

The Magic Fish
Discussion Guide
Grades 7 - 9

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Before reading, have a class discussion to activate prior knowledge about Vietnam fairytales
- Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:
- "This book contains topics and language that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another."
- Frontload vocabulary (see vocabulary list)

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- How does Tien's mom fix his jacket?
- What's the significance of the story of Alera?
- What are the terms of the contract? What does this mean for Alera?
- Describe the three wedding dresses and their significance.
- Why was Alera given a walnut?
- What can the ring do?
- What happened to Alera? Who found her?
- What connection does Tien's mom have with the story of Alera?
- What secret does Tien have?
- Why can't he tell his parents?
- How did Alera get to go to Prince Maxwell's party?
- How did Alera slip away from the party? Why do you think she left?
- Why did Tien's parents have to escape? Where were they?
- What changed with how Tien viewed his jacket?
- Why do you think Claire asked to go to the dance as a group?
- Why do you think the princess keeps disappearing after each party?
- Why do you think Alera didn't tell Prince Maxwell the truth?
- What do you think Tien's mom heard on the phone?
- What is Tien's mom contemplating? Why do you think she's upset?

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- What happened between Tien and Claire?
- What's the connection between Alera, Tien's mom, and cinderella?
- Why do you think Tam's stepmother made her eat the fish?
- Why couldn't Tam go to the party with her stepsisters?
- How does Claire comfort Tien?
- What does Claire do to ensure that Tien will come to the dance? What is the significance of the jacket?
- What happened at the dance?
- What did Tam's stepmother do? What impact does this have?
- What do you think Tien's mom meant when she said, "My past and present selves speak two different languages." ?
- What did the ancient mermaid have to give up to be able to go on land? What story does this make you think of?
- Why do you think Tien's mom choose the story of the ancient mermaid to read to him?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- How does the author and illustrator differentiate between the Vietnamese stories and the story of Tien and his mother?
- Micro-/Meso-/Macro Environment Systems: Levels of Setting*: Notice the name and the aspects of a character's environment. This may be based on the author's information or on what you can infer based on text details. Then, think about which of these is important based on the conflicts that the character is experiencing.
- The Influences on Character*: Consider all the influences on the character - the problem(s) the character is facing, the other characters with who he or she comes in contact, and the setting of the story. Notice how the character interacts and reacts to these different forces. What effect(s) do characters, setting, and problems have on how the character acts earlier and later in the story?

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If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.