

**Folktale Example 1: The Moon in the Well**

One cold night, Nasreddin Hodja finished his supper and went to the well to draw water for his bath. It was a cloudless night, and the stars shone brightly. He walked down the path under the cypress trees. The cattle were all asleep, and the Hodja was contented. He leaned over the well and saw the moon reflected in the water. This worried him a great deal. "What is the moon doing in my well?" he asked, leaning forward over the cold stones. If the moon were not in the sky, there would be darkness all night. Shepherds would not be able to see their flocks, and travelers would lose their way. "It's fallen into my well," he said.

The Hodja stood up and scratched his head. Then he went back inside and returned with a shovel. He tried to use the shovel to lift the moon from the water, but it didn't work. The shovel came up with water, but no moon. He went back inside and returned with a basket. He leaned as far as he could over the stone and dipped the basket into the water, but still he couldn't pull the moon up.

Finally, he went inside and returned with a length of rope and a hook. "This will work," he said. He unspooled the rope into the water and swung the hook back and forth, trying to fasten it about the moon. The hook caught in a gap in the rocks. The Hodja pulled as hard as he could, but the moon was very heavy. He stopped for breath, then pulled again even harder. The rope snapped and he stumbled, toppling to the ground on his back. Looking up at the sky, Nasreddin Hodja saw the moon. "O praise and glory, I have suffered much pain, but the moon has got to its place again."

Origin: Turkey, Nasreddin Hodja is a famous Turkish trickster figure, most often referred to as "the Hodja."

**Close Reading Framework—The Moon in the Well**Setting the Stage (Introduction)

Slowing down with reading instruction is imperative for creating critical thinking skills. When students linger over a text, they can start to identify patterns and pinpoint an author’s underlying message and purpose for writing the text. It is also important for students to realize that writing is a true form of artistry and self-expression. Gather the class to set the stage for the close reading exercise. Explain the importance of close reading, and also remind them of recent teaching points that they should be on the lookout for specifically. You could say:

*Friends, I want to encourage you to slow down when you’re reading to make sure you notice every word on the page. Have you ever wondered why an author chose one word over another? Nothing on the page is an accident! Authors read and reread their work and write each sentence carefully. As readers, our job is to try and figure out what the author was thinking as he or she was writing. We should always take time to pause and ask questions. Why did that character do that? Why does the author describe the wind as “angry”? How can wind be angry?*

*As you read today, I want you to try and figure out the main reason or lesson that the author is trying to teach you through the story.*

Whole-Class Practice

Read the first paragraph of the folktale aloud. Then pause to have a brief whole-class discussion to model close reading before breaking into small groups or individual practice time.

*Okay, let’s pause here and see what we have learned so far. I noticed that the author used lots of descriptive words about the setting and the weather to create a peaceful feeling. The narrator also describes the Hodja as “contented.” That tells me a lot about the Hodja. I know he appreciates simple things, like looking at the stars in the sky, even if it is a cold night. I also notice that, because the author sets such a peaceful scene, we are extra surprised when something so unusual and out of the ordinary happens—the moon has fallen out of the sky! We weren’t expecting that! What do you think will happen next? (Have the class make some predictions.) Great predictions. Let’s get back to the folktale to see if we’re right!*

Independent Practice

Have students read the rest of the folktale independently and have them answer one question from each box of the Core Lens guiding worksheet. Have students discuss their thinking in a small group or with a partner while you circulate to monitor progress. Then come together for a full-class discussion.

<p><b>Seven Core Ready Lenses</b>  <i>Guiding Questions for Close Reading Instruction</i></p>		<p><b>The Personal Lens</b></p> <p>1) Does this story remind you of anything that has happened in your life?</p> <p>2) Does this story remind you of anything that is in the news right now?</p>
<p><b>The Linguistic Lens</b></p> <p>1) What does the dialogue in this folktale tell you about the main character?</p> <p>2) What words or phrases does the author use to paint a picture of the setting, or of the action, in your head?</p>	<p><b>The Semantic Lens</b></p> <p>1) What questions did you have as you read? Were they answered later in the text?</p> <p>2) Retell the story in your own words.</p>	<p><b>The Analytical Lens</b></p> <p>1) What are the most important ideas presented in this story?</p> <p>2) Talk about an important decision in this story that the main character had to make. Do you agree or disagree with the character’s actions as a solution to the main problem?</p>
<p><b>The Context Lens</b></p> <p>1) Why do you think the author wrote this story?</p> <p>2) Has the author left out any information that you are curious about?</p>	<p><b>The Metaphoric Lens</b></p> <p>1) What do you think the narrator meant when he or she said, “The moon was very heavy”?</p> <p>2) Why is the water so important in this folktale?</p>	<p><b>The Critical Lens</b></p> <p>1) Did the story change your mind about something?</p> <p>2) Would you want to be friends with the main character?</p>