

Reading Questions: Prompt Sheet

Traditional Tales: Firebird

Reading Questions and Answers

After Looking at the Cover: What type of book do you think this is? Justify your opinion.

- Example answer: It looks like a fiction book because it is an illustrated cover of a bird I don't think is a real bird. It looks like it might be a story filled with magic because there are little stars and golden apples in the picture.

What questions would you like to know the answer to having looked at the front cover?

- Example answer: I would like to know what sort of bird this is and what the bird does in the story. I'd like to know if the bird is a good or bad character.

Chapter 1, p.5: Where is the story set?

- This story is set in an orchard within the gardens of Tsar Vislav, who lived years ago.

p.5-8: What are the names of the characters in the book?

- The characters we are introduced to in this chapter are Tsar Vislav; Erik, the gardener; Dmitry, the oldest son; Vasily, the middle son; Ivan, the youngest son; the tsar's guards and the firebird.

p.7: Which phrase tells you that the older brothers do not believe in the firebird?

- The phrase which tells us that the brothers do not believe in the firebird is 'sniggered at this', which is used when the gardener talks about the firebird.

p.7: Does the tsar think Dmitry will catch the thief? Find evidence to justify your answer.

- Example answer: The tsar doubts that Dmitry will catch the thief. The evidence in the text for this is that it says, 'The tsar did not look convinced by this. He knew all too well that Dmitry usually had little motivation to do anything other than drink fine wines and play cards with his friends.'

p.9: What words or phrases can you find which tell us how the tsar is feeling when he finds Vasily asleep by the apple tree?

- Example answer: The text says, 'a very disappointed tsar stormed into the orchard'. Storming implies that he is angry. The fact that he gives Vasily 'a sharp poke in the ribs with his flute' also shows he is annoyed with him.

p.10: What helps Ivan to stay awake when he is on night watch?

- Ivan makes himself uncomfortable and alert by climbing into the branches of the tree and keeping watch from there.

p.11: Which words or phrases tell you that the firebird puts up a fight when Ivan tries to grab it?

- Example answer: It says in the text that, 'the firebird let out a huge squawk and frantically beat its wings in an attempt to fly upwards, away from Ivan's purposeful grasp', so this shows the firebird puts up a fight.

Deeper Reading

What do you think Tsar Vislav thinks of his youngest son? What evidence can you find in the text to explain your opinion?

- Example answer: The tsar thinks his youngest son is less capable than his older brothers as he says, 'Why would you be able to catch the thief when both your brothers have failed?' He thinks he is a good but young and foolish boy. The tsar also waves Ivan away 'with a look of annoyance on his face', so he might find him irritating.

How would you describe Ivan, the youngest son, based upon evidence from the text?

- Example answers: Ivan stands up for himself and expects to be treated equally with his brothers. He says that he should be allowed a chance to catch the thief. He is determined. This is shown by the way he ignores his father and goes on night watch then successfully stays awake all through the night. He is resourceful because he climbs up in the tree to make himself uncomfortable and to stop himself falling asleep. He is strong-willed because even though his instinct is to gaze at the firebird, he makes a grab for it.

