

# A Discussion Guide

from

**A** *Illinois*  
**AGRICULTURE**  
in the Classroom





# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## SUMMARY OF TEXT

*Prairie Lotus*, by Linda Sue Park, follows the journey of a young girl named Hanna Edmund and her father as they settle in the Dakota Territory during the 1880s. Hanna is excited to learn her father has decided to open a dress goods shop in the town of LaForge, as well as find that there is a school she might attend. However, there is one problem. Hanna is half-Chinese, in a society that is unwelcoming, and unpleasant towards people of different ethnicities. But Hanna is determined to make the town see her and accept her for who she is. This story brings a new perspective to the trials Asian Americans faced during the early days of America. It opens the door for serious conversations about American history, diversity, and growth.

## AG-VOCABULARY

- Chapter 1: Timpsina
- Chapter 1: Picket Lines
- Chapter 1: Feed sack
- Chapter 2: Roan
- Chapter 2: Sorrel
- Chapter 2: Mare
- Chapter 4: Fields
- Chapter 6: Groves
- Chapter 16: Hooves
- Chapter 16: Taproot
- Chapter 16: Husk

## IAITC ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Check out the Ag in the Classroom Horse Ag Mag to learn more: [https://iaitc.co/AgMag\\_Horse](https://iaitc.co/AgMag_Horse)
- The Illinois Ag Ed mAGic lessons can provide more activities relating to prairie grasses and native vegetation: <https://iaitc.co/mAGiclessons>
- *Prairie Lotus* focuses on many different events in history. Check out the Illinois History Ag Mag here: [https://iaitc.co/AgMag\\_History](https://iaitc.co/AgMag_History)
- Do you ever wonder where your clothes come from? Use this lesson to teach students how the wool from sheep, and other fibers are used to make the clothes we wear every day: <https://iaitc.co/SweaterWeather>
- Use <https://iaitc.co/history> to research different events in Illinois history.





# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 1

Page 1

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is Hanna so shocked to see people with black hair?
- Hanna loves sewing because it takes up all her attention. Is there something in your life you feel that way about?

### WRITING PROMPT

- What hobby do you have that others might think is “weird”? What makes you passionate about it?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: HISTORY

- Research the history of Native American reservations and their relationship with settlers.

#### VOCABULARY

Petulance	Encroach
Paper Patterns	Skirmishes

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## CHAPTER 2

Page 13

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it so important to Hanna that LaForge has a school?
- Why did Papa choose LaForge for them to settle down?
- What made Papa and Mama’s marriage so unusual?

### WRITING PROMPT

- For centuries, riots have taken place over the topic of race. What current events can you think of that are similar to the events in this chapter?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: HISTORY

- Research the Los Angeles Chinatown Massacre and riots that occurred during the time and how it affected the Chinese people who lived there.

#### VOCABULARY

Lotus	Livery
Defiance	Lynched
Shrewd	



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 3

Page 25

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Papa believe that Hanna attending school will cause problems for them?
- Mr. Harris seems surprised that Hanna speaks English. Why do you think this is?
- How will leaving on her bonnet at school help Hanna hide her differences from the other kids?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Do you predict Hanna attending school will cause trouble for her and Papa? What problems could they face?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: ART

- Draw a “sieve” using the descriptions from the book.

#### VOCABULARY

Muslin

Sieve

Weevils

Sixth Reader

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## CHAPTER 4

Page 34

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How was Hanna able to make such quick assumptions about Dolly on the first day of school?
- Do you think Hanna’s plan to leave on her bonnet in class is working?
- How did you feel on your first day of school?
- Think about the way school was set up back then. How is it different from now?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna can sense the other girls in the schoolhouse do not like Dolly, and they sometimes will exclude her from their conversations. Have you ever been in a similar situation as Dolly? How did that make you feel?

#### VOCABULARY

Cambric

Pretense

Demure

Modesty



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 5

Page 46

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did Mama braiding Hanna's hair help Hanna realize she didn't want to be blonde?
- Why are the older girls talking about Hanna when she arrives at school?

### WRITING PROMPT

- What would you have done if you had been in Hanna's situation when she arrived at school and hears her classmates talking about her?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: HISTORY

- Hanna's name has significance. Does your name have a special meaning? Talk to your family about your name or research the meaning of it online. Share what you find out about your name.

#### VOCABULARY

Gratifying  
Embroider

Merchant

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## CHAPTER 6

Page 56

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was Hanna so moved by the younger girl asking her for a dip of water?
- Why do you think three students did not return after lunch?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Miss Walters made her students realize they were all different and they all came from somewhere else. How might this help them better understand and accept Hanna?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

- Is everyone in your classroom from the same place? What makes your fellow students unique? Participate in the same activity as Miss Walters's class to celebrate your differences.

#### VOCABULARY

Mired  
Dispel

Porcelain



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 7

Page 67

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is Sam so intrigued by Hanna eating oranges every day?
- Sam's father is very vocal about his negative opinions on Hanna. Will this impact Sam's outlook on the situation?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Miss Walters was willing to vouch for keeping Hanna in school. Do you think this will be enough for the townspeople to accept Hanna? Why or why not?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: AGRICULTURE

- Hanna ate oranges every day because they are a common crop grown in California. Research other crops that are grown primarily in other states and present your findings to the class.

#### VOCABULARY

Stealthily	Civilized
Comported	Guffaws

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## CHAPTER 8

Page 76

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think happened to Hanna's calligraphy paper?
- Why did the students go from being comfortable with Hanna one day to picking on her the next?
- Why do you think over half a dozen students did not show up in school the day after the town meeting?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna began thinking about Sam in a romantic way, but a relationship between them would be illegal. What would happen if someone like Sam's father knew she felt this way?

#### VOCABULARY

Inquiry	Tantalizing
Belligerent	Calligraphy



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 9

Page 85

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did Sam know exactly where Hanna's penmanship paper was?
- Why did Hanna hide the fact she was being targeted by other students from Miss Walters?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Until her paper was placed in the water bucket, Hanna's schoolmates had been civil towards her. How could the sudden shift in behavior raise alarms for Hanna's well-being?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Use foreshadowing to make inferences about how school will be for Hanna in the future. How will the students treat her in the coming weeks?

#### VOCABULARY

Sodden  
Meek

Admonition  
Benign

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## CHAPTER 10

Page 91

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was Sam chasing one of the Heywood boys down the street?
- Hanna can distract herself with work at the store over the weekend. What do you think will happen when she returns to school?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna is upset by the teasing and torment of her peers. She decides to seek comfort from her books in order to avoid having an emotional outburst. When you are upset or angry, what do you turn to for comfort and calming?

#### VOCABULARY

Indignities  
Banality

Daunted



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## **CHAPTER 11**

Page 100

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Although it is unfortunate that many students are not attending school, what is the positive effect of this on the girls who are still there?
- Dolly asks Hanna questions about her Chinese ethnicity, including questions about her different appearance. Why is it important to be conscious of how our words impact those around us?

### **WRITING PROMPT**

- Miss Walters and the families of her students each have the choice to attend school while Hanna is in attendance. How would you feel today if your classmates were removed from school by their parents simply because they thought you were different?

### **VOCABULARY**

Countenance

Foreboding

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## **CHAPTER 12**

Page 109

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Dolly's father is infuriated when he finds her walking alone with Hanna. Do you think it was Dolly's goal to make her father upset?
- Why does drawing a dress tailored to Dolly feel like revenge to Hanna?

### **WRITING PROMPT**

- When Hanna is feeling upset, she uses her Mama's advice to do one small thing for someone other than herself, and as a result she polishes her papa's boots. What is one small thing you could do for someone else in order to make yourself feel better when you are sad?

### **VOCABULARY**

Lampblack

Covet





# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 13

Page 118

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Papa turned down the idea of having a large mirror in the store?
- Why is Miss Walters's idea for Hanna and Bess to graduate early an "unsatisfying" compromise in Hanna's opinion?
- Do you think Hanna is making the right choice by taking her examination early? Why or why not?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna dreams of designing and sewing dresses. What do you dream of doing now or in the future?

#### VOCABULARY

Arithmetic      Feverishly  
Examinations

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## CHAPTER 14

Page 133

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean now that Hanna has her diploma?
- Why is it important that both women and men see the dress goods shop?
- Why is it important that Papa and Hanna host an opening day party?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Think about what you would do if you had to plan a party for the store opening today. What food and drinks would you serve? Who would be your target audience? Would you have entertainment? How would you advertise?

#### VOCABULARY

Facade      Daunting  
Lath



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 15

Page 139

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What events can you think of today that use raffles to attract people?
- Why do you think raffles are a good way to promote something?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna is very involved in her family's business. Have you worked with your family before or had a job for someone else? Tell us about your experience.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Alliteration: Use alliteration to make a phrase that summarizes this chapter.

#### VOCABULARY

Enameled

Diaphanous

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## CHAPTER 16

Page 147

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- During that time period, why would it be important for Hanna to know how to drive a wagon and shoot a gun?
- Why does Hanna find herself wishing her mother could meet the Native American women?
- Why do you think Hanna enjoys spending time with Wichapiwin?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna and Wichapiwin speak different languages. Have you ever been in a situation where you communicated in a different way than someone else? How did you adapt to understand each other?

#### VOCABULARY

Trowel

Tuber

Inconspicuous



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 17

Page 154

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Hanna care about the Native American women being turned in to the government?
- Who do you think Hanna is thinking of hiring as her assistant?
- How would you feel if you were in Hanna's position, and you couldn't do something you were passionate about because people discriminated against you?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna and Papa often disagree about things. Do you ever have disagreements with your parents, and what do you do in that situation? Tell us about that experience. Is there a different way the disagreement could have ended?

#### VOCABULARY

Linger                      Impudent  
Nonchalantly

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## CHAPTER 18

Page 164

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Hanna asked Bess to be her sewing assistant?
- When Bess's mother ignored Hanna, she realizes that she cannot control the thoughts and actions of other people. What can she control instead?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna spent a lot of time planning what her dress design will look like. Have you ever done a project that required lots of planning and detail? What was it?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: MATH

- Hanna offered to pay Bess 0.50 cents a day to work with her. Research what people have been paid to work throughout history and make a graph showing how it has changed over the decades.

#### VOCABULARY

Tiered                      Sprigged  
Elusive



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 19

Page 173

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it strange for Hanna to be Bess's boss?
- Bess is curious to try eating the new food Hanna offered her. Would you be willing to try it if you were in her position? What new foods have you tried recently?
- Why is Bess scared to become a teacher?

### WRITING PROMPT

Mama used to say, "*To save time, take time.*" Think about and share a time where you made a mistake because you were rushing to do something too fast. How would taking your time have changed the outcome?

#### VOCABULARY

Basting  
Treadle

Scholar

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## CHAPTER 20

Page 183

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think Hanna did the right thing by standing up to Mrs. Harris?
- How do you think Bess felt when her mother commented on Hanna's cleanliness?

### WRITING PROMPT

- We can gain a lot of knowledge from the italicized phrases of Mama's advice. In this chapter, Hanna remembers her saying "*For the person who is sour, do something sweet.*" Think about a situation when someone was sour or mean towards you. How would doing something sweet for that person change the scenario?

#### VOCABULARY

Axiom  
Mystified

Assiduously





# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 21

Page 191

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was Hanna so surprised and happy that Mr. Harris called her Bess's "friend"?
- Did Hanna make the right decision by telling Mr. Harris about the Sioux women she saw?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Why do you think Mr. Harris decided not to report the Sioux women to Yankton?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: HISTORY

- Research how the Sioux Nation was affected by the pass system being implemented. Did this cause tension between Native peoples and settlers?

#### VOCABULARY

Contempt                      Constitute  
Interpretation

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## CHAPTER 22

Page 198

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you think things would have been different for Papa and Mama if Miss Lorna had not given them her blessing and assistance in their marriage?
- Why did Hanna's parents get married in Arizona Territory?
- How has Papa changed since Mama died?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Have you ever found yourself in a position where you knew the rules in place were unfair? What did you do?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Flashback— In this chapter Hanna has a flashback to when her parents told her the story of how they got married. How does this flashback, as well as others, help you better understand the story?

#### VOCABULARY

Tainted                      Impudent  
Meticulous



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 23

Page 205

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Hanna think no one will believe her if she tells the truth about what Mr. Swenson did?
- How can Mr. Swenson easily get away with what he did to Hanna?
- What do you think the encounter with Mr. Swenson will do to Hanna's reputation?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Hanna is constantly being put down verbally by the people around her and has found ways to cope with it. But now, Mr. Swenson has physically harmed her. Do you think Hanna will decide to tell Mr. Harris what has happened to her? Why or why not?

#### VOCABULARY

Privy

Leer

Wistfully

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## CHAPTER 24

Page 215

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why did Hanna keep her encounter with Mr. Swenson a secret from Papa?
- Mr. Harris and Bess have been very kind and welcoming to Hanna. Why do you think the current situation has made them turn away from her?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Although the encounter with Mr. Swenson was not Hanna's fault, she is being blamed by the town. Think of a time when the blame for something was wrongly placed on you. How did this make you feel? Did you stand up for yourself and tell the truth? Why or why not?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Point of View– This story is told entirely from Hanna's point of view. How does this aid the story? How would the story be different if it was told from Bess's point of view instead?

#### VOCABULARY

Gargantuan

Patronize

Altercations

Tremulous



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 25

Page 224

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it significant that Hanna sews a lotus onto the dress?
- Why are Bess and Miss Walters better candidates to talk to the women in town than Hanna herself?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Late at night, Hanna remembers she must sew a lotus onto the green dress. Why do you think the book is titled *Prairie Lotus*? Explain two times within the book the author incorporated the title, and why those times were significant.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Symbolism- How does Hanna use symbolism in this chapter to honor her mother?

#### VOCABULARY

Livelihood

Dissipating

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## CHAPTER 26

Page 232

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why did some women not attend the shop opening, even after Bess and Miss Walters visited them?
- How did Bess and Miss Walters make their plan to visit the women in town?
- Mr. Swenson has been in trouble before; how was this helpful for Hanna?

### WRITING PROMPT

- Standing up for yourself can be very difficult, especially when most people are against you. Research people in history who stood for social change and equality. Choose one example and share its significance.

#### VOCABULARY

Tersely

Gaiety

Blithely



# CHAPTER READING GUIDE

## CHAPTER 27

Page 239

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think Hanna and Papa will stay in LaForge for good?
- Hanna thinks life would be easier if she had a younger sibling. How would this have made her life different? Do you think it would be easier for her to have someone to relate to?

### WRITING PROMPT

- If you were to step into this book, what is the first thing you would do and why? How would you use your actions to change the story?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: LITERARY DEVICES

- Theme- Are there one or more general themes that are established in the book? What major issues and ideas is the author trying to convey and explore?

#### VOCABULARY

Yearning                      Altered  
Surreptitiously

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## FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the title fit into the book? What makes it significant?
- Has reading about Hanna's experiences changed the way you think about others?
- Which character could you relate to the most? What makes them similar to you?
- How is agriculture incorporated into this book?
- What is the author's purpose for writing this story?
- Why is the setting and time so important to this story?
- What questions do you still have after completing the book?
- How does reading the author's note give you a better understanding of the book's purpose?
- What parallels can you find between Hanna and the author after reading the author's note?