

Nail Soup

**Serbian folktale as told by
Nada Ćurčija-Prodanović**



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Explore a Classic Folktale with Shared Inquiry!

Shared Inquiry™ is a learning method in which students search actively and collaboratively for answers to questions of meaning about a text, with guidance from the leader's questioning. This lesson plan helps students interpret the folktale "Nail Soup" over three sessions, with exploration of the text deepening each time. Writing and creative activity options are also included.

In Shared Inquiry, it is important to keep in mind that the suggested discussion questions have more than one reasonable answer that can be supported with evidence. This means the leader focuses on asking questions that encourage students to develop ideas, explain evidence to support them, and respond to others' ideas.

Nail Soup

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Session 1

Prereading (Optional)

Choose one or both of the options below to help students explore concepts and information relevant to the story.

Prereading Question

Ask students to think about a time when they shared a special meal with family and/or friends. Then ask: *What do you remember most about the meal? Why do you think many holiday celebrations include sharing a meal with others?*

World of the Story

Tell students that this story is a folktale from Serbia, a country in southeast Europe. If you wish, use a map or globe to show students where Serbia is. You may also wish to tell students that versions of this tale are told in other parts of Europe and that folktales are stories that have been told and retold by a group of people for a long time.

First Reading with Sharing Questions

Read the story aloud and have students note places where they are confused or curious. Ask students to share their questions, and record them for all to see. With students' help, answer important comprehension or vocabulary questions; save the remaining questions for discussion or writing activities.

Session 2

Second Reading

Choose one or more of the options below to conduct during a second reading of the story.

Note!

Students mark a **W** where they **would** do or say something a character does and a **WN** where they **would not** do or say something a character does.

Follow-up question: *Why would (or wouldn't) you do or say what this character does here?*

Move!

Students act out the soldier knocking on the door and the conversation he and the old woman have. [Text: "A faint light flickered in a hut by the roadside, and the soldier went to the door and knocked. An old woman opened it for him and eyed him suspiciously. 'I'm a penniless soldier, granny. Would you give me something to eat and let me spend the night here?' 'I will, soldier, but I can't give you food, for there is none in my humble hut,' said the mean old woman."]

Follow-up question: *Why does the old woman let the soldier into her house but say she doesn't have any food?*

Share!

Pairs of students share personal connections to a time when they watched closely as someone else did something. [Text: "He kept stirring the hot, rich soup on the stove, the old woman never moving from him. . . ."]

Follow-up question: *Why does the old woman stay so close to the soldier while he stirs the soup?*

Session 3

Shared Inquiry Discussion

Before discussion, students write the focus question and their initial answer with supporting evidence (use the Build Your Answer form on page 8). The teacher leads discussion, asking follow-up questions about students' ideas and using cluster questions to bring up additional parts of the text. Then students write their answer after discussion, explaining how they changed or added to their original answer and providing new evidence.

Focus Question

At the end of the story, why does the old woman have "angry eyes" as she watches the soldier eat the nail soup?

Cluster Questions

- Why does the soldier call the old woman "granny"?
- Why does the old woman tell the soldier she doesn't have any food?
- Why does the soldier tell the old woman he can make soup from a nail?
- Why does the old woman keep giving the soldier the ingredients he asks for?
- Why does the soldier eat the soup in front of the old woman without offering her any?
- Is the soldier just being mean to the old woman, or is he trying to teach her something?

Additional Sessions (Optional)

Interpretive Drawing

Have students draw the old woman bustling about the kitchen while the soldier watches her.

Writing Options

Essay Writing

Use your students' questions and areas of interest as topics for essays. Alternatively, try one of the options below.

Interpretive question: Have students turn their answer to the focus question into an essay, using the answer and evidence they developed during discussion.

Evaluative question: *Was it right for the soldier to eat the soup in front of the old woman without offering her any of it?*

Creative Writing: The Next Knock

Remind students that “Nail Soup” begins with the soldier knocking on the old woman’s door. Ask students: *How do you think the old woman felt after the soldier left her house? What do you think she will do the next time a stranger knocks on her door?* Have students brainstorm types of people who might knock on her door and how the old woman would react to each. Then have each student write a story about a person who knocks on the old woman’s door and the old woman’s reaction to that character.

Related Project: Stirring and Sharing

Create a physical or digital class bulletin board called “Stirring and Sharing.” Have each student create an image of a favorite family recipe and write a caption explaining what it is and whether it is associated with a special holiday or other event. If you wish, have students give brief presentations about their chosen recipes.

NAIL SOUP

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A soldier going home after serving in the army was caught by nightfall far from his village. A faint light flickered in a hut by the roadside, and the soldier went to the door and knocked. An old woman opened it for him and eyed him suspiciously.

“I’m a penniless soldier, granny. Would you give me something to eat and let me spend the night here?”

“I will, soldier, but I can’t give you food, for there is none in my humble hut,” said the mean old woman.

“Don’t worry, granny, for I hope you’ll let me cook my favorite nail soup for myself,” said the soldier, whose nose detected the savory smell of the food recently eaten by the old woman.

“Give me a pot, an iron nail, and some water, granny, please,” said the soldier, throwing some wood on the fire.

The old woman bustled about the kitchen, eager to see what this cheapest of all soups would be like. The soldier dropped the nail into the pot, poured some water over it, and put it on the fire. When the water was hot, he asked for some salt. The old woman handed it to him and looked in the pot as he dropped salt into it. As the water started boiling, the soldier asked for some flour, and the old woman gave it to him. He made a thick soup, then asked for an egg. The woman gave him that, too, eager to see the nail soup. The soldier broke the egg into the pot and mixed it with the flour and water. Now he needed some cooking fat, and got it. He kept stirring the hot, rich soup on the stove, the old woman never moving from him; and when he judged it ready to be eaten, he removed it from the fire, took the iron nail out of the fat, and ate his favorite nail soup under the angry eyes of the miserly old woman.

Build Your Answer



The focus question: _____

Your answer before discussion: _____

A piece of evidence from the text that supports your answer: _____

Page: _____

Your answer after discussion (explain how you changed or added to your original answer, and give evidence that supports your answer now): _____

