

UNIT 1

Module 1

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Reader's Questions

What is an expert reader?

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

What are the characteristics of a historical fiction book?

1.1 Reading Is Detective Work

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

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

Sneak Peek

In this module you will learn:

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





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

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

1.2 What Is an Expert Reader?

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

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

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



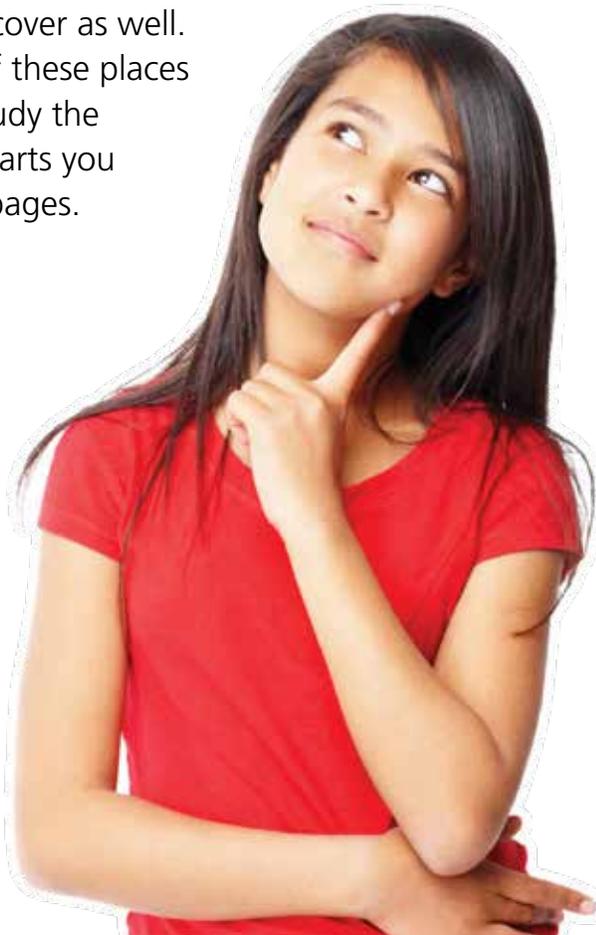
These are just a few of the numerous strategies that expert readers use to better understand what they read. Better understanding helps readers enjoy what they read more deeply.

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

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

1.3 The Clues on the Cover

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



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

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

Better understanding helps readers enjoy what they read more deeply.



READER'S TOOLBOX

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



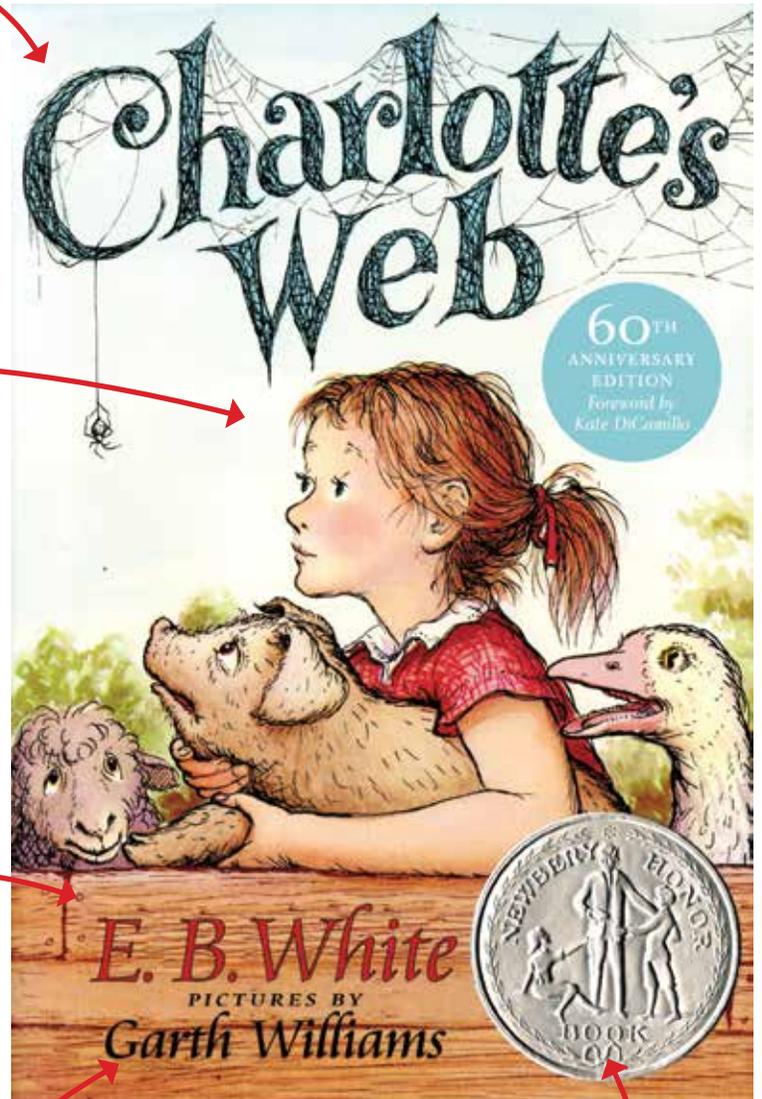
Clues on the

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

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

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

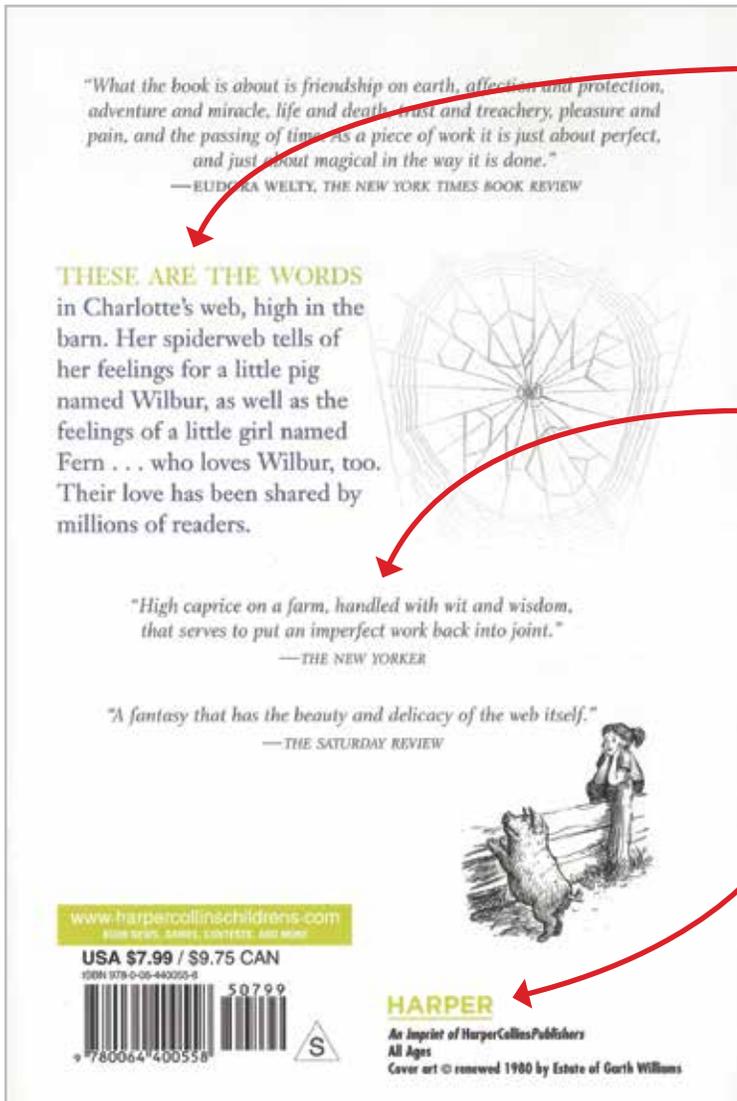
The name of the **illustrator** may also appear on the front cover if the book contains a lot of pictures. The illustrator is the artist who creates the front cover and the pictures inside the book.



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



Cover of a Book



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

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

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



1.4 Nonfiction or Fiction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Nonfiction and Fiction Books in My Home	
Nonfiction	Fiction

1.5 Narrative or Nonnarrative Texts

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

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

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

narrative (adj.) – Organized around a storyline.

nonnarrative (adj.) – Organized by topics.



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

Narrative and Nonnarrative Books in My Home	
Narrative	Nonnarrative

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



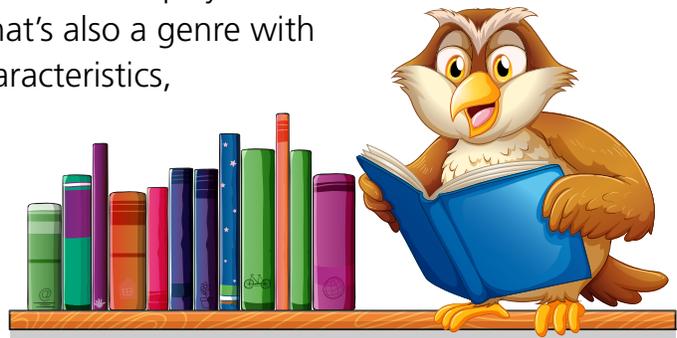
READER'S TOOLBOX

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

1.6 Literary Genres

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

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





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

literary (adj.) –
Related to literature.

1.7 Why Genre Matters

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

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



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

An expert reader might think:

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



Expert Reader's Thinking Process

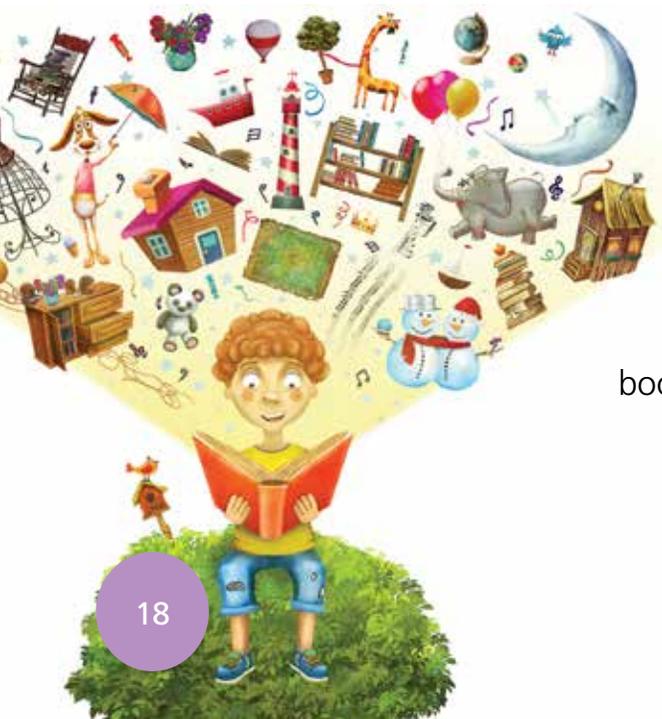
Another expert reader might think:

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

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

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

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





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

Student Sample

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

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Literary Genres	
Historical fiction – A realistic story set during a particular time in the past.	
Informational nonfiction – A factual text about real people, places, things, or events.	
Mystery – A story with a mystery, puzzle, or crime to solve.	
Poetry – The expression of an idea with language selected for sound, rhythm, and meaning.	
Realistic fiction – A story that could happen in the real world.	
Reference book – A catalogue of information, such as a dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, almanac, or encyclopedia.	
Science fiction – A story based on real or imaginary science or technology.	
Traditional literature – Stories handed down through cultures either orally or in writing, including fables, fairy tales, folktales, myths, legends, and tall tales.	



1.8 Introduction to Historical Fiction

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

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

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

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





Characteristics of Historical Fiction

Characters

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

Setting

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

Dialogue

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

Plot

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

Description

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

Conflict

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



1.9 The Cover of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*

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

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

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

1. Who is the author of this book?

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

3. Who is the publisher of this book?

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



Readers in Residence: unit 1

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

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

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

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

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



1.10 Clues to Genre

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

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



READER'S TOOLBOX

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

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

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

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



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

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

1.11 Make a Prediction

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



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

Handwriting practice area with a purple dashed border, a purple pencil icon at the top left, and four horizontal lines for writing.



1.12 Create Your Own Book Cover

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

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

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

<p>A brief description of your book</p>	<p>Book Title</p> <p>Draw an illustration about your book.</p>	
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<p>Author's picture</p>	<p>Short biography of author</p>	
<p>BOOK TITLE</p>		<p>Author's Name</p>

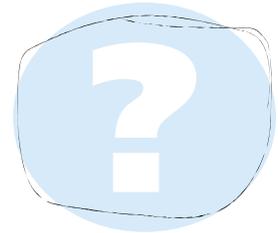
Use this template to help you design a book cover of your own, following the directions on the next page.



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

1.13 Review: Reader's Questions

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



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

1.14 Book Talk



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

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

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



Checklist for Module 1

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

Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
1.4 Nonfiction or Fiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List examples of nonfiction and fiction books that you have in your home. 		
1.5 Narrative or Nonnarrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List examples of narrative and nonnarrative books that you have in your home. 		
1.7 Why Genre Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a book in your home or library that fits each genre listed and fill in the chart with the book titles. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the different parts of each book and talk about the differences you notice with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. 		
1.8 Introduction to Historical Fiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the unique features of a historical fiction book with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. 		
1.9 The Cover of <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i> (SPT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer the questions by using the clues you find on the front and back covers of the book. 		
1.10 Clues to Genre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write your best ideas for answers to these questions. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss your answers to the questions with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. 		

Checklist Point System:

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

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

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

Tasks	Done ✓	Points Earned
1.11 Make a Prediction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write your predictions about what you expect to happen based on the clues you find on the cover of <i>SPT</i>. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your answers to the questions with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. 		
1.12 Create Your Own Book Cover <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a front and back cover for a book you might like to write someday. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include plenty of clues for your readers so they will know what they can expect to find inside. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask several family members and friends to use the questions in 1.9 and 1.11 to answer questions about your cover. 		
1.13 Review: Reader’s Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your answers to the READER’S QUESTIONS from the beginning of the module with a parent, teacher, or reading coach. 		
1.14 Book Talk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the questions to get a discussion going about the books your family or friends enjoy. 		
Total		

Module 1: 90 points possible