

Canadian Celebrity Readers

Famous Female Actors

Grades 4-8

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Ruth Solski was an educator for 30 years. She has written many educational resources over the years and is the founder of S&S Learning Materials. As a writer, her main goal is to provide teachers with a useful tool they can implement in their classrooms to bring the joy of learning to children.

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Table of Contents

At A Glance™	2
About This Book.....	4

Biographies and Worksheets:

Sarah Polley	5
Megan Follows.....	7
Tricia Helfer.....	9
Meg Tilly.....	11
Tina Keeper	13
Jill Hennessy.....	15
Kim Cattrall	17
Neve Campbell	19
Natasha Henstridge	21
Molly Parker.....	23
Sandra Oh	25
Jackie Burroughs	27
Wendy Crewson.....	29
Cynthia Dale	31
Kathleen Robertson	33
Anna Paquin	35
Shirley Douglas.....	37
Kate Nelligan	39
Tantoo Cardinal.....	41
Geneviève Bujold.....	43
Answer Key.....	46

S

arah Polley is a Canadian actress, singer, screenwriter, and director. She is the youngest of five children and was born on January 8, 1979 in Toronto, Ontario into a show business family. Her mother, Diane Polley, was also an actress and casting director. Her father, Michael Polley, is a British actor and an insurance agent. Her older brother Mark is an actor and her second brother John is a casting director and producer.

Sarah's acting career began at the age of four, due to her mother's connections and her persistence to act. In 1985, Sarah played the role of Molly in the Disney film *One Magic Christmas*. In 1988, at the age of eight, Sarah was cast in the title role in the television series *Ramona*, which was based on Beverly Cleary's books. The series only lasted one season. As a child actress, her career took a dramatic change in 1990 when she was cast as the Cockney orphan Jody Turner in *Lantern Hill*, a television film. The film was based on the book written by Lucy Maud Montgomery. Sarah's efforts were rewarded with a Gemini Award in 1992. During the same year, Sarah had the opportunity to be in the public eye by appearing as Sara Stanley on the popular CBC television series *Road to Avonlea*. This series made her famous and financially independent and she was loved and adored by thousands of Canadian fans.

When Sara was 11, tragedy struck her family. Her mother, Diane Polley, died from cancer. This tragic event paralleled the life of the character Sara Stanley, who she was playing in the *Road to Avonlea*. Her mother's death made a great impact on her personal life. Being extremely intelligent and politically progressive, Sarah rebelled against the Americanization of the series when it was picked up by the Disney Channel. When Sara was 12, she attended an awards ceremony wearing a peace sign in protest of the first Gulf War. She was asked to remove it by Disney officials and she refused. Her relationship with Disney was not the same after the incident and she left *Road to Avonlea* in 1994. Sarah has often stated that she lost her childhood to her acting career. Although she does not blame her parents, she has said during interviews that she would never let any of her children act at an early age.

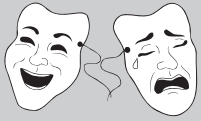


During her teens, Sarah attended the Subway Academy II, which was then called Earl Haig Secondary School. She became politically active, became a prominent member of the New Democratic Party, and dropped out of school before graduating. During a political protest at Queen's Park in Toronto in 1995, Sarah lost several back teeth during a clash between the police and the protesters.

In 1996, Sara appeared as Lily on the CBC television series, *Straight Up*. It ran for two seasons and she won the Gemini Award for Best Performance in a Children's Series. Her next role was as Nicolle Burnelli, a teenager who was injured in a school bus accident, in the film *The Sweet Hereafter*. This role brought her attention from American and Canadian critics and was her breakthrough into adult roles.

In 1999, Sarah played a young woman named Harper who comes from a well-to-do family in the film *Guinevere*. She finds life boring and unfulfilling, and does not want to attend university. This film brought Sarah unwanted attention and fame, which was something she dislikes intensely, as she is an extremely private person. Sarah often rebels against the expected ways the media and critics feel one should accept celebrity and fame. As a result, she dropped out of the movie *Almost Famous* which was to make her a mainstream star in the United States and returned to Canada to make less money to do the film *The Law of Enclosures* in 2000.

For a period of time, Sarah took a wide variety of parts in independent films. Her choice of roles helped her to focus on the art of her craft and she also wanted to be in films with a social importance. ★



Sarah Polley

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Skills

In Sarah Polley's biography, locate the name of the film that each clue is describing. Record its title on the line provided.

- This series ran for two seasons on television and Sarah won a Gemini Award for her performance.

- In this television film, Sarah played the role of Jody Turner, a Cockney orphan.

- Her role in this film, as Nicolle Burnelli, brought her attention from the United States.

- Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote the book on which this television series was based.

- At the age of four, she acted in her first Disney television film.

- Her role in the film brought fame that she felt invaded her privacy.

- This series was based on the books written by Beverly Cleary.

- This film had been designed to make Sarah a popular star in the United States.

- During this film series, Sarah showed a rebellious, political, and activist side to her personality.

Vocabulary Skills

A. Using a straight line connect each word to its meaning.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. persistence • | • a surrounded area |
| 2. cockney • | • extreme force; overpowering |
| 3. tragedy • | • life after death |
| 4. paralleled • | • like no other |
| 5. hereafter • | • perserverance; lasting |
| 6. enclosure • | • extremely sad event |
| 7. ultimate • | • an English dialect |
| 8. intensely • | • correspond to, similar |

B. In the biography, locate synonyms for each of the following words. Record each one on the line provided.

- waif _____
- conflict _____
- honoured _____
- lamp _____
- impression _____
- clever _____
- important _____
- start _____

C. Record the root word for each of the following words on the line provided.

- famous _____
- business _____
- actress _____
- persistence _____
- financially _____
- progressive _____

M

egan Follows won the hearts of thousands in her role as the red-haired, freckled-faced orphan named Anne Shirley in the television series *Anne of Green Gables*. This talkative 11 year old, with an active imagination, impressive vocabulary, and a quick temper filled Marilla and Mathew Cuthbert's lives with a wide variety of events and adventure.

Megan Elizabeth Laura Diana Follows was born on March 14, 1968 in Toronto, Canada. She was the last child of Ted Follows, a famous Canadian theatre actor and director, and Dawn Greenhalgh, an actress. Her siblings Laurence, Edwina, and Samantha Follows, are also actors. Megan began acting as a toddler with her siblings as their parents were involved with the establishment of Canada's summer theatre.

Megan's acting career began at the age of three doing commercials. When she was 11 years old, she had her first break in the television series *Matt and Jenny*. At 12, she played the youngest daughter in the series *The Baxters*. Megan also had guest roles on a variety of television shows such as *Hangin' In* and *The Littlest Hobo*. In time, producers in the United States began to hear about Canada's rising star and when she was 14, Megan was invited to audition for the most famous television producer, Norman Lear. Her audition gave her American exposure and began her cross-border career which continues today.

Megan played the lead in many Canadian specials such as *Jen's Place*, *Hockey Night*, and *Boys and Girls*. During the filming of *Hockey Night*, Megan auditioned for the series *Anne of Green Gables*. Her first audition was not very successful and the producer decided to search across Canada for a young girl to play the part. After auditioning over 3,000 young girls and not finding a candidate to play the role, the producer decided to audition Megan again. This audition was successful and Megan went on to make the role her own. The series received rave reviews and Megan won the Gemini Award for Best Performance by an Actress. *Anne of Green Gables* was one of the most successful Canadian shows ever produced and has played in more than 145 countries.



During her teen years, she appeared in the film *Stacking*, a special called *Seasonal Differences*, and the television movie *Sin of Innocence*. In 1986, she returned to Canada to play the role of Anne Shirley in the *Anne of Green Gables - The Sequel* often referred to as *Ann of Avonlea*. It became the highest rated miniseries ever to be seen on television in Canada.

While working on the movie *Deep Sleep*, Megan met and began to date Christopher David Porter who was originally from Chester, Nova Scotia. They were married in the oldest chapel in Las Vegas on April 27, 1991. During the 1990s, Megan decided to slow down and focus on becoming a Shakespearean actor, as well as a new mother. Her first child, Lyla Ann, was born in 1992, and Russell Porter-Follows was born in 1995. After the birth of her daughter, Megan got the role she had always dreamed of playing. She was to star in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* at Canada's Stratford Festival. Shortly after the birth of their second child, Megan and Christopher divorced.

For a few years, Megan took on leading roles in various plays produced by the Toronto-based Soulpepper Theatre Company. She has performed in plays such as *A Doll's House*, *Fool for Love*, *The Real Things*, *Top Girls*, *Three Sisters*, and with her real mother, Dawn Greenhalgh in *Drama' Night*, *Mother*.

Today, Megan is happily married to fellow actor Stuart Hughes, who is a founding member of the Soulpepper Theatre Company. They divide their time with their children between their homes in Los Angeles and Canada. Megan will always be Anne Shirley in the hearts and memories of Canadians across Canada. ★



Megan Follows

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Skills

Record the word *true* or *false* on the line at the end of each sentence.

1. Megan was the daughter and first child of Ted Follows and Dawn Greenhalgh. _____
2. Her first career break took place when Megan was 11 years old. _____
3. Megan comes from a family who are heavily involved in music. _____
4. At the age of three, Megan began acting in television commercials. _____
5. Megan was readily hired by the producers of *Anne of Green Gables* after her first audition. _____
6. The producer of *Anne of Green Gables* auditioned young girls from all over the world for this role. _____
7. The series, *Anne of Green Gables*, has been viewed by people in over one hundred countries around the world. _____
8. *Anne of Green Gables* and the *Road to Avonlea* were well received by television viewers. _____
9. Megan's desire to play a role in a Shakespearean play has never come her way. _____
10. Megan starred in the series *The Littlest Hobo*. _____
11. Lately, Megan has been involved in various plays produced by the Soupepper Theatre Company. _____
12. Megan did not return to Canada to perform in the *Road to Avonlea*. _____

Vocabulary Skills

A. Skim through the biography to locate synonyms for the following words. Record each one on the line provided.

1. chatty _____
2. busy _____
3. outstanding _____
4. anger _____
5. baby _____
6. advertisement _____
7. visitor _____
8. smallest _____
9. hunt _____
10. court _____

B. Skim through the biography to locate antonyms for the following words. Record each one on the line provided.

1. narrow _____
2. oldest _____
3. son _____
4. biggest _____
5. falling _____
6. lowest _____
7. imaginary _____
8. shallow _____
9. sadly _____
10. married _____