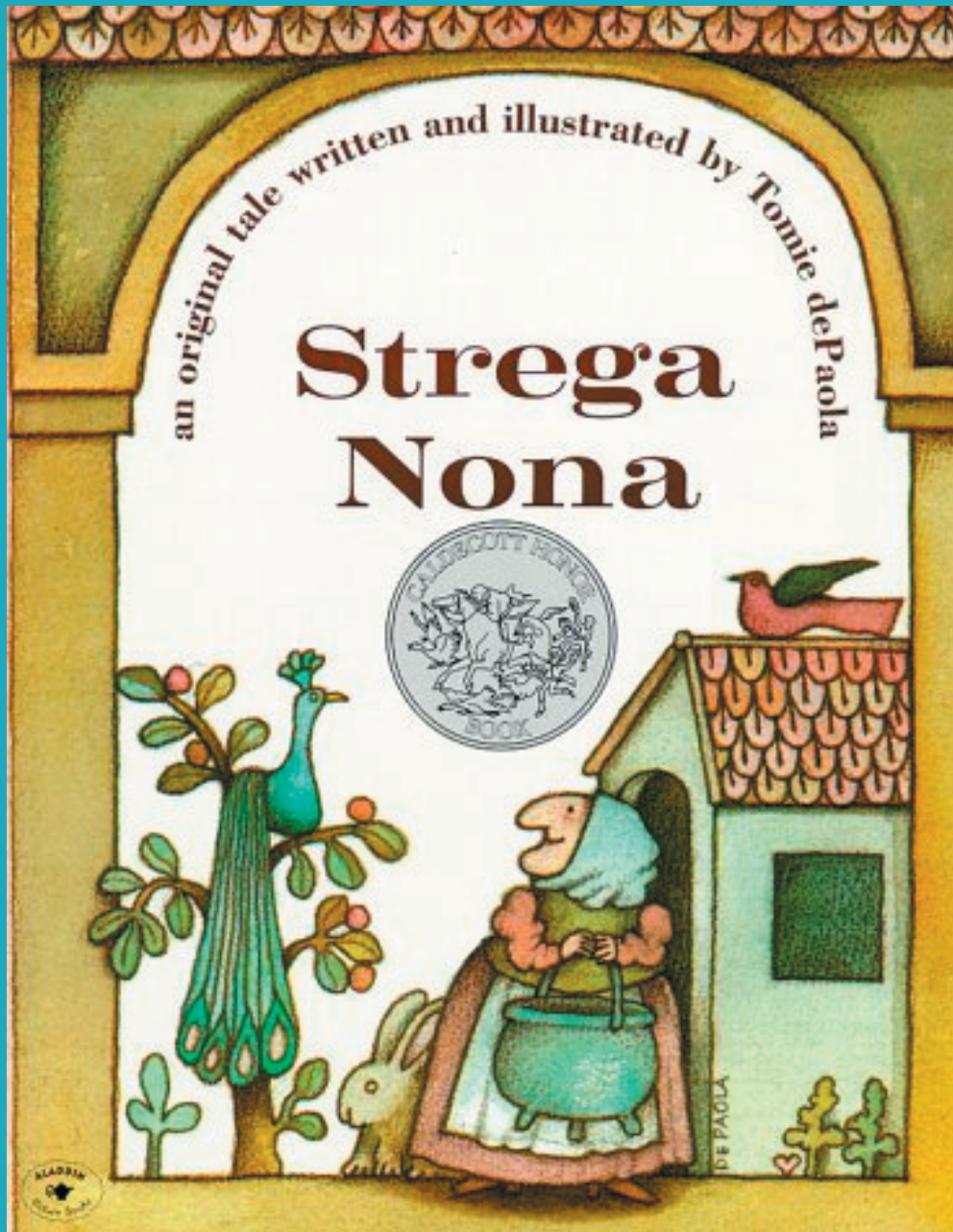


Study Guide for
Tomie DePaola's *Strega Nona*
A Musical



Presented by Maximum Entertainment
in Association with Active Arts Theatre for Young Audiences

Fun Fact:
The set designer read the pop-up book
“Brava Strega Nona” for inspiration
when she was designing this show.

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Who is Tomie dePaola?

(Pronounced Tommy da-Pow-la)

Quick Facts

- Born September 15, 1934
- Raised in Connecticut with two sisters and one brother
- Knew he wanted to write books when he was four years old
- Studied art in college and graduate school
- Illustrated over 200 books, written over 100
- Over 6 million copies of his books have sold worldwide.

More information:

www.tomie.com

TOMIE dePAOLA, HIS
ART & HIS STORIES
by Barbara Elleman
with a preface by Trina
Schart Hyman



Strega Nona: A Brief History

(From www.tomie.com)

So, here's the real scoop on how Strega Nona came about...

In the early 1970s, I was teaching in the theater department at what is now Colby-Sawyer College in New Hampshire (where I live). My books were beginning to get noticed, so my editor at Prentice-Hall (now Simon & Schuster), Ellen Roberts, suggested that I look into re-telling a folk tale. Of course, I would also illustrate it.

Well, some months before at a required weekly college faculty meeting (I always sat in the back row with a legal pad and doodled. The administration thought I was taking notes.), I was, as usual, doodling. I was "obsessed" with the Italian commedia dell'arte character Punchinello. So many of my doodles were of him - big nose, big chin.

On my pad, I drew the profile, but suddenly I found I had drawn a head scarf. I put in the eye and the smiling mouth and continued to draw a little chubby body complete with long skirt and apron. And I scribbled the words "Strega Nona" next to the drawing.

I was tickled pink. She was so cute, so Italian, I thought I might be able to use her in a book someday. I pinned the doodle up on my studio wall.

Back to Ellen Roberts and her suggestion that I re-tell a folk tale.

"What was one of your favorite folk tales when you were a child?" she asked.

"The Porridge Pot story," I answered immediately.

"Why don't you re-read it in a version that's in the Public Domain and see if you're interested enough in it to re-tell it," Ellen said.

So, I re-read the story. But, I didn't really like it. Suddenly, LIGHT BULB TIME!

Maybe I could change PORRIDGE to PASTA and I could use my little Strega Nona (who was already "telling" me who she was").

I called Ellen to ask if it was "legal" to re-tell a story.

"Of course," she said, "as long as the story is in the Public Domain." (A story in the Public Domain is a story for which the copyright has expired or lapsed. Public Domain stories are usually very old.)

So, I started working on the text for STREGA NONA.



About This Production

Who makes the show happen?

The **Director** is Tracy. Tracy is in charge of telling the actors where to go on stage and how to make their characters interesting. She is the person who makes sure everyone is doing a good job telling the story of the play.

The **Actors** are all of the people you saw on the stage. They work together as a team to rehearse the play, memorize their lines, and learn their songs. All of the actors went to school to learn how to perform.

The **Set Designer** is Andrea. Andrea creates the world where the actors tell the story. She imagines and draws all of the pieces that you saw on the stage, the furniture and the painted fabric.

The **Costume Designer** is Ulises. Ulises imagines the clothes that the actors are wearing to help become the characters. He draws and then sews the clothing.

The **Producers** are Eva and Nina. Eva and Nina hired all of the people involved with the show. They also work together to tell people all across the country about the show so they will want to come and watch it.

Fun Fact:
The word for Grandmother in Italian is "Nonna." The character in the play is named "Nona."

Pre-Show Classroom Activities and Discussions:

Discussion Questions:

What is theatre? What is the difference between live theatre and a movie or television?

Imagine you are an actor on stage.

What kind of part would you like to play?

How would you like the audience to respond to your performance?

Why do we applaud at the end of a performance?

Fun Fact:
Actors are very superstitious and never wish each other "Good Luck." Instead they say "Break a Leg" in hopes that saying something bad will make something good happen.

Class Activity: Going to See a Show

Select four volunteers to act as "performers." Select two volunteers to act as "stagehands." The rest of the class will act as the "audience."

Step 1: Stagehands flash the lights in the classroom to indicate the performance is starting. And say the line "Everyone please take your seats."

Step 2: Performers enter by standing in front of the class. All of the performers sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" or any other song or poem that everyone in the class knows.

Step 3: The Audience applauds at the conclusion of the performance.

Step 4: The Performers bow.

Step 5: The Stagehands flicker the lights to indicate the end of the show.

Step 6: Rotate participants.

Post-Show Classroom Activities and Discussions:

Discussion Questions:

What was the play about?

Were there differences between the story in the book and the story in the play?

What parts of the play were the most exciting?

Which character did you enjoy the most? Why?

Why do you think the director chose to use puppets along with live actors?

Which parts of the set helped to tell the story? How?



Writing and Drawing Activity:

Each student writes a letter to the actors.

Dear Strega Nona Actors,

My favorite part of the play was _____

While watching your play I felt _____

because _____

I have drawn a picture of the scene when _____

If I could be in your play, I would like to play the part of _____

_____ because _____.

Sincerely,

After writing the letter, students can illustrate a scene from the play. We love hearing from our audiences! If you would like, please send these letters to Active Arts Theatre for Young Audiences, 6114 La Salle Avenue, #431, Oakland, CA 94611. Include your return address and your class will receive a note back from the actors!

Math: Estimation

When Big Anthony's Pasta Pot overflows, the pasta fills the whole town. Big Anthony has a lot of eating to do! But how much exactly?

Step 1: Fill a jar with pasta (we recommend spirals).

Step 2: In groups, allow your students to estimate how many pieces of pasta are in the jar. Write down the estimates.

Step 3: Pour out the pasta in the jar into paper cups and pass out the paper cups, one per student. Pass out an additional empty paper cup. The students must count their cup's worth of pasta by moving the pasta from one cup to the other and counting it piece by piece. The students write their results on the board. Teacher adds up the results to see which group estimated the closest to the actual.

Step 4: Imagine the central square in Paola, Italy. How many jars would it take to fill the central square? In front of the class, the Teacher explains that 1000 jars fit in the central square. Through multiplication, we find out how much pasta Big Anthony had to actually eat.

Fun Facts:

The Chinese ate pasta as early as 5,000 B.C.

There are over 600 shapes of pasta eaten worldwide.

To cook one billion pounds of pasta, you would need 2,021,452,000 gallons of water—enough to fill nearly 75,000 Olympic-size swimming pools.

(from the nibble.com)

Math: Strega Word Problems

1. If Big Anthony has 99 pieces of pasta in his hand and Strega Nona adds one more, how many pieces of pasta will Big Anthony have?
2. Strega Nona has piled 200 pieces of wood on the wood pile. She is cold and wants to make a fire, so she asks Big Anthony to bring her 1 piece of wood from the wood pile. How many pieces does she have left?
3. Big Anthony dances for six hours. He dances so much, he ruins one pair of shoes for every hour he dances. How many pairs of shoes does Big Anthony ruin?
4. Big Anthony wants to learn magic. He studies very hard and learns 49 spells. Strega Nona tells him that he will not be a real Strega until he learns 60 spells. How many more spells does Big Anthony have to learn to become a Strega?
5. Strega Nona is counting all of the people in the village. She counts 98 people. Then, she looks around and realizes that Big Anthony and Bambolona are missing. How many people actually live in the town?



Language: Let's Learn Italian

Draw a line from the Italian word to the English word:

Molto

Excuse Me

Si Si

Thank You

Buon Giorno

Yes Yes

Tutti

Goodnight

Grazie

Very

Prego

Hello/Goodbye

Scusi

You're Welcome

Ciao

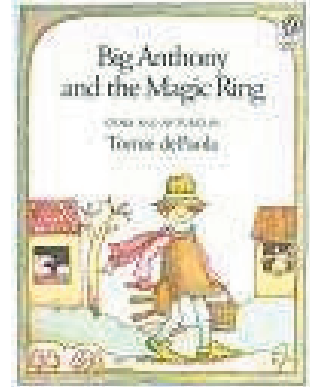
All

Buona Notte

Good Day



Reading for Detail: Big Anthony and the Magic Ring by Tomie dePaolo



Read the following section from “Big Anthony and the Magic Ring” and then answer the questions.

Wintertime was very quiet in the little town in Calabria where Strega Nona (Grandma Witch) and her helper Big Anthony lived. People came to Strega Nona to help them solve their troubles. Big Anthony did his chores and tried to behave himself. And every morning Bambolona, the baker’s daughter, came to deliver the bread.

One day the sun began to shine a little brighter, the birds began to sing a little sweeter, and the flowers began to bloom everywhere. Spring had come, and Big Anthony began to drag his feet.

“Anthony,” said Strega Nona, “whatever is the matter? You’re sleeping late. Your chores are half done, and every time I look at you, you’re gazing into space and sighing.”

“Oh, Strega Nona, I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” said Big Anthony. “Everything in my head is fuzzy.”

“I think you have spring fever,” said Strega Nona. “What you need is a little Night Life. Why don’t you go to the village dance tonight? It would perk you up.”

Big Anthony sighed again. “The village seems so far away,” he said. “And anyway, who would dance with *me*?”

“Bambolona the baker’s daughter, would,” said Strega Nona. “Why don’t you ask her when she brings the bread?”

Questions:

1. **Wintertime in Calabria was:**

- a) loud b) quiet c) cold d) helpful

2. **People came to see Strega Nona to:**

- a) buy bread b) go to the dance
c) do chores d) solve their problems

3. **List three signs that Spring had come:**

4. **Why is Big Anthony’s head fuzzy?**

- a) He has a headache b) he needs glasses
c) he has spring fever d) he ate too much pasta

5. **Who does Strega Nona think will dance with Big Anthony?**

- a) The baker’s daughter b) the entire village
c) the birds d) a witch

Art: Illustration

Tomie dePaola is a writer and an artist. Sometimes he writes his books and illustrates them, sometimes he illustrates other people's books.



- Step 1: Select a story that the class is all reading together.
- Step 2: Teacher reads aloud one scene from the story.
- Step 3: Using markers, crayons, or colored pencils, all of the students use their imagination to illustrate the same scene.
- Step 4: Each student describes what is in their drawing to a partner.

Drama: Acting out a Story



In the play "Strega Nona," the actors took a story which was originally a book and acted it out.

- Step 1: Teacher reads a story aloud to the class.
- Step 2: As a class, brainstorm the characters in the story and the settings--locations in the story.
- Step 3: As a class, determine the plot--events in order with a clear beginning, middle and end.
- Step 4: Teacher breaks up the story into small segments and assigns each segment to a group of students.
- Step 5: Students must create a tableaux (frozen picture that tells a story) of the moment in the story.
- Step 6: All groups show their tableaux in front of the class in the order of the story.

Vocabulary: Illustration, Plot, Tableaux, Character, Setting

Language: Strega Nona Word Find

C	V	Y	O	Q	V	K	R	K	V	U	J
H	G	V	B	P	K	C	N	K	C	X	U
O	B	Q	P	U	C	Q	W	J	T	R	E
R	P	A	W	P	S	J	M	P	O	Z	U
E	M	A	K	P	D	T	P	A	M	F	J
S	Y	E	S	E	Q	A	R	C	G	C	L
I	D	H	R	T	R	H	C	E	G	I	P
F	G	A	I	C	A	J	R	T	G	C	C
T	X	A	N	T	H	O	N	Y	O	A	C
O	X	K	G	C	A	K	S	G	T	R	X
S	P	L	A	Y	E	I	T	A	L	Y	G
W	T	N	P	I	D	N	D	A	A	V	L

ACTOR

ANTHONY

BAKER

CHORES

DANCE

ITALY

MAGIC

PASTA

PLAY

PUPPET

RING

STREGA

Geography: Research

Using the tools of the classroom and library, students in groups must answer the following questions:



1. In what country does Strega Nona take place?
2. Name three of the four countries that Italy borders.
3. What item of clothing is the country of Italy roughly shaped like?
4. Name three major cities in Italy.
5. What are two kinds of food that Italy is famous for?
6. Italy borders on five different Seas, name one of them.
7. How many people live in Italy?
8. What is the name of the mountain range located to the North of Italy?

Here are more ideas for Strega Nona related activities for all grade levels.

Lower Elementary:

- Pasta Art
- Strega Nona read-a-loud with older grades
- Make your own paper bag puppets
- Freeze Dance with Italian Opera Music



Middle Elementary:

- Act out the story of Strega Nona using tableaux
- Write a class cookbook using your favorite pasta recipe
- Write a short dialogue between two characters

Upper Elementary:

- Write and illustrate your own story about magic gone wrong and the consequences
- Strega Nona read-a-loud with younger grades
- Research projects on different aspects of Italian culture: food, music, theatre, art

Answer Key for Teachers

Word Problems Answers:

1. 100 pieces of pasta
2. 199 pieces of wood
3. 6 pairs of shoes
4. 11 spells
5. 100 people live in the town

Language Answers:

Molto=Very Sì, Sì=Yes, Yes
Buon Giorno=Good Day Tutti=All
Grazie=Thank You Prego=You're Welcome
Scusi=Excuse Me Ciao=Hello/Goodbye
Buona Notte=Good night

Geography Answers:

1. Italy.
2. France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia
3. Boot
4. Rome, Venice, Florence, Naples, etc.
5. Pasta, Pizza, Spaghetti, Lasagna, Calzone, etc.
6. Adriatic, Mediterranean, Ionian, Tyrrhenian, and Ligurian
7. Approximately 58 million
8. The Alps

Reading for Detail Answers:

1. a) quiet
2. d) solve their problems
3. sun shines, birds sing, flower bloom
4. c) he has spring fever
5. a) the baker's daughter