



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Prairie Lotus

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Ages: 10–14
Grades: 5–8
Reading Level: 7th grade
Lexile Measure: 790L
Guided Reading Level: Y
**Developmental Reading
Assessment (DRA):** 70

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, and social studies (including individual development, identity, and geography).

Synopsis of Book

Prairie Lotus by Linda Sue Park is a historical fiction novel set in the Dakota Territory in the 1880s. It follows Hanna, a half-Chinese, half-white girl who moves with her father to a small frontier town after her mother's death. Hanna dreams of becoming a dressmaker and finishing school, but she faces discrimination and exclusion because of her Asian heritage. Despite the racism and prejudice around her, Hanna remains determined to honor her mother's legacy and find acceptance in the community. Through resilience, courage, and kindness, she begins to carve out a place for herself on the American prairie.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Next Generation Science Standards

- Engineering Design
- Earth and Human Activity

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Trace the journey Hanna and her father take from Los Angeles to the Dakota Territory using an interactive map tool such as Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Mark significant stops along the way and discuss how the cultural shift between urban California and frontier life might have affected Hanna's sense of identity and belonging.

3. Use Google Earth ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to explore the landscape of the Great Plains and compare it to the descriptions of LaForge in the novel. Reflect on how the setting shapes characters' daily routines, opportunities, and challenges through a class Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or discussion post.
4. Research the Dakota Territory in the 1880s and create a visual timeline/map hybrid using Sutori ([TeachersFirst review](#)) that shows both historical events and fictional moments from

Prairie Lotus. Include key topics such as Westward Expansion, railroad development, Native American displacement, and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

5. Use StoryMapJS ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a "Map of Belonging" to show how Hanna's relationships and identity evolve across locations. Have students write a reflection about where they see themselves fitting into the map and what makes a place feel like home.

Extension Activities:

1. Make dumplings as a class using a simple pork or vegetable filling wrapped in store-bought dumpling wrappers. Discuss how preparing traditional food helps Hanna connect to her Chinese heritage while also trying to fit into life in LaForge.
2. Read an excerpt from the PBS documentary [Becoming American: The Chinese Experience](#). Have students reflect on the challenges Chinese immigrants faced during the 19th century and how those experiences parallel Hanna's in *Prairie Lotus*.
3. Read a short excerpt from *Little House on the Prairie* and compare it with a passage from *Prairie Lotus*. Discuss how each author portrays frontier life and whose stories are centered or left out of the narrative.
4. Have students use StoryCorps ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to record short audio interviews with family or community members about moving to a new place and finding a sense of belonging. Share them with the class, then compare these stories of displacement, courage, and starting over to Hanna's experiences in the novel.
5. Visit the [Chinese American Museum](#) website to explore its online exhibits on Chinese railroad workers and family life in the 1800s. Learners can choose an artifact to research further and present its historical significance to the class.
6. Explore examples of frontier fashion in online museum collections (e.g., the Smithsonian or the [Maggie May Clothing Site](#)). Learners can sketch an outfit Hanna might have sewn for herself or others, incorporating both practical and cultural elements.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [Linda Sue Park Website](#)
- [Prairie Lotus Teacher Resources](#)
- [TeachingBooks Resources](#)
- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [Vocabulary.com *Prairie Lotus* Activities](#)