

THE STORY GIRL

by

L. M. Montgomery

"I know a story..." Four little words that can start a young heart racing in anticipation. The beloved author, L. M. Montgomery, satisfies this anticipation in her book *The Story Girl*. Sara Stanley of Carlisle on Prince Edward Island is the Story Girl. Gifted in the art of storytelling, Sara has a tale for every occasion.

Bev King and his brother, Felix, are sent to spend the summer on the old family homestead, where the King family has lived for four generations. The boys are eager to visit the haunts of their father's boyhood and to meet the relatives they have heard so much about. The farm is now run by their kind Uncle Alec and his no-nonsense wife, Aunt Janet. Of special interest to the boys are the cousins: pretty, but slightly vain, Felicity, warm-hearted and sympathetic Cecily and Dan with the crooked mouth.

On a neighboring farm, another cousin, the Story Girl, lives with Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger. After her mother's death, her artist father sent her to live with them while he roams around Europe. She has inherited her father's artistic talent but instead of using paint, she presents her pictures with words. Upon meeting the Story Girl, Bev says, "If voices had colour, hers would have been like a rainbow. It made words *live*. Whatever she said became a breathing entity, not a mere verbal statement or utterance." He and Felix were soon captivated by Sara's stories such as "The Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess," "How Kissing was Discovered," and the many family stories handed down through the years.

The King cousins, along with Peter, a hired boy, and the weeping Sara Ray make up the community of young people who work, play and sometimes quarrel with each other. They spend their summer finding out what God looks like, awaiting the judgement day together, writing down their dreams and eagerly waiting for the Story Girl to say, "I know a story..."

Lucy Maud Montgomery, herself a "Story Girl," has created many heartwarming characters. Her sympathy for children, especially orphans, is seen in stories set on beautiful Prince Edward Island, Canada. Perhaps it is her strong feeling for family and roots that make her stories so appealing and enduring.

Lucy was only thirteen months old when her own mother died and she was sent to live with her elderly grandparents who were strict and did not understand the sensitive child's needs. Certainly her wonderful gift for story telling can be traced back to those years of loneliness.

Choose from the following suggested activities to continue your enjoyment and learning:

1. Practice telling a story from *The Story Girl* as you think Sara would tell it.
2. Join in a storytelling contest if one is held near you or organize one for your family or home school group.
3. Start a collection of stories. Clip from magazines or copy down what you hear. These can be true or not.

4. Read a collection of Longfellow's and Tennyson's poems.
5. Begin writing your family's stories. These may be stories you have heard from your parents or other relatives, or stories that have happened to you.
6. Locate Prince Edward Island on a map.
7. Learn the history of Prince Edward Island.
8. Research apple trees. Learn about pruning and grafting.
9. Make apple pies experimenting with different kinds of apples. What apples make the best pies?
10. Try starting a family tradition of planting a tree for a new baby or some other special occasion.
11. Read the sequel to *The Story Girl*, *The Golden Road*, to find out what happens to the King cousins and friends.
12. If, like Peter, you haven't read the Bible all the way through, begin now.
13. Enjoy other books by L. M. Montgomery:
 - a. *Anne of Green Gables* series
 - b. *Jane of Lantern Hill*
 - c. *Emily of New Moon* series
 - d. *Pat of Silver Bush* series
14. The Story Girl even makes the multiplication table interesting. "We had never dreamed that there was so much in the multiplication table. As she announced it, the fact that three times three was nine was exquisitely ridiculous, five times six almost brought tears to our eye, eight times seven was the most tragic and frightful thing ever heard of, and twelve times twelve rang like a trumpet call to victory." Just for fun, try reciting the multiplication table for a young friend and see how entertaining you can be.
15. L. M. Montgomery writes, "There is such a place as fairyland - but only children can find the way to it. And they do not know that it is fairyland until they have grown so old that they forget the way. One bitter day, when they seek it and cannot find it, they realize what they have lost; and that is the tragedy of life. On that day the gates of Eden are shut behind them and the age of gold is over. Henceforth they must dwell in the common light of common day. Only a few, who remain children at heart, can ever find that fair, lost path again; and blessed are they above mortals. They, and only they, can bring us tidings from that dear country where we once sojourned and from which we must evermore be exiles. The world calls them its singers and poets and artists and story-tellers; but they are just people who have never forgotten the way to fairyland. "What do you think she means? Do you agree? Why or why not?"