

Educator Discussion Guide

PRINCESS AND THE PEAS

by Rachel Himes

Illustrations by Rachel Himes

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-2020
Grade 3-5**

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ABOUT THE BOOK

A southern twist on the original story of *The Princess and the Pea*, this tale is set in the mid-1950s in Charleston County, South Carolina. Ma Sally is known as the best cook in town and most famous for her black-eyed peas. Her son, John, is the most eligible bachelor. One day, John tells his mother that he is ready to get married. Worried that her son would be prepared an ill cooked meal, Ma Sally planned a town competition to give her son away to the winning woman who could cook just as well as her, but the winner had plans for John of her own.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Himes is a museum educator, children's book author, and illustrator who lives in Brooklyn. Her work focuses at times on material culture, diversity, and intercultural exchange in the ancient and medieval world and at other times on the black experience in America.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://www.rachelhimes.com/about--contact.html>

Accessed 02 October 2018

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Rachel Himes works in a variety of media, but especially acrylic and collage. Rachel graduated from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design with a BA in Religious Studies and a BFA in Illustration. Her first book, *Princess and the Peas*, was released by Charlesbridge in spring 2017.

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BOOK AWARDS

2018 Cooperative Children's Book Center Choice, Picture Books for School-Age Children

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Word of Mouth

Ask your students if they have ever spread information by word of mouth. Ask them to tell you some examples of positive and negative effects of using word of mouth to pass information. Ask students if they were aware that word of mouth can also be used as a tool in digital conversations. According to Wikipedia: **Word of mouth** (also called **viva voce**) is ^[1] the passing of information from person to person by oral communication, which could be as simple as telling someone the time of day. ^[2] Storytelling is a common form of word-of-mouth communication where one person tells others a story about a real event or something made up. ^[3] Oral tradition is cultural material and traditions transmitted by word of mouth through successive generations. Storytelling and oral tradition are forms of word of mouth that play important roles in folklore and mythology. ^[4] Another example of oral communication is oral history—the recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker. Oral history preservation is the field that deals with the care and upkeep of oral history materials collected by word of mouth, whatever format they may be in. Site accessed 10/24/2018. Here are two examples of word-of-mouth:

1. Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Restaurants Get People Talking
<https://pos.toasttab.com/blog/word-of-mouth-marketing>
2. The Power of Word of Mouth
<https://www.ama.org/publications/MarketingNews/Pages/The-Power-of-Word-of-Mouth.aspx>

Discuss with students different ways to use word of mouth in both offline and online settings.

Recipe

Ask your students to think about different recipes people use to make familiar dishes and how they taste differently. Ask them to them give you some examples. If they need hints, ask them to think of spaghetti, chili, potato salad, etc. Do different family members cook them differently? What about if you order these foods at a restaurant? Ask students to distinguish some differences between restaurant recipes and individual or homemade recipes. Ask them if they ever learned to cook and created their own recipe. According to Wikipedia: **recipe** (noun) is ^[1] a set of instructions that describes how to prepare or make something, especially a culinary dish. Site accessed 10/24/2018. Divide the students into groups of two providing them with a pencil and a sheet of paper to make a grocery list. Ask the students to jot down the items they would purchase to make their own black-eyed peas recipe.

The Princess and the Pea, original story by Hans Christian Andersen

Read to your students a more traditional version of the Princess and the Pea by Hans Christian Anderson or show them this YouTube video of someone reading the story out loud, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ0EKqAECps>. Ask your students what they thought of the original story. What seemed to be the main focus of the original story? After you read the *Princess and the Peas* by Rachel Himes, individually or in groups, ask them to share similarities and differences between the two stories.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the cover image of the book. How does it hint the content of the story? What does each item on the cover tell you specifically?
2. Why did Ma Sally hold a competition at her home that Sunday evening? What was the prize for the winner?
3. What were the distinct differences between the peas the local women cooked? How could they each have been improved?
4. What is the meant by Ma Sally's term "ill-cooked meal"? What other words can you think of that have a similar meaning? Have you ever been served an "ill-cooked meal"? If so, what was it?
5. What did the three local women competing for John's love have in common?
6. What were the results of Ma Sally's competition?
7. What do we know about Princess? Take a look at the first three pages in the book. What do these illustrations tell us about Princess and what kind of books she likes?
8. Explain the way John knew the three local women. How did they differ from Princess?
9. After Princess won the competition, what two things did she ask John to do? And why?
10. Do you think that it is fair that someone else wash the dishes if you have cooked dinner? Why or why not?
11. How would you explain the way Princess learned to cook?
12. In your own beliefs, what is the importance of knowing how to cook?
13. What is the meant by the expression, "two peas in a pod"?
14. What are some similarities between Princess and John?
15. Explain how the town found out about the competition? Was the method used an effective marketing strategy?
16. Compare and contrast this story with the original story *The Princess and the Pea*. How are they alike? How are they different?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Math:

The book provides a recipe for Princess's Black-Eyed Peas to feed four. Consider teaching cooking measurements (teaspoon, tablespoon, quart, gallon, liter, etc.) and have your class determine how much of each ingredient they would need to feed the entire class.

- This PDF is a guide to help students understand kitchen math and measuring.
www.sevastopol.k12.wi.us/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=5031401

Social Studies/Geography:

- This story was set in Charleston County, South Carolina. Have your students use Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps>) to determine the number of hours required to travel from their current location to Charleston County, South Carolina. Then divide your class into half. Suppose your students leave from your current location at the same time, determine the difference in arrival time if half the students traveled by car and the other half traveled by bike to Charleston County, South Carolina.
- The story was influenced by the 1950s, have students research the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) and its effects on people of the United States. What caused the Civil Rights

Movement? How did the Civil Rights Movement affect African American communities? Have students list the cause and effects of the Civil Rights Movement on Americans overall and African Americans specifically.

Health and Physical Education:

- Different recipes and foods are great to eat and try, but it is also important to choose foods that encourage healthy lifestyles; learn more at <https://organwiseguys.com/>. If possible have a state nutritionist speak to the class on the subject.
 - This website offers health tools, recipes, and activities for parents and children. <http://www.nourishinteractive.com/>
 - This website offers information for kids and parents about the 5 food groups. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate>
- Practice different exercises to promote good physical and mental health. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/exercise-benefits-children-physically-and-mentally#1>

Vocabulary:

Ancient
Anxious
Clustered
Gossip

Groaned
Hitched
Ingredients
Molasses

Pew
Potluck
Sulked
Veranda

RELATED WEBSITES

Rachel Himes Draw Blog

<http://rachelhimesdrawblog.tumblr.com/>

A blog of updated drawings and information related to Rachel Himes.

Booktalk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6OapktZLoc&t=271s>

A booktalk detailing the plot summary and characters in the book Princess and Peas.