

Discussion Questions for Strega Nona

Biography

Tomie dePaola, whose given name is Thomas Anthony de Paola, was born in Meriden, Connecticut in 1934 of an Irish and Italian background. From an early age his ambition was to create picture books. His mother, a book lover, read to him and his brother and encouraged their love of books. At age ten he wrote books for his younger sisters' birthdays. dePaola has drawn upon his own childhood experiences in writing books.

Confirm Understanding of Story

1. Who is Strega Nona? (Italian word for “grandmother witch”)
2. What is special about the pasta pot?
3. What does Strega Nona tell Anthony not to touch?
4. Why does Big Anthony want to show the towns people the magic pasta pot?

Critical Thinking Questions:

Important lessons about being responsible, paying attention and keeping promises.

Responsibilities:

- Compare how Strega Nona and Big Anthony work. Who is a responsible worker? Who is not? Strega Nona shows she cares for community by being responsible in performing her job. What are Big Anthony's responsibilities? What does he do that is not responsible? Do you think Big Anthony will make the same mistake again?
- Discuss the meaning of *responsible*. Relate it to the meaning of the word *responsibility*. What are your responsibilities (expected chores, behaviors) at school and at home. What are the benefits of being responsible? What are the problems with being irresponsible?

Promises:

What would you do if you broke promise to someone? If someone broke promise to you?

If you were Strega Nona, how would you have punished Anthony? (Punishment fits crime)

Why is it important to keep promises?

If you were Strega Nona, would you trust Big Anthony?

Paying Attention:

Why do you think Big Anthony disobeyed Strega Nona's directions?

What happens when you do not pay attention?

Introductory questions to stimulate discussion :

1. How many of you believe in magic?
2. Have you ever been to a magic show?

Introduction Activity :

The teacher will demonstrate a magic trick to motivate the students.

Body :

1. Students will generate a list of adjectives that describe Strega Nona's pot. The teacher will list them on the board or transparency.
2. The teacher will explain that in each container there are six objects and that each student will pull an object from the pot.
3. The teacher will hand each student a blank index card. Each student will list as many descriptive words and phrases for their object on the card.
4. Students will put the card with the describing words back into the container. The teacher will then mix the cards up and let students pick a card from the container (not their own card).
5. Students and the class will see if they can guess what the object is based on the describing words.

Conclusion Activity :

The teacher will initiate ideas and suggestions from the class that could help students better describe their objects.

Vocabulary Terms :

- sensory
- adjective

Evaluation Activity :

The teacher will ask the students what makes a good describing word or adjective (it uses the senses and paints a picture for the reader).

Instructional Procedure(s):

Anticipatory Set:

Tell the students that you are going to read a story about *Big Anthony and Strega Nona*. Tell them that while you are reading, you want them to listen to the kind of work people do, not only what the job is, but how they do their work. Read the story of **Strega Nona** or **Strega Nona's Magic Lessons** .

- Ask the students to name the different jobs they observed (heard or saw in the pictures) in the story. Write their responses on chart paper.
- Then ask the students whether Strega Nona is paid for the work she does (yes). Is Big Anthony paid for his work? (yes) Try to determine who pays them. Talk about why the work they do is important to the person who pays them.
- Ask the students to compare how Strega Nona (or Bambalona) and Big Anthony work. Who is a responsible worker? Who is not? What are Big Anthony's responsibilities? What does he do that is not responsible? Ask students if they think Big Anthony will make the same mistake(s) again.
- Discuss the meaning of *responsible*. Relate it to the meaning of the word *responsibility*. Ask the students what some of their responsibilities are at school and at home. Responsibilities may include expected tasks and expected behaviors. What are the benefits of being responsible? What are the problems with being irresponsible?
- Every member of a community has responsibilities. Some of our responsibilities are jobs that we get paid to do. Ask the students if it is possible to get paid for every responsibility. Why not? Make a list on chart paper of things that people must act responsibly about that they cannot be paid for. Examples include not interfering with the rights/needs of others, helping a neighbor, doing your best work at school and home, and bringing canned goods to school for hungry members of the community.

Assessment:

Have each student fold a paper in fourths and unfold it to make four sections in which to draw. Tell the students to draw themselves acting responsibly in four different situations. For example, the pictures may show the student cleaning his/her room, listening in class, sharing a toy and setting the table at home. Encourage the students to label or write a sentence describing each picture. Assess whether the student recognizes that responsibility includes helping, making good choices, completing tasks and being a good "citizen."

Provide practice and feedback related to the primary learning outcomes: Teacher will ask at least two critical thinking questions and take notes of students' answers for lesson assessment.

<p>Summary</p>	<p>When Strega Nona leaves Big Anthony in charge of her house while she goes away, she gives very strict instructions that he is not to touch her magic pasta pot. Being somewhat forgetful and wanting recognition from the townspeople, Big Anthony decides that using it can't cause too much harm. Strega Nona arrives home just in time to save the town from being overtaken by pasta, and Big Anthony gets his comeuppance.</p>
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<p>Background Building/Vocabulary</p>	<p>This is a Caldecott Honor Award book, which means it received the top recognition for its illustrations for the year it was published. If the cover of your copy has an embossed silver medal, discuss what this means. Tomie dePaola often uses white doves in his illustrations. The setting of the story is Calabria, a small town in Italy. You might want to note the red tiled roofs and the building styles. Although Strega Nona ("grandmother witch" in Italian) is able to perform magic, she uses her magic touch and wisdom to help people with everyday problems.</p>
<p>Pillars of Character Discussion Points</p>	<p>Responsibility, Respect and Trustworthiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * It is a big responsibility to take care of other people's possessions. * Respecting other people's property makes for good citizenship. * A lesson is often well learned when the punishment fits the crime.
<p>Questions for Discussion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Strega Nona show she cares about the people of Calabria? 2. What jobs did Big Anthony have responsibility to do in the house? 3. Why do you think Big Anthony disobeyed Strega Nona's directions? 4. When Strega Nona told the townspeople the punishment must fit the crime, what did she mean? 5. Do you think Big Anthony will disobey again? 6. If you were Strega Nona, would you trust Big Anthony?

1. Why do you think Big Anthony became angry when the towns people laughed at him?
2. What are some ways Big Anthony could prove he was not lying about the pasta pot?

Easy Magic Trick: The Jumping Rubberband

Effect: A rubber band mysteriously jumps from your pinkie and ring fingers to the first and middle fingers of the same hand and then back again.

Materials: A rubberband. If you like, you can also use a hair band.

1. Hold your hand naturally and wrap the rubberband around your pinkie and ring fingers. Let the rubber band rest at the base

of your fingers. The back of your hand should be facing your audience.

2. With your other hand, stretch the rubber band and insert the tips of your pinky, ring, middle and first fingers into it.

3. Rest your fingers in the rubber band against the palm of your hand. Notice how all of the fingers are resting inside of the rubber band and how the band is held against the fingertips.

4. At this point, you should be able to simply open (straighten) all of your fingers to make the rubber band "jump" to your index and middle fingers. If the rubber band doesn't jump, please review the instructions. Note that by reversing the direction, you can make the rubber band jump back to the original fingers.