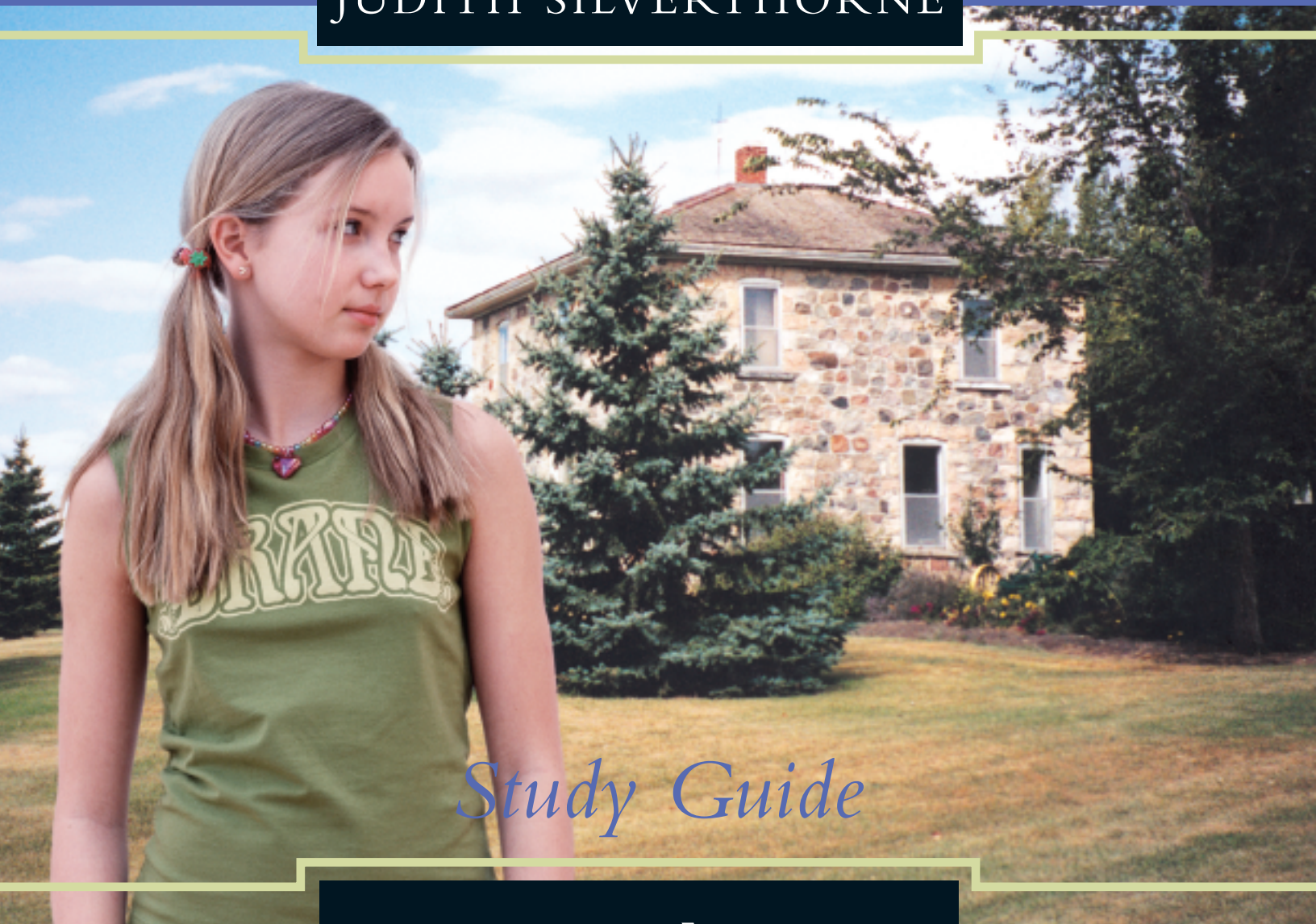


The Secret of the STONE HOUSE

JUDITH SILVERTHORNE



Study Guide

FROM **MANY**
PEOPLES



The Secret of the STONE HOUSE

JUDITH SILVERTHORNE

A NOVEL STUDY GUIDE

by Ruth Garnett



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

IntroductionI
Introductory Activities4
Chapter One6
Chapter Two . . . . .	.9
Chapter Three and Four . . . . .	.II
Chapter Five . . . . .	.I3
Chapter Six . . . . .	.I4
Chapter Seven . . . . .	.I5
Chapter Eight . . . . .	.I7
Chapter Nine . . . . .	.I8
Chapter Ten . . . . .	.20
Chapter Eleven . . . . .	.2I
Chapter Twelve . . . . .	.23
Chapter Thirteen . . . . .	.24
Chapter Fourteen . . . . .	.25
Chapter Fifteen . . . . .	.27
Chapter Sixteen . . . . .	.28
Concluding Activities . . . . .	.29
Supplimentary Activities . . . . .	.29
Resources . . . . .	.30



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JUDITH SILVERTHORNE is the author of five books, including the prequel to this one, *The Secret of Sentinel Rock*, which received the Saskatchewan Book Award for Children's Literature in 1996. The books in her Dinosaur series, *Dinosaur Hideout* and *Dinosaur Breakout*, have also been listed for several awards.

Judith works as a writer, film producer, and cultural administrator in Regina. For more information on Judith and her work, consult her Web site at: www.judithsilverthorne.ca.

INTRODUCTION

PLOT SUMMARY

In this story, twelve-year-old Emily Bradford travels back in time to discover a secret about her grandmother's stone house. She also learns how to accept her parents' divorce and change her relationship with her mother.

Times are hard for Emily Bradford. Her beloved Grandmother Renfrew has died and her mother can't afford to keep the family's beautiful old stone farmhouse. Emily and her mom, Kate, return to the house to help auction off its contents.

At the same time, Emily's parents are divorcing and Emily fears her father won't have time for her any more. And her mom's driving her crazy with her obsessively organized and bossy ways.

But Emily has a wonderful secret. She's learned to travel into the past—to the time her forebears were building the stone house. She sees her grandmother as a child and becomes friends with her great-uncle Geordie as a boy of twelve.

In the past, Emily learns to understand her mother better and discovers a powerful secret contained in the old house – a secret that will help her explore her family's roots in Scotland. And she may even have a way to keep the stone house in the family.

A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

Judith Silverthorne – Why I wrote *The Secret of the Stone House*

I've always been amazed at the resolve and fortitude of the early settlers and the hardships they faced in an unknown land. Hearing a few stories from my grandparents and great-grandparents sparked my imagination about how difficult their lives had been, yet how resolutely they accepted their daring fates and proudly soldiered on.

This story also came about in part because of my fascination with stone buildings. Over the years I've often stopped and explored some of these fine old homes, marvelling at the tenacity and patience needed to achieve these skilfully built structures. I've often wondered about the background stories of the owners and the builders, including some of my relatives, who actually lived in the area I write about.

Many of the incidents I relate are taken from my own ancestors' lives, or of others that I know about or have researched. I wanted to include the dangers of a prairie fire, and the occurrence of a pioneer wedding, as well as their everyday lives. The setting is one I'm familiar with, as I spent the first few years of my life on the land where the imaginary stone house in my story exists. There are many parts of living as a settler I would love to have experienced. I am proud to come from such hardy stock as my pioneer ancestors, and also to retain the love of the natural surroundings of the prairies that they embraced.

ORGANIZATION

Within this guide you will find a variety of activities intended to help readers appreciate and understand the novel, *The Secret of the Stone House*. Literary qualities are considered, comprehension is examined, and connections to the curriculum and to readers' real lives are pursued. Each teacher using this guide will be able to choose those exercises that best suit the needs of her or his students. We encourage you to add other activities as well.

Three categories of responses are offered for each chapter: *Preparing to Read*, *After the Reading*, and *Extending the Reading*.

PREPARING TO READ

The first part of the study of each chapter has activities that require class discussion and personal reflection. Students may be asked to make predictions. It is intended to help the students anticipate the coming chapter.

AFTER THE READING

Discussing the chapter: Questions for each chapter target points essential to plot and character development. Add other questions of your own. Encourage students to develop questions about the reading that their classmates could answer.

EXTENDING THE READING

From the selection of activities in this section, choose some which will add to students' enjoyment of the reading and involve them actively in what they've read.

CONNECTIONS TO THE SASKATCHEWAN CURRICULUM GUIDES

The Language Arts curriculum (Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level, 2002) skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Representing are developed in this study. Several themes are dominant in the story: Family Values, Surviving Hardships, and Preservation of Heritage. These are developed within a context of cultural customs, events and issues, and our place in history.

Social studies connections are taken from the Grade Four and Five Saskatchewan Curriculum Guide. (Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level, 1995).

Grade Four: Heritage – Immigrants and Settlers

Grade Five: Heritage – Building a Nation: Immigration, Confederation, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Treaties, and the Wars

FROM MANY PEOPLES

The Secret of the Stone House is part of the *From Many Peoples* series published by Coteau Books. Originally developed as a celebration of Saskatchewan's Centennial in 2005, the stories in this series illuminate life in the province from the viewpoints of young people from different cultural groups. Study guides for the *From Many Peoples* novels can be downloaded free of charge from the Coteau Books website: www.coteaubooks.com. For more information about this book, and the other books in the *From Many Peoples* series, please check out our dedicated web site at www.coteaubooks.com/frommanypeoples.html.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

Although enjoyment and study of *The Secret of the Stone House* is not dependant on the reading of the “prequel,” *The Secret of Sentinel Rock*, students could be encouraged to read it.

- Ask students to imagine being able to time-travel to the past and be a child in Saskatchewan during pioneer times.
 - What activities would you like to do while you are in the past? In what ways is life different now than in pioneer times?
 - Who from your family would you like to meet in the past? Why?
- Post a highway map of Saskatchewan on a wall for the duration of this study, and have students identify locations that are mentioned in the story.
- The story begins three months after the death of Emily’s grandmother. It may be helpful to have a discussion about how our culture deals with loss. Some students may not have experienced the death of a loved one, and others may be experiencing a recent loss. For many people, funerals are more than just a time to say good-bye to a loved one. Discuss with students the emotions, tributes, remembrance, and family gatherings that often are part of a funeral.
- Read aloud to the students *The Auction* by Jan Andrews, a beautiful picture book that tells how a boy and his grandfather come to grips with the sale of the family farm. It becomes clear later on in the story that this auction is the result of Grandmother’s recent death.

BEGINNING THE NOVEL STUDY

LITERARY CONNECTIONS

There are several picture books that show historically accurate depictions of pioneer times. Use these as read-alouds and make them available for students throughout the study of this book.

- *The Auction* by Jan Andrews; pictures by Karen Reczuch.
- *The Stoneboat* by Teddy Jam; pictures by Ange Zhang.
- *The Year of the Fire* by Teddy Jam; pictures by Ian Wallace.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

- Have students begin vocabulary charts, and enter new vocabulary during and after each section read. This can include glossary words as well as other words unfamiliar to students. Use the chart (next page) or have students make their own chart.

NEW VOCABULARY

[illegible]

CHAPTER ONE

(PAGES 1–19)

SUMMARY

Chapter One gives a brief overview of Emily’s adventures in the “prequel,” *The Secret of Sentinel Rock*. We learn how Emily came to have the power to time-travel to the past, and how she met Emma, a young pioneer girl, whom she later discovered was her great-aunt as a child. Although Emily loved visiting the past, the story was touched by sorrow when Emma died of an illness despite Emily’s attempt to save her. At the beginning of the new book, Emily and her mother Kate return to Grandmother Renfrew’s farm, three months after her grandmother’s funeral. They and Aunt Liz (Kate’s sister) begin to organize the auction to sell Grandmother’s belongings. Emily senses that her about-to-be-divorced mother may be interested in an old boyfriend. Emily secretly struggles with her desire to once again time-travel to the past and see her pioneer forebears again.

PREPARING TO READ

Often relationships between grandparents and grandchildren show special closeness. Ask students if any of them has had a grandparent or older relative who has died. Discuss ways that we cherish memories of loved ones.

- Look for clues that tell you about Emily’s relationship to her grandmother.

AFTER THE READING

- Why does Emily need to stop at the cemetery on the way to the farm? Why do you think her mother wants to hurry and get to Aunt Liz’s house?
- What kind of a relationship do you think Emily and her grandmother had? Give evidence from the story to support your point of view.
- What kind of a relationship do Kate and Aunt Liz have? What kind of a relationship does Emily have with her mother? Give some evidence to support your answer.
- How do you think it would feel to meet a relative from several generations ago, when he or she was the same age as you are now? What would be some of the things that he or she might not be able to understand?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Using the map of Saskatchewan, find Wolseley and Candiak, and identify the road joining them, known as “Moffat Road.”
- Character Development. On the following pages are two options for students to show their understanding of character development. Begin a character chart.
- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.

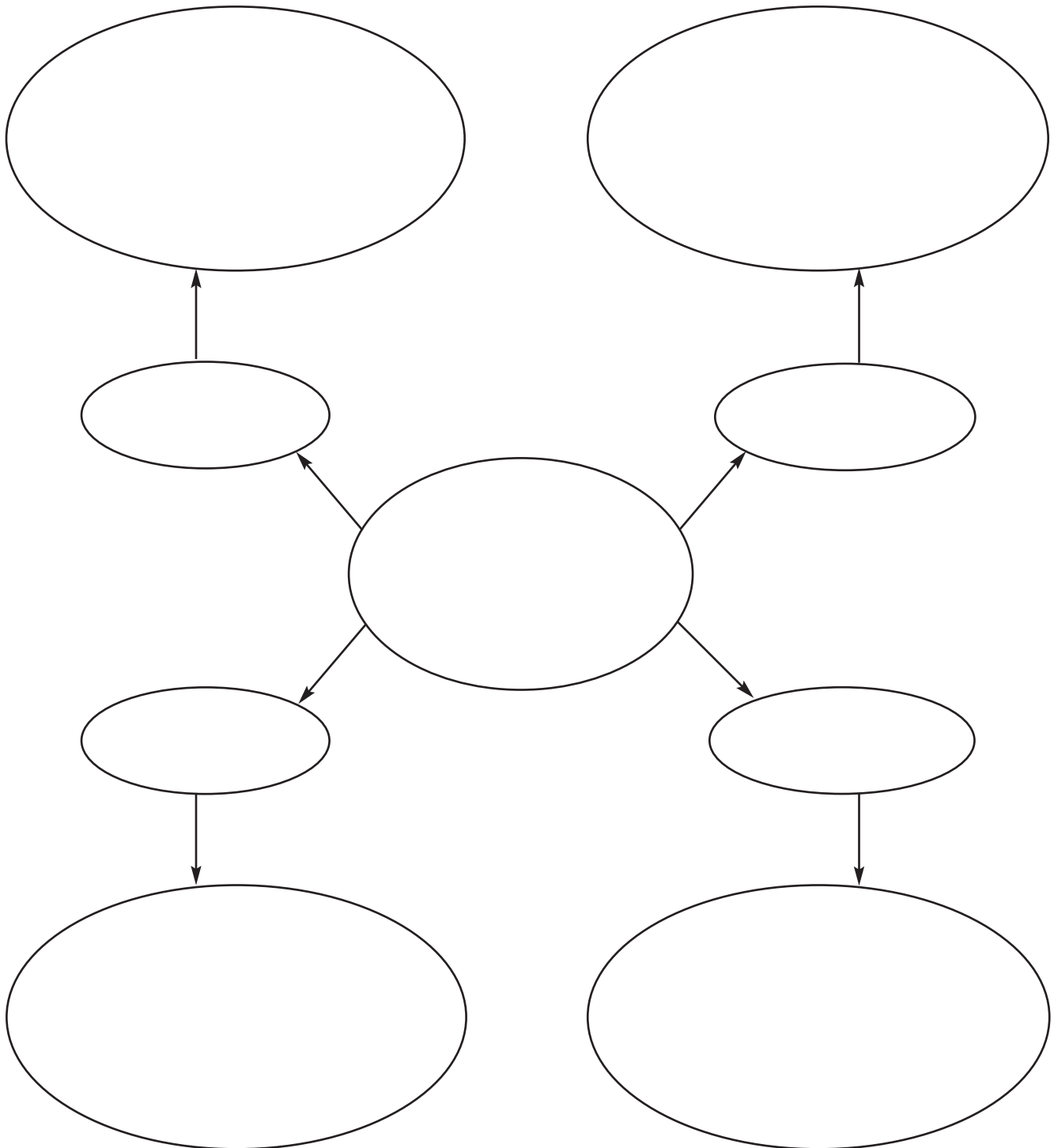
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Fill in the chart with information the author has given you about Emily. Choose six more characters from the story.

CHARACTER	Character Trait	CLUES THAT PROVE THIS TRAIT	PAGE
1. Emily			

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Choose a character from the story and write his/her name in the centre oval. Write four character traits in the connected smaller ovals, and then following the arrows, write evidence for each trait in the large ovals. Remember to use page numbers for reference.



CHAPTER TWO

(PAGES 20–32)

SUMMARY

Emily, her mother, and Aunt Liz inspect the furniture and items in the attic, making final decisions as to which items will be relegated to the auction and which will be divided among family members. A maple drop-leaf desk captures their attention and Aunt Liz remembers seeing her granddad put some papers into a hidden drawer. It takes some ingenuity from all three to find the hidden drawer. Inside they discover the original homestead papers, and from these they learn how the land was acquired and developed, and when the stone house was built. They find a small key with a tag attached, which has the letter “E” on it. They speculate as to what the key could be for and decide that Emily should keep it. Emily returns to her room and makes plans for a new attempt to return to the past.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter, Emily finds some artifacts from her great-grandfather’s desk. Will she get an opportunity to return to the past to do some investigating? Do you think it is wise for her to even try?

AFTER THE READING

- Emily seems to be the only family member who is really interested in acquiring any of the antique furniture. Why do you think she is so keen on keeping things?
- We learn that Great-granddad had some rather unusual ways. What were some of these, and what might they reveal about his personality?
- What secret do you think the key will reveal?
- Emily is not sure if she will be able to return to the past, but she is willing to try again. Why does she change her clothes? In what ways do you think Emily is brave? In what ways do you think she is foolish?

EXTENDING THE READING

If a computer lab is available, have students find information on homesteading in Saskatchewan. Appropriate information can be found at: Homesteading on the Prairies – a part of Exploring Saskatchewan History Through the Decades:

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/exploring/homestead/index.htm>

- Using the timeline, outline Great-grandfather’s sequence of improvements to the land, known as “proving,” which was required as part of the homestead agreement.
- Add to the character development and vocabulary charts.

HOMESTEADING TIMELINE

YEAR	DESCRIPTION OF WORK, IMPROVEMENTS MADE
1899	

CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

(PAGES 33–50)

SUMMARY

Emily fearfully takes some risks and discovers that she can travel to the past and back at will, as long as she has the stone and touches the sentinel rock. The Ferguson brothers help with preparations for the auction. Emily notices that her mother and Donald Ferguson share an awkward attraction to one another. Emily manages to slip back into the past and is confused, as the landscape seems different. When she meets Geordie again, now twelve years old, she realizes it is four years later than her last visit. This time, he reveals that he is one of the people able to “see” Emily. They discuss the death of Emma (Emily’s great-aunt), which has occurred since Emily’s last visit. Emily and Geordie talk about “the second sight” and the ability to have premonitions, and try to understand the circumstances that bring them together. Emily sees the stone house for the first time, still in the construction phase.

PREPARING TO READ

- In these chapters, Emily gets the opportunity to return to the past. Who will she meet and what experiences will she have?

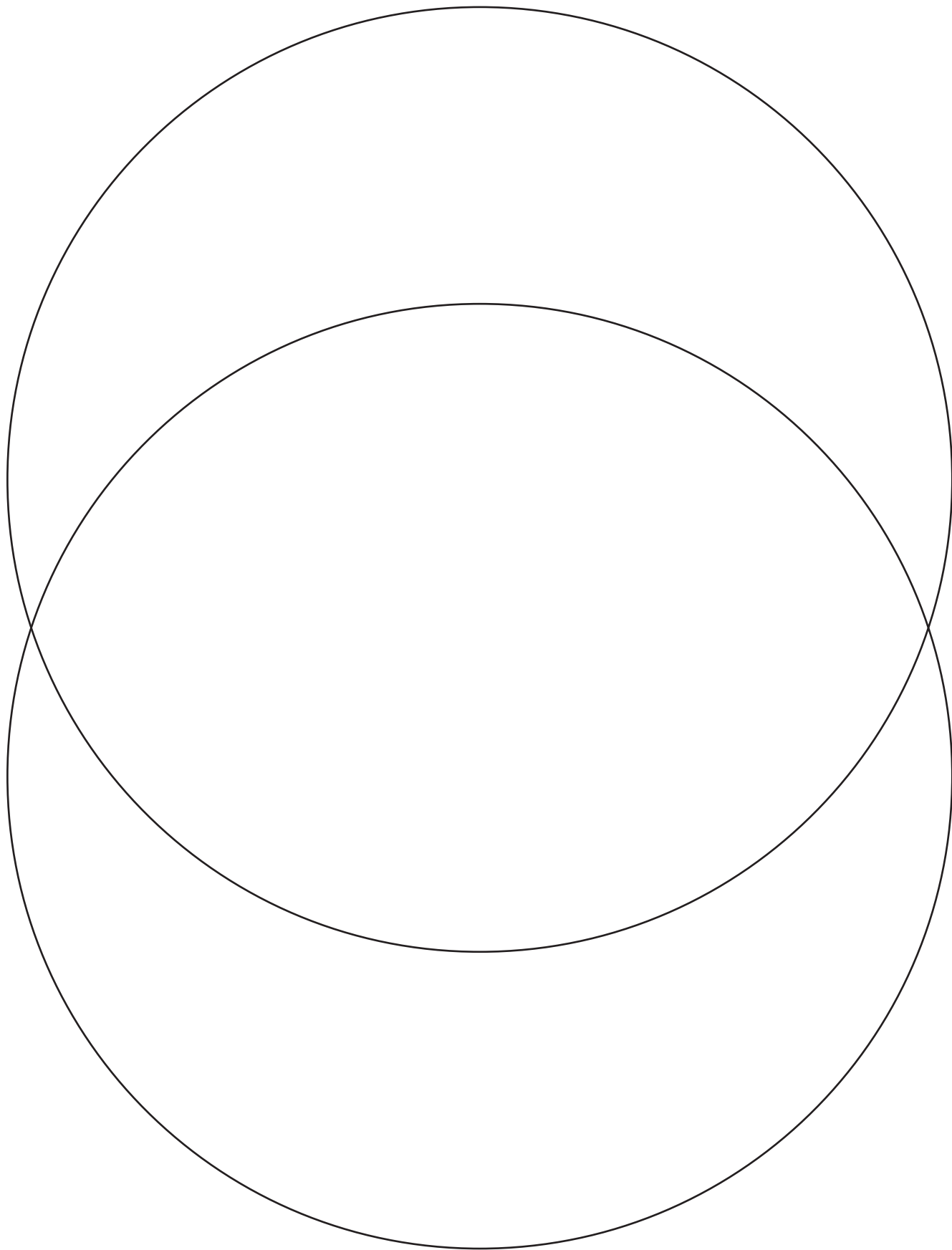
AFTER THE READING

- In the past again, things seem familiar to Emily, yet different. Explain.
- The way time passes in the past and the present does not seem to be the same. How could this cause problems for Emily?
- What clues show that Kate seems to be uncomfortable around Donald Ferguson? How does Emily feel about this?
- Emily and Geordie have fun remembering her last visit, when Emma was still alive. What were some of the ways children in pioneer times amused themselves?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add to the character development and vocabulary charts. As this activity progresses, you may choose to incorporate the use of Venn diagrams to allow students to show comparisons between individuals. Students may draw their own diagrams, using two or three circles.
 - Kate and Aunt Liz
 - Emily and her mother
 - Emily and Aunt Liz
 - The two Kates – Emily’s mom and Great-aunt Kate
 - Geordie and Emily
 - Others that students may choose

VENN DIAGRAM



CHAPTER FIVE

(PAGES 51–61)

SUMMARY

Emily watches construction of the stone house while she is in the past. Emily struggles with Emma’s death, wondering if it would have been possible for her to somehow change the course of events. She returns to the present just as final preparations have been completed for the auction the next day. She sees her mother and Donald becoming comfortable together again, but she doesn’t want a replacement for her father. Aunt Liz is surprised by Emily’s knowledge of the construction method of the stone house. We learn about early construction methods and present-day farm machinery. Emily ponders the mystery of the key, and wonders about her great-grandfather. Emily overhears a tense telephone conversation between her parents (who are separated) and she gets permission to phone her dad.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily watches as the stone house is being built. Will Emily be discovered by anyone else in the past?
- What do you think will happen with Emily’s mom and Donald Ferguson?

AFTER THE READING

- What did Geordie do in the “prequel” that made it impossible for Emily to return to the past during Emma’s final illness? He now wonders if Emily might have been able to save his sister’s life. He wonders if he was responsible for Emma’s death. What do you think?
- How is modern technology changing the life and landscape in Saskatchewan?
- How does Emily feel about her dad? How do you know?

EXTENDING THE READING

If a digital projector is available, view images of 42 stone buildings in Saskatchewan, including two in Moffat, Saskatchewan. <http://www.reginaphotoclub.com/MemberGallery/Stone-Buildings-Saskatchewan>

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.

CHAPTER SIX

(PAGES 62–73)

SUMMARY

Emily returns to the past to spend the day watching the activities of her ancestors on a Sunday. She discovers that Molly (her grandmother as a child) is now four years old, and is able to “see” her. Emily wonders who can “see” her and why, and she fears being detected. She manages to get Geordie’s attention and learns more about the traditional family work roles – what constitutes “men’s work” and “women’s work.” Geordie explains how and why the location of the house was chosen and takes Emily on a tour of the stone house under construction. Emily has some interesting comments on the house which pique Geordie’s interest, such as the squeaky stairs, the fireplace and the lack of a bathroom. Geordie is quite disgusted with Emily’s suggestion of having a bathroom indoors. When he finally realizes that Emily is claiming they are related, he becomes frightened, and Emily now worries about how to give him the facts without scaring him away.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily learns more about pioneer life. Watch for some interesting and funny differences between then and now.

AFTER THE READING

- In Geordie’s time, men’s and women’s work were well defined. Tell about some of the traditional jobs and duties that men and women had. How have attitudes and roles changed?
- Why did the family choose to build the stone house on that site? Give several reasons why pioneers carefully chose the location of their homesteads.
- Explain Geordie’s reaction to having an indoor bathroom.

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.

CHAPTER SEVEN

(PAGES 74–88)

SUMMARY

Emily, Kate, and Aunt Liz set up for the auction tomorrow, and Emily is feeling sad about losing the house and all the personal belongings of her ancestors. Emily learns more about the relationship her mother and Donald had as teenagers. She continues to search for the box that will fit the mystery key. Kate and Aunt Liz suggest that perhaps their grandfather had hidden the box behind a moveable stone. Emily again travels to the past, in time to watch the construction of the fireplace. Geordie invites her to return later in the week for his brother's wedding, and they devise a plan that might allow Emily to time-travel directly to the house, instead of to the rock.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily watches as the fireplace is being built. Will she find clues to the missing box?
- Will Geordie want to see Emily again?

AFTER THE READING

- If you had to choose between living in the past (Geordie's time) or in the present, which would you pick? Why? Using the chart, list the pros and cons of each.

EXTENDING THE READING

Have students write "A Day in the Life of _____." The first page should be a typical day in their own life, describing their activities from awakening in the morning to going to bed at night. Next have them write "A Day in the Life of _____," describing a typical day in the life of one of the pioneer characters in the story. They may choose one of the children or adults and imagine what activities would fill their day. Include chores, meals, family activities, and daily routines. These may be done in poster format and used for a bulletin board display. Have small group or class discussion, comparing modern-day life to pioneer life.

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.

LIVING IN THE PAST (GEORDIE'S TIME)

PROS (ADVANTAGES)	CONS (DISADVANTAGES)

LIVING IN THE PRESENT (NOW)

PROS (ADVANTAGES)	CONS (DISADVANTAGES)

CHAPTER EIGHT

(PAGES 89–106)

SUMMARY

Emily and Geordie devise a hiding place for the carved wooden bird, hoping that it will be the new “portal” for Emily’s time travel. Emily gets a glimpse of her great-aunt Kate as a child, and understands why she has the nickname “Miss Bossy Boots,” the same nickname that Emily’s mother was given as a child. Emily gets to spend some time with Molly, who is actually her grandmother at age four, and Emily is overwhelmed with emotion. She learns that her dad’s new project at work will necessitate more travel for him, meaning that she will not be able to see him for a while. Emily is upset, but her mom and Aunt Liz are there to support and encourage her. They receive information from Uncle Ian about a loose stone in the fireplace, where they suspect the missing box might be.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily and Geordie try to find a way for her to time-travel directly to the house. What do you think it might be?
- Will Emily be able to attend both the auction in the present, and the wedding in the past?

AFTER THE READING

- Explain the history of the nickname “Miss Bossy Boots.”
- What is Emily feeling as she is spending time with little Molly? Why do you think her emotions are so strong?
- Why is Emily angry with her father?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Have students write a paragraph or short story about a character plagued with a nickname. This could either be based on personal experience or students can create their own story. Use this opportunity to discuss the power of words, and the feelings they evoke, both positive and negative. *Chubby Champ* by Peter Eyvindson is a suitable chapter book which deals with nicknames and bullying,

CHAPTER NINE

(PAGES 107–119)

SUMMARY

Emily goes back in time using the carved bird, to try to discover information about the secret opening in the fireplace, where the box is supposed to be hidden. She meets Geordie but goes unnoticed by her great-aunt Kate, who seems a lot like her mother. Emily ponders the possibility of whether or not her actions in the past could affect the future. Aunt Liz finds Great-grandmother's journal and Emily delights in reading the entries, as she makes more emotional connections to the past.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily watches her great-aunt Kate in the past, and notices some familiar behaviour. See if you can make some connections.

AFTER THE READING

- Emily is concerned when she sees her mother and aunt arguing. How do they solve their differences of opinion? Do you think it is healthy to argue? Why or why not?
- Emily realizes that the attic stairs are not squeaking any more. Why not? What is important about this discovery?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Students enjoy books in which they can search for hidden objects in the pictures. Allow students to locate *I Spy* and other similar books of this genre in the library, and bring them into the class to share.
- Have students begin to think of items they might like to put in a time capsule for their own grandchildren or great-grandchildren to find. Discuss meaningful mementoes that might be included. Using the following chart, begin making a list.
- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.

TIME CAPSULE

WHAT WOULD I PUT IN MY TIME CAPSULE?	WHAT DOES THIS OBJECT TELL ABOUT ME?

CHAPTER TEN

(PAGES 120–131)

SUMMARY

Emily awakens early on the day that will have the wedding in the past and the auction in the present. She plans to attend both of these events. Aunt Liz is already up and so Emily helps set up for the auction, waiting for an opportunity to sneak away. When the auction begins, she gets her chance and travels back in time to experience the pioneer wedding. She takes note of the traditions and celebrations, especially the taking of the family photo. As time passes and Emily needs to get back to the present, she realizes that she is four miles from the closest portal home.

PREPARING TO READ

- Watch for clues that show Kate’s and Aunt Liz’s feelings about the auction.
- Will Emily be able to return to the past in time to attend the wedding?

AFTER THE READING

- If you were Emily, what excuses would you use to get away from Mom and Aunt Liz in order to travel to the past? How could you do this without lying?
- How will Emily be able to attend the wedding and not be discovered? Why does she need to be careful around Molly?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

(PAGES 132–143)

SUMMARY

Geordie returns Emily to the stone house, giving her a bareback ride on his horse. She checks the construction of the fireplace, and looks for the hiding place in the stones before returning to the present. A woman at the auction witnesses Emily’s return to the present, and Emily is quick to concoct an explanation when questioned by her mother. As the auction winds down, Emily examines the family photo from her trunk, the same photo that she watched being taken at the wedding in the past. That evening, Emily “unlocks” the secret stone in the fireplace and discovers the family Bible, but not the mystery box. As they inspect this treasure and read the family information, Emily becomes determined to keep the stone house in the family. Geordie makes a surprise visit to the present.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter, someone sees Emily returning from the past. How will she be able to explain what is happening? Will Emily find anything in the fireplace?

AFTER THE READING

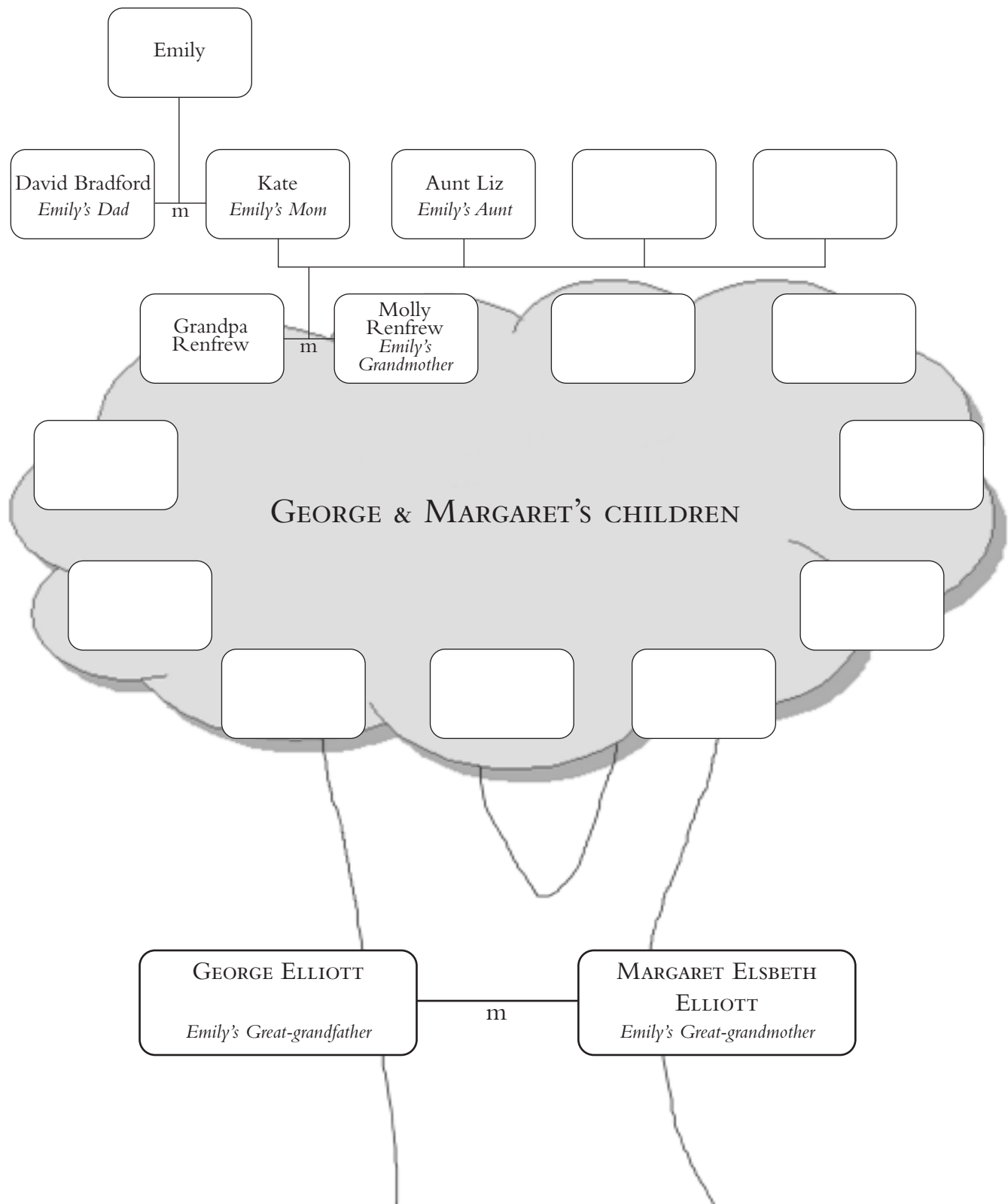
- What do you think would happen if the family notices that Geordie has disappeared during the wedding festivities? Make up some excuses for his absence.
- Emily lost her hair band during her time in the past. Why do think this is important for the author to mention?
- Mrs. Barkley sees Emily appear, as she is returning from the past. How does Emily deal with this?
- Why is the discovery of the family Bible so important? What does this tell you about immigrants and pioneers?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Complete the Elliott Family Tree Activity Sheet. Have students draw and complete a similar tree using information from their own family, if possible.
- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

THE ELLIOTT FAMILY TREE

Fill in the missing names. The letter “m” between two people means they are married to each other.



CHAPTER TWELVE

(PAGES 144-154)

SUMMARY

Geordie travels to the present when he finds Emily's hair elastic and uses it as a portal for time-travel. The looks and furnishings of the stone house amaze him. He is frightened by electrical appliances and surprised at the growth of vines that his mother had planted many years before. Emily has to quickly come up with imaginative excuses for strange happenings around the house, which are actually evidence of Geordie's presence. Kate and Aunt Liz suspect a burglar when they hear Geordie fall from the vine as he is making his way back to the past. They sense that Emily is somehow involved with the weird things happening over the last few days, and consequently she is forbidden to leave the house.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Geordie manages to travel to the present. How do you think he will react?

AFTER THE READING

- Describe some of the changes that Geordie notices on his visit to the present.
- How does Geordie learn to read? Was this typical of pioneer children?
- Was it fair for Kate to ground Emily?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

(PAGES 155-167)

SUMMARY

Emily closely examines the homestead papers, and plans to travel back to the past again as soon as she can. She discovers that there was a prairie fire in 1903, and wonders if it would be possible for her to warn the family and somehow change the course of history. She sneaks out in the night and appears in the past on the day of the fire, just as the Elliott family is having a picnic. She tries to convince a sceptical Geordie of the danger. As the winds start to shift, he finally heeds her warning. The family races to deal with the fire without realizing that Molly is missing. Emily instinctively knows where Molly is, and she and Geordie manage to find her with little time to lose. They find themselves trapped, with fire raging around them.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter Emily has to convince Geordie of danger that is about to happen. Will he listen to her?
- In the previous book, *The Secret of Sentinel Rock*, Emily tried to tell her mom and Aunt Liz the truth about her ability to travel to the past, but she was not sure they believed her. Will Emily try to convince them again?

AFTER THE READING

- Emily was forbidden to leave the house, yet she still decides to defy her mother. How do you feel about her actions?
- What things happen to convince Geordie that Emily is right about the fire?
- What is a fireguard?
- Once the family realizes that the fire is quickly advancing, everyone jumps into action. Why do you think they were so well prepared? How do we prepare for fires?
- Why doesn't anyone notice sooner that Molly is missing?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Read aloud one or both of the historically accurate picture books by Teddy Jam, depicting pioneer farm life. *The Stoneboat* tells the story of cooperation, hard work and forgiveness among neighbouring farmers. In *The Year of Fire*, a grandfather tells the story of a devastating fire that destroys a forest, a neighbour's house, and some fields.
- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

(PAGES 168–181)

SUMMARY

Emily finds Molly in her hiding place in the bluff, playing with her doll, oblivious to the fire. Emily, Geordie and Molly follow the stampeding oxen and find a safe haven in the slough. They stay there, submerging and staying wet until the fire passes over them. As they head to the stone house, the wind shifts and the fire comes toward the house from the other direction. Geordie and Molly continue on ahead, and Emily gets separated from them. The fireguard prevents damage to the house, and the entire family is reunited safely. The family and neighbours survey the damage to the surrounding dwellings and land. Emily and Geordie realize they may never meet again, and Geordie truthfully confides that he has no knowledge of the secret hiding place for the box. Emily says goodbye to Molly, and reaches peace at last with losing Grandmother Renfrew. As she heads towards the portal to the present, she becomes determined to keep the house in the family. She dreads facing her mother, who must surely realize by now that she has been gone.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter, a prairie fire devastates the countryside. Predict how you think Emily, Geordie, and Molly will escape the fire.

AFTER THE READING

- Geordie says, “The main things are safe.” What do you think he means? What are the main things in your life?
- After the fire passes and all in the family are found to be safe, Emily and Geordie realize that they may never see each other again. Why not? What do they talk about?
- What is the reaction of the neighbours to the loss and devastation? How will they join together to help each other?
- Emily has just witnessed a tragedy in the past, but no life was lost. In the present, her grandmother has recently died. Explain some of the emotions that Emily is experiencing.

EXTENDING THE READING

- What happens to animals when there is a prairie fire? Have students locate and share information. They could interview knowledgeable adults, find information in the library, or search online. This is an opportunity to teach search skills through different search engines such as *Ask Jeeves for Kids*, (<http://www.ajkids.com/>) or *Ask Earl (Yahooligans)* (<http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/>).
- Has a natural disaster occurred somewhere in the world recently? Have students search the newspaper or online for information about the results of the disaster and about people's responses to it. Talk about ways that people have helped each other.
- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

(PAGES 182–190)

SUMMARY

Emily returns to the present exhausted, her hair and clothes wet and smoky. When Kate and Aunt Liz discover her, they allow her to get cleaned up and have something to eat before she has to explain what has happened. Emily realizes it is best to tell the truth, hoping they will believe her this time. The story seems too far-fetched for them, however, and they are concerned for Emily's well-being and state of mind. Emily decides to try to find the box in the fireplace. When she mentions Geordie's name, they again worry about her. However, she manages to find the latch in the fireplace, and eventually discovers the wooden box. When they see the carved "E" on the box, Emily knows it was originally made for Emma. She rushes to find the key.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter, Kate and Aunt Liz have some serious concerns about Emily. How do think Emily will explain her absence, and her unkempt appearance?
- Will Kate and Aunt Liz believe her this time? Will she be punished for disobeying?

AFTER THE READING

- When Kate and Aunt Liz see Emily, they are worried and relieved at the same time. Why don't they insist on answers immediately?
- Finally, Emily tells the whole truth. She feels relieved to have everything out in the open, but they still do not believe her. How does she plan to prove that she is telling the truth?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Add new words to the vocabulary chart.
- Add to the character charts and Venn diagrams.
- Add to the time capsule chart.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

(PAGES 191-206)

SUMMARY

Emily tries to remember where she put the key, which leads to a confrontation with her mother. Remembering Great-aunt Kate, Emily realizes that her mother shares some of the same personality traits, and this leads Emily to a better understanding of her mother's temperament. Aunt Liz mentions the possibility that Emily is psychic, which seems ridiculous to Kate. However, they agree to disagree. Emily reintroduces the idea of keeping the stone house, and together she and Aunt Liz plan to investigate the possibility of the house being declared a heritage site or developed into a bed and breakfast. Emily confronts her father on the phone, accusing him of not wanting to see her. She again notices the developing friendship between her mother and Donald Ferguson. Emily finds the key and opens the box. Together, she, her mother, and Aunt Liz examine the contents. They learn that the past has many valuable connections to our lives. Emily's dad suggests a plan that has her delighted.

PREPARING TO READ

- In this chapter, the contents of the box are revealed. What secrets will the box hold?
- What will become of the stone house?

AFTER THE READING

- Emily seems to better understand her mother's point of view, but is also able to assert her own very different personality. How did this happen? Will it change their relationship?
- Aunt Liz recalls that Uncle Geordie was the inventor of the family. Emily knew Geordie as a boy. What do you think influenced him to become an inventor?
- When Emily holds the mirror that is in the carved box, she feels a special connection. Tell about this and explain why it is important to her.
- Why is Emily so angry with her father? How does this get resolved?

EXTENDING THE READING

- How will Emily's life be different as a result of her experiences?
- Predict what you think will happen with the stone house.
- Write a letter to the author giving her suggestions for a sequel to this story. You may or may not choose to actually mail the letter. You can find her email at www.judithsilverthorne.ca. Or, you might like to write the next chapter of the book yourself!

CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

THINKING ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

In this book, the action takes place in two time periods. Think about the different characters. Are there major differences between the characters who lived in the past and those in the present? Are there similarities? What can you learn about people from this information?

Look back at the character charts you completed. Which character is most like you? In what ways? Which character do you admire the most? Why?

THINKING ABOUT THE STORY

What does this book teach you about family life and relationships between family members? Why is it important to understand our heritage?

Think about the time capsule chart that you completed. Did you learn anything about your own set of values from this activity?

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

WILDFLOWERS OF SASKATCHEWAN

- If possible, take a hike in an area where there may be some wildflowers in bloom. Using a field guide, try to identify and sketch wildflowers of Saskatchewan.

BIRDS OF SASKATCHEWAN

- Take the students on a bird walk. Have field guides available and have students bring binoculars if possible, and try to identify some common birds of Saskatchewan.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Early Days – Homesteaders: Web site developed Josi Giannetta, Regina, Sask. Includes photographs of sod houses in Saskatchewan. <http://www.saskschools.ca/~gregory/intro.html>

Homesteading on the Prairies: A part of Exploring Saskatchewan History Through the Decades. <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/exploring/homestead/index.htm>

View 42 images of stone buildings in Saskatchewan.

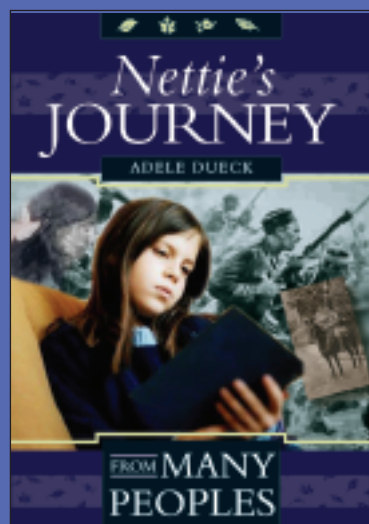
<http://www.reginaphotoclub.com/MemberGallery/Stone-Buildings-Saskatchewan>

Explore “Celebrating Saskatchewan’s Heritage”, created by Saskatoon Public Schools, Online Learning Centre in partnership with the Western Development Museum.

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Saskatchewan100/index.html>

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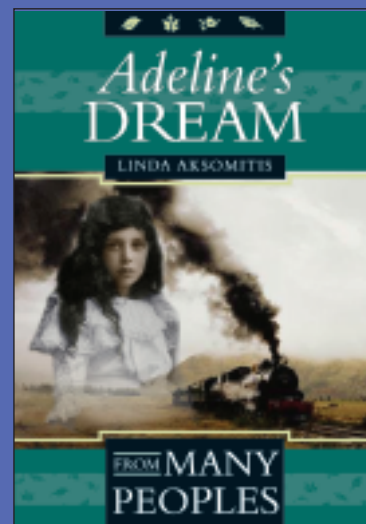


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