

# BOOKNOTES

TEACHERS GUIDE

## thematic connections

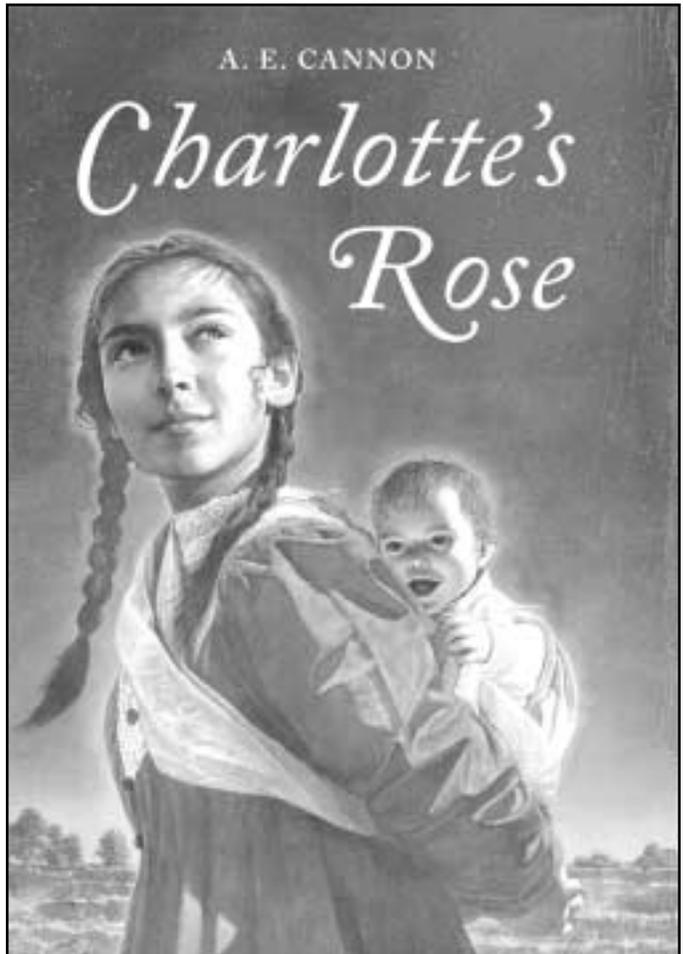
Friendship • Family  
Commitment  
Courage • Persecution

Grades 3–7

## about the book

Walking halfway across the country carrying a newborn baby was no way to spend the summer, but twelve-year-old Charlotte, always ready for a new adventure, was up for the challenge.

In 1856, Charlotte and her father are ready to leave Wales for a new life in America with other Mormon converts. They join a group of 700 converts making the trip to Salt Lake City, Utah, to start a new life. Life on the trail is difficult because they are so poor they cannot afford wagons and must push carts from Iowa City to Utah. When a woman in the company dies giving birth, and her husband is too distraught to care for the baby girl, Charlotte grandly offers to care for the infant, and names her Rose. As Charlotte struggles along the trail, she begins to dream of life with “her” baby, even as Papa and others remind her that she will have to return Rose to her father at the end of the journey.



Wendy Lamb Books hardcover • 0-385-72966-9

A. E. Cannon, a descendent of Mormon pioneers, combines tales about her family and her community with vivid storytelling and meticulous research in this lively and memorable novel.

## pre-reading activity

Read "A Letter to the Reader" at the end of the book to your class, and then discuss how the author wove together factual information and real people to write a work of fiction. Cannon also relies on oral history as well as factual accounts of the Mormon Trail to tell her story. Ask students to share with each other stories that have been passed down to them about their own heritage.



# thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Friendship**—Charlotte makes a new friend in Catherine Jones. Ask students what brought the two of them together and why Catherine finally extended her hand in friendship. What characteristics are important to students in friends they make? What characteristics in people make it difficult to be their friend? Have students tell about a time that a friend helped them through a difficult situation.

**Family**—The family in American society today is structured differently than when the Mormons made their trek across the country. Families on the trail depended on each other to meet their basic needs. What influences are there in today's society that make it difficult to be dependent on one another? Do today's families seem to be strengthened or weakened as they face problems and obstacles? Ask students what they can do to help their families be closer?

**Commitment**—The people on the Mormon Trail were committed—committed to God, their family, and their move to Salt Lake City. Charlotte was also committed to Rose. What are the marks of a committed person? Ask students what they are committed to, and how they prove that commitment? To what are people they know committed? Discuss with students a personal commitment they could make for a month and how they could keep it.

**Courage**—Imagine the fear the Welsh Mormons must have felt in leaving behind their country and many loved ones for the promise of a better future. What types of challenges did the Mormons face in their unfamiliar new country? What motivates people to make such a drastic change in their lives? Ask students to write about a time when they or a family member had to draw on inner strength and courage to overcome fear.

**Persecution**—The Mormons left Wales because they were being persecuted, and when they arrived in Boston, they were met by a mob of people who thought of them as animals (pp. 39–47). Discuss with students why Charlotte and the company were ostracized for their religious beliefs. Ask students what other groups of people in history have been persecuted? Ask students if any of them have ever been discriminated against for their beliefs.

# connecting to the curriculum

**Language Arts**—The author uses figurative language to convey specific meaning to her words. For example, “He’s warm, and I adore the way his jacket smells, like wood shavings and smoke. Papa perfume.” (p. 17) “Brother Bowen’s voice [is] deep and full of a wave’s regular music. Even when his words are sad, the sound of them washes over you and gives sweet comfort.” (p. 74) Ask students to write a description of a person they know by the way they smell or sound using metaphors or similes.

In “A Letter to the Reader,” the author encourages young readers to keep a journal of stories about events and experiences in their life so that they can pass them down to their great-grandchildren. Have students decorate a journal to fit their personality. Then they can begin writing about the activities they enjoy and the stories of their lives.

**Science**—Charlotte often speaks of Polaris, which is the North Star, and the Big Dipper, which is a constellation. Ask your students to investigate stars and constellations and identify one they can place in the night sky. Cover a wall in your classroom with black paper and mark the North Star and the Big Dipper, and then have students draw and label their constellations to make a panorama of the night sky.

**Geography**—Charlotte and her father sailed from Liverpool to Boston, and then boarded a train to Iowa City. Ask students to draw a large map of the United States and prepare a mural that traces the Welsh handcart company’s journey across the United States through Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Utah. Using the journal dates in the novel, have them calculate the length of time it took the company to get from one location to another and note that on the map. Students may want to research physical landmarks, animals, and vegetation the company would have seen and draw them on the mural.

**Social Studies**—Charlotte and her father were members of a Welsh handcart company that traveled to Salt Lake City on the Mormon Trail in 1856.

Charlotte’s father was allowed to take 17 pounds of personal possessions, and Charlotte 14 pounds. Review the list of belongings left behind. (p. 60) Discuss with students the possible reasons for their choices, and then ask them what they would have taken and why? Have students compare the groups who traveled on the Mormon Trail with other groups who traveled across the U.S., i.e. the Oregon Trail, Appalachian Trail, and Trail of Tears. Have students discuss how the journeys were similar and how they were different.

**Art**—Every family on the trail had their own handcart to carry their possessions across the country. Using the description of the handcart on page 59, other clues gleaned from students’ reading, and additional research for the dimensions and materials, have them draw a picture or make a model of a handcart used by the Mormons.

## vocabulary/ use of language

As students read *Charlotte’s Rose*, ask them to look for unfamiliar words they might want to use in their own writing. Then define the words using context clues or a dictionary and write an original sentence using each word identified. Some words they might be unfamiliar with are: *yearning* (p. 21), *toils* (p. 61), *flush* (p.82), *commotion* (p. 55), *devised* (p. 99), *hideous* (p. 124), *headlong* (p. 114), *swoons* (p. 120), *scrawny* (p. 131).



## related titles

### by theme

#### Cherokee Sister

Debbie Dadey

Prejudice • Family • Friendship • Survival  
Grades 3–7 / 0-440-41568-3  
Dell Yearling

#### Sing Down the Moon

Scott O'Dell

Cultural Diversity (Native American)  
Family Life & Relationships • Prejudice • Survival  
Grades 5–9 / 0-440-97975-7  
Dell Laurel-Leaf

#### Soft Rain: A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears

Cornelia Cornelissen

Prejudice • Family • Friendship • Survival  
Grades 3–7 / 0-440-41242-0  
Dell Yearling

#### Tucket's Home

Gary Paulsen

Adventure • Historical Fiction • Heroes • Survival  
Grades 5 up / 0-440-41558-6  
Dell Yearling

## internet resources

#### Trail of Hope: The Story of the Mormon Trail

[www.pbs.org/trailofhope/stories.html](http://www.pbs.org/trailofhope/stories.html)

This site provides information about all aspects of the Mormon Trail and includes actual stories and photos.

#### The Mormon Pioneer Trail

[www.americanwest.com/trails/pages/mormtrl.htm](http://www.americanwest.com/trails/pages/mormtrl.htm)

This site gives historical documentation of the Mormon Trail experience and the early history of the Mormon Church.

## about the author

**A. E. Cannon** was raised in Salt Lake City, and she is the daughter of Wyoming rodeo queen Patti Louise Covey and longtime Brigham Young University football coach LaVell Edwards. She is the author of two books, *Amazing Gracie* and *The Shadow Brothers*, which were named Best Books for Young Adults, and her first book—*Cal Cameron by Day, Spider-Man by Night*—was the winner of the Delacorte Press Prize for an Outstanding First Young Adult Novel. Ms. Cannon and her husband, Ken, live in Salt Lake City and have five sons: Philip, Alec, Dylan, Geoffrey, and Quinton.

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