Design a cover for your story. If you have not already done so, create some illustrations for your story. If you're completing a children's book, design and complete a picture for each page of your book. Make sure that there is a match between your words and your illustrations.

### IX. Publish your story

Now it's time to put your project into its most final form. You want to get it as perfect as possible! Read and look over everything one last time and make a final copy of your story. If you can, ask a peer to look over your work and double-check for any errors. When you're satisfied with your final project, share it with others!