

*A Second Barr Colony Adventure*



# THROUGH FLOOD & FIRE

*Anne Patton*



ISBN: 9781550506402

# Through Flood & Fire

**Novel Study Guide**

By Paula Jane Remlinger

**Juvenile Fiction – Grades 4 to 7**

Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts, Social Studies (History)



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Juvenile Fiction

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2517 Victoria Avenue

Regina, Saskatchewan

Canada S4P 0T2

[www.coteaubooks.com](http://www.coteaubooks.com)

Coteau Books gratefully acknowledges the financial support of its publishing program by: the Saskatchewan Arts Board, The Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund, the City of Regina, and the Government of Saskatchewan through Creative Saskatchewan. We further acknowledge the [financial] support of the Government of Canada. Nous reconnaissons l'appui [financier] du gouvernement du Canada.

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# Introduction

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## **Plot Summary**

In 1903, 10-year-old Dorothy "Dodie" Bolton and her family travelled all the way from England to a campsite near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Now, the family continues their journey towards the Barr Colony. While Dorothy's mother stays behind to care for those with scarlet fever, Dorothy and the rest of her family face floods, wildfires, and the dangers of the trail as they make their way to their new home.

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## **Organization**

Within this guide you will find a variety of activities intended to help readers appreciate and understand the novel, *Through Flood & Fire*. We encourage teachers to choose those activities, questions, and exercises that are best suited for their particular classroom and students. Many activities can easily be adapted or modified, and teachers should feel free to adjust material as necessary. All material is reproducible for personal classroom use, personal reference, and student use. Please do not publish or post this material elsewhere without permission from the author or publisher.

As pre-reading material, this guide contains a section on why the author wrote the novel. This is followed by a brief summary of the novel (Introduction) and some guidelines for finding information within the guide (Organization).

Furthermore, expectations of the Saskatchewan curriculum are reviewed so teachers can easily incorporate the necessary outcomes and indicators required for their grade levels. As always, the most up-to-date Saskatchewan curriculum information is available at: <https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp>

Each chapter is given its own section, complete with a short summary, pre-reading activities, questions for discussion, and general activities. Where worksheets are suggested, you will find the appropriate worksheet at the end of the guide.

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## **Saskatchewan Curriculum Connections**

### **English Language Arts, Aims and Goals**

The K-12 aim of the Saskatchewan English language arts curricula is to help students understand and appreciate language, and to use it confidently and competently in a variety of situations for learning, communication, work, life, and personal satisfaction. The K-12 Goals are broad statements identifying what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of study in a particular subject (e.g., English language arts). The K-12 goals of the Saskatchewan English language arts curricula are to:

**Comprehend and Respond (CR).** Students will develop their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-level appropriate texts in a variety of forms (oral, print, and other texts) from First Nations/Métis and other cultures for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.

**Compose and Create (CC).** Students will develop their abilities to speak, and use other forms of representation to explore and present thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.

**Assess and Reflect (AR).** Students will develop their abilities to assess and reflect on their own language skills, discuss the skills of effective viewers, listeners, readers, representers, speakers, and writers, and set goals for future improvement.

- taken from the *Saskatchewan Curriculum, English Language Arts, January 2016*

The variety of options included in this guide is designed to help teachers meet the outcomes and indicators. Detailed lists of outcomes and indicators for each grade level are available at the online Saskatchewan Curriculum website:

<https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp>

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## **Message from the Author**

Although the main characters in this book are fictional, Mr. Barr, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Snow and Dr. Amos are real historical figures. The events of this story happened in 1903, when 1500 British immigrants were unloaded from colonist trains in the village of Saskatoon.

In 1983 my friend, Bregje Melissen, told me about an elderly woman with an unusual childhood story. Armed with a tape recorder, I accompanied Bregje to visit Dorothy Holtby Boan in Briercrest, Saskatchewan. Dorothy recounted how the Holtby family had followed Isaac Barr to the Canadian North-West in 1903. At nine years old Dorothy had been plucked from her familiar urban life in England and thrust into the rigours of wilderness survival.

I had never heard of the Barr Colony, but I knew that tape was special, so I tucked it away. Twenty-two years later I attended a university course on writing for young people. Needing a story idea, I remembered that tape. It was still in the drawer where I had left it. Listening to it, I tried to imagine heading into unknown wilderness with no pioneering skills.

When I googled "Barr Colony", I discovered both information and family tales invoking comedy, tragedy and high adventure. I decided right then to retell this significant chapter in prairie history, using the Holtby family as models for my characters.

For my university assignment I recreated the birth of a baby in a tent on a frigid night. In 1903 Mrs. Holtby had attended that birth, so I placed my fictional family in the next tent. Then I wondered, "What on earth were these people doing here, so poorly prepared to settle on the prairie?" Piece by piece I reconstructed their journey from England, which became my first book, *Full Steam to Canada*.

Over time I uncovered a wealth of archival records about the Barr Colony. Dorothy Holtby's older brother, Robert, recorded the 1903 trip in his diary. After reading *Through Flood and Fire*, you will recognize the following episode: one of my uncle's horses got loose and started sauntering round amongst the tents. Oliver and I heard a swish of hoof close to our heads & then there was a crash & a sound of tearing of linen. We go outside & find that it (the horse) had passed between our tent & the one next to ours & had caught its shoe in the ropes of the other tent [and] fallen nearly on the occupants thereof.

In her taped interview Dorothy Holtby Boan remembered: one day that the ground was moving, alive with snakes. You couldn't see an inch that didn't have a snake on it.



And it was there for the whole day. We didn't stop for lunch at noon because you didn't want to step down into that condition. You know how I wove this event into my narrative.

Many settlers wrote letters home, kept journals and wrote memoirs. One colonist, Stanley Rackham, inscribed his diary daily, noting the weather, the flowers in bloom and what he accomplished, including fighting numerous grass fires.

Reverend George Exton Lloyd's memoirs were collected into a book, *The Trail of 1903*. He recorded specific details, including references to the tiny iron camp stoves and the Cairns Bakery. Mrs. Lloyd described nursing a daughter through scarlet fever, quarantined in a leaky shed. The colony physician, Dr. Amos, contributed a letter of reminiscence.

At the Prairie History Room in Regina I discovered a rare book from 1928, *Next Year*, by Harry Pick. This book provides up-close descriptions of snowstorms, prairie fires and other misadventures. Now the entire book is digitized in an internet resource called *Our Roots: Canada's Local Histories Online*.

The most complete record of the Barr Colony is *Muddling Through* by Lynne Bowen. Unlike most historical accounts, Lynne features the experiences of frontier women. She gives voice to daily frustrations such as coaxing bread to rise in the cold, cooking for a family on a tiny campstove and brewing tea full of slough insects. She highlights women's larger concerns such as tending the sick and giving birth in a freezing tent.

When I met Lynne Bowen I learned she is the granddaughter of Bessie Holtby, Dorothy's older sister. Lynne thanked me for honouring her grandmother's memory through my character, Lydia. Lynne shared other stories passed down by her grandmother. Dorothy's son, Jack Boan, remembered the childhood stories his mother related, such as receiving a lecture for taking an orange from a stranger. He endorsed my fictional Dorothy for capturing the feisty, independent spirit of his mother.

I feel privileged to know people such as Jack and Lynne whose memories, through family lore, stretch back to 1903. Many people living today are the descendants of Barr Colonists. If you know some of them, ask them to share their family stories.

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# Chapter Synopses and Questions

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## **Chapter 1 Summary**

Dorothy "Dodie" Bolton grows frustrated with her mother's fussing. Dorothy thinks that since they're in Canada now, she shouldn't have to worry about what they would do in England. Dorothy, her mother, and her sister Lydia attend church, where the line to meet the Reverend Mr. Lloyd is interrupted by Dorothy's friend Victor, who whispers in the Reverend's ear before they both run off together. Dorothy learns what her mother thinks of Victor's family.

When they return home, Dorothy's father explains that Victor helped save a woman whose tent had started on fire. They make a visit to Dorothy's brother Frank to retrieve firewood and prepare supper for the neighbours, the Thorpes. Dorothy considers four-year-old Rose Thorpe to be almost like a little sister.

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## **Before Reading**

- Use the form "What Predictions Can You Make?" to make predictions about the content of the book based on the title and cover.
  - Discuss the cover in terms of picture, colouring, font, etc. What do each of these elements tell you about the type of story to expect?
  - Review the information in the Author's Note. Ask students what they know about historical fiction. Be prepared to discuss the role of fact versus fiction.
  - Share the information from the About the Author section. If possible, make arrangements to have the author visit your school.
  - Provide students with a New Vocabulary sheet to collect and define unfamiliar vocabulary words.
  - Explain or review the parts of a novel including rising action, climax, and falling action.
  - Discuss the documents and map shown at the front of the book as well as the illustration at the end of the chapter.
  - Ask students to fill out what they Know, and what they Want to Know about the pioneer life in 1903 Saskatchewan. At the end of the novel, or as they go along, have them complete the section on What they have Learned.
-

**Questions**

- The chapter starts with a date. Why is that significant? What information does it provide to the reader?
- Describe Dorothy's physical appearance. What does her behaviour towards her mother tell us about her character?
- Why is it important to Dorothy's mother to maintain things the way they were in England?
- Why is Victor a hero?
- What does Mrs. Bolton think of the Suttons? The Thorpes?

**Activities**

- Using the Internet, research life in 1903 before Saskatchewan became a province.
  - Research what types of archival documents are available from that time period. How do you think access to these documents helped shape the novel?
  - Have students write a short essay on why accuracy is important in historical fiction.
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## Chapter 2 Summary

Little Rose comes to Dorothy to be read to. Dorothy then goes to the river to fetch ice chips to make her mother some tea. Her mother seems to be in a sad state of mind. When Dorothy returns, her Mam has gone with the neighbours to the restaurant tent, and her sister has been put in charge of watching the neighbours baby, Jasper. Dorothy argues with her sister Lydia about holding the baby. She goes to check on Rose only to find the child has a fever.

When her mother returns, Dorothy is made to leave Rose and to get ready for a hot bath. Her mother wants Lydia to fetch something for her, but she's nowhere to be found. Dorothy decides not to tattle on where she believes Lydia has gone.

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## Before Reading

- Review where chapter one ended. What do you think will happen next?
  - What information does the author include about the previous book in the series?
  - Discuss with students what they think conditions living in a tent on the prairie might be like.
  - What were the greatest dangers of early pioneer life?
- 

## Questions

- Describe Mrs. Bolton in the beginning of the chapter? Why do you think she's upset?
- What does Dorothy do that she isn't supposed to?
- What does Dorothy know about her brother George?
- Why is the porcelain doll important to Dorothy?
- Why do the adults panic when they realize Dorothy is with Rose?

## Activities

- Write a descriptive paragraph that gives a clear picture of the camp.
- Draw a picture of Dorothy's family.
- Research typhoid and scarlet fever. How dangerous were these diseases and how dangerous are they now?

- Mrs. Bolton's condition is described as melancholy in 1903, but we know it today as depression. Discuss mental illness with the class, in particular depression. How has the perception of mental illness changed in modern times (including healing methods), and why is it important to talk about mental illness? Have students draw or paint an abstract piece of art to reflect Mrs. Bolton's mood. Draw or paint another to capture your own mood.
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## **Chapter 3 Summary**

The family makes preparations to give Dorothy a hot bath. She has to scrub with carbolic soap to stop any risk of contracting scarlet fever. Mrs. Bolton decides she must stay behind to help care for Rose and the Thorpes. The rest of the family will continue up the trail to look for a homestead.

First they need to establish a new campsite until all their preparations are ready. Dorothy realizes that she never really got to say goodbye to her mother. The family makes plans and Lydia is reminded that she and Patrick can only begin a relationship in three years time.

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## **Before Reading**

- Do you have a nickname or a shortened form of your name? Why do people use nicknames?
  - Have you ever had a brush with a serious illness in your family?
  - Are your parents strict or not? Have you ever broken family rules? What were the consequences?
- 

## **Questions**

- Why does Mrs. Bolton insist on scrubbing Dorothy and all of her clothes?
  - Why do the Boltons have to move to a new campsite area?
  - Describe the relationship between Lydia and Patrick.
  - Describe the preparations that are being made to go on the trail.
- 

## **Activities**

- Make a character map showing the various characters introduced so far and how they relate to one another.
  - Make a character page in your notebook for each character. Add information as you come across it in the novel. Note the page where you found the information so you can go back to it for reference.
  - Keep track of words that are specific to the time period. Are these words still used today? Do they mean the same things they used to mean?
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## **Chapter 4 Summary**

Dorothy goes with her father to purchase food supplies. They make a visit to the Sutton's camp and Mrs. Sutton offers to teach Dorothy and Lydia how to make bread. Lydia is less than enthusiastic about the idea. Dorothy and her father visit her mother and get a list of supplies from her.

In the evening, Dorothy and Lydia go to the Suttons, and Victor teaches Dorothy how to light a fire. Lydia is angry that Dorothy didn't help with the bread.

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## **Before Reading**

- Have you ever baked bread?
  - Have you ever had a friend that your family didn't really like? Why didn't they like him or her?
  - Set the historical stage. Find out what students know about Canada at this point in history. Fill in the gaps as necessary or assign a research project.
- 

## **Questions**

- What information is provided about Mr. Barr?
- List the supplies that the family needs for their journey.
- Describe Dorothy's friendship with Victor.
- Why does Lydia refuse the bread that is offered by Mrs. Sutton?
- Why is the kiss on the cheek significant to Dorothy?

## **Activities**

- Consider the assumptions we make about people based on race, class, gender, etc. Ask students to write down some of the assumptions that they have about other people. Prepare for a frank discussion about stereotypes and prejudice.
  - Write a letter to her mother from Dorothy describing the preparations for the journey they are about to undertake.
  - Research the historical Mr. Barr. How accurate is his character in the book compared to history?
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## **Chapter 5 Summary**

Even though it's April, there is snow. Dorothy learns to walk the two pups, Chap and Irish. Dorothy inquires about the Indian people nearby and is told it would not be proper for her to meet them. Dorothy and her dad go to check on Mrs. Bolton, and Rose asks Dorothy to sing to her across the campsite, and Dorothy remembers happy times with her grandparents back in England.

Dorothy overhears an incident between a settler and a Métis person. Lydia's mood seems to have improved, and Dorothy learns it's because she's baking bread for Patrick, who is very complimentary. Dorothy takes Irish for a walk again, but the puppy gets away from her and runs toward a strange person.

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## **Before Reading**

- How big an influence does the weather have on your life? Is weather important where you live?
  - Have you ever had a pet? Discuss the kind of responsibility it takes to care for an animal.
- 

## **Questions**

- Why is Dorothy cold when she wakes up?
- Why is Dorothy excited to be allowed to walk the dogs?
- Describe the incident Dorothy witnesses. What does it say about the relationship between the settlers and the Indigenous people?
- Why is Lydia in a better mood when Dorothy returns to the camp?
- What happens at the end of the chapter?

## **Activities**

- Research the Métis people of Saskatchewan. Consider assigning a project that includes current news and issues that face the Métis people.
  - Have students write a personal essay on the topic of racism. How does it affect their lives?
  - Obtain some archival photographs and have students craft a short story based on a picture.
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## **Chapter 6 Summary**

Dorothy meets a Métis man who returns Irish to her. Dorothy's father is upset that Dorothy went off by herself, and warns her that they are not in England anymore. Frank describes the process for turning sod and building a sod house, but the girls are not happy about the prospect.

The family busies themselves packing for the journey, and Dorothy goes to visit her mother, but finds her asleep. The family sets off in two wagons with horses, and Dorothy considers the enormity of the task ahead of them.

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## **Before Reading**

- What is the furthest you've travelled? How do you prepare for a long journey?
  - Discuss what a house means in different parts of the world, including the sod house.
- 

## **Questions**

- Describe Dorothy's encounter with the Métis man.
- Why is Dorothy's father angry at her afterwards?
- Why is Dorothy upset after going to see her mother?
- What makes Dorothy excited again?

## **Activities**

- If you had to leave your home behind, what would you miss the most? Write a letter describing those things.
  - Have you ever had to leave someone behind without being able to say goodbye. Write a poem that explores those feelings.
  - Discuss the prejudices that are already apparent in the book, particularly with regard to class and race. What parallels exist today?
  - Describe a time when you were starting something new and it made you excited. Share that with a classmate.
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## Chapter 7 Summary

Dorothy can't believe they've only travelled four miles. Mr. Bolton warns Frank and Patrick about wearing out their horses. Dorothy receives a letter from England from her best friend Ada. Dorothy and her father get to ride while Frank and Patrick stretch their legs, and Dorothy considers what life will be like when they have a homestead.

When they come to a slough, the cart tracks disappear, and they see an oxen cart stuck in the water. They meet Matthew Snow who patrols the area, and Mrs. Sutton joins Lydia and Dorothy while the men attempt to get the oxen out of the water. Dorothy and Mrs. Sutton walk while Lydia drives the horses and wagon around the slough. They see crocuses and Dorothy shares her letter from her friend Ada. They stop for a meal, and Dorothy fetches water for tea.

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## Before Reading

- What is the best memory you have of spending time with your family? Share that memory with a partner, then write about it in your journal.
- What is a slough? Research the origin of the word. What words do you use in your area that are not used elsewhere?
- Why does the author use dialect for different characters?

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## Questions

- Why is Mr. Bolton concerned about the horses?
- What do the boys bring for Dorothy?
- What happens when the family reaches the slough?
- Describe what happens between Mrs. Sutton and Dorothy.
- Describe Lydia's attitude toward the Suttons. Why is she like this?
- Why is Dorothy acting innocent at the end of the chapter?

## Activities

- Have students trace their family tree back to their great-grandparents generation at least. This will mean enlisting the help of parents. Did any have similar stories to Dorothy's?
- Ask students to write about what the members of their families mean to them.
- Pretend you are Dorothy and write a letter to Ada describing the journey so far.

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## Chapter 8 Summary

Lydia discovers dead bugs in the tea, and Mrs. Sutton offers a method for straining them out. Dorothy helps Mrs. Sutton with the work of washing up and cleaning clothes. The family starts out on the trail again, leaving the Suttons behind for the night. Before she leaves, Dorothy gets a kiss on the cheek from Victor.

When the family arrives at the marquee, they find it full and pitch their tents in a nearby gully. Irish the dog has run off, and Patrick goes to look for him. During the night, one of the horses gets loose and tramples the tent near Dorothy's head. She's lucky to escape without injury. Lydia is relieved Dorothy isn't injured and starts to act more like a big sister.

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## Before Reading

- Have you ever played a trick on someone, particularly a sibling? What happened?
  - Discuss if there are any things about pioneer life that are surprising to students. Do they think they could live without modern conveniences?
- 

## Questions

- Why is Lydia upset at the beginning of the chapter?
- Why are the two Sutton kisses significant?
- Why is Dorothy concerned about her father's dream of having a homestead?
- What happens during the night?
- What effect does it have on Lydia?

## Activities

- Institute a 24-hour technology ban. How do students find being unconnected? Or, if this isn't possible, have students make a complete list of all the modern conveniences they use in a 24-hour period.
  - Imagine what families like Dorothy's did for fun. In groups, come up with a list of possible activities to fill the time in the evenings. Discuss why we don't do these things as much anymore.
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## **Chapter 9 Summary**

Dorothy wakes up wondering if the previous night was a dream. Her family seems to have disappeared. Two men from the marquee explain that they've gone to find the runaway horse. Dorothy goes with the two men and receives an orange, which she later shares with Lydia.

When she returns to her camp, she finds Lydia and learns that Irish and the horse are still missing. Dorothy fetches water from the seepage well, and shows her sister how to start a fire. Mr. Parenteau, the Métis man, returns Irish to them, and lets them know that the runaway horse is probably at the salt lick. The girls consider inviting him to tea, but he tells them it's not appropriate.

The girls prepare to have food ready for when the men return. Dorothy works up the courage to ask her sister about their dead brother George. Dorothy learns he died of scarlet fever.

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## **Before Reading**

- How much trust do you have for strangers? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
- What is the best gift you've ever received?
- Have you ever tried to master a skill? How difficult was it?

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## **Questions**

- Why does Dorothy panic when she wakes up?
- Why is the item given to Dorothy by the two men special?
- Why does Dorothy decide to share it?
- Describe the use of the seepage well and how the girls start the fire.
- Why is it not appropriate for the girls to be alone with Mr. Parenteau?

## **Activities**

- Consider what is happening to the other characters in this chapter. Write the chapter from the point of view of Mr. Bolton, Frank, or Patrick. Imagine what they are doing.
  - Consider what might be happening to the Suttons along the trail. Write a chapter that tells of their adventures from Victor's point of view.
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## **Chapter 10 Summary**

Patrick arrives back at camp to let the girls know the stray horse has been found. Together they pack up the camp to get back on the trail. They arrange the wagons so Lydia and Dorothy can ride together. The day is pleasant and warm, and the girls grow sleepy.

The horses bolt and Dorothy is thrown from the wagon and lands in an area filled with snakes. Panicked, she runs, but soon loses track of where she is. Mr. Snow, who the government hired to patrol the trail, was sent back to find Dorothy. He returns her to Lydia who is grateful Dorothy is alive. It turns out that Dorothy has injured her hip, though, and she rides in the back of the wagon for a while. Her father returns when a storm blows in, and the family takes shelter. They continue on, Dorothy's dad pushing to arrive at the marquee. Dorothy loses track of time, and when she awakens realizes she is alone and it's night.

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## **Before Reading**

- Do you like storms? What are some general rules for storm safety where you live?
- Are you afraid of anything in particular? Discuss common phobias, including the fear of snakes.

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## **Questions**

- How do they find the runaway horse?
- What causes the horses to bolt?
- Describe what happens when Dorothy is ejected from the wagon.
- Why are there so many snakes?
- How does Dorothy return to her sister?
- What is Lydia's attitude towards Dorothy after the accident?
- There are four key dramatic moments in this chapter. What are they?

## **Activities**

- BINGO – Have students create a BINGO game using vocabulary from the story. Play as a class.

- We have Dorothy's impression of Lydia, but what does Lydia think of Dorothy?  
Write a journal entry from Lydia's point of view, describing her little sister.
  - Choose one of the four dramatic moments in the chapter and illustrate it.
  - Consider rewriting this chapter as a graphic novel.
-

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## Chapter 11 Summary

Lydia returns, stating that it had gotten too dark to see, so the family has stopped for the night. The next morning, Mr. Bolton is in a rush to leave. They must make better time.

On the trail, a woman foretells that someone will die at Eagle Creek. She and her family are returning to England, and when Lydia sees the steep valley they must cross, she agrees with the woman. Dorothy, however, thinks the land is beautiful.

They watch as people travel down and up through the valley with varying degrees of success. When it's their turn, Lydia and Dorothy walk while their father and brother navigate the steep valley. The wagon wheels lift into the air when they encounter soft ground.

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## Before Reading

- Is it easier to be a participant or a bystander when something is happening?
- Do you believe that people can foretell the future?

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## Questions

- Why does the family stop for the night?
- Why is Mr. Bolton in such a hurry?
- What is at Eagle Creek? Why is it dangerous?
- How does the family assist other travellers?
- What happened to the people who had trouble crossing the valley?

## Activities

- Values Inventory – On a piece of paper, list all the things that are important to you. For homework, ask one or both of your parents/guardians to do the same thing. Compare your answers. Are they the same or different? How?
- Practice building suspense and action into your stories. Take an incident and try to write it in as exciting a manner as possible. Have your peers rate how exciting the story is.
- Revisit the historical document at the beginning of the book that relates to Eagle Creek. Did the author do a good job of capturing the experience from the historical record? What differences are there? Why do you suppose that is?

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## Chapter 12 Summary

The wagon teeters precariously, and Dorothy makes her way down to it to take the pups from Mr. Snow. She falls badly before she reaches him and injures her hip worse than before. Dorothy is given instructions to stay off her feet, but she struggles to obey when there is work to be done.

The family crosses the swollen creek, and Dorothy isn't able to write her letter because the paper is wet. She is bored and lonely, and for the first time she misses her mother.

---

## Before Reading

- Are you ever bored? What kinds of things do you do to pass the time?
  - A few times, people say the girls have "grit." What does this mean? Are there other expressions in the book that you are unsure of?
  - Have you ever been away from home? What did you miss most?
  - Discuss the difference between the morality that is presented in the book and what is considered normal for today.
- 

## Questions

- How does Dorothy attempt to help the men?
  - What happens when the wagon is stuck?
  - What's wrong with Dorothy?
  - Describe what Lydia does to take charge of things.
  - Why does Dorothy worry what her mother will think of Lydia and Patrick's growing relationship?
  - Why do you think Dorothy misses her mother now in particular?
- 

## Activities

- Visit a local museum that holds pioneer exhibits or items that are from the time period of the book. The Western Development Museum in Saskatoon, SK, would be a good choice.
- Have students try to imagine living in Saskatoon when it was only a campsite with tents and not a major city. Describe one day in their lives then and now.



- Discuss with students the expected roles of men at women in 1903. How have things changed now? Have students write down a day in their life now vs what their lives might have been like in Dorothy's time. What social norms prevail today, in school and out? In what ways are they different from, or the same as, those of the novel's setting?
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## Chapter 13 Summary

Dorothy rides in the wagon to rest her sore hip. She wishes again for her mother, but Lydia proves comforting when she brews Dorothy a cup of tea made with poplar bark that Mr. Parenteau dropped off for her. The family finishes traversing the wide valley.

Dorothy writes a letter to her Gram in England, and realizes she has forgotten about poor Rose suffering from scarlet fever back in Saskatoon. They stop for a while and Lydia learns to use the axe to chop firewood while the men are duck hunting. Patrick's dog Irish runs off again, and when Dorothy hobbles out to the slough to look for him, she is almost left behind.

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## Before Reading

- Which character are you most like? Or which character do you like the most? Why?
- Have you ever forgotten something important and then felt guilty about it?
- Have you ever been accidentally left behind somewhere?

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## Questions

- What does Mr. Parenteau contribute to help Dorothy? Why do the girls keep it a secret?
- What things does Dorothy focus on in her letter to her grandmother?
- Why does Dorothy feel guilty?
- How does Dorothy get left behind?

## Activities

- If you could interview the author, what questions would you ask her? Propose five questions. As a class, choose the best questions. Email the author or invite her to your school to answer those questions and read from the book.
  - Construct a book trailer based on the information you have so far about the story.
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## Chapter 14 Summary

Dorothy is found by the Sutton family. She is grateful and delighted to see Victor. Mrs. Sutton checks out Dorothy's hip and determines that she has probably pulled a muscle. They make her a pair of crutches to use. Lydia and her father come back for Dorothy when they realize she's missing.

The family continues on. Mr Bolton reacts badly to learning about the poplar bark tea, but Frank reassures his father that Lydia did the right thing. One of the bridges is broken and must be repaired before they can continue on. While waiting, they find a piano wrapped up, and enjoy the merriment it produces. Dorothy falls asleep only to find the Suttons have arrived, and helped finish the work. They promise to wrap the piano back up before carrying on.

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## Before Reading

- Do you have home remedies? Share them with the class.
- Do you have the same values as your parents' generation?
- How important is music in your life? Do you play an instrument or just listen?

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## Questions

- What role does Irish play in finding Dorothy?
- What information have we learned about the Sutton family so far?
- How do Mr. Bolton and Lydia react upon finding Dorothy safe?
- How does the writer convey the passing of time in this chapter?
- What is Mr. Bolton's reaction to the poplar bark remedy?
- What does the family find along the trail and why is it significant?

## Activities

- Have students research the songs that are mentioned in the book and make a compilation of the tunes.
- Do a book review and record it as a podcast. Share it with other classes in the school. Perhaps students could do a monthly book review and post it to the web.
- Have students write a personal essay about a song that is very important to them.

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## **Chapter 15 Summary**

The family at last arrives in the settlement at Battleford. The Sutttons soon catch up to them. Mr. Bolton surprises Dorothy by telling her she'll have to stay behind with Lydia and Mrs. Sutton because of her injury while the rest of the family goes on to claim a homestead. Dorothy is distressed when her father and the others leave without saying goodbye.

Lydia is distracted by the prospect of being clean for the first time in a long time, and regrets her earlier comments about Mrs. Sutton. Dorothy learns more about her dead brother George. The three move into the Immigration Hall. Dorothy meets one of the men who had given her the orange, and gets him to post two letters for her, including one to her mother. Dorothy wonders when she will see her mother again.

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## **Before Reading**

- Consider what it would be like to live without easy access to water. What do you think life would be like on a daily basis?
- Do you ever write letters? What value does the written word still have? Consider the future of things like the book and the postal system.

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## **Questions**

- Describe the settlement at Battleford.
- Why is Dorothy left behind with her sister and Mrs. Sutton?
- Why does Mr. Bolton leave without saying goodbye?
- What are the important points of Dorothy's letter to her mother?
- Who is the man Dorothy meets in Battleford?

## **Activities**

- Use this as an opportunity to discuss formal letter writing techniques, as well as the difference between formal and informal writing.
  - Have students write a letter to someone important in their lives.
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## Chapter 16 Summary

Dorothy continues to heal. Mr. Todd takes the women into the village of Battleford in his democrat. After a day in town, the democrat is surrounded by angry colonists voicing their concerns and their anger towards Mr. Barr. The women leave and return to the Immigration Hall.

Snow returns to the prairies, although it's the middle of May. Mr. Lloyd and his family arrive in the settlement, and Dorothy begins to hear stories from other colonists. She worries for her father and the rest of her family. The Lloyds bring news that Rose is out of danger and that Mrs. Bolton will be travelling to meet them soon. Mr. Lloyd is elected leader of the Colony.

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## Before Reading

- The author includes many small details that help contribute to the setting. Discuss the importance of setting in a novel.
  - How does the author continue to create tension in the story even when her main character is unable to be active?
  - Discuss the qualities of a good leader.
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## Questions

- Describe the village of Battleford.
- What is a democrat? Describe it.
- What are some of the issues the colonists have with Mr. Barr?
- Describe the character of Mr. Barr.
- What adventures do the women recount to Dorothy and the others?
- What news does Dorothy receive?

## Activities

- Use your letter-writing techniques to write a letter to Dorothy's mother to update her on what has happened. Or write to Ada in England.
  - Consider recent elections – civic, municipal, provincial, and national. Examine the leaders' platforms. What qualities are important to the students?
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## Chapter 17 Summary

Dorothy and the others wait for Mrs. Bolton to arrive in Battleford, and her initial appearance surprises Dorothy. The family gets caught up on each other's news, and Dorothy hopes her mother will like the Suttons, who have been so helpful to them. Dorothy learns the Thorpes have stayed behind in Saskatoon, and Mr. Parenteau arrives with their mother's things.

Dorothy is chastised for visiting with Mr. Parenteau, but disobeys her mother to say thank you to him. He gives her a carved meadowlark. Dorothy shares her gift with Lydia, who tells her it's precious. The girls are starting to accept that they are now part of the land they are living in.

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## Before Reading

- How do you feel when you meet someone you haven't seen for a long time? Happy? Awkward? Fearful?
  - How does place affect a person's beliefs and culture?
  - Have you ever changed your mind about someone once you've gotten to know them? What happened?
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## Questions

- Why is Dorothy worried about seeing her mother again?
- Describe Mrs. Bolton's arrival.
- What news does she share with Dorothy?
- What news does Dorothy share with her mother?
- How is Mrs. Sutton received by Mrs. Bolton?
- Why does Mrs. Bolton react negatively to Dorothy spending time with Mr. Parenteau? Is this attitude appropriate?
- What does Mr. Parenteau give to Dorothy?
- How have Lydia and Dorothy changed since the beginning of the book?

## Activities

- Play a game of telephone. Share a piece of news with the next person in line and see if the news remains the same as it reaches the last person. Discuss what this means for the transmission of information orally.

- Have students draw, sculpt, or paint a significant moment from the story—for example, the gifting of the meadowlark to Dorothy.
  - In a journal entry, ask students to examine their own attitudes toward Canada's Indigenous peoples. Use these as a starting point for a frank discussion about racism.
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## **Chapter 18 Summary**

The girls discover some of the beauty of the prairies when they find wolf willows. Mr. Bolton returns having found a homestead, and shares his news. There is a reunion between Mr. and Mrs. Bolton, and he offers his wife a sample of dirt from their new home.

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## **Before Reading**

- What things are specific to where you live? Write a short essay about how you would introduce someone to those things.
  - Do you have any daily rituals, such as the serving of tea?
  - Prancer and Dancer are a reference to "'Twas the Night Before Christmas". Share the poem with the class.
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## **Questions**

- What do the girls find on the prairies?
- What is Dorothy most concerned about regarding her mother?
- Describe the new homestead.
- What surprise does Mr. Bolton present to his wife? Why is it significant?

## **Activities**

- Research the building of a sod house. Imagine what it would have been like to live in one. Write your impressions in a journal entry.
  - Describe how the key relationships in the story have changed: Mr. and Mrs. Bolton, Dorothy and Lydia.
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## Chapter 19 Summary

The women and Mr. Bolton start out for the homestead, anticipating a three-day journey. They learn a little more about what awaits them. Dorothy stays with her mother while they ford a creek, and realizes she knows more about living in the wilderness than her mother does. They stop for supper and eventually sleep under the stars at night.

The family sees the first signs of a prairie fire and makes preparations. They try to continue forward, but are blocked by the fire. They drive back towards the slough, while Mrs. Sutton instructs Dorothy to empty the mattress covers of straw so they'll be able to use them in the water.

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## Before Reading

- Cast the movie. Who would you choose to play the characters in the book and why?
  - Are there things that you know how to do that your parents don't? Are these skills valued?
  - Have you ever been close to a real fire? Describe the event.
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## Questions

- How far away is the Britannia Colony?
- Why is Dorothy worried about her mother?
- Describe the process of fording the creek.
- Why doesn't Dorothy receive the lecture she's expecting?
- What is Dorothy's general attitude towards the prairies? How is it different from the rest of her family?
- Describe the details that precede the fire and help increase tension.
- What does Mrs. Sutton instruct Dorothy to do?

## Activities

- Discuss emergency preparedness. What are ways each family can prepare? Working in groups, have students come up with suggestions for an emergency kit.
  - Have each student prepare a fire escape plan with his or her family.
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## **Chapter 20 Summary**

The horses pull the wagon into the midst of the slough, and the family waits out the fire using the mattress covers soaked in water to help protect themselves and the horses. The fire passes quickly and the family prepares to camp there until someone can help them get the wagon out of the slough. Dorothy inquires about her mother's locket.

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## **Before Reading**

- Are there any objects that are special to your family? Something that might be handed down from one generation to the next?
  - Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Debate which is better.
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## **Questions**

- How does the family survive the fire?
- Explain the significance of Mrs. Bolton's locket.
- Why can't the family leave the slough area?
- What does the family do until help arrives?

## **Activities**

- Write a story called "My Worst Trip Ever." It can be based on fact or be pure fiction. Try to build tension into the story the way the author of this novel does.
  - Write the scene of the fire as a radio play or podcast and dramatize it.
  - Study the effects of forest fires in your area. What environmental impacts do fires have, both positive and negative?
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## Chapter 21 Summary

Mr. Parenteau arrives to help the family out. Dorothy and Lydia are angry about their mother's insistence on being civilized and not fraternizing with the Aboriginal man. Dorothy attempts to engage the man anyway and asks her father to invite him to eat with them. He serves them bannock.

Dorothy and her mother assist on shore as the others unload the wagon. The family struggles to get the wagon out, and everyone gets involved. Finally they get it close enough to shore for the horses to pull it the rest of the way. Mrs. Bolton seems to become more appreciative of Mr. Parenteau. The family and Mrs. Sutton get back onto the trail.

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## Before Reading

- Are you like one of your parents in particular? Are there family traits that are easily identifiable? Share these with a partner.
  - Have you ever been rescued from a bad situation? Explain what happened. How did you feel about the person who helped you?
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## Questions

- Why does Mrs. Bolton think it's important to look civilized?
  - Why is Lydia angry with her mother?
  - How do you make bannock?
  - What items are saved and which items are damaged or left behind?
  - How does Mrs. Bolton's attitude toward Mr. Parenteau change? Do you think it's a permanent change? Explain your answer.
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## Activities

- Explain what an idiom is. For example, this chapter features "in a pickle." Have students brainstorm as many possible idioms as they can. Consider illustrating particularly funny ones with cartoon-like drawings and posting them around the classroom.
  - Make bannock with the class, or invite an Elder to speak to the class about the traditions of the Métis people.
  - If you could only save one item from a flood or fire, what would it be?
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## **Chapter 22 Summary**

The family and Mrs. Sutton reach the last marquee before the colony, and then head toward their homesteads. Dorothy figures out the significance of the hair in the locket. The girls learn to be more comfortable in the wilderness and appreciate its beauty.

Patrick meets them on the trail and shares information with them about the newly-named Lloydminster. He offers to take Mrs. Sutton to her homestead. The rest of the family carries on to the empty homestead and Dorothy revels in the wide-open expanse, while her mother expresses concern and disappointment. Dorothy has a reunion with Victor, and they begin to set up camp for their new home.

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## **Before Reading**

- This is the last chapter. Have students predict what they think will happen in the few remaining pages. Have them write down their predictions and compare them to what actually happens.
  - Do you believe in happily ever after? Discuss what makes a good ending.
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## **Questions**

- What is the significance of the hair in the locket?
- How does the author provide some humour in the chapter?
- What awaits the family on the homestead?
- Describe Dorothy's relationship with the land.
- How does Dorothy cheer up her mother?

## **Activities**

- Write what has happened in Victor's life since Dorothy has been away.
  - Have students create a timeline of events for the novel.
  - Outline what you think would happen in the next chapter of the book, or in a sequel.
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## After Reading

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- Are there any parts of the story where the students are unclear about what happened?
  - Review the construction of a novel and have students identify what chapters are the rising action, climax, and falling action.
  - Review vocabulary for usage. Have students use their dictionary projects to quiz the rest of the class on vocabulary words.
  - Is there any additional information the students are still interested in learning about the book's topic? Review and complete the Know-Want-Learn sheet handed out at the beginning of the unit.
  - Review the additional resources in the book, the pictures, etc. Assign a research project to find as much information about the real Dorothy as possible.
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## About the Authors

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**Anne Patton**

Since retiring as an elementary school teacher, Anne Patton has published ten books for children. Her first five books are part of the Scholastic reading program, Literacy Place for the Early Years. Next Anne collaborated with her friend, Wilfred Burton, to write three books about a Metis boy who learns to jig. They have visited many schools to read from this popular trilogy: *Fiddle Dancer*, *Dancing in My Bones*, and *Call of the Fiddle*.

Anne is fascinated by history and loves exploring museums, old ruins and any kind of trace left by our human ancestors. To date Anne has published two historical novels for young readers: *Full Steam to Canada* and its sequel, *Through Flood and Fire*. She is currently working on a third book to conclude her Barr Colony adventures.

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### ***Paula Jane Remlinger***

is a writer and educator. She holds a B.A. Hons (English), B.Ed., M.A. (English), and M.F.A. (Creative Writing). She is experienced in working with youth, adults, and ESL/EAL students.

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# What Predictions Do You Have?



Picture Clues

Word Clues

Predictions

# Know – Want - Learn



What I Know

What I Want to  
Know

What I've Learned