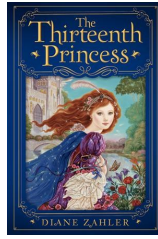


Reader's Guide

The Thirteenth Princess

By Diane Zahler



The activities and questions in this guide are correlated to Common Core State Anchor Standards. For more specific, grade-level standards within each Anchor Standard, see the specific Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening Standards for your grade at <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>.

Extension Activities

1. The Tale Behind the Fairy Tale.

The Thirteenth Princess is a retelling of the classic fairy tale “The Twelve Dancing Princesses.” Research the history of the original story. Then read the version recorded by the Brothers Grimm and compare and contrast it with Diane Zahler’s rendering. What does Diane Zahler change, and what does she keep the same? Which version do you prefer? Why? Reimagine one of your favorite fairy tales by writing your own version of it.

CCRA.R.9, CCRA.W.3

2. Word Revelations.

Illustrate a scene or place that Diane Zahler describes in *The Thirteenth Princess* using the artistic medium of your choice. Possible subjects for your artwork include the castle where the royal family lives (chapter 1), Babette’s cottage in the woods (chapter 4), the princesses dancing in the ballroom under the lake (chapter 8), or the princesses’ bedroom going up in flames (chapter 10). Incorporate quotations from the text directly into your art to support your artistic choices.

CCRA.R.4

3. Cakes and Cookies and Pies, Oh My!

Zita loves baking because she knows it pleases her father. Ask each member of your reading group to bake a favorite dish to bring in and share. After enjoying your group’s delicacies, work together to create fairy tale-inspired names for the various baked goods, and then compile the recipes together in a fairy tale cookbook. Create multiple copies so that everyone in the group can have his or her own.

4. **Magical Medleys.**

Zita, Breckin, and Milek are enchanted by the beautiful music that plays in the ballroom under the lake. With other members of your reading group, assemble a short medley of song clips to mesmerize and enchant listeners. Choose songs to which you can imagine a dozen princesses twirling about a ballroom floor. Share your magical medley with the rest of the group – and even try dancing to it.

CCRA.SL.2

Discussion Questions

CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4; CCRA.SL.1

1. How do the princesses react when Zita tells them that she is their sister? How do their feelings change toward Zita as they come to know her better?
2. In chapter 3, Zita promises Aurelia that she will find her a prince to marry. Why does Zita make this promise? How can she be so sure that she can help her sister?
3. Zita realizes in chapter 3 that her sisters are prisoners in their own lives – just like she is. How does this realization make Zita feel? What does she do to free herself? Who helps her?
4. Breckin and Zita quickly become friends. What needs do they fulfill in each other? What do they have in common? What differences threaten to keep them apart?
5. When Breckin and Zita meet Babette in chapter 4, she tells them about the meanings of their names. Why does Breckin's name suit him? What does Zita's name mean? What is Zita seeking?
6. What does Zita learn about her father from Cook and others in the castle? How does the king feel about Zita's sisters? What are his feelings for Zita? How do you know?
7. How does Zita strive to win her father's love and affection? Do her efforts work? Why or why not? What role does her deceased mother play in Zita's relationship with her father?
8. In chapter 6, Zita says that she is not courageous, knows nothing of magic, and is terrified of following her sisters on their walk into the night. What evidence in the book negates Zita's self-description? How does she prove to be courageous?
9. How does Milek break the enchantment cast on the princesses when no one else could? How does he save Aurelia's life?
10. What impact does Nurse's deception have on the royal family? How does it destroy the man she sought to love? How does Babette help restore the royal family's happiness?
11. Why is Zita able to explain to her sisters what her father's last words mean? How do those words bring comfort to the thirteen princesses?
12. Zita grows significantly over the course of the novel. What prompts the changes in her? Make a list of words that characterize Zita in the first half of the novel. Make another list of words that describe her in the second half. Which words are repeated on both lists? Which words are different?