



Priceless Gifts: A Tale from Italy

Read Aloud Guide

Themes: Generosity, Kindness, Gratitude

Book Brief: A merchant named Antonio travels to the Spice Islands and discovers that his two cats are more valuable than gold to a king with a rat problem. This Italian folktale teaches children that the best gifts are often the most helpful ones, rather than the most expensive.

Author:

Martha Hamilton &
Mitch Weiss

Illustrator:

John Kanzler

Before Reading

The Cover: Ask students to make a prediction about the story based on the cover.

The Pictures: Take a brief picture walk and ask students what they notice.

Prior Knowledge: Ask, “How do we learn to be more generous and giving and less greedy?”
(Optional: Think, Pair, Share)

Vocabulary: Frontload Tier 2 words using the accompanying [Vocabulary Guide](#).

Purpose for Reading: “As we read, think about how the best gifts are often the most helpful ones, rather than the most expensive..”



During Reading

Check for understanding & make connections:

- Why did Antonio go to faraway islands?
- Where was Antonio invited to dine?
- Why were the guards at the palace holding sticks?
- Why did Antonio think the cats would help with the rats?
- How much money did Antonio ask for the cats?
- What did the king give to Antonio?
- How did Luigi feel when we heard Antonio's story?
- Who helped the king decide what to give Luigi?
- What did Luigi think the king would give him?
- Where did the king get the kitten that he gave to Luigi?
- How did Luigi act when he received the kitten?

Think Aloud:

“I notice that the merchant's two cats were valuable to the king.”

I'm wondering...“Have you ever been in a situation where you had something that was valuable to someone else?”

After Reading

Our Purpose: “What lesson did Luigi learn for himself and about the meaning of what is important?”

If your students enjoyed this book...

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

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Extension Activities

Research Spices

Materials:

Computer or tablet with Internet access

Directions:

1. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a spice to research.
2. [thekitchn.com](http://www.thekitchn.com) is a great resource to research different spices, however teachers can use whatever websites or books as they see fit. (<http://www.thekitchn.com/quick-guide-to-every-herb-and-spice-in-the-cupboard-108770>)
3. Groups report to the class about their spices and show pictures of the plants from which the spices are derived.

Dining in the King's Palace

The king has invited you to dine with him. Teacher asks students to consider:

- What would you wear?
- Who might be there?
- What would the pace of the meal be: fast or slow?
- You would need to use your best manners. Give some examples.

Directions:

1. Students are divided into small groups and create skits about dining at the king's palace.
2. Present the skits as part of the extension of the story, using costumes and props.

Ask the Authors

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils

Directions:

1. Ask students, "If you could meet the authors of the book, what three questions would you ask them?"
2. Students share their questions with the class.