

## Questions for "The Courage of Sarah Noble"

### Book Summary:

During the early 1700's, an eight-year-old girl named Sarah, accompanies her father into the wilderness to build a house. Although many times she was frightened and wanted to be anyplace else than where she was, she kept her courage. As we read this book, we find out how two very different groups of people learn to live in the same land -- the European settlers (like Sarah's family) and the people who already lived in this part of North America (Native Americans) when Europeans first came to live here.

### About the Author:

Alice Dalgliesh (1893 – 1979) was an educator, book reviewer, and author. She taught elementary school for 17 years and taught children's literature at Columbia University. She wrote more than 40 books for children, several of which were Newberry Honor books.

### Comprehension Questions:

1. When is the story taking place?

Although an actual date is not used in the text of the story, students will discover through context clues (inferencing) that the time period had to be long ago.

The colonial period of history occurred during the early 1600s to the late 1700s. The reference in chapter 2 to the "Massachusetts Colony" will lead students to understand that the story is probably taking place during the colonial period. The actual time of the story is known, however, because an "author's note" is included in the book explaining the time, setting, and events surrounding the story. It is recommended that teacher read this author's note after the story has been read so that students can have the experience of using context clues in the story to answer the questions.

2. What historical events are mentioned in the story?

Note: The teacher may need to clarify that an "historical event" is not just a major event like the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence, but can also be the smaller events that affect how people lived, acted, etc. The birth of the students can be considered an "historical event" in the context of their lives. Examples of historical events:

#### **Chapter 4**

"Men had come over from Milford to buy the land from the Indians. They had cleared it and divided it into plots for houses."

#### **Chapter 6**

"They traded with the Indians for corn."

3. Did any of the characters really exist?

The answer to this question is located in the author's note--"Sarah Noble was a real little girl who came, in 1707 to cook for her father while he built the first house in New Milford.

4. What characters were fictionalized in the story?

Tall John, the Indian, and his family are fictionalized characters, although the author tells us that town records show that Sarah was indeed friendly with a "tall Indian who 'loved her as he did his own children'."

5. How then does historical fiction differ from nonfiction?

A variety of answers will probably be acceptable, but students should understand that nonfiction is based entirely on fact (e.g., a textbook), while historical fiction is a combination of both facts and fiction (some situations or characters are real and some are created in the mind of the author). Historical fiction has the following elements:

- a period that is accurate in both time and place
- historical events that affect the story
- one or more characters that really existed
- a fictionalization of an historical figure

6. How does Sarah's father view the Native Americans?

7. What possessions would you want to have with you in the cave if you were Sarah?

8. Tell about a time when you have stayed away from your family (i.e. sleepover, camp). How did you feel? How was it different?

9. Why is it important that Sarah's courage always be with her?

10. What do you think will happen next with Sarah and her family?

11. Do you think it was a good idea for Sarah to accompany her father on such a trip? Why or why not?

12. How might Sarah's life have been different if she hadn't gone into the wilderness with her father?

13. What was the most courageous thing Sarah did?

14. What do you think would have happened to Sarah if something had happened to her father when he left her with the Indians and went back to get the rest of the family?

15. What did Sarah's father mean when he said, "To be afraid and to be brave is the best courage of all?"

**Extension Questions**

1. Exploring Cultural Differences -- Share something Sarah learned about how she and the Indians were either alike or different as she lived among them (clothing, housing, food, beliefs, concern for others). How do the pictures in the story reveal these differences/similarities?

Possible answers -- Native Americans and English settlers used the land differently in terms of how they provided food and shelter for themselves (e.g., primarily hunting & fishing vs. cultivated farming methods, simple huts vs. log cabins, etc.) and the relative positive and/or negative impact on the environment these two groups demonstrated.

2. Exploring Character Traits -- How are friendship, trust, loyalty and respect dealt with in the text?

Suggested Activities:

1. Look up the word “courage” in the dictionary and write the definition in your best handwriting and decorate the page with illustrations of what you think courage is.
2. Sarah went into the forest to cook for her father. Try your hand at some of these recipes (or the leader can use these for snack suggestions):

[Maple Candy](#)

[Snack in the Saddle Again](#)

[Taffy Pull](#)

[Turkey Jerky](#)

[Homemade Fruit Roll Ups](#)

[Indian Pudding](#)

[Homemade Sausage](#)

[Apple Butter](#)

[Sausage and Apple Rings](#)