

# The White Snake

by Ben Nadler

A TOON Graphics

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FOR VISUAL READERS  
**TOON BOOKS**<sup>®</sup>



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## CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan and Teacher’s Guide

Overview	In this modern retelling of a Grimm Brothers’ fairy tale, a servant boy fulfills a mission, acquires special powers, is tested, marries a princess, and teaches his king to respect animals and stay in tune with nature.
Subject:	Ecology
Grade Level	3-5
Objectives	To help children gain respect for the natural world and be in tune with it. To gain an understanding of how text and images work together to bring out the underlying ideas driving a story.
<b>VERBAL EXPRESSION</b>	
RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.5.1, RL.5.3	On page 8, what does the king think is important? Why? Does Tilda, his daughter, agree?
RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3	On pages 8-9, what does the king expect of his daughter? How does she react?
RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3	Do you think the king is fair to Tilda and Randall? Give evidence from the story for your opinion.
RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1	What secret is Randall supposed to find out in Borisylvania?
RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1	Does Randall’s life change much working for King Boris?

RL.3.1, RL.3.3,  
RL.4.1, RL.4.2,  
RL.4.3, RL.5.1,  
RL.5.2

Often in fairy tales and other old stories, girls and women are obedient and passive and are expected to do as they are told. They are to be wives and daughters and do little else. Think of Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty. Does Tilda fit this model? Give evidence from the book for your opinion.

*Tilda does not fit this model. She talks back to her father and criticizes him. On page 8, she tells him that he knows that she could rule as well as any man. She's the one who comes up with a plan to save Randall on pages 36-37, and she tells him that she believes in him, even though he is from a different social class. In the end, she ends up ruling the kingdom.*

RL.3.1, RL.3.2,  
RL.4.1, RL.4.2,  
RL.4.3, RL.5.1,  
RL.5.2

Is Randall a typical, bold male hero with a "traditional," old-fashioned view of women? How do you know?

*No, he isn't. He tells the king that Tilda is far more qualified to rule the kingdom than he'll ever be. He also has a tender heart, which is seen in his kindness to the animals and his emotion when Edward is about to leave him.*

RL.3.1, RL.3.2,  
RL.4.1, RL.4.2,  
RL.5.1, RL.5.2

Page 18: What power does eating a piece of the snake give Randall? How do you think he will use it?

RL.3.1, RL.3.2,  
RL.3.3, RL.4.1,  
RL.4.2, RL.4.3,  
RL.5.1, RL.5.2

Page 34: Why do you think Randall wants to speak to Princess Tilda instead of telling her father what King Boris's secret is?

RL.3.1, RL.3.5,  
RL.3.7, RL.4.1,  
RL.4.7, RL.5.1,  
RL.5.7



This is a serious story, but there are many touches of humor. Find some of them and talk about why you think they're there.

RL.3.1, RL.3.2,  
RL.3.3, RL.3.6,  
RL.4.1, RL.4.2,  
RL.4.3, RL.5.1,  
RL.5.2

Do you think Randall changes during the course of the book? How and why?

RL.3.1, RL.3.2,  
RL.3.3, RL.3.6,  
RL.4.1, RL.4.2,  
RL.4.3, RL.5.1,  
RL.5.2

How do you know that some of the king's ideas have changed? Did he gain wisdom from taking a bite of the golden apple?



*He allows Randall, a commoner, to marry Tilda and offers to let him rule his kingdom. After Randall speaks up for Tilda, the king allows her to rule. At the end of the story, he turns the palace into an animal shelter. It does seem that the golden apple has brought him wisdom.*

<p>RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.3, RL.3.6, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.5.1, RL.5.2</p>	<p>On page 6, the first time we hear Randall speak, he already has a connection to animals. What is that connection? How does this connection change during the rest of the book?</p> <p><i>He longs to be free like the animals. As the story proceeds, he learns to respect them and to treat them with kindness.</i></p>
<p>RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.7</p>	<p>What do you think the author would like us to learn from this book?</p> <p><i>This story is built on the idea that nature should be respected, literally listened to, for people to move harmoniously through the world. The author/artist says, “For me, the takeaway of this tale is simple: stay in tune with nature. Pay attention to the Earth.”</i></p>
<p>RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.5.9</p>	<p>Do you know any other stories with snakes? How are the snakes portrayed in them? Are they helpful or harmful?</p>
<p><b>YOUR VERSION OF THE TALE</b></p>	
<p>RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.5.3</p>	<p>New tasks for Randall: Instead of a fish helping Randall locate a ring, what kind of task might the king require that, say, a beaver might help out with? Imagine a retelling of this story with a different set of animal helpers.</p>
<p>RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1</p>	<p>The story could have turned out differently at many points. Sometimes one event or decision can change everything. What would have happened if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tilda went to Borisylvania, as her father had asked?</li> <li>Randall never lifted the cover off the top of the dish with the snake?</li> <li>Randall didn't taste the snake?</li> <li>Randall didn't overhear the duck saying that something was stuck in its throat?</li> <li>The horse had stepped on the ants?</li> <li>Tilda didn't convince her father to have a contest?</li> <li>The fish, ants, and ravens didn't help Randall?</li> <li>Randall didn't return with the golden apple?</li> </ul> <p>There are many more ideas to use as the basis for discussions and activities in the back matter at the end of the story. Teachers are encouraged to make the most of them.</p>



## VISUAL EXPRESSION

RL.3.7, RL.4.7,  
RL.5.7

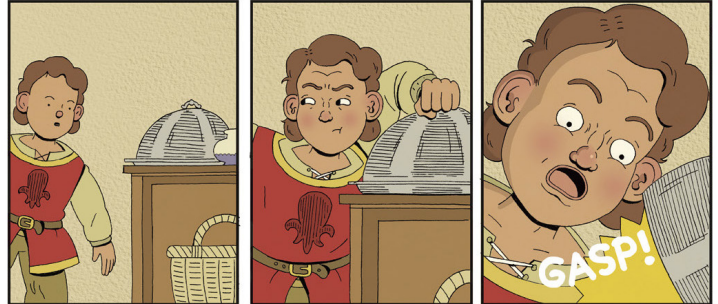
Look at the details on the cover and the title page (page 5). What do you see? Is anything surprising?

RL.3.7, RL.4.7,  
RL.5.7

Now look at page 6: Are the ducks, goats, bird, and fish in exactly the same places or positions in the first panel and the second one?

RL.3.5, RL.3.7,  
RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Until the bottom of page 15, the artist presents the action in 3 broad panels per page. How does this change on the bottom of page 15 and on pages 16-17? Why?



*On the bottom of page 15, there are three small panels in the same amount of space that one panel has taken up so far. The action is sped up, making it more exciting. Notice that Randall's face is bigger in each panel, until the final close-up. This brings out his intensifying emotions and draws us into them. On page 16, we have a large close-up, and on page 17 extreme close-ups that become more and more dramatic. All of this lets us know that this is a key moment in the book.*

Find other close-ups in the book and explain what you think they are expressing. Look, for example, at the middle panel on page 30 and think about how the close-up emphasizes the close relationship between Randall and Edward. Or the third panel on page 38.

RL.3.5, RL.3.7,  
RL.4.7, RL.5.7

How does the artist show that Randall turns around suddenly on page 18?

RL.3.7, RL.4.7,  
RL.5.7

Pages 19-20: How does the artist show how sad the queen is after she loses her ring?



RL.3.7, RL.4.7,  
RL.5.7

Page 21, bottom: Why is the background for these two panels so dark? Is it really nighttime? *The dark background emphasizes the drama of the moment. The duck stands out strongly against it, and it is darker in the last panel than in the next-to-last one. It's almost a moment out of time and space.*

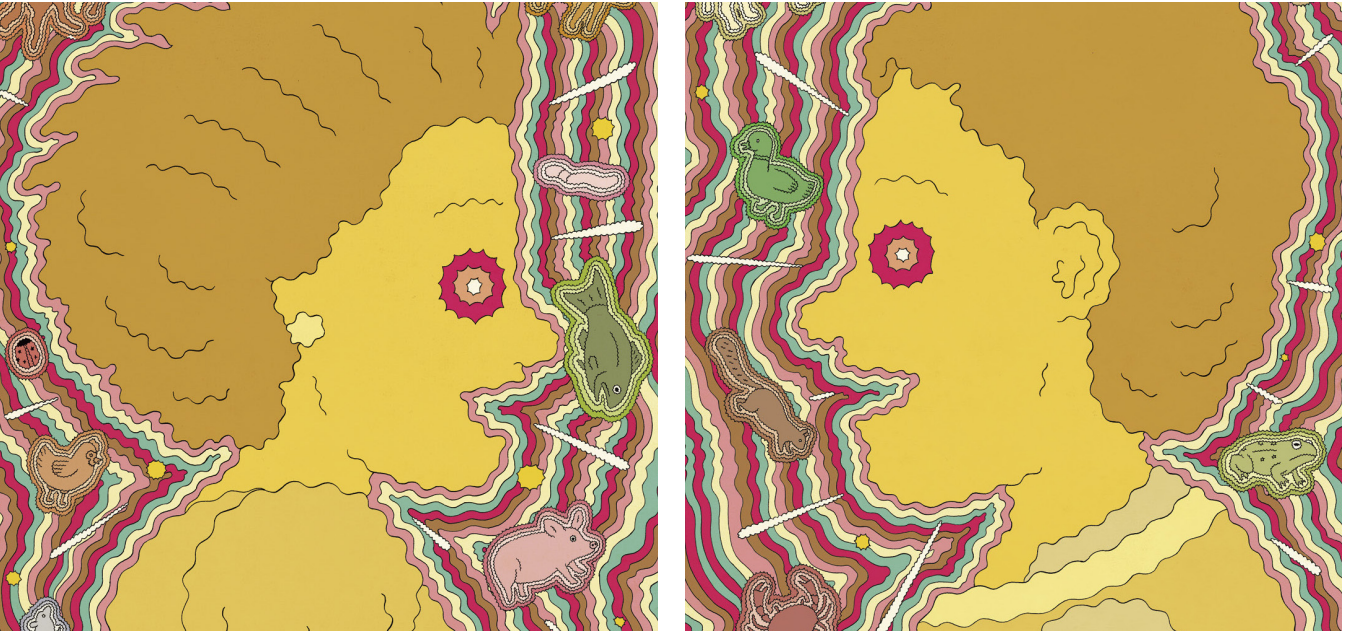
Notice the black background again at the bottom of page 50. Again, the drama is highlighted. Find some other places in the book where a sudden dark (not necessarily black) background with no details has this effect.

RL.3.7, RL.4.7,  
RL.5.7

Look at how the color of Randall's clothes and face change on page 39. Have you ever noticed how the colors of things change when you look at them through water? Any idea why this might be?

*Water absorbs light and filters out color.*

<p>RL.3.5, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Look at the large panel on the bottom of page 24. What effect does it have? <i>This is a peaceful moment. The large panel slows down the action, and the harmonious colors and lighting reflect the peaceful quality. Compare this with the middle panel on page 27.</i></p>
<p>RL.3.5, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Look at the font when the animals are speaking. How is it different from the font when people are speaking? <i>It's in red, it's in italics, and it's generally smaller.</i></p> <p>Why do you think the artist made these changes? <i>To set it off from human speech and to show its unreal quality. Only Randall can hear the animals talking.</i></p>
<p>RL.3.5, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>What does it mean when someone is talking in capital letters and/or boldface? How does it help you to read with the correct expression?</p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Look at people's eyes throughout the book. What do you think they are expressing? Choose five different examples of this and write down or explain to your classmates what you think the emotion being expressed is or the reason for the particular look in a character's eyes. (A good example is page 22: the chef, the duck, and Randall.) Try to make your eyes look the same.</p> <div data-bbox="310 884 1484 1268" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>See how many of your classmates chose the same examples. Why do you think this might be?</p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Look at the composition of the frames on pages 28 and 29. Why are the ants so big? <i>The top panel on page 28 is especially dramatic because of the extreme close-up. The ants are so big because their close call is dominating the moment. We're inside their thinking and emotions.</i></p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>How does the diagonal composition on page 36 emphasize the strength and boldness of the suitors? <i>They are moving in a bold line straight toward the front of the frame, taking up the entire foreground. They are looking straight at the reader, challenging his or her gaze.</i></p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>How does the artist show that night is falling on page 41? Do you think it is falling slowly or quickly? Why?</p>
<p>RL.3.5, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Notice how Randall's size changes from the last panel on page 43 to the middle panel on page 44. Think about why.</p>

<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>What can you tell us about the artwork in the last panel on page 44? What do the wavy colored lines and the position of Randall's body express?</p> <p><i>First of all, it uses imagery from video games, linking quests in games to the Grimm Brothers' story told here. Also, it's one big panel, indicating a different stretch of time. The zigzags follow the long course of Randall's adventures and stretch out the time. Notice how the weather and landscape change. Randall is wandering far away under changing conditions. There are so many little Randalls so that you can follow the progress of his quest. A comic allows the artist to represent many different moments in time all at once in a way that a verbal narrative cannot. (Point out that Randall travels again through these game landscapes on page 48.)</i></p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7, W.3.3, W.3.4, W.3.5, W.4.3, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.5.3, W.5.4, W.5.5</p>	<p>Which of Randall's adventures do you like best? Write and illustrate a story about it or develop it into a comic.</p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Talk about how page 51 is composed and how it reflects many things that happen in the book.</p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>What's happening on pages 54-55? How does the artwork reflect it?</p>
	
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Page 56: The author says that Randall and Tilda lived happily ever after. Analyze how the artwork brings out this idea.</p>
<p>RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7</p>	<p>Think about the color differences in the indoor scenes and the outdoor ones. Why does the artist make such a contrast between these two worlds?</p> <p><i>King Arnold lives in an indoor world, separate from nature. What he needs to learn comes from outside, from the natural world.</i></p>



## ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER RESEARCH

RL.3.9, RL.4.9,  
RL.5.9

Find the original version of *The White Snake* by the Grimm Brothers. What is different about Ben Nadler’s version? Why do you think he made these changes?



RL.3.9, RL.4.9,  
RL.5.9

Students can find another fairy tale by the Grimm Brothers (like the TOON Book *Hansel and Gretel*), or by Charles Perrault or from a non-European culture, and compare it with *The White Snake*. How is it different? What is the same? What do they think are probably characteristics of all fairy tales?

The back of the book has notes on “Folktales, Told and Retold,” a bibliography, and online resources for Grimm Brothers and other folk tales.

RL.3.5, RL.4.5,  
RL.5.5

Readers’ Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles, and be sure that students adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Maybe the class can work together on turning the book into a play that they can perform for other classes or for parents.



W.3.4, W.3.5,  
W.3.7, W.3.8,  
W.4.4, W.4.5,  
W.4.7, W.4.8,  
W.5.4, W.5.5,  
W.5.7, W.5.8

There are over 2,900 species of snakes. They live in vastly different environments on every continent except Antarctica. Assign a different snake to each student to research. They can find out how big it is, what it looks like, where it lives, what it eats, what eats it, what special features it has, if it’s venomous, etc. They should report on it (with illustrations) and you can post their results in the classroom for other children to study. Older students should list their sources (books, websites, other sources).

W.3.3, W.3.4,  
W.3.5

Students can make a clay model of a real or imaginary snake (it doesn’t have to be white) and then write a description, poem, story, song, or play about it.

RL.3.9, RL.4.9,  
RL.5.9, W.3.3,  
W.3.4, W.3.5,  
W.4.3, W.4.4,  
W.4.5, W.5.3,  
W.5.4, W.5.5

For a long-term project, students can take another Grimm story and make their own comic. (They can find many hints on how to do this in the TOON Book *Comics: Easy as ABC!*, by Ivan Brunetti.) Display their comics in the classroom so that children can read and enjoy their classmates’ work.

## Standards addressed in *The White Snake Teacher's Guide*

Below are the ELA Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature addressed in this book by grade level.

READING LITERATURE			
	Key Ideas and Details	Craft and Structure	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
<b>3</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.5 Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.9 Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series).</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story of drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how the characters interact).</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.9 Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventures stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.</p>



Below are the ELA Common Core State Standards for Writing addressed in this book by grade level.

<b>WRITING</b>			
	<b>Text Types and Purposes</b>	<b>Production and Distribution of Writing</b>	<b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</b>
<b>3</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.4 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; takes notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.</p>