Reading

Reading with Short Chapter Books
How to Use This Guide

Place each week’s schedule page behind the correct week’s tab in your Core Instructor’s Guide. We provide a 5-day schedule because we believe beginning readers should read each day.

In this guide, you’ll find general comprehension questions by chapter, cultural literacy notes, and map assignments for books where appropriate.

The cultural literacy notes add depth and context to the stories and help your children develop what E. D. Hirsch calls “cultural literacy”—a knowledge of those things children must know in order to be appropriately conversant about subjects they may encounter throughout their lives. You can find these terms in the notes under the heading “Vocabulary.”

For instance, students read about “wigwams” in our Level D book *The Courage of Sarah Noble*. We explain what a wigwam is so you can share with your children. This adds a layer of understanding to your children.

If you think we’ve asked a particularly picky question, please feel free to skip it! To learn to answer questions is a skill your children will use.

Timelines

Note to Mom or Dad: Timeline suggestions are in **bold** type with a ♦ symbol. Those Timeline suggestions preceded by a ♦+ symbol have an accompanying Timeline Figure. Timeline Figure packets are included in Core packages or may be purchased separately. See www.sonlight.com for more details.

When there is a range of dates (e.g., 1865–1890), we recommend that you use the ending date when placing the figure on your Timeline. Also, please note that we have taken our dates from various authorities. Since even the best authorities do not agree on specific dates, especially for biblical references, you will find discrepancies among the dates we suggest. Feel free to adapt these assignments as you see best.

Map Activities

Sonlight’s geography program weaves assignments throughout the year from every appropriate book. It demonstrates to your children the importance of map skills while enhancing the learning adventure. Complete the map assignments included in all of the guides to lend context to the stories your children are reading and improve their knowledge of geography. We provide map suggestions from the assigned reading in the Study Guide. Look for the ♣ symbol on the schedule page. This will alert you to a map assignment for that day’s Study Guide notes. Use the coordinates and the location name in the Study Guide (see sample below) to find each location on the laminated colorful maps. Then, your children can note each location on your Markable Map using a washable pen. (We recommend Vis-a-Vis® pens. If you should accidentally use a non-washable marker, rubbing alcohol can remove those errant marks.) We want to make it easy and quick to check your student’s work on the Markable Map with the coordinates and the location name in your guide.

Helps: The map included in your Study Guide also folds into your IG and can serve as your place holder throughout the year.

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### Week 1

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### Day 1

**Clara and the Bookwagon** | Chapter 1

**Setting**
Maryland; early 1900s.

**Overview**
Clara wants to learn to read, but Papa thinks there is no time to read on a farm. When a traveling library in a horse-drawn wagon passes by, Clara and the librarian persuade Clara’s father that reading is helpful and good.

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: Does Clara know how to read?
A: no—there is no one to teach her, and nothing to read

**Timeline and Map Activities**

Maryland (D10) (map 1)

### Day 2

**Clara and the Bookwagon** | Chapter 2

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: How much do the books cost in the store?
A: they are lent out free of charge, for it acts as a library

Q: Is Papa happy that Clara could borrow a book?
A: no—he thinks reading is for the wealthy; farm people do not have time to read

### Day 3

**Clara and the Bookwagon** | Chapters 3–4

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: What does Clara see while she is out working? [chap. 3]
A: the book wagon—a wagon full of books that travels from place to place

Q: How does the librarian think books can help farmers? [chap. 4]
A: all people need to rest sometimes; reading is fun and can teach about farming

### Day 4

**The Long Way to a New Land** | Chapters 1–2

**Setting**
The journey from Sweden to America in the late 1860s.

**Overview**
Since no rain fell in Sweden, Carl Erik and his family have nothing to eat. Their relatives in the United States invite the family to emigrate to the U.S. So the family sells their farm and starts the long voyage. First by buggy to the port, then a short ocean voyage to England, across England by train, then the long steamship voyage to New York.

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: Why is Carl Erik hungry? [chap. 1]
A: they and their neighbors had no rain during the growing season, so they could not grow crops

Q: How did the family pay for tickets to America? [chap. 2]
A: they sold their farm and most of their possessions

**Timeline and Map Activities**

Gothenburg, Sweden (A3) (map 3) [chap. 2]

### Day 5

**The Long Way to a New Land** | Chapter 3

**Note:** A doctor could see a smallpox vaccination because it leaves a little pox mark in the skin.

Q: How did the family journey to Liverpool?
A: they spent three days under the deck of a ship; when they reached England, they took a train to Liverpool, which took another day

**Timeline and Map Activities**

Hull, England (A2); Liverpool, England (B1) (map 3)
### Week 2

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#### Day 1

**The Long Way to a New Land** | Chapters 4–5

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: What happened while sailing across the sea? [chap. 4]
A: *a storm came up, which made people seasick; everyone was locked under the deck, and some became ill with fever*

Q: Was Carl Erik happy to arrive in America? [chap. 5]
A: *yes—he got to eat bread and butter, his father had work, and they had hope for a better life*

**Timeline and Map Activities**

- New York (C11) (map 1) [chap. 5]

#### Day 2

**The Long Way Westward** | Chapter 1

**Setting**
From New York to Minnesota in the late 1860s.

**Overview**
After Carl Erik and his family reach New York, they have several more days of travel on several slow trains before they reach their relatives in Minnesota.

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: Describe the different railroad cars.
A: *the First Class cars have plush seats, lamps, and heated air; the Third Class seats have wooden benches and crowded conditions; people sleep on the floor*

**Timeline and Map Activities**

- Hudson River (D11); New Jersey (D11); Minnesota (C7); Philadelphia (D10) (map 1)

#### Day 3

**The Long Way Westward** | Chapter 2

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: Is everyone in America equal?
A: *no, some people are wealthy and can afford to pay for expensive tickets; yes, in that there are not lords and kings, which would be “higher” in the social structure than farmers*

**Timeline and Map Activities**

- Pennsylvania (D10); Trade Lake, Wisconsin (C8); Pittsburgh (D10); Chicago (D8); Ohio (D9) (map 1)

#### Day 4

**The Long Way Westward** | Chapters 3–4

**To Discuss After You Read**

Q: What is the Svea Society? [chap. 3]
A: *people from Sweden who help the immigrants*

Q: How did the family travel to their new home? [chap. 4]
A: *by railroad and on a steamboat*

**Timeline and Map Activities**

- Crestline, Ohio (D9); Fort Wayne, Indiana (D9); La Crosse, Wisconsin (C8); Mississippi River (F7) (map 1) [chap. 3]
- St. Paul, Minnesota (C7); Anoka, Minnesota (C7) (map 1) [chap. 4]
Setting
Colorado in 1880.

Overview
Noah Bidson loves living on the prairie, and sees no use for reading and writing. When his Aunt Dora comes to teach him, he stubbornly avoids lessons for a week. Then Aunt Dora shows him how much more she knows about the prairie because she can read. Intrigued, Noah agrees to learn. And once he starts, he realizes he loves learning! He can understand the world around him better because of the books he reads.

Vocabulary
sod house: a house built with grass-covered soil that is held together in brick-like clumps by the roots. [chap. 1]

To Discuss After You Read
Q: What chores did Noah do? [chap. 1]
A: hauled water, fed animals, kept snakes out of the house, kept the hearth fire lit

Q: Why is Mrs. Bidson surprised when she sees her sister? [chap. 2]
A: Dora was in an accident and became paralyzed

Q: How does Noah avoid learning? [chap. 3]
A: he excuses himself to do chores, which he does as slowly as possible; he knows his aunt can’t chase him, so he simply stays away from the house

Timeline and Map Activities
📍 Maine (C12); Colorado (E4) (map 1) [chap. 1]
### Day 1

**Prairie School | Chapters 4–5**

To Discuss After You Read

- **Q:** How does Aunt Dora demonstrate to Noah that reading can be useful? [chap. 4]
  - **A:** she asks him about his beloved prairie; when he doesn't know the answers, she reads facts and teaches him

- **Q:** How does reading help Aunt Dora? [chap. 5]
  - **A:** it helps her understand what she sees and hears

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**Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie**

- pp. 7–22

**Riding the Pony Express**

- chap. 1

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### Day 2

**Prairie School | Chapters 6–8**

To Discuss After You Read

- **Q:** When Noah recites the alphabet, how do his parents respond? [chap. 6]
  - **A:** his father smacks the table in excitement, and his mother claps for joy

Read Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Psalm of Life.”

**A Psalm Of Life**

WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN
SAID TO THE PSALMIST

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!—
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

To Discuss After You Read

- **Q:** What new tradition did the family begin after dinner? [chap. 7]
  - **A:** Noah would read to them

- **Q:** What can Noah read? [chap. 8]
  - **A:** he can read the whole world—and he can write about it, too
Day 3

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie | pp. 7–22

Setting
Matinicus Rock, off the coast of Maine, in 1856.

Overview
When Abbie’s father sails from his island lighthouse for the afternoon to bring back needed supplies, he reminds Abbie that she is responsible for the lighthouse until his return. A storm begins and prevents her father’s return. Abbie cares for the lighthouse for four weeks while she waits for calm seas.

To Discuss After You Read
Q: Why did Papa go to town?  
A: Mama needed medicine, the lights needed oil, and the family needed food

Timeline and Map Activities
Matinicus Rock (or Matinicus Island), Maine (map 1)

Day 4

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie | pp. 23-end

To Discuss After You Read
Q: What challenges did Abbie face?  
A: to keep the ice off the windows, to care for her family, little food, the weight of responsibility
Q: How did Papa know that the family was okay?  
A: he watched for the lighthouse lights, and he saw them every night

Day 5

Riding the Pony Express | Chapter 1

Setting
Western USA; 1860.

Overview
Dick travels to St. Joseph, Missouri in 1860 to connect with his dad. Once there, he discovers his dad is not in town because he is riding cross-country on the Pony Express. The Pony Express is a fast mail service in the days before the country was spanned by the railroad or telegraph. The Pony Express used relays of horses, fresh horses waiting at stations located about every ten miles, all the way across the country. Each rider would make, on average, a 70-mile “run,” switching horses about six times, before he would pass his saddle-bags to the next man. Pony Express riders faced many dangers and hardships, but the motto “The mail must go through” was an urgent reality. What a great introduction to this memorable era in American history!

To Discuss After You Read
Q: Why does Dick travel to St. Joe?  
A: his aunt sent him from New York to live with his father

Timeline and Map Activities
Pony Express (April 1860-October 1861)  
The Pony Express (April 1860-October 1861) (map 1)
Chart the journey Dick took by train from New York (C11) to St. Joseph, Missouri (D7) (map 1)