"Too Soon a Woman" by Dorothy M. Johnson

Prereading
Additional Background
Discuss the Homestead Act  Tell students that the purpose of the Homestead Act was to encourage the settlement of the West. Pioneer life was hard and was made more difficult by the settlers' poverty.

Vocabulary Practice
(Especially for ELL) Preview Content-Area Vocabulary  English-language learners may not be familiar with several words and phrases in the story. On the chalkboard, write and define the following terms:

- two-bit (p. 170): cheap; of little value
- prid'near (p. 170): pretty near
- grub (p. 170): food
- timber claims (p. 170): tracts of land on which trees are grown to be cut
- homesteader (p. 170): person who has a homestead

Alternative Teaching Strategy
Preview and Predict Before they read the story, ask students to look at the title of the story and predict what the title foreshadows.

Reading
Alternative Activity
(Especially for ELL) Play the Audio Recording  Struggling readers may benefit from listening to the audio recording of the selection as they follow along in their books. Spanish-speaking English-language learners may also listen to the recording of the selection in Spanish.

Listening and Speaking Opportunity
(Core Skill) Summarize and Predict  Ask students to take turns reading aloud, pausing at points—for example, when the family meets Mary or when Pa has to leave them at the cabin. Ask students to sum up what has happened so far and predict what is going to happen next. Ask students whether they have ever had to make a big decision or do something they didn't really want to do on behalf of a younger sibling, or a child they were babysitting. Point out that this selection is about a woman who risks her life to provide food for three children. Ask students to think about her motivation as they read.
Postreading
Additional Practice

Write a Letter Have students write a letter from Mary to a childhood friend she left behind. In the letter, summarize the story from Mary’s perspective. Explain her motivation for joining the family. Tell students to imagine what happened to Mary before she met the narrator’s family.

Listening and Speaking Opportunity

Give an Oral Response Have students prepare and present an answer to the following question: Who benefited more from Mary joining the family, Mary or the father and children? Why do you think so?

Alternative Activities

Discuss a “What If” Scenario Discuss with students how unplanned factors early in the story affected the outcome. For example, what if Pa had not let Mary join them?

Core Skill) Compare and Contrast Draw the comparison between immigrants of today and the pioneers of the 1800s. Why do people immigrate to other lands or areas unfamiliar to them?
(Answers may include the idea that immigrants are in search of a better life, want to escape persecution or oppression, are looking for adventure.)

Explain that Pa took his three children west with him to find a better life. Ask students what clues are provided to indicate that Pa did not move for the adventure of it, but to escape desperate poverty. (The family was traveling in an old farm wagon. They had one weary horse. Pa wanted to find an old uncle who owned a two-bit sawmill. They were out of food and clean out of money. Pa didn’t want to take Mary along with him and his family.)

Ask students to compare the reactions of Pa and Mary as they confronted the hardships of traveling west. The following chart may be useful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pa</th>
<th>Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to conserve what they had and begrudged taking on Mary.</td>
<td>Wanted to escape from people who whipped her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveled twice as far as the wagon every day to hunt for his family.</td>
<td>Even though Pa was unfriendly, she cooked for the family and took care of the two girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to fish for his family.</td>
<td>Found the mushroom to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa was bitter. “There ain’t anything good left in the world or people to care if you live or die.”</td>
<td>She risked her life to see if the mushroom was safe for the children to eat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary Development

Reteach the Key Idea

Explain How Language Develops Point out that language develops and spreads in different ways. In some cases, language travels with conquering armies. Other times, it comes with immigrants or develops in response to technological change. Change can also result from the work of a gifted artist. Shakespeare is credited with coining more than seventeen hundred words. Have students find words first used by Shakespeare by using the library and the Internet. (possible answers: countless, bump, dwindle, housekeeping)

Additional Practice

Reinforce Sequencing Skills To reinforce the discussion about the use of timelines, ask students to use the timeline on page 176 of their textbooks to number the following events in the correct sequence, from 1 to 6. (3, 5, 1, 6, 2, 4)

1. Norse combines with the language of Britain forming Old English
2. Webster’s dictionary replaces the meanings of some older English words with American words and meanings
3. Proto-Indo-European slowly changes into many languages
4. English is spread around the world through the use of the World Wide Web
5. Latin influences the language of the Britons
6. French and Latin influence the English language and the period of Middle English begins

Reading Skills Development

Mixed Ability Group Summarize a Story Students may have difficulty determining the most important events to recount in a story summary and may include extraneous information. One way to help students is to remind them of the cause-effect structure of most stories. Arrange students in small, mixed ability groups to re-read together “Too Soon a Woman.” After groups have finished re-reading, give each group a number of note cards. Direct the groups to write on each of the cards a major event in the story and to arrange the cards in the order in which the events happened. Have groups then examine their cards and determine whether a card can be left out of the stack without leaving a gap in the cause-effect chain of events that forms the plot. If the card can be left out, the event can be left out of the summary of the story. Have groups compare their cards and work together with the class to construct on the chalkboard a summary of the story.
TARGETED STRATEGIES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Prereading

Reinforce the Key Idea

Introduce Motivation Introduce the concept of motivation by discussing the motivation of people who hold familiar jobs. On the chalkboard, draw a chart like the one below. Discuss the firefighter example with students. Then, ask them to suggest other jobs, actions, and motivations (an ambulance driver, taking sick people to a hospital; a sales clerk, getting people to buy things; a candidate for governor, getting people to vote for him/her), and write their suggestions on the board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a firefighter</td>
<td>putting out a fire</td>
<td>rescuing people saving property</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading

Alternative Activity

Make a Motivation Chart On the chalkboard, draw a motivation chart like the one above. Change the label on the first column from Job to Character. With the class, read “Too Soon a Woman” aloud. Pause after each major event, and ask students to fill in the chart for the characters in the story. For example, write in “Pa,” and ask them to think about his motivation for letting Mary stay with the family. Later, add Pa’s motivation for leaving the family to the chart.

Postreading

Alternative Assessment

Use TRUE/FALSE Statements Write the following statements on the chalkboard or on a transparency. Have students determine whether each statement is true or false. If a statement is false, ask students to rewrite the sentence to make it true.

1. The family began the trip with a large fancy Conestoga wagon.  
   (F; The family sets out in a one-horse wagon.)
2. Mary is eighteen years old in the story.  
   (T)
3. Everyone the family meets is going through hard times.  
   (T)
4. Mary eats the mushroom herself to make sure it isn’t poisonous.  
   (T)
5. The narrator and Mary get married.  
   (F; Mary marries Pa.)
Vocabulary and Comprehension

“Too Soon a Woman”

A. Match words and definitions. Write the letter of the correct definition next to each word.

1. grudging   a. less than enough
2. skimpyp   b. very thin and bony
3. gaunt      c. searched through the contents of a container
4. savoring   d. reluctant, unwilling
5. rummaged   e. enjoying or appreciating with great delight

B. Choose three words from above. Use each word in a sentence.

1. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________

C. Write T or F next to each statement to tell if it is true or false.

1. The family begins the trip with a large, fancy Conestoga wagon.
2. Mary is eighteen years old in the story.
3. Pa is happy when Mary joins them.
4. Mary came from a happy family.
5. Everyone they meet is going through hard times.
6. Mary eats the mushroom first to make sure it isn’t poisonous.
7. Pa and Mary get married after the story ends.
Additional Vocabulary Practice

“Too Soon a Woman”; Union Pacific Railroad Poster; “Home, Sweet Soddie”

A. Complete each sentence with a word from the Word Bank.

1. I’m hungry. Do we have any ____________________?

2. To keep the supplies dry, cover them with something that’s ____________________.

3. Many ____________________ found life on the prairie hard and lonely.

4. On the farm, they ____________________ pigs and cattle for food.

5. Pioneers would dig a ____________________ so they could have water.

B. Match words and definitions. Write the letter of the correct definition next to each word.

   1. soil
   2. timber
   3. acre
   4. sod
   5. poison
   6. crops
   7. prairie
   8. flea
   9. tornado
  10. hail

   a. trees that can be cut for lumber
   b. pieces of ice that sometimes fall in a thunderstorm
   c. tall, narrow, funnels of whirling wind
   d. something that causes illness or death if taken into the body
   e. top layer of grass, containing grass and its roots
   f. plants grown on a farm, such as wheat, corn, or fruit
   g. tiny, wingless, jumping insect that feeds on the blood of people and animals
   h. large area of grassland
   i. dirt
   j. measure of land; one acre is equal to 43,560 square feet
Collection 2: Do the Right Thing

Vocabulary and Comprehension
from Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad, p. 65
A. 1. d 3. e 5. b
   2. c 4. a
B. Sample answers given.
   1. She is strong-willed and willing to take risks to free people from slavery.
   2. Her appearance: She was short. Her actions: She knows how to avoid the slave catchers as she leads people on the Underground Railroad. Her speech: She is firm with the group, always urging them on. Her thoughts and feelings: She knows she must instill courage in her group, even though she is often afraid herself. The effect she had on other people: She inspired confidence because she was so determined and committed to her task.

Vocabulary and Comprehension
The Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850, p. 67
A. 1. c 3. a 5. e
   2. d 4. b
B. Sentences will vary.
C. 1. T 3. F 5. F
   2. T 4. T 6. T

Additional Vocabulary Practice
from Harriet Tubman;
The Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850, p. 68
A. 1. e 3. d 5. f
   2. b 4. a 6. c
B. Sentences will vary.
C. 1. had no teeth
   2. cradle of liberty
   3. taken to their heels
   4. goodly number

Vocabulary and Comprehension
Barbara Frietchie, p. 73
A. 1. a 3. a 5. b
   2. d 4. d
B. Sample answers given.
   1. She speaks her mind and has great courage.
   2. She means that they should not destroy the flag, which is still the flag of their country.
   3. The Southern army marches quietly through the town, passing by the Union flag as it waves above them.

Additional Vocabulary Practice
Barbara Frietchie, p. 74
A. 1. staff 4. tread
   2. stirred 5. host
   3. rent
B. Sentences will vary.

Vocabulary and Comprehension
Too Soon a Woman, p. 79
A. 1. d 3. b 5. c
   2. a 4. e
B. Sentences will vary.
   2. T 5. T
   3. F 6. T

Vocabulary and Comprehension
Union Pacific Railroad Poster, p. 81
A. 1. F 3. F 5. F
   2. T 4. T 6. T
B. Sample answers given.
   Accept all reasonable responses.
   1. The picture presented by the poster is very biased. Winters were harsh and summers very hot and dry, although the poster claims that the climate is mild.
   2. Answers will vary.

Vocabulary and Comprehension
Home, Sweet Soddie, p. 83
A. pioneers
   2. as scarce as hen’s teeth
   3. the crack of dawn
   4. drawbacks
   5. prairie
B. Sentences will vary.
C. 1. T 3. F 5. T
   2. F 4. T

Additional Vocabulary Practice
Too Soon a Woman; Union Pacific Railroad Poster;
Home, Sweet Soddie, p. 84
A. grub 4. butcher
   2. waterproof 5. well
   3. homesteaders
B. 1. i 5. d 9. c
   2. a 6. f 10. b
   3. j 7. h
   4. e 8. g

Vocabulary and Comprehension
Mrs. Flowers, p. 89
A. 1. d 3. a 5. b
   2. e 4. c
B. Sentences will vary.