

THE PRINCESS REVOLT

Discussion ideas and questions

The School Library Journal has noted that *The Princess Revolt* “*prompts readers to consider the downside of beloved fairy tales. Do they promote unrealistic standards of beauty? Do they discourage self-reliance in girls? Are they racist?*”

The questions below will encourage readers to look critically at fairy tales and consider whether or not they might themselves have certain biases about looks, gender and race.

- 1) In Chapter 8, Cia learns that her mom had asked Madame Fredepia to cast a spell that would make Cia immune to the charms of fairy tales, so that she wouldn't grow up believing in that “one day my prince will come and make my life wonderful nonsense.” (p.85)
 - a) Do you think Cia's mom was right to be worried about the effect of fairy tales on Cia?
 - b) Or was she overreacting?
 - c) Is it possible that you have learned some bad lessons (or bad messages) from stories like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White?
 - d) What are some good lessons you have learned from these stories?

- 2) In Chapter 10 Cia finds a paper her mom had written that criticized the fairy tale princesses (p.106 - p.107) and she wonders why Snow White just set herself up as a housekeeper for the dwarves instead of figuring out how to get back at the Evil Queen.
 - a) In what ways could Belle, Rapunzel, Cinderella and Snow White have figured out their own happy endings instead of waiting for someone else to rescue them?

- 3) In Chapter 14 Cia and Romy discover that Madame Fredepia is a fairy godmother.

- a) Why is Romy angry because Cia is so surprised by this discovery? (p.166 - p.168)
 - b) Why did Cia think that because Madame Fredepia was black she couldn't be a fairy godmother?
 - c) Have you ever made the wrong assumption about a person's abilities or life because of the way they looked?
- 4) In Chapter 16 as Cia is walking home from school, she notices a little girl in a sparkly tiara and princess dress and wonders if this will make this girl think, when she's grown-up, that she has to look a certain way to attract a "prince".
- a) What do you think? Do you think wearing frilly, fairy-tale inspired dresses as a kid affects your view of the world when you grow-up?
- 5) On p. 188 Cia wonders how it makes Romy feel that most of the fairy-tale princesses in movies are white; and, later, in the epilogue, we learn that Cia felt weird when she asked Romy about it.
- a) Have you ever talked to a friend, who is different from you in some way (for example, skin color, or religion, or accent, or country of origin) about your difference?
 - b) Has anyone ever asked you a question about how you are different? How did it make you feel?
 - c) Are there questions you'd like to ask, or wish that someone would ask you?
- 6) In Chapter 21 Cia tries to make Hildee, Cinderella's stepsister see that she doesn't have to find a prince and get married (p.255 - p.258).
- a) Why is it so hard for Hildee to accept that she can do other things with her life?
 - b) What could Cia have said or done to change Hildee's mind?
- 7) The fairy-tales in The Princess Revolt are hundreds of years old.
- a) Why do you think fairy tales are still being told today?

- b) Are there any books that you have read that you think will still be read three hundred years from now?

Now, some just-for-fun discussion questions!

1. The Princess Revolt begins with a fascinating mystery, why does Cia no longer need to sleep? If you were like Cia, how would you spend your time? What would you do with all those extra hours? Would you be freaked out, as Cia is, by no longer needing to sleep?
2. Cia's mom asks Madame Fredepia to cast a spell to make sure that Cia doesn't grow up wishing for a prince charming to make her life amazing. If your mom had visited a fairy godmother when you were a baby, what would you like for her to have asked the fairy godmother to give you? Think about the gifts the fairies gave to Sleeping Beauty when she was a baby ... good thoughts, kindness, amazing singing voice, ability to play any musical instrument and grace (aka be a great dancer). If you could only pick one of these, which would it be?
3. Cia looks for help from three fairy-tale villains: Cinderella's step-mother, the Sea Witch and the Evil Queen. Which one is your "favorite"? Which one do you find the meanest/scariest? Do you feel sorry for any of them? Do you think they are trapped in the way that the fairy-tale princesses are trapped?
4. When Cia is trying to escape from Snow White's basement and get away from the assassin dwarves, she reactivates her crush and deliberately turns John into a beast. Should she have asked his permission before she did it? And if he'd said no, then what should Cia have done?
5. Cia has a lot of embarrassing moments. Being attacked by pigeons in science class, her hair falling out during math class, being made fun of by John Lee when she visits him in the hospital, having to ask John Lee to kiss her when they are

trapped in Cinderella's basement. Which one do you think is the most embarrassing?