

**3rd Grade Curriculum Guide Book Summary**

**Book title: Caleb’s Story**

**Author:** Patricia MacLachlan

**Main characters:** Caleb, Cassie, Anna, Sarah, Jacob (Papa), John (Grandfather)

**Executive summary:** A boy learns the importance of forgiveness as he observes his father’s act of forgiving his grandfather for leaving him and his mother many years ago.

**Detailed summary**: Caleb’s older sister Anna was going to work in town for Doctor Sam, the father of her boyfriend, Justin, who was fighting in the war in Europe. Caleb’s Papa was taking Anna to town. While Anna was away, it would be Caleb’s job to keep a journal about what happened at their farm on the prairie.

That morning as Caleb played hide-and-seek with Cassie, Caleb’s little sister, she saw a man behind the barn. Sarah thought she saw someone outside too. After Papa and Anna left, it started to snow. Caleb and Cassie herded the sheep and cattle into the barn, where they would be safe from the drifting snow. When they looked out from the house, they saw the barn door was open. Caleb went out to shut it. In the barn he saw an old man. He seemed sick. Caleb and Sarah helped him to the house to warm up. They found out that his name was John. Caleb took him upstairs where he fell asleep. After that Caleb wrote in the journal about the mysterious man who showed up at the farm.

When John awoke he came downstairs and sat at the table with the family. Cassie asked him if he was a robber. He said, “No.” Caleb showed the mysterious man what he had written about him in the journal, but the man didn’t even read it. Cassie asked John questions, but he didn’t answer. Caleb told him about when Sarah came to live with them after answering an ad from his Dad for a wife. Caleb’s real mother had died. Caleb saw the man take some medicine.

In the morning, John woke early. He made coffee, chopped wood and fed the animals. When Cassie came downstairs, he called her the “Queen of Questions.” When Jacob returned he didn’t recognize John. Then he realized that it was his father, who he thought was dead. Caleb and Cassie had a grandfather! Jacob left the house. Caleb saw John take another pill.

Caleb and Cassie tried to talk to their new-found grandfather, but he didn’t want to talk. Caleb asked his Dad why he wasn’t happy that his grandfather wasn’t dead. His Dad didn’t answer. Later, Caleb listened outside the barn as Sarah and his Dad talked about John. Caleb discovered that John, his grandfather, had abandoned his family when Jacob was a young boy, without ever explaining anything to Jacob. Continued on Back

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Caleb knew his grandfather was sick. He saw him take the medicine. Sarah found out he was taking medicine for his heart and there were only a few pills left in the bottle. The family took him to town to get more pills.

When they got to Dr. Sam’s office, Anna ran out to greet them. She met John Witting, her grandfather. Dr. Sam examined John and gave him two more bottles of pills. On their way back to the farm Cassie asked her grandfather what it said on the bottle. He said he couldn’t read it because he didn’t have his eyeglasses. Caleb had never seen his grandfather wear glasses. He suspected that he couldn’t read. It explained why he never read the journals that Caleb told him to read and why he never wrote his dad a letter. Caleb taught his grandfather to read using Anna’s journals which told the story of their family, how Sarah came from Maine to live with them and be a wife to Jacob and a mother to Caleb and Anna.

One afternoon as the family ate a meal Cassie told her grandfather that she was named after her grandmother. That started something. Papa was angry. Grandfather and Jacob went out to the barn. Caleb stood outside listening to their conversation. They were yelling. Then they were shoving each other and Jacob got hurt. He broke his leg. Jacob told Sarah that he fell. Another snow storm started and they could not get a doctor, so John set Jacob’s broken leg using two poles and some cloth.

After that John and Jacob still didn’t talk. Caleb continued to read the journals with his grandfather. John could read very well now. So Caleb gave him a journal that he could write in too. That made John feel loved. Caleb and John worked on the farm while Jacob’s leg mended. Caleb worried about his grandfather doing so much work when he had a bad heart.

One day Cassie got her grandfather to sing a song to her. The song stirred memories in Jacob. Once again he showed his sadness as anger. Caleb heard Sarah asking Jacob to forgive his father for leaving the family so many years ago. John was helpful and loving to their family now. Caleb told his father that what he wanted most for his birthday was for him to forgive his grandfather.

One night Caleb was wakened by the sound of the wind blowing snow hard against his window. He got up and discovered Sarah was gone. She had gone out in the snowstorm to find the dog. Grandfather went out in the dark snow-filled night to find her, holding on to the rope tied between the house and the barn. He found her on the ground covered with snow, her skin white and cold. The rope had broken and she lost her way. Caleb and grandfather carried Sarah to the house. They covered her with blankets and gave her hot tea to drink. She was ok. In the morning the storm was over. Caleb worried that it was his fault that the rope broke and Sarah almost froze to death. Sarah told him that “fault doesn’t matter. Things happen. And we can’t blame ourselves - or someone else - forever.”

Caleb knew his grandfather was leaving. His bags were packed and father was using a cane now, so he could get back to work. Sarah told Jacob it was time to forgive. She told him not to let the chance to make things better pass. Jacob went up to John’s room. John said that he was wrong for leaving the family. He confessed to Jacob that he never learned to write. That was why he didn’t write him a letter after he left. He told him that Caleb had taught him to read and write. He wrote on a letter, “I love you, Jacob.” Jacob hugged John and asked him to stay. He didn’t want to have to miss him again, like he did when he was a boy.

After that the house was filled with happiness. Justin returned safely from the war and everything was right in Caleb’s world.