

Close Reading Lessons for *The Princess and the Pizza*

Initial Close Reading Lesson

Text: *The Princess and the Pizza*

Author: Mary Jane Auch and Herm Auch

Purpose: R1: Close reading for deep understanding of the text

Before Reading

Clues Based on Cover Illustration

- Notice that a “cartoonish” looking princess is carrying a pizza

Clues Based on Title, Author

- Notice key words: *Princess* and *Pizza*; notice the similarity to the title *The Princess and the Pea*

Probable Text Type (Literary or Informational); Possible Genre

- Probably a fairy tale

Vocabulary That May Need Pre-Teaching for ELLs or Low Language Students

- Princess, pizza

During Reading

Questions Students Should Ask Themselves for Each Chunk of Text

- What is the author telling me?
- Any hard or important words?
- What does the author want me to understand?
- How does the author play with language to add to meaning?

Follow-Up Text-Dependent Questions for the Teacher to Ask About Each Chunk of Text

Pages 1–2

- What is different here from the original story of *The Princess and the Pea*? (The princess is not rich and doesn’t live in a castle.)
- What does the authors’ point of view seem to be about princesses? What is the evidence? (They seem to be poking fun at princesses and “princessing”: walking the peacock, surveying the kingdom from the castle tower, doing the princess wave.)

Pages 3–4

- How do the details on this page relate to what we learned on the previous page? (The author shows that these “princess behaviors” don’t work out as well in Paulina’s new life: made holes in the roof, people thought she was swatting at flies.)

- How are these authors making this story humorous? (poking fun at princesses)

Pages 5–6

- What does Paulina seem to think about being a princess? What is the evidence? (She wanted to be a princess—ball gown, tiara, wanted to marry the prince)
- What odd details does the author include on this page? (took along some garlic and herbs)

Pages 7–8

- Does Paulina talk and act like a princess? Explain. (No: “Oh, for Pete’s sake”; “the old princess-and-the-pea trick.”)
- What does Paulina mean: “That’s so once-upon-a-time”? (She is referring to fairy tales.)

Pages 9–10

- Why were the princesses who looked bright-eyed sent home? (they were able to sleep with the pea under their mattress—so they weren’t real princesses)
- In a fairy tale there are often three tests. What was the first test that Paulina had to pass? (write an essay about her mother-in-law)
- Why was the topic of this essay so humorous? (Queen Zelda was definitely *not* “exquisitely beautiful.”)
- How does Paulina respond when Queen Zelda explains the second test? Do you expect this in a fairy tale? (Paulina argues back—definitely not a princess quality)
- What is a “sharp look”? (angry look)

Pages 11–12

- This page includes references to several other fairy tales. What are they? Explain the references. (The two big-footed princesses were like the stepsisters in *Cinderella*; the seven strange little men were like the dwarfs in *Snow White*; the princess with the long braid was like Rapunzel.)
- How does the illustration add to the humor on this page? (accept all reasonable responses)
- If you were to use one word to describe Paulina, what might it be based on her actions and words so far? (outspoken, bold, rude, etc.)

Pages 13–14

- How do the authors continue to use other fairy tales in a clever way? (The characters from other fairy tales are back again—and get in the way of Paulina’s success.)
- Notice the ingredients that are left for Paulina. Do you think she can create a feast out of these? Explain. (accept all reasonable responses: will students recognize that these are the ingredients for pizza?)

Pages 15–16

- What strategy do you think the authors want us to use as they describe Paulina’s “feast”? (visualize)
- What other fairy tale character is mentioned on this page? (fairy godmother)
- Why do you think the authors are having Paulina take a nap right now? (raises suspense about who will win)

Pages 17–18

- What is the meaning of *beheaded*? (off with your head)
- What is the fairy tale referenced here? (*Rumpelstiltskin*)

- What do you think the authors are trying to show with the arguments back and forth between Queen Zelda and Paulina? (They are both strong women; don't want to be pushed around.)

Pages 19–22

- What details from earlier in the book are returning here? (garlic and herbs—the authors included these details for a reason)
- What was Paulina creating? (pizza)
- How are the authors using other fairy tales here? (Paulina considered climbing down Rapunzel's braid to escape)

Pages 23–26

- How did pizza get its name? (“Pete’s. . . . ah”)
- How did the authors create a surprise ending here? (Paulina says she doesn't want to marry the prince.)
- What do you think Paulina's new plan is? (accept all reasonable responses)

Pages 27–30

- How do the authors tie details together from the beginning of the story? (Paulina opens a pizza restaurant; the restaurant includes the carved furniture her father makes; Drupert and Queen Zelda come to the restaurant; people now notice the princess wave.)
- How do the authors let you know there might be one more surprise? (“She was still worried about one little thing.”)

Pages 31–32

- Explain what Paulina is worried about. (Her dad might marry Queen Zelda—which would make Zelda Paulina's stepmother)

After Reading (Complete These Tasks on Day 2 of the Lesson Sequence)

Important Words to Talk About the Text

- Paulina, Queen Zelda, pizza, fairy tales, Drupert

Theme, Lesson, or Message (if Appropriate)

- Being a princess isn't for everyone—even though it might look great at first

Summary or Gist Statement

- This is a great story to summarize because of its classic problem/solution structure. Students can identify what happens at the beginning, middle, and end

Review of Text Type (Literary/Information) and Genre

- This is a fairy tale with modern twists. It also incorporates characters from other fairy tales into its plot

Collaborative Oral Task

- To reinforce understanding of genre characteristics, ask students to work in pairs or small groups to identify five fairy tale characteristics in this story. (You might want to review fairy tale characteristics before asking students to complete this task.)