

THE NUTMEG PRINCESS

by **Richardo Keens-Douglas** • illustrated by **Annouchka Gravel Galouchko**

Genre: Picture book, fiction

Themes: Storytelling
Legends and folktales
Friendship
Magical Fantasy
Multicultural tales
Courage/bravery
Community

Suitable for: Grades 1 – 4

Nutmeg Princess

Petite Mama grows tropical fruits and spices in the Caribbean. She tells her friend, young Aglo, about the beautiful Nutmeg Princess, who has diamonds in her hair. Only those with a good heart can see her, and when Aglo retells the story, many of the villagers for various reasons, want to find her. This is a story about bravery and being honest.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY IDEAS ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text. Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text

BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK:

Activities to build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and to establish prior knowledge and interest and develop predictions of what the text will be about.

A 1. Display a world map and find the Caribbean islands. Identify with the students, the names of the countries, and from student research post a list of words that describe the general climate in the Caribbean and the names of fruits and spices that are grown there.

A 2. Cut up a mango/banana/orange/guava and grate a small amount of nutmeg seed or use ground nutmeg. Place everything on a dish. Ask students to close their eyes while they taste and smell the fruit and spice.

Post a list of words from the students describing the fruit and spice using all their senses. Encourage similes with phrases starting “like a” or “as ___ as a.” Encourage stories about other times they have tasted tropical-grown foods.

A 3. Introduce the book as a fictional story about a magical princess and a woman who grows and sells tropical fruits and spices.

Ask students to read about the author on the back of the book *The Nutmeg Princess*, and discuss at least four facts that inspired Richardo Keens-Douglas to write this story.

WHILE READING THE BOOK

Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers’ reactions.

B 1. As students take turns reading the book aloud, take time to pause and study the illustrations. Discuss the colors and details that add to students’ impressions about living in the Caribbean. Reconsider the lists developed in activity A1 and A 2. Ask the students for further descriptive words or phrases found in the story to add to the lists.

B 2. On page 10, stop at the line:

Then all of a sudden, all the birds stopped singing and everything became very still.

Encourage discussion about the writing technique of building suspense with questions such as:

- Why do you think the birds stop singing?
- Do any previous sentences in the text or dialogue give you a hint about what will happen next?
- Have you ever been in a place where all of a sudden all noise stopped?
- How did you feel?
- How do you think Anglo and Petal are feeling at this point in the story?
- What do you predict will happen next?

B 3. Have students take turns reading aloud until the top of page 16 with the lines:

“There she is,” said Aglo.

“Where? Where?” everyone started shouting.

Students sit in a small group in a circle and take turns retelling the story. The teacher interrupts each storyteller after a minute, asking the next student to continue where the previous one left off until the story has been retold up to this point.

As a group, students present a tableau of the last scene at the lake, creating a frozen snapshot portraying what the characters might be doing at exactly that moment in the story. In character, the students think of one line to say about who they are and what they are thinking when they are interviewed by the teacher.

In the same groups and roles, students are asked to create a second tableau, depicting what the next scene could look like, and to be ready with another line to say when interviewed again by the teacher. Give them time so they are prepared to justify their predictions while being interviewed.

AFTER READING THE BOOK

Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

C 1. Ask students to imagine that they too can see the Nutmeg Princess and to prepare five questions each would like to ask her. Take turns with volunteer students or the teacher in the role of the Nutmeg Princess answering these questions.

C 2. On the page 10, the author describes a song the Nutmeg Princess sings. In pairs, create possible words to such a song by thinking about what the Nutmeg Princess would say. Some pairs may also be ready to create a melody or sound effects to accompany their lyrics.