



# Activity One



## THE STATE OF MAINE

*This can be done individually or in a small group.*

Sarah left her home back in the eastern state of Maine to travel all the way across America to be with the Witting family on the prairies. It is plainly evident that Sarah loved Maine and the people she left. She missed the flowers, the sea, seals and many other wonderful things about this beautiful state.

Your task is to do some investigation into the state of Maine. Where exactly is it located? How large is it? What are some of its larger cities? What wildlife is found there? How do people make their living? What is the vegetation like there (i.e. kinds of trees, flowers)? What historical sites might be worth investigating?

Now create a **brochure**

advertising the wonders of the state of Maine. The purpose of the brochure is to attract tourists and visitors.

Your brochure should be informative and colorful, with an attractive and appealing layout. It might be helpful to have a look at some sample brochures to see how they are laid out and organized. A couple of pictures would also make a good *selling feature*.



### Consider this...

**Maine** is famous for its scenery—its jagged rocky coastline; its low, rolling mountains; and its heavily forested interior—as well as for its seafood cuisine, especially lobsters and clams.



# Activity Two

## TAKE IN A MOVIE

***Sarah, Plain and Tall*** was made into a movie in 1991. It starred Glenn Close as Sarah and Christopher Walken as Papa. Two years later Patricia MacLachlan's follow-up to this novel, ***Skylark***, was also made into a movie starring the same cast. Then in 1999 a third movie in the series was made – ***Sarah, Plain and Tall: Winter's End***. This third movie featured basically the same cast.

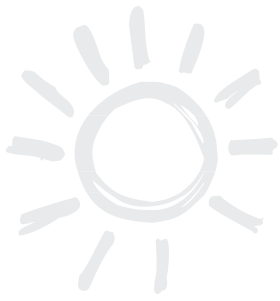
Your task is to take in a viewing of one of the above movies. Write a brief report (approximately one page in length) comparing the actual novel with a movie adaptation. (If you choose to view ***Skylark*** or ***Winter's End*** it will mean having to read the novel.) You might consider the following:

- How the film brought the novel to life (or failed to).
- How suited were the actors to their roles?
- Were any big changes made in the making of the movie from the novel?
- Do you think the movie version was better than the book?
- Are there any changes you would recommend to the producer of the film?

### Consider this...

In the third movie installment of the ***Sarah, Plain and Tall*** series, Academy Award winner **Jack Palance** starred as Jacob Witting's father, John.





# Activity Three

## PUTTING ON A PLAY



**This activity needs to be done with students working in small groups.**

As a small group select a passage from the novel. The passage should not be more than two or three pages long and should contain interesting dialog and/or action. It is probably a good idea to

select a passage that does not feature any long passages by a specific character. After some discussion, assign the roles featured in this section of the play. Practice reading it through once or twice with each actor reading his or her particular part. (You will also need a Narrator, and may wish some character parts to be “improvised”.) Remember to use “expression” as much as possible when performing each role. Finally, present the passage as a Readers Theater performance in front of another group or the entire class.

Good luck and have fun.

### Consider this...

“Great acting is not easy; anyone who says it is, is either shallow or a charlatan. And one of the hardest things about acting is admitting that it is hard.”

- Robert Cohen



# Activity Four



## FLOWER POWER - FACT SHEET

It is very plain that Sarah loves wildflowers, and she is delighted by the number of these that she finds in her new home on the prairie. Maggie helps her as well by bringing her a number from her garden and giving her advice on their upkeep. Some of the flowers mentioned in the novel are:

- ▶ zinnias
- ▶ marigolds
- ▶ wild feverfew
- ▶ roses
- ▶ dahlias
- ▶ columbines
- ▶ nasturtiums
- ▶ dandelions
- ▶ violets
- ▶ goldenrod
- ▶ woolly ragwort
- ▶ wild asters
- ▶ bride's bonnet
- ▶ clover
- ▶ paintbrush

### Consider this...

Did you know that there are almost 100 different types of wild flowers that grow on the prairies of the American west?



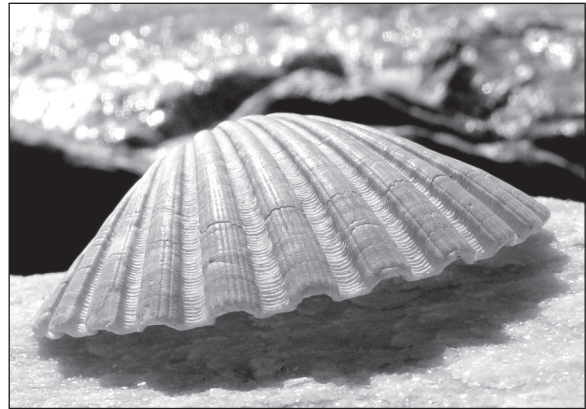
Selecting four of the above flowers, or four of your own choosing, put together a **Flower Fact Sheet**. Your fact sheet should be one page only and be divided into quarters. In each quarter you are to carefully draw and color a picture of the flower and include a brief description underneath. By using the fact sheet, your classmates should be able to identify the flowers on your sheet if they should see them in the wild.



# Activity Five

## SEASHELLS

Sarah brings with her a collection of her favorite sea shells: a moon snail, a scallop, a sea clam, an oyster, a razor clam and a conch shell.



In addition to these there are a number of other seashells and other examples of sea life that people commonly find along the beaches where they walk: mollusks, sanddollars, starfish, sea urchins, sponges, crabs, sea fans, seahorses and who knows what else.

Your task is to choose one of the above examples of sea life to investigate.

For example:

- what does the item look like – size, color, texture? (*You may wish to include a picture or drawing.*)
- What kind of variety in shapes and sizes is found?
- Along what beaches of the world can it be discovered?
- Before it became a shell, what animal life lived there? How did it survive? etc.
- What might an artist do with this seashell to make it into a work of extraordinary art?

Write a one-page report on your research.



# Activity Six

## AN ALTERNATE ENDING

► This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

The conclusion of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* certainly leaves the reader feeling very good about her situation and the happiness of the Witting family. It is very well written and ties several “loose ends” together, and most importantly, features the classic “happy ending” that everyone loves so much.

What, though, if Sarah had returned from her trip to town to tell the family that she had decided to return to Maine? What would the family have done then? Would Anna and Caleb have been able to convince her to change her mind? What about Papa—is there anything he could have done?

Although we will never know the answers to these questions, you will be given the opportunity of putting your imagination to work in coming up with what might have happened if Sarah had returned to the farm with an entirely different decision.

With your group brainstorm possible alternative endings to the novel. Remember to consider all of the principal characters. From your list of ideas choose one ending to present to the class. Write a detailed synopsis of your alternate conclusion presenting as much detail as possible. After presenting it to the class, you may wish to get their input as to any additional changes that might be made to further improve your alternative ending.

Have fun!