



Lesson Extensions and Activities for *Strega Nona*

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Reading Is Fundamental

Google Voyager Folktales Unit

Book Description

Strega Nona, or Grandmother Witch, heals her community members with her natural remedies. When she gets too old to cure headaches, help single women find husbands, and rid people of warts on her own, she takes on a helper called Big Anthony. Unfortunately, Big Anthony doesn't pay enough attention to Strega Nona and ends up putting the village in a scary position. Can Strega Nona save the village and teach Big Anthony a lesson?

Folktale Background

Strega Nona is an original story written and illustrated by Tomie dePaola. It was published in 1975 and won a Caldecott Honor in 1976. Perhaps the author's best-known work, it was also one of the "Top 100 Picture Books" of all times in a 2012 poll by *School Library Journal*. ([Source](#))

Vocabulary

Convent – A Christian community under monastic vows; Many convents are especially home to nuns.

Potion – A healing liquid.

Town square – An open public space commonly located in the middle of a traditional town.

Confess – To admit a crime or fault.

Bow – To bend the body as a sign of respect.

Barricade – A barrier that blocks an entrance.

Prior to Reading

- Ask students if they have heard of Italy. On chart paper, create a Venn diagram and have students share what's similar about the U.S. and Italy and what's unique to each of the countries. Note students' answers even if they're incorrect as you will go back and discuss the answers after learning more about the country.
- Walk students through the Italy [Google Voyager Experience](#). Students will learn about the country where the story is set. Add additional notes to the Venn diagram as you walk through the experience.
- Share with students that this is a folktale is set in Calabria, a region in Southern Italy. Ask if they've heard any other stories set in Italy and call on volunteers to share.

While Reading

- Stop reading after completing the page that says, “And Big Anthony, who didn’t pay attention, went to see her.” Ask the students if they think that paying attention is important if you’re helping someone like Strega Nona and why.
- Stop reading after completing the page that says, “Peeking in the window, he saw Strega Nona standing over the pasta pot.” Ask the students to guess what Strega Nona is doing with the pasta pot.
- Stop reading after completing the page that says, “But too bad for Big Anthony, because he didn’t get to see Strega Nona blow three kisses to the magic pasta pot.” Ask the students if they think the three kisses are important and why.
- Stop reading after completing the page that says, “Of course everyone laughed, but ran home to get forks and plates and platters and bowls, and sure enough, when they got to Strega Nona’s the pasta pot was so full it was beginning to overflow.” Ask the students what Big Anthony is forgetting to do.
- Stop reading after completing the page that says, “‘Stop!’ yelled Big Anthony.” Ask the students what they would do in Big Anthony’s position.
- Stop reading after the line that says, “‘Now, wait,’ said Strega Nona. ‘The punishment must fit the crime.’” Ask the students what punishment they think Strega Nona is considering for Big Anthony and what punishment they would suggest for Big Anthony.

Post Reading Activities

- Lead a discussion about the tale. Ask students such questions as:
 - Why did Strega Nona ask Big Anthony for help?
 - What caused all of the trouble with the pasta?
 - How could Big Anthony have avoided the trouble with the pasta?
- Have students complete the Criss Cross, Memory Matching, and Word Search puzzles about *Strega Nona* on RIF’s Literacy Central (<https://www.rif.org/literacy-central>).

Lesson Extensions and Activities

Here are some ways to further explore the story:

Primary Standard for all activities: RL.K.10 (Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.)

- **Math** – Have students complete word problems using pieces of pasta to represent the numbers.
 - Example word problem: Strega Nona has cooked 15 pieces of pasta. Big Anthony throws 5 more into the pot. How many pieces of pasta are there in total?

Objective: Students will be able to use representations to solve addition and subtraction problems.

Standards: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.OA.A.1 (Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.)

Materials:

- Printouts with word problems related to *Strega Nona*
- Pieces of pasta
- Pencils

- **Arts** – Have students create macaroni art inspired by *Strega Nona*. Invite them to create something that’s inspired by the illustrations in the book.

Objective: Students will design and create artistic works with food and other materials.

Standards: National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #3 (Refine and complete artistic work.)

Materials:

- Pasta
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Pencils
- Magazines that can be cut
- Scissors

- **Science** – Have students explore if hot water boils faster than cold water by completing the chemistry experiment described on Education.com.

Objective: Students will explore how temperature affects the boiling process.

Standards: NSES Physical Science Standards Levels K-4 (Properties of objects and materials.)

Materials:

- 2 water kettles that are different colors or have different designs
- 2 candy thermometers
- 3 cups of hot water
- 3 cups of cold water
- Stove or source of heat for both kettles
- Pen
- Paper

- **Writing** – Big Anthony had trouble listening to Strega Nona’s instructions. Have students create an instruction guide for Big Anthony about how to use the pasta pot.

Objective: Students will recall details from a book to write clear directions.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8 (Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.)

Materials:

- Journals
- Pens