

# Family Tree

BY ANN M. MARTIN



ABBY  
BOOK 1

Friendship  
and family.  
Life and death.  
Four girls.



DANA  
BOOK 2

Four generations.



FRANCIE  
BOOK 3



GEORGIA  
BOOK 4

# Family Tree

## ABOUT THE BOOKS

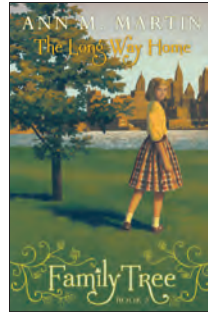
In this inspiring and intimate new series, bestselling author Ann M. Martin brings the past and present together in a story spanning four generations of a family, one girlhood at a time, and shows how a family tree grows.



### **Family Tree Book One: Better to Wish**

In 1930, eight-year-old Abby Nichols can't imagine what her future holds. The best things today would be having a dime for the fair, keeping her Pops from being angry, and saving up eighty-seven cents to surprise her little sister with a tea set for Christmas.

But Abby's world is changing fast. Soon there will be new siblings to take care of, a new house to move into, and new friends to meet. But there will also be good-byes to say and hard choices to make. As Abby grows older, how will she decide what sort of life will fit her best?



### **Family Tree Book Two: The Long Way Home**

Dana is Abby's daughter—but she's always been much closer to her father, Zander. He's a celebrated New York author who encourages Dana's artistic talents...even if he sometimes drinks too much. Dana is on his side in any argument, regardless of whether he's wrong. And then her father dies.

After years of moving, often with her mother and three siblings, Dana is angry at Abby, and she wants nothing more than to get back to New York City. She moves in with her young, bohemian aunt Adele, determined to study art, attend school, achieve independence, and avoid all the mistakes her mother made. But can she leave her family and Maine behind?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

While reading about Abby, Dana, Francie, and Georgia's family, have your students trace their roots and make their own family trees.

Before beginning any of the following family tree projects, ask your students to study their family's pasts. Encourage them to interview family members; research surnames online; look at old family pictures, drawings, and maps; and try to uncover any family heirlooms, lore, and stories.

### **Making Family Trees**

If you have internet access in the classroom or the school library, or your students have it at home, encourage them to visit [www.scholastic.com/familytree](http://www.scholastic.com/familytree) and create their own family tree using Scholastic's build-your-own family tree activity, which allows for many different kinds of family relationships.

Alternatively, type "Family Tree Template" into your browser and show students some of the many free templates that are available online. Discuss the pros and cons of different designs, and let students pick their favorites to work on. Be aware of students who come from blended families, single-parent families, same-sex-parent families, and other kinds of families. Encourage students to design their own template if a suitable ready-made one is not available.

Ask students to fill out as many branches of their tree as they can on their own. Then have them take their family trees

home and finish the trees with the help of a parent, other relative, and/or guardian.

After your class finishes their family trees, invite each student to share his or her tree. Talk about how each branch has influenced their family, and how their family would be different if any one branch had not been included. Discuss how all families are unique.

### **Family Scrapbook**

Ask your students to find photographs of as many family members as they can. Then have them each make a scrapbook featuring the faces and names of their family members.

Display the scrapbooks in your classroom. Invite each student to discuss his or her scrapbook by pointing out the personality traits and facial features their family members share, as well as the ones that differ.

### **Memorabilia Fair**

Hold a memorabilia fair for students to get a chance to see each other's family histories. Ask your students to bring in family memorabilia such as photos, letters, military medals, jewelry, and heirlooms. Remind them to label their items. Display the memorabilia on a table and give students a chance to look at everything up close.

Then invite your students to ask each other questions about the history of each memento. Further the discussions by



encouraging your students to tell stories and anecdotes about their families and where they came from.

#### **Written Heirlooms**

Ask your class to write about their favorite family memories.

Encourage creativity by letting students choose to write in one of the following forms: fairy tale, legend, letter, myth, play, or poem. Invite your students to read their written heirlooms to the class. Then publish the finished pieces in a *Written Heirloom Classroom Anthology*.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **Book One: Better to Wish**

1. Why do you think that Ann M. Martin chose to name Abby's story *Better to Wish*? Do you think this is a fitting title? Why or why not? Can you come up with an alternate title?
2. Explain what Abby meant when she lamented: "Pop once said it's a good thing we don't know what's around the corner. I didn't understand what he meant then, but I do now. It's better to wish than to know."
3. Over the course of her young life, Abby had many life-changing events occur. List three of them. Then explain how her life could have been different if they never occurred.
4. Abby saved up her money to surprise Rose with the tea set that she wanted for Christmas. How does this one act summarize Abby's personality? Have you ever sacrificed something to make a family member or friend happy?
5. Why didn't Pop want Abby associating with Orrin? Were his words and actions towards Orrin justified? Why or why not? Have you ever broken a rule that you didn't believe in? If so, what was it, and what were your reasons for doing so?
6. There were many days when Mama wouldn't get out of bed or would sit for hours and stare at her two rose bushes. What was wrong with her? What did the rose bushes symbolize? How did Mama's living children both help and hinder her will to live? How did Abby, Rose, Fred, and Adele feel about their mother's actions?
7. For her eleventh birthday, Abby wanted a doll, but her father gave her an expensive watch instead. How did this spectacle disappoint Abby? Why? Why do you think Mama went behind Pop's back and gave Abby the doll anyway? Did this make it better? Why or why not?
8. For a long time, Abby blamed herself for Sarah's death. How did this affect her? Do you think she should have felt responsible? Why or why not?
9. There were many times when Pop refused to talk about unpleasant things and tried to solve problems by ignoring

- them. How did this affect each member of the Nichols family? Why do you think no one challenged him?
10. Abby worked very hard at school and won many academic prizes. How would Abby's future have been different if she had not put so much effort into school?
11. Abby referred to certain smells throughout the book—the smell of home, the smell of her mother. Do you think that smells evoke memory? Can you give an example of a smell that reminds you of a certain time, place, or person in your life?
12. Abby's high school graduation contained many traditions. List three of them. Compare and contrast them to present-day graduation traditions that you know of or have heard about.
13. Why was Abby so upset when she found out that her father was going to marry Helen? Were her feelings warranted? If you were Abby, how would you have felt?
14. Abby had a crush on Zander since the first day she saw him. Why do you think she turned down his first marriage proposal? Why did Pop want Abby to marry Zander? Do you think Abby made the right decision? Why or why not?
15. Abby's life was full of both good and bad moments. Which one moment do you think defined her the most? How and why?

### **Book Two: The Long Way Home**

1. Julia liked to look, act, and dress the same as Dana, but Dana wanted to be different than her twin. How does this affect their relationship? Do you think that Dana had a right to want her own identity? Why or why not? How did this make Julia feel?
2. Zander and Dana have a very special father-daughter bond. How is this both good and bad for Dana? How does this bond affect Dana's relationship with her mother? How does it affect her relationship with her sister? How does this bond affect her future life choices?
3. Dana becomes a published illustrator before she is eleven. How does this achievement pave the way for Dana's future desires and successes?

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4. Dana is a very complicated young woman. Give three examples of how Dana's behavior impacts her family. Do you view these actions as selfish or ambitious? Why?
5. Adele moved to New York City, had a career she loved, and never married. In what ways does Dana's life resemble Adele's? In what ways does it not?
6. Explain how Dana blames both her mother and herself for her father's death. Who do you think was responsible for Zander's death? Why? What clues does the author give you that foreshadow Zander's death?
7. When Dana asks Abby about why they had to move from New York to Maine, Abby told her: "If I could have made things work there, we would have stayed. But I didn't feel I had a choice about where we lived." Do you think Abby was right to feel that she didn't have a choice? Why or why not? Was there ever a time when you did something because you felt that you didn't have another choice? If so, how did it make you feel?
8. Dana changed her life by leaving her family and moving to New York. Do you think it was fair of Dana to leave Julia behind? Why or why not? How was the move both easy and hard for her?
9. Even though she wasn't around him very often, Dana picked up on Papa Luther's prejudices. List three things and/or people that Papa Luther was prejudiced against. Conversely, list three instances that show how Dana is accepting of others that are different than her.
10. Describe three pivotal moments in Dana's life and how she grew from each one.
11. Dana seems surprised to learn about Abby and her life in Maine before Dana and Julia were born. Why doesn't Dana want Abby to move around for or marry Orrin? Do you think she has a right to be angry at Abby? Why or why not? Why do you think Julia, Frank, or Nell weren't as upset about these things as Dana?
12. What is your definition of a family? Why do you think that Dana continually questioned her role in her family? Why do you think that Julia always accepted her role and duties in her family without question? Which twin are you more like? How?
13. How many times did Dana move? How did each move affect her life both positively and negatively?
14. Dana possessed both Zander's and Abby's traits. Who do you think Dana was more like, Zander or Abby? Use examples from *The Long Way Home* to back up your answer.
15. In what ways does Dana's life parallel Abby's? In what ways is it different?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### Letters from Near and Far

The characters in the Family Tree series write many handwritten letters to each other. Letter writing was very popular during the time when Abby and Dana both grew up, but today handwritten letters are on the decline and have almost become a lost art.

Discuss the benefits of letter writing. Then instruct your students to bring in letters from family members if they have any, or to look in library books or online to find some examples. Ask each student to read their favorite letter aloud. Encourage them to discuss the style, content, and circumstances surrounding the letter.

Finally, have your students write and send a letter to a family member or friend who does not live in his or her home, and who may live in a different city, state, or country. Instruct your students to ask the recipient for a reply letter. When your students receive their replies, ask them to bring the letters and postmarked envelopes in to share with the class. Keep track of where the letters come from by marking the responses on a map.

### The Great Depression

The Family Tree series begins in 1930—one year after the Great Depression started. Research the Great Depression, then answer the following questions: What was the Great Depression? How long did it last? How did it affect America and its people?

### Fictional and Factual Timeline

Distinguishing fact from fiction is an important skill. The Common Core emphasizes the benefits of learning about a topic from multiple sources, including fiction and nonfiction.

On a large piece of butcher paper, create a timeline of both major fictional and real-life events from the Family Tree series. Break your class into two groups. Give "group one" the task of picking out the major fictional events in the Family Tree books. Assign "group two" the job of noting all of the major factual historical events that happen during the span of Abby's and Dana's stories (1930–1971).

Have students write both the fictional and factual events on the same timeline, making sure to use a different



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color for each. Then assign each student a different year on the timeline. Have them research their year and bring back five real-life events that were not mentioned in the books. Have each student present their findings and add them to the timeline.

## **Abby's and Dana's New York**

At different times, both Abby and Dana were drawn to the wonders of New York City. Many of the places and attractions that they visited still exist today. These sites include: the 21 Club, the Waldorf Astoria, The Plaza, Rockefeller Center, Central Park, the Winter Garden Theater, and the Staten Island Ferry. Assign your class to choose a place that either Abby or Dana visited. Ask them to research their landmark's history and present their findings to the class. Then identify each place on a big map of New York City as a class.

## **Favorite Family Recipes**

Some of Abby's and Dana's favorite memories involved extended family dinners, holidays, picnics, and parties. Ask your students to bring in a recipe that they enjoy when their family and friends gather together. Then publish all of the recipes in a classroom cookbook and make a copy for each student to take home.

If your school lets students bring in food from home, hold a class picnic featuring some or all of the dishes. During the picnic, invite students to talk about their dishes and share a favorite memory from a family event.

## **Real-Life Paper Dolls**

Abby, Rose, and Sarah spent many days playing with paper dolls. Invented in England over 200 years ago, paper dolls have entertained generations of children. Using thick construction paper and markers, have your students make paper dolls depicting each member of their family. Instruct your students to create different outfits and accessories for their paper dolls that show what their family members wear for different occasions.

## **Family Time Capsules**

The Family Tree books give readers a glimpse into the life of one family over the course of four generations. Ask each student to make a family time capsule to capture how his or her family is at this exact moment in time. Have students ask each member of their family to contribute an item that shows who they are today. Examples are things like a school paper, a favorite recipe, art projects, an office memo, and family photos. Have them put everything inside a container or shoebox, and then store the time capsule away in a safe place. Instruct them to bring it out exactly one year from now to see how their family has changed and grown.

In your classroom, have your students talk about their family time capsules. Make an audio recording of each student talking about the items his or her family members placed in the time capsule.

## **Family Tree Book Talk**

Have each student in your class write a book talk about one of the titles in the Family Tree series. Instruct students to give a brief summary of the book, touch upon text characteristics, choose a short excerpt, and mention why they liked it. Remind students to use specific facts from the book, as well as their own opinions, to support the facts and arguments they present.

If you have access to audiovisual equipment, break your class into pairs and have them take turns filming each other's book talk. Screen the book talks for the whole class to watch.

## **Special Siblings**

Both Abby and Dana had a brother with Special Needs. Even in the span of a few decades from when Fred and Peter were born, the boys were treated differently and increasingly better. Pop shipped Fred off to a home, but Abby kept Peter at home and sent him to a special school to help him develop and thrive.

Discuss these differences with your class. Then talk about the ways children with Special Needs are treated today. Help your students research the ways that your school district helps Special Needs students and the programs that are available to them. As a class, create a chart highlighting the differences between the quality of life for Special Needs students during these three time periods.

## **Family Cards**

Have your students make a deck of family playing cards with index cards and photographs. Ask them to gather photos of family members, extended family, and pets. Have them glue one photo onto each index card and label each one with the person's name, age, and relationship to the student.

As a class, play sorting games with the cards. You could sort all the moms, dads, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, dogs, and cats—or you could sort by boys, girls, and animals. Create a chart to keep track of all of the categories your class comes up with.

## **Fill in the Gaps**

Ann M. Martin starts off each chapter of the Family Tree books with a date. Although the stories are told in sequential order, there is a time gap between each one. Ask your students to choose one of these gaps and write a chapter about one of the characters that could fit into the book. Have your students present their writing to the class.

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## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

This guide meets the following Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Reading Literature

##### Key Ideas and Details

Grade 3 – RL.3.1-3

Grade 4 – RL.4.1-3

Grade 5 – RL.5.1-3

Grade 6 – RL.6.1-3

Grade 7 – RL.7.1-3

#### Craft and Structure

Grade 3 – RL.3.4-6

Grade 4 – RL.4.4-6

Grade 5 – RL.5.4-6

Grade 6 – RL.6.4-6

Grade 7 – RL.7.6

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 4 – RL.4.7-9

Grade 5 – RL.5.9

Grade 6 – RL.6.9

Grade 7 – RL.7.9

#### Range of Reading Level of Text Complexity

Grade 3 – RL.3.10

Grade 4 – RL.4.10

Grade 5 – RL.5.10

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

#### Writing

##### Text Types and Purposes

Grade 3 – W.3.1-3a

Grade 4 – W.4.1-3e

Grade 5 – W.5.1-3e

Grade 6 – W.6.1-3e

Grade 7 – W.7.1-1c, 2-2d, 3-3e

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

Grade 3 – W.3.4-6

Grade 4 – W.4.4-6

Grade 5 – W.5.4-6

Grade 6 – W.6.4-5

Grade 7 – W.7.4-6

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Grade 3 – W.3.7-8

Grade 4 – W.4.7-9b

Grade 5 – W.5.7-9b

Grade 6 – W.6.7-9

Grade 7 – W.7.7-9a

#### Speaking and Listening

##### Comprehension and Collaboration

Grade 3 – SL.3.1, 2, 3-5

Grade 4 – SL.4.1-2

Grade 5 – SL.5.1-1d

Grade 6 – SL.6.1-2

Grade 7 – SL.7.1

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 4 – SL.4.4-6

Grade 5 – SL.5.4-5

Grade 6 – SL.6.4-5

Grade 7 – SL.7.4-5



PHOTO: DIION OGUST

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann M. Martin's *The Baby-Sitters Club* series has over 176 million copies in print worldwide and inspired a generation of young readers. Her novels include the *Main Street* series, *Belle Teal*, *A Corner of the Universe* (A Newbery Honor Book), *Here Today*, *A Dog's Life*, and *On Christmas Eve*, as well as the much-loved collaborations *P.S. Longer Letter Later* and *Snail Mail No More* with Paula Danziger, and *The Doll People* and *The Meanest Doll in the World*, written with Laura Godwin and illustrated by Brian Selznick. She lives in upstate New York.



### Book One: Better to Wish

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### Book Two: The Long Way Home

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The Family Tree books are available from your local bookstore or usual vendor. Teachers and librarians may order from:

## Scholastic

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