



Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot Study Guide



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ABOUT *STREGA NONA AND THE MAGIC PASTA POT* AND THE STUDY GUIDE

Wild Swan's production of *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot* is imaginatively staged and is the perfect introduction to theater for young children. Strega Nona, is a character created by Tomie dePaola, who in this tale has a magical pasta pot that only she can control. Silliness ensues when Big Anthony does not listen to her, causing the streets of their small Italian village to fill with pasta. *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot Study Guide* is an educational resource that offers discussion questions, activities, and resources to enrich your students' theater going experience. We have identified related Michigan Content Standards so you can see how curriculum goals can be explored and reinforced by *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*.

ABOUT TOMIE DEPAOLA

From <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/tomie-depaola/>

Tomie dePaola was born in Meriden, Connecticut in 1934. At age 4, he knew he wanted to become a writer and an illustrator. His mother was an avid book lover and read to him and his brother often. As a child, dePaola would illustrate the books his mother read to him. By age 10, dePaola was writing books for his younger sisters' birthdays. One of these books was *Glimmera, the Story of a Mermaid*. He often draws upon his own childhood experiences in writing books; his Italian grandmother was the model for the grandmother in *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup*. Tomie dePaola has published over 200 children's books over the past 35 years, and has won numerous awards, including both a Caldecott Honor Award, and a Newbery Honor Award. A prolific writer, he has written up to four children's books in a single year. Tomie dePaola now lives in New Hampshire in a large renovated 200-year-old barn with his four dogs.

ABOUT WILD SWAN THEATER

Wild Swan Theater is dedicated to producing professional theater of the highest artistic quality for families and to making that theater accessible to everyone including low income, minority, and disabled patrons through low ticket prices and innovative outreach programs.

Founded in 1980, Wild Swan Theater has been delighting children and building imaginations with a potent combination of some of the world's greatest stories, original music, dance, masks, puppets, and the visual poetry of American Sign Language (ASL). Since its founding, our company of professional adult actors, dancers, musicians, visual artists, and ASL performers has performed for hundreds of thousands of children in its home base of Ann Arbor and in schools, theaters, museums and public libraries throughout Michigan.

We have presented world premieres of folktales and myths from other cultures such as *Under the African Sky*, *Marketplace Stories—Folktales from the Arab World*, *Tales from Egypt* and our bilingual production of Aztec mythology, *Musicians of the Sun*. We have developed historical dramas about women in the World War II workforce in *Rosie the Riveter*, Michigan's maritime heritage in *Shipwrecked!*, and the Underground Railroad in *Along the Tracks*. All the components of Wild Swan productions, scripts, acting, music, and dance, are selected and developed for their outstanding artistry with the belief that children should experience the very best in the arts. For more information, please visit www.wildswantheater.org.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

1. About American Sign Language (ASL) in Wild Swan Theater Productions: Making Theater Accessible to Everyone

Materials Needed

- Handout #1 American Sign Language (ASL) Alphabet Chart

Objectives

By participating in this activity, students will:

- Understand the purpose and use of ASL in communication
- Develop some skill by practicing the use of ASL to communicate with others
- Reflect on the impact of ASL performers on a live theatrical production

Background

Wild Swan Theater (WST) strives to create theater productions that all audience members can enjoy. ASL is the language that children and adults who are Deaf use to communicate. WST shadow interprets all of its performances for the Deaf that are part of its season of productions at Washtenaw Community College.

In the early 1980s, we were one of the first theater companies in the nation to incorporate ASL into all of our mainstage performances, and invented a new aesthetic for the theater by fully integrating ASL actors into the central action of the play. When you see a WST production, you will notice that the people who do the signing, the interpreters, are part of the production and wear costumes just like the rest of the actors. When you attend a WST production, you will also see the signing completely woven into the performance. That way people who are Deaf can see what the speaking actors are doing and what the signing actors are doing at the same time.

Procedure

- Discuss with students how and why Wild Swan Theater uses ASL in its performances.
- Ask whether students have used ASL to communicate or if they have seen ASL performers in a production.
- Copy and distribute or project **Handout #1 American Sign Language (ASL) Alphabet Chart**. Ask student to “sign the alphabet” using the chart.
- Use the ASL alphabet to spell character names and words that are used in the play such as Strega Nona, Big Anthony, pasta, magic spell.
- Before attending the performance of *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*, provide some specific questions to guide student observation during the performance such as:
 - How do the ASL interpreters and actors work together to communicate ideas, feelings, and emotions?

Assessment

- After students have seen the play, ask students in what ways do they think ASL added a new dimension to *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*?
- Discuss student observations by asking: How did the ASL interpreters and actors work together to communicate ideas, feelings, and emotions?

2. What Happens Next? Using *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot* to Predict and Imagine

Materials

- Handout # 2--Excerpt from the story, from Wild Swan's production of *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*
- Paper and pencils, crayons, or markers

Objectives

By participating in these activities, students will:

- Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions influence events.
- Compare and contrast characters, settings, or events in a story.
- Describe how a particular story's plot unfolds in a scene from a play.
- Collaborate as a group to imagine and role play a new set of actions by each of the characters.

Procedure

Read aloud or select students to read and act out the dialogue excerpted from the play *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot* in Handout #2. Afterwards, ask students to further explore the characters, setting, and story in this short scene by asking:

- Who are the characters in this scene? How would you describe each character? Invite students to draw or describe what they think each character looks like.
- Describe what is happening in this story. Where are they? Invite students to draw or describe the setting or scene for the story.
- What decisions are being made by Big Anthony? What are the consequences of these decisions or actions?

Have students work as a class or in small groups to imagine and predict what happens when Big Anthony says to Paula, "Hankety pankety bibbety . . . bibbety . . . bibbety *pit!* This wart has got to *QUIT!*."

Assessment

- Have students describe or perform their stories and discuss the various next scenes or endings they imagined.
- After students have seen Wild Swan's *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*, ask them to compare and contrast the scenes and endings. What was different? What was the same? What is their favorite ending? Why?

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Follow-Up Learning Activities

1. Recall and Reflect

Use these questions as follow up to your visit to Wild Swan Theater's production of *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*:

1. Who is Strega Nona? Why does everyone want to see her?
2. Why does Strega Nona need someone to help her around her house? How does it feel to need help? How do you feel when someone helps you? How do you feel when you help someone?

3. Name some of the jobs Big Anthony has to do. Do you have jobs to do at your house or at school? What are some of those jobs?
4. What does Strega Nona tell Big Anthony he must not do? Do you have something valuable that you don't want other people to touch?
5. What is Big Anthony supposed to remember when Strega Nona leaves to visit her niece?
6. What does Big Anthony do when Strega Nona leaves?
7. How do you think Big Anthony feels when the pasta begins to bubble out into the town? How do you think the Townspeople feel? Have you ever felt that you were in trouble because of something you have done? Did you want someone to help you fix the problem?
8. When Strega Nona comes into town, how does she stop the pasta? What does she make Big Anthony do?
9. Do you think Big Anthony learned a lesson?

2. Big Anthony Strikes Again!

Big Anthony gets into a lot of trouble when he casts spells or uses Strega Nona's Magic Pasta Pot. Ignite students' imaginations by having them tell or act out new actions/spells performed by Big Anthony that create trouble. What are some new kinds of trouble that Big Anthony might get into? Review the plot and the characters in the story with your students. Using the basic plot format, have your students tell or write a story called ***Big Anthony Strikes Again***. You could write this story as a whole group activity, small group or individually.

Annotated Bibliography Selected Print and Online Resources

Other Strega Nona Books by Tomie de Paola /

- *Big Anthony and the Magic Ring* (1979): Introduces Bambolona, "the baker's daughter."
- *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons* (1982): Big Anthony disguises himself as a girl and takes magic lessons from Strega Nona, who is also teaching Bambolona.
- *Merry Christmas, Strega Nona* (1986): Strega Nona abandons her usual pursuits in order to prepare a Christmas dinner for the entire town.
- *Strega Nona Meets Her Match* (1993): Her friend Strega Amelia sets up a modern cure shop which competes with Strega Nona's cure shop.
- *Strega Nona: Her Story* (1996): Covers Strega Nona's life, telling the readers how she got the magic pasta pot and learned her magic (it all came from the help of her grandmother, Grandma Concetta).
- *Big Anthony, His Story* (1998): Tells of his life since childhood and how his family noticed that Big Anthony simply does not pay attention.
- *Strega Nona Takes a Vacation* (2000): Strega Nona goes on vacation and sends gifts of candy and bubble baths to Bambolona and Big Anthony.
- *Brava, Strega Nona! A Heartwarming Pop-Up Book* (2008): Strega Nona gives advice about life.
- *Strega Nona's Harvest* (2009): Strega Nona teaches Big Anthony about gardening and the importance of order.
- *Strega Nona's Gift* (2011): Concerns Italian holiday traditions.
- *Strega Nona Does It Again* (2013): Strega Nona has the perfect remedy for a houseguest who overstays her welcome.

Classroom Lesson Ideas

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/nicole-kent/bring-magic-your-classroom-strega-nona/> *Bring the Magic Into Your Classroom with Strega Nona* Lesson plan developed by an elementary school teacher for Schoalsitc with ideas and activities for using Strega Nona books in your classroom

More About Tomie de Paola

<https://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/depaola> Two video interviews with Tomie dePaola

CONNECTIONS TO MICHIGAN STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Kindergarten

- Reading Standards for Literature 2: With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
- Reading Standards for Literature 3: With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
- Reading Standards for Literature 9: With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 3: Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

Grade 1

- Reading Standards for Literature 2: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.
- Reading Standards for Literature 3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
- Reading Standards for Literature 9: Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 3: Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 4: Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Grade 2

- Reading Standards for Literature 2: Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- Reading Standards for Literature 3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

- Speaking and Listening Standards 3: Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.
- Speaking and Listening Standards 4: Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Arts Education

Kindergarten

- ART.T.I.K.1 Imitate and recreate the sounds of objects, animals, and people.
- ART.T.II.K.1 Recognize characters, environments, and situations that support the creation of a classroom dramatization.
- ART.T.I.1.1 Imitate and recreate the sounds of objects, animals, and people.
- ART.T.I.1.2 Role-play a variety of real and non-real characters through guided dramatization.
- ART.VA.II.K.1 Explore the basic uses of art materials to produce artwork.
- ART.VA.II.K.5 Express thoughts and ideas through the creation of artwork.

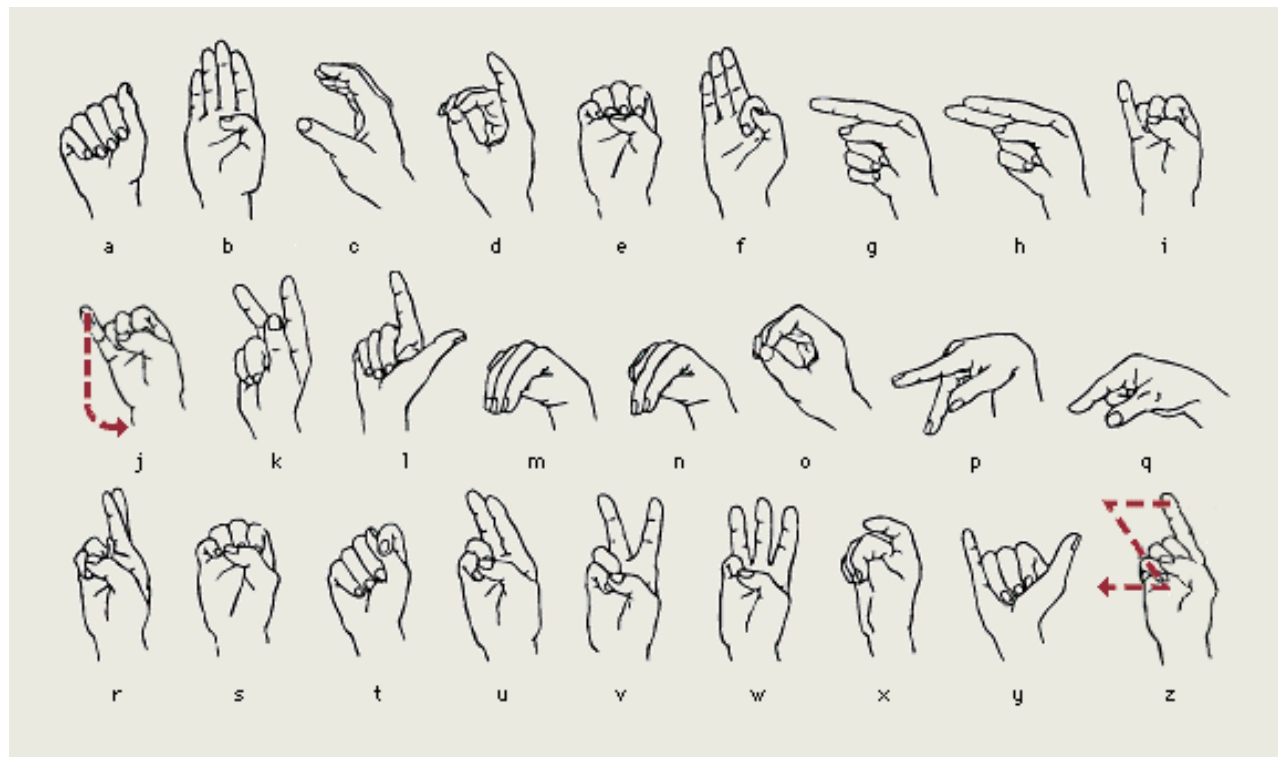
Grade 1

- ART.T.II.1.1 Identify characters, environments, and situations that support the creation of a classroom dramatization.
- ART.T.III.1.2 Recognize sequence of events.
- ART.T.III.1.4 List character choices, story settings, and plot lines.
- ART.T.III.1.6 Reinforce the recognition of the character's wants and needs.
- ART.T.III.1.7 Describe emotions and thoughts evoked by performances.
- ART.T.I.2.2 Dramatize real and non-real characters with prompting and side-coaching.
- ART.VA.II.1.1 Explore and experiment with materials and processes while creating artwork based on personal routines, activities, or environments.
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Grade 2

- ART.T.II.2.1 Describe characters, environments, and situations that support the creation of a classroom dramatization.
- ART.T.III.2.1 Describe the characters and setting in stories.
- ART.T.III.2.2 Convey elements of character, setting, and events after reading a story or script (The Five Ws).
- ART.T.III.2.4 Make predictions about characters, setting, and events based on story content.
- ART.T.III.2.6 Describe the character's wants and needs.
- ART.T.III.2.7 Give examples of emotions and thoughts evoked by performances.
- ART.VA.II.2.1 Demonstrate how materials, techniques, and processes can be used creatively to communicate ideas.

Handout #1 American Sign Language (ASL) Alphabet Chart



Handout #2 An excerpt from the play, *Strega Nona and the Magic Pasta Pot*

(ENTER SALVATORE, holding his head.)

Big Anthony (BA)

Hey, Sal, guess who I'm working for!

SALVATORE

I give up, Big Anthony. Who?

BA

Strega Nona.

SALVATORE

Strega Nona? She's where I happen to be heading.

BA

Well, she's not there, Sal. Gone to visit her niece. But maybe I can help you. What's the problem?

SALVATORE

My head. It feels like thousands of little hammers pounding it! I can't stand it!

BA

Ha! This is your lucky day, Sal, because Strega Nona has been showing me how she cures people. *(Indicating place behind fountain.)* Now sit here, and be still.

SALVATORE

Are you sure you know what you're doing, Big Anthony?

BA

Oh, absolutely, Sal. *(To audience.)* Isn't that right?

SALVATORE

(To audience.) You think I should let him try to get rid of my headache? *(BEAT.)* Well ... okay. *(Sitting down.)* What have I got to lose, eh?

BA

Not a thing, Sal. Not a thing. *(Facing audience, waving his hands around.)*

Hankety pankety bippety . . . *(To audience:)* Oh no! I forgot! How's it go? *(Improv with audience: if correct answer comes, BA turns it down, then finally says:)* Hey wait! I got it! *(Back to SALVATORE.)*

Hankety pankety bippety *bat!*

This headache has got to *scat!*

(BEAT with a look of shock, walking in front of fountain.) Uh, Sal, don't look now, but you've got . . .

SALVATORE

(Slowly standing up.) Got what, Big Anthony?

BA

Purple hair.

SALVATORE

(Feeling his head, the hair.) I've got *what*?

BA

Purple hair. But it's beautiful, Sal! Absolutely gorgeous!

SALVATORE

(Pulling some tresses into view.) But I don't *want* purple hair! Whoever heard of a Salvatore DiDonato with purple hair!

(EXIT SALVATORE.)

BA

(To audience.) Wow. He's really mad, isn't he? But maybe he'll grow to like his purple hair.

(ENTER PAULA.) Oh my gosh, it's Paula. I've been in love with her for as long as I can remember. *(To PAULA, twisting and turning with shyness.)* Hi, Paula.

PAULA

Oh, hello, Big Anthony.

BA

(Shy but flirty.) Where you goin'?

PAULA

To Strega Nona's.

BA

(To audience:) Did you hear that? To Strega Nona's! Hey, maybe this is my big chance, eh?

(To PAULA.) To Strega Nona's, huh? Well, Paula, she's not there now—gone to visit her niece. But maybe I can help you.

PAULA

You help me, Big Anthony! How could you ever help me?

BA

I'm Strega Nona's apprentice. I'm learning the tricks of her trade. *(Approaching her, studying her face.)* And I think I see what your problem is.

PAULA

(Averting her face.) It's not polite to stare at people, Big Anthony!

BA

You've got a big wart right on the end of your nose.

PAULA

It's not all that big.

BA

It's *huge*! But I know exactly how to take care of it.

PAULA

Really?

BA

I wouldn't kid you, Paula. You're too pretty. Just stand here and be still. *(Warily, she does as told.)*

Hankety pankety bibbety . . . bibbety . . . bibbety *pit!* *(Bringing PAULA behind fountain.)*

This wart has got to *QUIT!*
(PAULA jumps out from behind fountain)

PAULA

And . . . ?