

The Princess and the Pea: a free story kit for classrooms, libraries and families

Watch the free first chapter

<https://andersenworld.com/tales/the-princess-and-the-pea>



The story

A prince searches the world for a real princess. One stormy night a soaked girl knocks at the castle gate, and a single pea hidden under twenty mattresses shows whether she truly is a princess.

Hans Christian Andersen first published "Prindsessen paa Ærten" on 8 May 1835, in "Eventyr, fortalte for Børn. Første Samling. Første Hefte".

About the author

Hans Christian Andersen was a Danish writer, born in Odense on 2 April 1805; he died on 4 August 1875.

He wrote his fairy tales in Danish; in Denmark he is known as H.C. Andersen.

How the story unfolds in our film

The Prince's Search. A young prince travels across kingdoms seeking a true princess to marry, but each candidate he meets proves false in some way—too loud, too coarse, too practiced—and he returns home dejected, his search seemingly hopeless.

The Storm-Night Arrival. On a wild autumn evening of lashing rain and thunder, a drenched young woman knocks at the palace gate claiming to be a princess; the queen devises a secret test while offering hospitality.

The Test of the Pea. The queen places a single dried pea beneath twenty feather mattresses and twenty eiderdown quilts; the traveler is given the towering bed for the night, while the royal family waits to see what morning will reveal.

The Truth Revealed. At breakfast, the traveler confesses she barely slept, bruised and aching from something hard beneath all the bedding; the prince rejoices, for only a true princess could possess such delicate sensitivity—and they are married in spring.

Themes

- Authenticity versus pretense
- Sensitivity as a mark of nobility
- True identity revealed through trials
- Perseverance in seeking truth

Age guidance

Suitable from about 3 years. The questions and activities are grouped for ages 4–6, 7–9 and 10–12; choose what fits your group.

The first chapter is free and lasts about 2 minutes; the whole film runs about 4 minutes.

The film is illustrated and narrated with AI, adapted from Andersen's original Danish text.

Discussion questions

Ages 4-6

1. What was the prince looking for?
2. What was the weather like on the night the girl knocked at the gate?
3. What did the queen hide under all the mattresses?
4. How did the girl sleep that night?

Ages 7-9

1. Why do you think none of the princesses the prince met seemed "real" to him?
2. The queen tests the girl in secret. Why do you think she does not just ask her?
3. How many mattresses and eiderdowns were on the bed? Why do you think there were so many?
4. How did everyone know at breakfast that she was a real princess?
5. Do you think the test was fair? Why or why not?

Ages 10-12

1. What does the story suggest makes someone "real", and do you agree?
2. The other princesses are described as too loud, too coarse or too practiced. What do these words tell us about what the prince wanted?
3. The girl arrives soaked and alone, yet she says she is a princess. Why might the queen have doubted her?
4. Is being sensitive a strength or a weakness? Use the story in your answer.
5. Invent a different test the queen could have used. What would it show, and what would it miss?

Activities

Build the tower of beds · 30 minutes · 4-6, 7-9

You need: Strips of coloured paper, Glue, A dried pea or a small paper dot

1. Glue the pea at the bottom of a sheet of paper.
2. Stack twenty strips of paper on top of it as mattresses and eiderdowns, counting together as you go.
3. Draw the princess on top and talk about how she might have slept.

Storm-night sound story · 20 minutes · 4-6

You need: Hands, feet and voices

1. Make the sounds of the storm together: rain with fingers, thunder with feet, wind with voices.
2. Retell the night the girl knocks at the gate while the group makes the sounds.
3. Go quiet at the moment the queen hides the pea.

Design a fair test · 35 minutes · 7-9, 10-12

You need: Paper, Pencils

1. In groups, decide what a "real" princess or prince should be like.
2. Design a test that would show it, and write down why your test is fair.
3. Share the tests and discuss: what can a test show about a person, and what can it not?

The queen's diary · 30 minutes · 10-12

You need: Paper, Pencils

1. Write the queen's diary entry for the stormy night and the morning after.
2. Include what she thought when the girl arrived, and why she chose the pea.
3. Compare entries: did the queen trust the girl?

Vocabulary

prince: the son of a king or queen

princess: the daughter of a king or queen, or the wife of a prince

mattress: the soft, thick part of a bed that you lie on

eiderdown: a thick, warm quilt filled with soft feathers

drenched: completely wet

genuine: real, not pretend

sensitive: able to feel even very small things

test: a way of finding out whether something is true

Reflection

- How can you tell if someone is being their real self?
- Have you ever been judged before people knew you? How did it feel?
- What is something small that you notice and others might not?

Sources

- Story Engine: the film's adaptation
- First-edition record
- Author page (approved), citing the author record and Wikipedia
- Author page (approved)
- Story Engine: the film's beats
- Story Engine: the film's themes
- Tale catalogue (ages)
- Film files (lengths)
- Production record

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