

UNIT 1

Module 1

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Reader's Questions

What is an expert reader?

What clues should I gather before I begin to read a book?

What are the characteristics of a historical fiction book?

1.1 Reading Is Detective Work

An expert reader is a good detective. For one thing, detectives solve mysteries by collecting clues, and books contain many mysteries to solve. Readers must figure out what the book is about. Readers must also figure out what new words mean. And readers must understand why characters behave as they do. These are just some of the mysteries you will solve by collecting clues as you read the books in the *Readers in Residence* series.

Also, like skilled detectives, expert readers know that they must be on high alert, pay close attention to every detail, and actively engage in the process. This is called **active reading**. Active reading is an approach to reading where readers pay close attention to details, ponder questions about the text, look for clues to meaning, and think deeply about the author's choices before, during, and after reading. Throughout this volume, you will practice active reading. Soon it will be second nature to you. Are you ready? It's time to get cracking on your first big case: *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

Sneak Peek



In this module you will learn:

- Expert readers study a book's cover before they begin to read.
- Expert readers identify a book's genre before they begin to read.





active reading –
An approach to reading where readers pay close attention to details, ponder questions about the text, look for clues to meaning, and think deeply about the author's choices before, during, and after reading.

theme (n.) – In fiction, the theme is the author's perspective on the significant human experiences that are explored through the story. A story's theme might focus on the importance of friends or the value of hope and perseverance in overcoming loss.

1.2 What Is an Expert Reader?

What is an expert reader? That's a fair question to ask before we dive into reading this first book. An **expert** is someone who has special skill or knowledge in a subject acquired through experience and training. That's the goal of *Readers in Residence*—to help you gain experience and training in reading. You will use this expertise for the rest of your life. In fact, reading is a skill that will help you to become an expert in many other areas.

Perhaps you already consider yourself a reader. After all, you are reading this page. What's the difference between a reader and an expert reader? Here's a list of some of the special skills an expert reader is trained to use. Which ones do you already know something about?

- ☆ Expert readers know a lot about how authors put stories together. They know how authors create characters, action, dialogue, and a setting to make their stories believable. They expect authors to increase the tension and suspense to keep their readers reading. And they know that authors sometimes explore a significant aspect of human experience in the book, called a **theme**, to give readers something to think about long after the story has ended.
- ☆ Expert readers also know a lot about words. They understand that words can have many different shades of meaning. They know how to gather context clues from the surrounding words and sentences to make a good guess about what a word means in a specific situation.
- ☆ Expert readers know to activate their imaginations and to allow a story to play like a movie in their minds to better understand the action.
- ☆ Expert readers know to keep their minds actively engaged while reading. They ask themselves questions and look for answers in the **text**. They are aware of what they understand and don't understand, and they take steps to clear up their confusion.



These are just a few of the numerous strategies that expert readers use to better understand what they read. Better understanding helps readers enjoy what they read more deeply.

As you read the assigned books in this volume of the *Readers in Residence* series, you will learn to think like an expert reader. It will require hard work. You'll have to learn to think differently about reading. You'll be required to read slowly sometimes so that you don't miss a single clue the author has included for you. You'll even have to reread some parts. All this will help you notice what authors do to make their stories come alive.

Did you know that expert reading begins even before you crack open the pages? In this first module, you will learn some of the things expert readers do before they start to read a book.

1.3 The Clues on the Cover

Expert readers know that the cover of a book contains a lot of important information, so they study it carefully. The front, the back, and the spine make up the cover of a book. Sometimes information is printed on the inside flaps of the cover as well. Make sure to inspect all of these places in each book you read. Study the information about these parts you will find on the next two pages.



expert (n.) – Someone who has special skill or knowledge in a subject acquired through experience and training.

text (n.) – Words in print or digital format, including books, magazines, newspapers, and websites.

Better understanding helps readers enjoy what they read more deeply.



READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers ask themselves questions about the book and the author before they start to read.



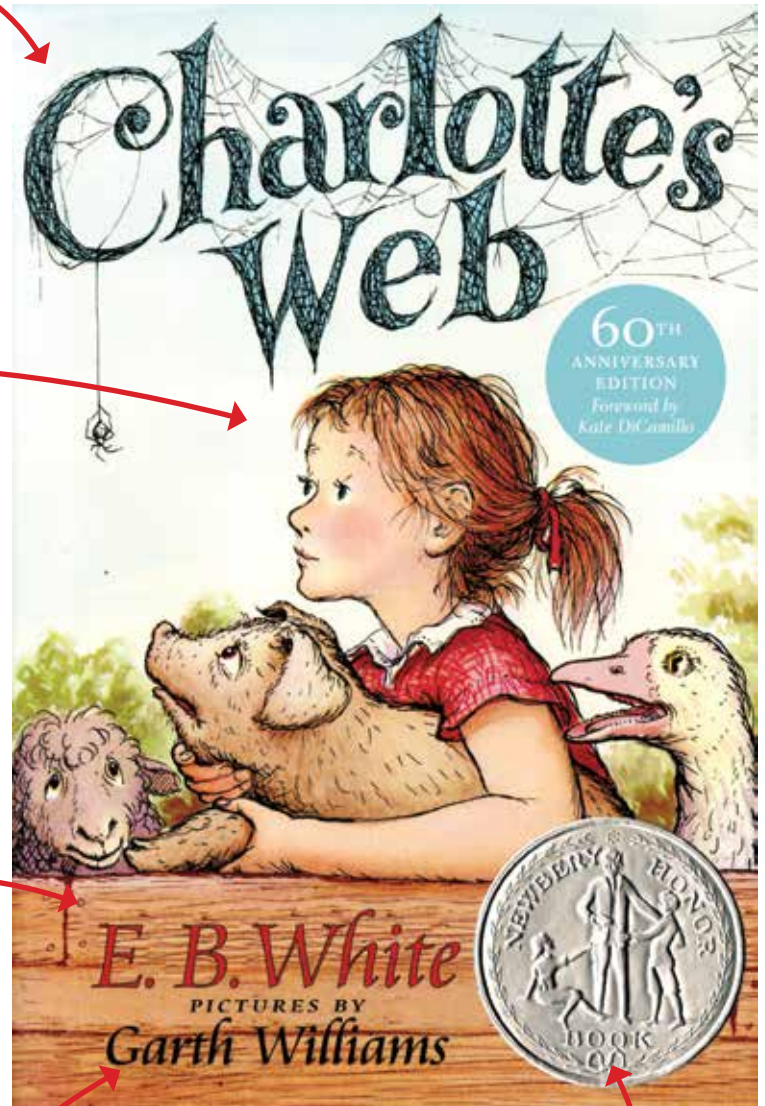
Clues on the

The **title** of the book appears on the front and the spine. The title may tell directly what the book is about, or it may only give a clue designed to make you curious about what is inside.

The **illustration** on the front cover gives many important clues about what you can expect to learn about in this book. The illustration often shows some of the main characters in the story and can also give you clues about the time and place (called the setting).

The **author**, of course, is the person who wrote the book. If you have read books by the author before, you will have an idea about what kind of story you can expect to find inside.

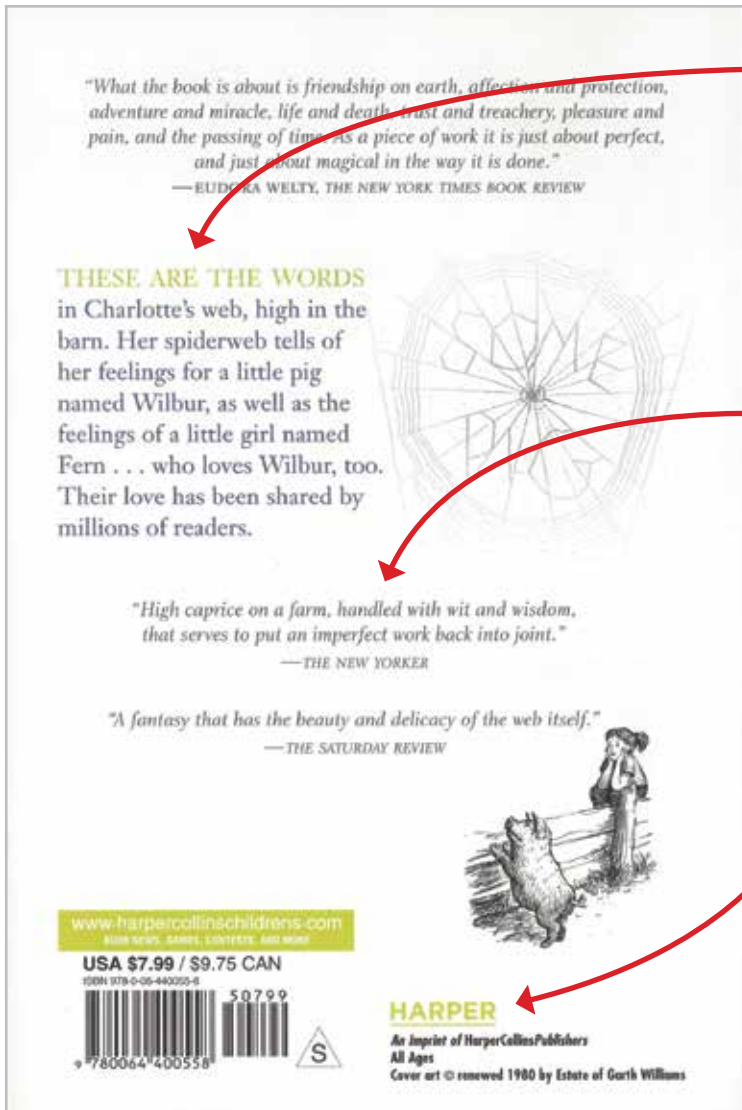
The name of the **illustrator** may also appear on the front cover if the book contains a lot of pictures. The illustrator is the artist who creates the front cover and the pictures inside the book.



If the book or author has won an **award**, this information is often noted on the cover.



Cover of a Book



A **synopsis** of the book is typically on the back cover. This short description tells what the book is about. This information is intended to make you curious about the story inside.

The back cover may also include endorsements. An **endorsement** is a formal statement of support or approval, usually from a publication that reviews books or from a respected author.

The **publisher** is the company that pays to edit and print the book and then ships or uploads it to a place where you can buy it. The publisher's name or company logo is usually found on the spine as well as the back cover.



1.4 Nonfiction or Fiction

nonfiction (n.)
– Information
that is primarily
factual.

What was the first task God gave to Adam? Naming the animals, of course. Humans have been naming things ever since. Naming is how we classify God's creation. When we classify, we put things that are similar into categories and subcategories. Salmon, goldfish, and minnows all belong to the class of fish. Ostriches, eagles, and peacocks all belong to the class of birds. In science we classify animals by kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species.

fiction (n.) – A
story having to do
with imaginary
events.

Humans classify books too. Classification of the animal kingdom begins with dividing animals into either vertebrates (with a backbone) or invertebrates (without a backbone). Books are divided into two categories as well.

**infographic
(n.)** – A visual
representation
of information
in the form of a
chart, graph, or
image.

Every book is first classified as either **nonfiction** or **fiction**. Nonfiction books contain information that is primarily factual. They are filled with facts, knowledge, and sometimes opinions. The primary reason an author writes a nonfiction book is to *explain* a subject. Because nonfiction focuses on communicating information, readers must be able to determine the main ideas, identify key details, and understand how to read **infographics** (such as charts and graphs). *Readers in Residence* is a nonfiction book.

plot (n.) – The
main events of
a story and the
order in which
they occur.

Fiction books contain stories that emerge from the writer's imagination but are usually based on observations of people and life. The purpose of fiction is to share a new experience with readers and help them understand their own experiences better. The information in fiction books is connected by a **plot** or theme. Authors of fiction use many tools to engage the reader's imagination, such as characterization and **setting**. When readers read fiction, they have to activate their imaginations in order to take part in the experience the author has created. You will learn exactly how to do this in *Readers in Residence*.

setting (n.) – The
time and place of
a story.



Directions: Look around your house. Can you find both nonfiction and fiction books? List some of the titles below.

Nonfiction and Fiction Books in My Home	
Nonfiction	Fiction

1.5 Narrative or Nonnarrative Texts

Books are also classified as **narrative** or **nonnarrative**. Those terms describe the book's organization. Narrative texts are organized according to a storyline. They follow a plot structure that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The book contains characters who face a problem. The problem gets more and more complicated until the characters resolve it. Readers' curiosity about *the characters* is satisfied at the end of a narrative text because the author shows how the characters' problems are resolved.

Nonnarrative texts are not organized according to a storyline. Instead, they are organized by topics that are related to the subject of the book. Often there are no characters in a nonnarrative text. Readers' curiosity about *the subject* is satisfied at the end of nonnarrative books because the author provides information about the topic that answers readers' questions.

In general, nonfiction books are organized as nonnarratives and fiction books are organized as narratives. But this is not always so. For example, a biography tells the true *story* of someone's life, so we classify biographies as narrative nonfiction.

narrative (adj.) –
Organized around
a storyline.

nonnarrative (adj.)
– Organized by
topics.



Directions: Can you find both narrative and nonnarrative books in your home? List some of them below.

Narrative and Nonnarrative Books in My Home	
Narrative	Nonnarrative

1.6 Literary Genres

genre (n.) – A category of literature or art.

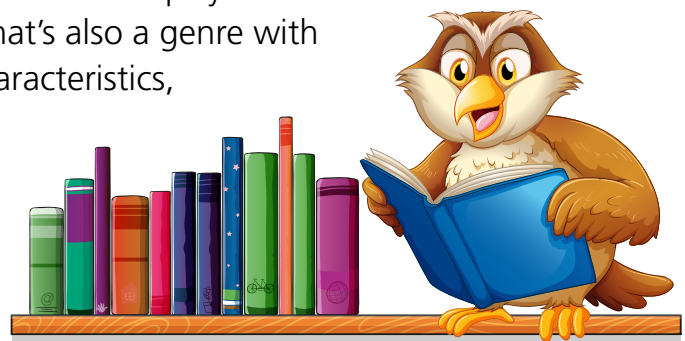


READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers determine a book's genre before they read it.

Just like animals are classified into subcategories, such as order and family, books are classified into subcategories called **genres**. The word *genre* is borrowed from the French language; in French, the word means "kind" or "type." Practice saying it. It is pronounced zhon'-ruh.

The word *genre* may be new to you, but you probably already group books with similar characteristics together in your mind. When you describe the kind of book you like, you probably mention the book's genre. Do you like to read mysteries? *Mystery* is the name of a genre. All mystery books have similar characteristics: the main character must uncover a secret or solve a puzzle. Perhaps you like to read fairy tales. That's also a genre with many predictable characteristics, such as fairies and princesses, witches and dragons, long-ago settings, and happy endings.





Expert readers begin by determining a book's genre. The books you will read in this volume of *Readers in Residence* represent three different **literary** genres. Each book is used to introduce reading strategies that will help you better understand the story you find inside that type of book. After you have completed the assigned book, you will practice what you have learned with a book of your choice from that genre in an On Your Own (OYO) unit. You will have completed your sleuth's training, and you'll then be ready to tackle the next level of the *Readers in Residence* series—*Detective* (volume 2).

literary (adj.) –
Related to literature.

1.7 Why Genre Matters

When expert readers pick up a new book, they automatically identify whether the book is classified as nonfiction or fiction. Then they identify whether the book is organized as a narrative or a nonnarrative.

Before you read further, think about this question: How does identifying a book as fiction or nonfiction and narrative or nonnarrative help you get ready to read?



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

An expert reader might think:

I wonder if I will enjoy reading this book? Let me see what kind of book it is. Hmm. The title makes me think this is a true book about airplanes. The illustration on the cover shows several different planes with a lot of details. I think I will learn a lot of facts I didn't know about planes if I read this book. Let me see what the synopsis on the back cover tells me. Yup, this is a nonfiction book. The author was a fighter pilot for the U.S. Navy. He knows a lot about the history of planes used in the military. That's a topic I want to learn more about. I can use this for my history assignment.



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

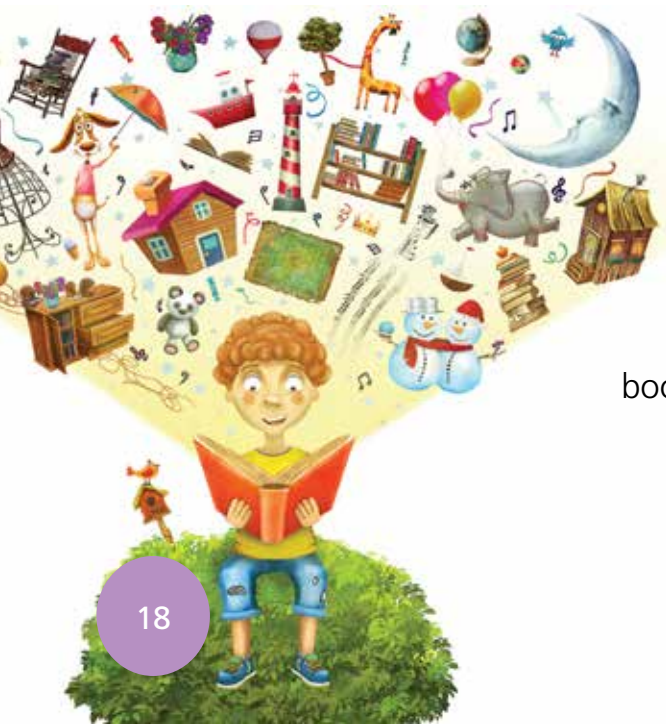
Another expert reader might think:

Wow, the cover of this book looks really cool. I can tell that this story is set in another world. I'm in the mood for a fantasy. Let me see what the back cover tells me. Oh, I've read a book by this author before. I lose track of time when I'm reading one of her books. I'm going to start this as soon as I finish my schoolwork for the day. I need a break from the real world.

If your book is nonfiction, you know you will be learning new information. This new information will probably contain new words. Perhaps you will have to take notes to help you keep track of what you are learning. You might have to read slowly at times so you can process the new information. You might read only a few pages at a time, or you might even have to reread sections to make sure you understand everything the author is explaining. Reading a nonfiction book is like learning an unfamiliar subject in school. You might have to *study* the book.

On the other hand, if you recognize that your new book is fiction, activating your imagination is a must. The more the world inside your fiction book becomes real in your mind, the more you will block out distractions and focus all your attention on the story. You still must use strategies to understand the events in the book, but your primary goal is not to study something new. Your primary purpose is to enter the fictional world the author has created.

While reading a nonfiction book is like studying a subject in school, reading a fiction book is like sitting down to enjoy a fascinating movie.





Directions: Here is a list of some of the literary genres you will study in the *Readers in Residence* series. Which ones do you know something about already? Find a book in your home or at the library that you think fits into each genre and fill in the chart with its title. Examine each one inside and out. Talk about the differences you notice with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.

Literary Genres	
Literary Genre	Book That Fits This Genre
Autobiography – A factual story about the author's life.	<i>Bill Peet: An Autobiography</i> by Bill Peet
Biography – A factual story about a real person, dead or alive.	<i>Who Was Albert Einstein?</i> by Jess Brallier and Robert Andrew Parker
Fantasy – A story that involves events that couldn't possibly happen. The story is usually set in another world or involves supernatural power.	<i>The Indian in the Cupboard</i> by Lynne Reid Banks

Student Sample

Literary Genres	
Literary Genre	Book That Fits This Genre
Autobiography – A factual story about the author's life.	
Biography – A factual story about a real person, dead or alive.	
Fantasy – A story that involves events that couldn't possibly happen. The story is usually set in another world or involves supernatural power.	

Continued on next page »



Literary Genres

Historical fiction – A realistic story set during a particular time in the past.

Informational nonfiction – A factual text about real people, places, things, or events.

Mystery – A story with a mystery, puzzle, or crime to solve.

Poetry – The expression of an idea with language selected for sound, rhythm, and meaning.

Realistic fiction – A story that could happen in the real world.

Reference book – A catalogue of information, such as a dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, almanac, or encyclopedia.

Science fiction – A story based on real or imaginary science or technology.

Traditional literature – Stories handed down through cultures either orally or in writing, including fables, fairy tales, folktales, myths, legends, and tall tales.



1.8 Introduction to Historical Fiction

Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan is an example of historical fiction. This genre blends actual historical facts with fiction. In this book Patricia MacLachlan puts characters she created from her imagination into a real historical setting: the Midwest during the late 1800s. During this time period, real farmers, like the character Jacob Witting in the novel, worked hard converting the prairies to sustainable farms that would eventually feed America. Real women, like the character Sarah, responded to advertisements for mail-order brides. And real children, like the characters Anna and Caleb Witting, often lost a parent when they were very young.

The Witting family in this book never actually lived, but *Sarah, Plain and Tall* gives us a realistic picture of what it was like to live more than one hundred years ago on the prairies of the Midwest. Writers of historical fiction must do a lot of research to make sure that their setting and made-up characters match the real-life setting and the sorts of people who lived in that time period.

Historical fiction uses a narrative organizational pattern. It follows a storyline with a beginning, middle, and end. The characters face a problem that gets more and more complicated until something happens to resolve it.

Directions: The infographic on the next page shows you what you can expect to find in a historical fiction book. Study it carefully now. Then discuss the unique features of a historical fiction book with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.





Characteristics of Historical Fiction

Characters

All the characters in the story behave in ways that are consistent with the time period. The characters may be fictional or may be a mix of fictional and real historical figures.

Setting

The time period is an authentic period in history. The setting is a real historical place. The setting is the most important clue that indicates a book is historical fiction.

Dialogue

The words spoken by the characters reflect the knowledge and thoughts of the people who lived during that time period and in that locale.

Plot

The storyline is a mixture of fictional and historically accurate events.

Conflict

The major characters face a significant problem common to the time period that creates a conflict that is resolved by the end of the story.

Description

The story contains vivid historical details. The author explains historical references that may not be familiar to readers.



1.9 The Cover of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*

Pick up your copy of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Examine the front and back covers closely. **Previewing** a book will help you to become a better reader. How much information can you glean before you even start to read this book?

Directions: Answer the questions by using the clues you find on the front and back covers of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. When you have finished, compare your answers with the sample answers in **ANSWER KEY 1.9**.

preview (v.) – To view or examine beforehand.

1. Who is the author of this book?

2. What can you find out about the author's life from examining the book?

3. Who is the publisher of this book?

4. Why do you think the author decided to call this book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*?



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5. Study the illustration on the front cover. What can you tell about the people in the illustration?

6. What are the names of some of the characters you will meet inside?

7. What are some things that you think you will learn about as you read *Sarah, Plain and Tall*?

8. How do you think the lives of the characters in this book will be different from your life?

9. What do you think you might have in common with the characters?



1.10 Clues to Genre

Authors want you to know what genre their book fits into because they want you to know what to expect inside. Unlike clever criminals, authors leave *lots* of clues for their readers. They want you to solve all the mysteries in their stories. You can find these clues in many places on the outside of a book.

Directions: Write your best ideas for answers to these questions. Then talk about your answers with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. When you have finished, compare your answers with the sample answers in **ANSWER KEY 1.10**.



READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers use the clues they collect from the cover of a book to help them make predictions about the story inside.

1. How can the title of a book be a clue to the genre of the book?

2. How can the illustration on the front of a book help you guess the genre?

3. How can you figure out the genre of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* from the synopsis on the back?



confirm (v.) – To establish as true or accurate.

revise (v.) – To improve or alter. Originally, revise meant “to see in a new way.”

1.11 Make a Prediction

When detectives begin a case, they start with a working theory. This is a possible explanation for the crime or mystery they are assigned to solve. As they collect clues, they **confirm** or **revise** their working theory based on what the clues tell them. Expert readers do the same thing. They use the information they collect from examining the cover of the book to help them predict what will happen in the story. This is their working theory. Predictions are an important part of active reading. Predictions help you activate your imagination. Try making some predictions now. Remember to base your predictions on the clues you find on the cover.



Directions: What difficulties do you expect the characters in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* to face? How do you think they might solve these challenges? What will it be like for Anna and Caleb to have a stranger become a part of their family? What will it be like for Sarah to leave the only home she has ever known? On the lines below, use the clues you gathered from the cover to make some predictions about what will happen in this book. When you have finished, discuss your predictions with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.



1.12 Create Your Own Book Cover

Now that you have examined your copy of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* closely and have scoured your home to find books that represent the different literary genres, why not start working on a book of your own? Start by making the front and back covers for a book you might write someday.

As you now know, there are many different kinds of genres—fantasy, science fiction, realistic fiction, and many more. Think about what interests you, what kind of a book you might like to create, and what genre it fits. Think about the major characters that might appear in your book. Think about a time and place for your story to happen. If you need help deciding, ask a parent, teacher, or reading coach to help you brainstorm about this assignment.

Before you begin, gather your favorite markers, paints, or colored pencils. Perhaps you would like to cut a picture out of a magazine or print out your title in a fancy font.

A brief description of your book	BOOK TITLE	Book Title Draw an illustration about your book.	
<table border="1"><tr><td data-bbox="256 1583 391 1772"> Author's picture </td><td data-bbox="418 1583 581 1772"> Short biography of author </td></tr></table>		Author's picture	Short biography of author
Author's picture	Short biography of author		

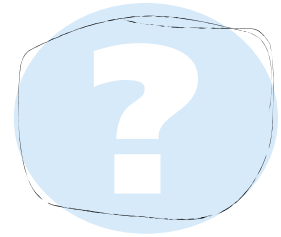
Use this template to help you design a book cover of your own, following the directions on the next page.



Directions: Create a front and back cover for a book you might like to write someday. Glue an 11 x 17 piece of sturdy paper to a similar-sized piece of cardboard. Bend the cardboard to create a front, back, and spine. Include plenty of clues for your readers so they will know what they can expect to find inside. You may want to include information about the genre, major characters, and/or the time and place of your book. When you have finished, ask several family members and friends to use the questions in **1.9 THE COVER OF SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL** and **1.11 MAKE A PREDICTION** to answer questions about your cover.

1.13 Review: Reader's Questions

Directions: Before you move on to the next module, review the **READER'S QUESTIONS** from the beginning of this module. How would you answer the questions based on what you have learned in this module? Talk about your answers with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.



- ☆ What is an expert reader?
- ☆ What clues should I gather before I begin to read a book?
- ☆ What are the characteristics of a historical fiction book?

1.14 Book Talk



Books are meant to be shared. Use the suggestions listed in the Book Talk sections at the end of each module as discussion starters to talk about books with your family and friends.

Directions: Find a time when some of your friends or family members are sharing a meal. Use these questions to get a discussion going about the books each person enjoys.

1. What are your favorite genres to read?
2. Who are some of your favorite authors?



Checklist for Module 1

Directions: When you have completed a task, make a ✓ in the “Done” column. Ask a parent, teacher, or reading coach to award you points for each task using the checklist point system. Fill in the points you have earned on the **SLEUTH’S LOG** in the appendix.

Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
1.4 Nonfiction or Fiction List examples of nonfiction and fiction books that you have in your home.		
1.5 Narrative or Nonnarrative List examples of narrative and nonnarrative books that you have in your home.		
1.7 Why Genre Matters Find a book in your home or library that fits each genre listed and fill in the chart with the book titles.		
Examine the different parts of each book and talk about the differences you notice with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
1.8 Introduction to Historical Fiction Discuss the unique features of a historical fiction book with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
1.9 The Cover of <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i> (SPT) Answer the questions by using the clues you find on the front and back covers of the book.		
1.10 Clues to Genre Write your best ideas for answers to these questions.		
Discuss your answers to the questions with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		

Checklist Point System:

1–6 points may be awarded by a parent, teacher, or reading coach for each task completed. Here are the recommended guidelines:

- 6** – exemplary in quality *and* effort
- 5** – exemplary in either quality *or* effort
- 4** – acceptable in quality *and* effort
- 3** – acceptable in either quality *or* effort
- 2** – needs improvement in quality *and* effort
- 1** – incomplete

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Readers in Residence: unit 1

Checklist Point System:

1–6 points may be awarded by a parent, teacher, or reading coach for each task completed. Here are the recommended guidelines:

- 6** – exemplary in quality *and* effort
- 5** – exemplary in either quality *or* effort
- 4** – acceptable in quality *and* effort
- 3** – acceptable in either quality *or* effort
- 2** – needs improvement in quality *and* effort
- 1** – incomplete

Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
1.11 Make a Prediction Write your predictions about what you expect to happen based on the clues you find on the cover of <i>SPT</i>.		
Discuss your answers to the questions with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
1.12 Create Your Own Book Cover Create a front and back cover for a book you might like to write someday.		
Include plenty of clues for your readers so they will know what they can expect to find inside.		
Ask several family members and friends to use the questions in 1.9 and 1.11 to answer questions about your cover.		
1.13 Review: Reader's Questions Discuss your answers to the READER'S QUESTIONS from the beginning of the module with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
1.14 Book Talk Use the questions to get a discussion going about the books your family or friends enjoy.		
Total		

Module 1: 90 points possible



Meet the Author Patricia MacLachlan

Patricia MacLachlan (born 1938) is the author of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. She was born in Wyoming but grew up in Minnesota. Even though she moved to the East Coast as an adult, she says she still thinks of the prairies of the Midwest as her home. MacLachlan became a writer after many years as an English teacher. She and her husband had three children, and family has always been very important to her. Not surprisingly, most of her books are about families, and many of her stories are based on real events that happened to her or a relative.

How does she get ideas for her stories? MacLachlan says, "I do not think up topics. They tap me on the shoulder." As her characters take shape in her mind, she holds conversations with them. "We talk in the car; we talk in the bathtub or in the shower. We talk sometimes when I'm in bed at night and the lights are off and I'm thinking" ("Meet the Author: Patricia MacLachlan").

MacLachlan said in an interview once, "I think what happens is you write how you grew up. And I was born



on the prairie and so everything is kind of spare on the prairie. And so I'm just used to writing in that way. *Sarah, Plain and Tall* was that way. And most of my fiction is" (Roper).

As you read the story, think about what Patricia MacLachlan means when she says her writing is "**spare**," like the prairie.

spare (adj.) – Without excess; bare or thin.

UNIT 1

Module 2

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Reader's Questions

How do authors show readers what their characters are like?

How do I make inferences about the characters I meet?

How do I make educated guesses about new words in the books I read?

Sneak Peek

In this module you will learn:

- Expert readers get to know characters by paying close attention to what they say, think, and do.
- Expert readers get to know characters by paying close attention to what the narrator and other characters say and think about them.
- Expert readers use context clues and their prior knowledge to make inferences.

2.1 Recipe for a Narrative

Sarah, Plain and Tall is historical fiction. Remember, the books in this genre are organized as narratives. That means they tell a story. All stories have certain ingredients. Here are a few important ones:

- ☆ Stories have to have characters. They are *who* the story is about. In this unit you will learn how authors create these characters and bring them to life.
- ☆ Something has to happen to the characters in the story. That something is *what* the story is about. In unit 3 you will study the “what happened” part of the story, also called a plot.
- ☆ A story has to occur at some time and in some place. This is the *when* and *where* of the story. In unit 5 you will study the “when and where” part of the story, also called the setting.

You will study one more ingredient in *Readers in Residence*, volume 1. Someone has to *tell* the story. That someone is called the **narrator**.

Stories can have other ingredients. But these are the basics: characters, plot, setting, and a narrator. Expert readers know a lot about these ingredients. Knowing how authors create stories will help you to understand the books you read more completely.



narrator (n.) – The teller of the story.

2.2 Character Development: Meet New Friends

When readers begin a book, it is like meeting a lot of new people for the first time. These new people are the characters in the story. We get to know characters in some of the same ways we get to know any new person we meet. We pay close attention to the following:

- ☆ what the character says or thinks
- ☆ what the character does
- ☆ what others say or think about the character

This is how the author leaves clues for the reader. The more information an author reveals about a character, the more readers understand the character's behavior. This understanding causes us to care about what happens to the character. That's one way an author keeps readers reading.

An author's number one job is to keep readers reading.

2.3 Main, Major, and Minor Characters

Some characters in the story are more important than other characters. These are the characters most involved with what happens in the story. They are called **major characters**. In the book you are about to read, the major characters are the Witting family (Papa, Anna, and Caleb) and Sarah Wheaton, a mail-order bride from Maine.

major characters – Characters who have a significant influence on the main character or the plot.



main character –

The most important character in a story, around whom all the action revolves.

The most important character in a book is called the **main character**. (Some books have more than one main character, but not often.) Here are four clues you can use to identify the main character in a book:

1. Most of the action in the story revolves around this character.
2. This character appears most often in the story.
3. This character is most affected by what happens.
4. Readers get to know this character better than any other character.

In *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, the main character is not entirely clear. At the end of this unit, you will decide which character in the story you think is the main character and list the clues you used to decide. That's another mystery you get to solve as you read. (Do you have a working theory already?)

Minor characters are not as important to the story. They appear less often in the action than major characters. Minor characters may be friends, acquaintances, or enemies of the main character. They help to move the story along by affecting the action, and they are often used to show us more about the main character. For instance, in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, a character named Maggie appears in only one chapter in the book. We do not even learn her last name. But the author uses Maggie to influence both Sarah and Anna in an important way. Maggie is a minor character.

dialogue (n.) –

Conversation among characters.

The conversation among characters in a story is called **dialogue**. Talking with your friends tells you many interesting things about them and their lives. Readers learn a lot about characters by paying close attention to what they say through the dialogue in the story.

Directions: Think about the characters in three of your favorite books. Can you use the clues in this section to decide who the main, major, and minor characters are in each one? Fill out the chart with the names of each type of character. A sample is provided for you.



Characters in My Favorite Books



Favorite Book



Main Character



A Major Character



A Minor Character

Pippi Longstocking

Pippi Longstocking

Tommy Settegren

Mighty Adolf



inference (n.) –
A conclusion or
opinion based
on collected
evidence
combined with
what is already
known.

prior knowledge
– What a reader
already knows
from his or her
experience and
reading.

2.4 Making Inferences: Read between the Lines



I'm sure you are ready to get started reading this first book! There's just one more thing we have to talk about before you dive in.

A primary goal of *Readers in Residence* is to teach you to make **inferences** as you read. Have you ever heard that word before? Maybe not. It isn't a common term. However, you make inferences all the time, even though you are probably not aware you are doing so. You make inferences not just about what you read, but also about what you experience in the world around you. An inference is a conclusion or opinion formed from evidence you collect plus your **prior knowledge**.

Throughout the entire *Readers in Residence* series, we will talk about making inferences. It is a big topic, and there are many different strategies expert readers use to help them make accurate inferences. When you need to make inferences in this volume, you will see the magnifying glass symbol 🔍 beside the question or activity.

How to Make an Inference



Prior Knowledge

Use background knowledge and prior experiences from your own life.

+



Clues in the Text

Notice details in the text.

=



An Inference

Make a conclusion about the story.



Here is an example from everyday life:

You notice that your father grabs an umbrella out of the closet before opening the door to leave for work. What conclusions can you draw based on this event? What clues from this event do you use? What prior knowledge about this subject do you use?

Did you conclude that it might be raining outside or that it might rain later? The clue you used is the umbrella, right? And from your prior knowledge, you know that people use umbrellas to help them stay dry when it rains.

Now let's try an example that you will find in chapter 1 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*:



And then the days seemed long and dark like winter days, even though it wasn't winter. And Papa didn't sing. (page 6)



What conclusions can you draw about the narrator of this passage by using clues you find in the sentences and your past experience? What conclusions can you draw about Papa from just those two sentences?

Did you think the narrator and Papa both might be sad about something? The narrator doesn't say she and Papa were sad, though, does she? Concluding they might be sad is an inference.

One clue you might have used is "the days seemed long and dark like winter days." From your prior knowledge about the seasons, you know that people often feel happy or energetic on sunny days and sad or dull on long, dark, wintry ones.

Another clue you might have noticed is "Papa didn't sing." This clue tells readers that Papa has a habit of singing. From your prior knowledge about singing, you may know that people often sing or hum when they are happy. When the narrator tells us that Papa has stopped singing, we conclude (or infer) that Papa is also sad.



READER'S
TOOLBOX

Expert readers use their prior knowledge to make inferences as they read.



Notice that a character in the story—Anna—is also the narrator of the story.

When we make an inference, we draw a conclusion based on the clues we collect from the text as we read, combined with what we already know about a topic. If we don't make inferences as we read a book, we will not fully understand the story. As you read *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, you will begin to practice making inferences about the characters you meet in this book. Ready? Then it is finally time to get started.

2.5 Read *Sarah, Plain and Tall*: Chapter 1



Directions: Read chapter 1 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan. Use the chart on the next page to list the characters you meet in chapter 1. Write some of the details you learn. Write how you learned each detail about the character using the list provided below. When you've finished, compare your list with the sample list in **ANSWER KEY 2.5**.

Here are some ways authors reveal characters:

- 1. the character's words
- 2. the character's actions
- 3. the character's thoughts
- 4. the narrator's or another character's words or thoughts about the character

Introduction of the Characters in <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>		
Character	What I Learned	How I Learned It
Student Sample Caleb	He asks a lot of questions.	Caleb asks Anna questions in this chapter.



Introduction of the Characters in Sarah, Plain and Tall			
Character	What I Learned	How I Learned It	



ruminate (v.) – To meditate, muse, or ponder.

2.6 Ruminare: Chapter 1



Ruminate means “to meditate, muse, or ponder.” But it also means “to chew the cud”—what grazing animals like cows do when they chew, swallow, and regurgitate their food over and over again. Even though that sounds unpleasant, *ruminate* is the perfect verb to describe how expert readers think about what happens in the books they read—even when they aren’t reading!



The Ruminare sections of *Readers in Residence* ask you to think deeply about an aspect of the story and to make a connection to your life. How you respond to these questions is your choice. You can use the questions as a discussion starter with your family. You can draw a picture to show what you think. Or you can write your thoughts in a reading response journal. The journal can be as simple as a three-ring notebook or as unique as a beautifully bound journal from a bookstore. You can use it to write about any of the books you are reading as well as recording your reactions to the questions in the Ruminare sections. Its purpose is to create a keepsake that traces the influence of good books on your life.

Directions: Ruminare on the following questions about chapter 1. Discuss, draw, or write your answers.

1. How can you tell that the Witting family members love one another?
2. How can others tell that your family members love one another?



READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers ask themselves important questions while they read.

2.7 Aha! Chapter 1



Expert readers ask themselves questions and hunt for the answers to them while they read. This skill helps them understand the characters and the story more completely. The reading



comprehension questions included in the Aha! section after you read a chapter or group of chapters show you the kinds of questions expert readers ask themselves while they read.



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

An expert reader might notice these clues and think about these questions while reading page 3:

I wonder whom Caleb is talking to? He is sitting close to the fire. The room must be chilly. I wonder if this is a cabin? The narrator sounds impatient with Caleb. He must be pretty young. Why does he ask the same question every single day? Something has happened to Mama because Papa doesn't sing anymore.

Directions: Use the lines provided to answer these questions about chapter 1 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Refer to the chapter as you answer them. To answer some of the questions, you will need to make an inference 🔍. (Draw a conclusion based on the clues in the story and what you already know.) When you have finished, compare your answers with the sample answers in **ANSWER KEY 2.7**.

1. What question does Caleb ask Anna all the time? (page 3)



Readers in Residence: unit 1



2. How does Anna end the retelling of the night Caleb was born? (page 5)
Why do you think this ending is important to Caleb? Make an inference.

3. How did Anna feel about Caleb when he was born? Include a sentence from the chapter that supports your answer. (page 5)



4. What regret does Anna have about the night her mother died? Make an inference. (page 5)

5. What time of year is it? (pages 5–6)



6. What does this passage mean: "And then the cousins and aunts and uncles had come and tried to fill up the house. But they couldn't"? Make an inference. (page 6)

7. Why does Caleb want Anna to remember Mama's songs? (pages 6–7)



8. What reason does Papa give for not singing anymore? (page 8) Can you think of another reason why Papa doesn't sing anymore? Make an inference.

9. Why does Papa put an advertisement in the newspaper? (page 9)



10. Why does Anna want to ask Sarah if she sings? Make an inference. (page 11)



2.8 Read *Sarah, Plain and Tall*: Chapter 2



Do you remember that Patricia MacLachlan says her writing is spare, like the prairies? (If not, read the end of **MEET PATRICIA MACLACHLAN** at the end of module 1.) *Spare* can mean “without excess, bare, or thin.” It can also mean “controlled or limited.” MacLachlan limits the number of words she uses to tell her story. Every single word has a purpose. She chooses words that will tell us the most about the characters in her story. Think about this when you read this next chapter.

NOTICE

Notice how Patricia MacLachlan uses just a few words to tell readers a lot.

Directions: Read chapter 2 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. What do you learn about Sarah from her letters? Use the chart on the next page to list what you learn and what you expect Sarah to be like when she arrives at the Wittings’ home. We’ve provided the first clue for you. When you have finished, compare your answers with the sample answers in **ANSWER KEY 2.8**.

Student Sample

Clues in Sarah’s Letters

What I Learn about Sarah from Her Letter to Anna	What I Expect Sarah to Be Like Based on Her Letter to Anna	What I Learn about Sarah from Her Letter to Caleb	What I Expect Sarah to Be Like Based on Her Letter to Caleb
Sarah can braid hair, bake bread, and make stew.	She is capable.	She has a cat named Seal.	She likes animals.



Clues in Sarah's Letters				
What I Learn about Sarah from Her Letter to Anna	What I Expect Sarah to Be Like Based on Her Letter to Anna	What I Learn about Sarah from Her Letter to Caleb	What I Expect Sarah to Be Like Based on Her Letter to Caleb	



2.9 Ruminare: Chapter 2



Directions: Ruminare on the following questions about chapter 2. How you respond to these questions is your choice. You can use the questions as a discussion starter with your family. You can draw a picture to show what you think. Or you can write your thoughts in a reading response journal.

1. Why do you think Sarah loves the sea?
2. What is one thing you love about the place where you live? Why?

2.10 Aha! Chapter 2



Directions: Use the lines provided to answer these questions about chapter 2. Refer to the chapter as you answer them. To answer some of the questions, you will need to make an inference . (Draw a conclusion based on the clues in the story and what you already know.) When you have finished, compare your answers with the answers in **ANSWER KEY 2.10**.

-  1. Anna says Sarah's letters arrived "before the ice and snow had melted from the fields." Do you think Sarah wrote back quickly or took her time? Explain your answer. (page 12)

-  2. Why does Caleb read Sarah's letters over and over? (pages 13 and 15)



-  **3.** What feelings are revealed through the questions Anna and Caleb ask in this chapter? (pages 13–15)

-  **4.** What does it mean that Sarah has said she will come for a month's time "To see how it is. Just to see."? (pages 15–16)

-  **5.** Why does Anna first set the table for four people and then put one place setting away? (page 16)

-  **6.** What is the special message Sarah includes at the bottom of her letter to Papa for the children? (page 17) Why does this make Papa smile?



2.11 New Words: Clues in the Context

What do you do when you come across a word in a book and realize you have no idea what it means? This happens to us all. But expert readers have a solution to this problem. They learn to make educated guesses about the meaning of the words they do not know. (Educated guesses are inferences too.) To do this, they look for clues in the sentence that contains the word. They also look closely at the sentences that surround the word. And they use their prior knowledge. Here's an example:



BOOK
EXCERPT

He was **homely** and plain, and he had a terrible holler and a horrid smell. (page 5)

context (n.) –
The information
around a word
that helps
readers guess
its meaning.



READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers use context clues to make educated guesses about the meanings of words they do not know.

The word we need to guess is *homely*. What's the context? The **context** is the information around the word that helps us detect the meaning.

Here's how an experienced reader might make an educated guess about the meaning of the word *homely*:



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

An expert reader might think:

I don't know what the word *homely* means, but let me look at the words around it. The rest of the sentence describes someone who is *plain*, has a terrible holler, and smells bad. So *homely* must be similar to *plain*. I'm going to guess that *homely* means not attractive or pretty. That would make sense in the context of the rest of the sentence.



This expert reader followed several important steps:

1. She read the whole passage *again*.
2. She decided what the *overall meaning* of the whole passage is.
3. She made a guess about the unknown word based on what *fit best* with the other clues surrounding the word.

Let's look at another example from the book.

I had gone to bed thinking how **wretched** he looked.
(page 5)



What do you think the word *wretched* means? There aren't enough clues in the sentence to make an educated guess, are there? Notice what happens when we look at the surrounding sentences, though:

He was homely and plain, and he had a terrible holler and a horrid smell. But these were not the worst of him. Mama died the next morning. That was the worst thing about Caleb.

"Isn't he beautiful, Anna?" Her last words to me. I had gone to bed thinking how **wretched** he looked. And I forgot to say good night. (page 5)



Can you make an educated guess (inference) now? If so, why?



adjective – The part of speech that describes a noun or a pronoun.

Abbreviations Legend

n. – noun

v. – verb

adj. – adjective

adv. – adverb

In a prior sentence, Anna uses the **adjectives** *homely*, *plain*, *terrible*, and *horrid* to describe her new baby brother. From your prior knowledge about the meanings of these words, it is easy to guess that *wretched* must mean something pretty awful. In fact, it means “miserable.”

2.12 Word Sleuth: Chapters 1–2

Directions: Using clues from the surrounding sentences in the book, make an educated guess (inference) about the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence taken from chapters 1–2 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Write it on the line provided. When you have finished, look up the word in the *Readers in Residence* dictionary in the back of this volume. Compare your educated guess with the definition there, and write the dictionary definition on the lines provided.

1. It was dusk, and the dogs lay beside him on the warm hearthstones. (page 3)

dusk (n.)

My guess: evening

Dictionary definition: the partial darkness between daylight and evening

2. It was dusk, and the dogs lay beside him on the warm hearthstones. (page 3)

hearthstones (n.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



3. It made a hollow scraping sound on the hearthstones, and the dogs stirred. (page 4)

hollow (adj.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

4. "And Jack was feisty." (page 7)

feisty (adj.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

5. He said it harshly. (page 8)

harshly (adv.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



6. She was round and slow and shuffling. (page 9)

shuffling (adj.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

7. "My choice, as you can see, is limited." (page 10)

limited (adj.)

My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

8. "What if she thinks we are loud and pesky?" (page 13)

pesky (adj.)

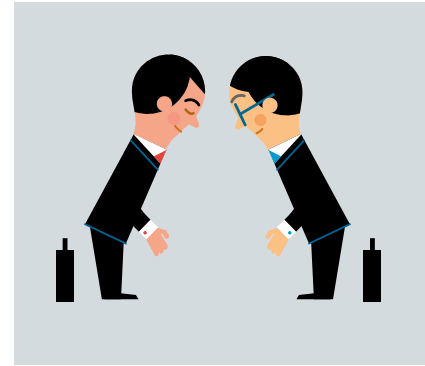
My guess: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



2.13 Conventions: I Spy Capitalization

Do you know what manners are? For instance, what is the proper thing to do when someone gives you a gift? What is the thoughtful thing to do when someone new joins your Sunday school class for the first time? Or what would you do if your grandmother walked into your living room and there was no place for her to sit?



Manners are the rules we've all agreed to follow to show consideration to others in our culture. In some cultures, you might bow when you meet someone for the first time. In another culture, you might shake hands. And in yet another culture, you might kiss the person on both cheeks. Even though the appropriate way to greet someone for the first time can be different from culture to culture, the point of the gesture is the same: to show respect and consideration to another person.

The **conventions** of the English language are the manners that writers use to show consideration for their readers. They do this by following the standards of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage. Writers follow these conventions to make it easier for their readers to understand what they are reading. But it is equally important for you—the reader—to know the conventions as well. Otherwise, you will miss these important signals.

For manners to work, we must know what they are. If you don't know a culture's customs for showing consideration, you are going to be confused. (For instance, what should you do if you meet the queen of England or the prime minister of Thailand? Better not offer them a handshake!)

For the same reason, readers must recognize the meaning of the conventions an author might use. In many ways, the conventions—like manners—are a secret code that authors and expert readers share. So the *Readers in Residence* series will draw your attention to these conventions as a regular part of studying the books we explore together.

The first convention we will focus on is capitalization.

conventions (n.)

– The manners writers use to show consideration for their readers. They do this by following the standards of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage so that readers understand their message.



READER'S TOOLBOX

Expert readers understand the conventions of the English language—punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage.



Directions: What do you already know about the rules for capitalizing words? Write some of the rules you know below.

Now let's see what you notice about how capitalization is used in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

Directions: Study the use of capitalization in the following sections of the book. Can you make inferences about why some of these words are capitalized? Answer the questions below. When you have finished, compare your answers with the sample answers in **ANSWER KEY 2.13**.

1. Study the front cover of your copy of the book. What are some words that are capitalized? Write them below.



2. Why do you think these words are capitalized?

3. Study the back cover of your copy of the book. What are some of the words that are capitalized? Write them below.



4. Read aloud every word that is capitalized on page 3 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Write them below.



5. On the lines below, write down at least three rules you think may explain why some of the words you read aloud on these pages are capitalized.



6. Why do you think the word *troublesome* is capitalized on page 4? What rule may apply?

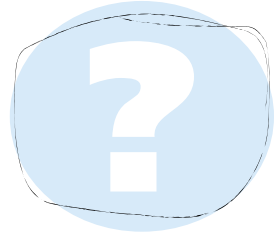
7. Why are the words *Tennessee* and *Maine* on page 10 capitalized? What rule do these words have in common?

8. Why do you think capitalizing the words you found in these sections of the book is helpful for readers? How might readers be confused if these words were not capitalized?



2.14 Review: Reader's Questions

Directions: Before you move on to the next module, review the **READER'S QUESTIONS** from the beginning of this module. How would you answer the questions based on what you have learned in this module? Talk about your answers with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.



- ☆ How do authors show readers what their characters are like?
- ☆ How do I make inferences about the characters I meet?
- ☆ How do I make educated guesses about new words in the books I read?

2.15 Book Talk



Directions: Find a time when some of your friends or family members are sharing a meal. Use these questions to get a discussion going about the books each person enjoys.

1. Describe one of your favorite characters from a book. Give several reasons why you like this character.
2. If you were to write a book about a place from your childhood, what place would you choose?

2.16 Sowing Seeds

Spiritual growth can happen through listening to sermons or praying with your family, but it can also happen through thinking about what you read in light of Scripture. Great authors write about meaningful topics—topics that prompt us to think deeply about life and truth. When we explore these topics through the lens of God's Word, we have an extraordinary opportunity to grow. You will get the chance to try this in the Sowing Seeds sections like the one on the next page.



Sowing Seeds

Directions: Discuss these ideas with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.

On page 5 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Anna thinks to herself:

Caleb thought the story was over, and I didn't tell him what I had really thought. He was homely and plain, and he had a terrible holler and a horrid smell. But these were not the worst of him. Mama died the next morning. That was the worst thing about Caleb.

1. Why do you think Anna keeps these thoughts to herself?
2. Has there ever been a time when you didn't tell someone your thoughts because you didn't want to hurt his or her feelings?

Talk about these scriptures:

Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Colossians 4:6 – “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

1. In light of these verses, do you think Anna made the right decision about what to tell Caleb? Was leaving out those details about Caleb's birth lying or kindness?
2. How do these scriptures relate to your own life?

Anna loved her brother enough to think about how her words would impact him. It pleases God when we put ourselves in others' shoes and consider how to build them up with our words.



Checklist for Module 2

Directions: When you have completed a task, make a ✓ in the “Done” column. Ask a parent, teacher, or reading coach to award you points for each task using the checklist point system. Fill in the points you have earned on the **SLEUTH’S LOG** in the appendix.

Checklist Point System:

1–6 points may be awarded by a parent, teacher, or reading coach for each task completed. Here are the recommended guidelines:

- 6** – exemplary in quality *and* effort
- 5** – exemplary in either quality *or* effort
- 4** – acceptable in quality *and* effort
- 3** – acceptable in either quality *or* effort
- 2** – needs improvement in quality *and* effort
- 1** – incomplete

Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
2.3 Main, Major, and Minor Characters Write down a main, major, and minor character from three of your favorite books.		
2.5 Read <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>: Chapter 1 Read chapter 1 of <i>SPT</i>.		
List the characters you meet on the chart.		
Write some of the details you learn about each character.		
List how you learned each detail about the characters.		
2.6 Ruminare: Chapter 1 Ruminate on the questions about chapter 1.		
Discuss, draw, or write your answers to the questions.		
2.7 Aha! Chapter 1 Answer the questions on the lines provided.		
Refer to the chapter as you answer them.		
2.8 Read <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>: Chapter 2 Read chapter 2 of <i>SPT</i>.		
From studying Sarah’s letters in this chapter, list what you learn about Sarah and what you expect Sarah to be like when she arrives.		



Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
2.9 Ruminare: Chapter 2 • Ruminare on the questions about chapter 2.		
• Discuss, draw, or write your answers to the questions.		
2.10 Aha! Chapter 2 • Answer the questions on the lines provided.		
• Refer to the chapter as you answer them.		
2.12 Word Sleuth: Chapters 1–2 • Use context clues to make an educated guess about the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence. Write it on the line provided.		
• Look up the word in the RIR dictionary and compare your educated guess with the definition. Write the dictionary definition on the line provided.		
2.13 Conventions: I Spy Capitalization • Write down some of the rules for capitalization that you already know.		
• Answer the questions about the capitalized words you find in the book.		
2.14 Review: Reader's Questions • Discuss your answers to the READER'S QUESTIONS from the beginning of this module with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
2.15 Book Talk • Use the questions to get a discussion going about the books your family or friends enjoy.		
2.16 Sowing Seeds • Discuss these ideas with a parent, teacher, or reading coach.		
Total		

Checklist Point System:

1–6 points may be awarded by a parent, teacher, or reading coach for each task completed. Here are the recommended guidelines:

- 6** – exemplary in quality *and* effort
- 5** – exemplary in either quality *or* effort
- 4** – acceptable in quality *and* effort
- 3** – acceptable in either quality *or* effort
- 2** – needs improvement in quality *and* effort
- 1** – incomplete

Module 2: 132 points possible