



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *Mizilca/The Real Romania* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *Mizilca*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of rulers, knights, and castles; families; personal identity; magic and tests; and the rule of three.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Rulers, Knights, and Castles: *Who lives in a castle?* Discuss that in the past castles were the homes of kings, queens, and other members of the aristocracy. Introduce the term *sultan* and tell the students that a sultan is a Muslim ruler equivalent to a king. Explain that although Romania is a strongly Christian country, it was ruled for a period of its past by Muslim rulers, or sultans, from the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). Explain that *Mizilca* is set during this time. *What is a knight?* Discuss that in the past knights were men of noble birth who served a king, queen, or sultan.

Families: *Who takes on responsibilities in a family?* Discuss that in a family most responsibilities are taken on by the parents, but that as parents and children get older some of the responsibilities pass from the parents to the children. Usually the older children take on these responsibilities first.

Personal Identity: *If you had to cut off all your hair or wear a wig to look different how would you feel about it? How would the girls feel if they had to pretend to be boys? How would the boys feel if they had to pretend to be girls?* Discuss that our

appearance and gender are strongly tied to our personal identity or sense of self.

Magic and Tests: *If you could use magic to turn yourself into any animal, which animal would you choose? Why?* Discuss that things happening “by magic” is a common feature of folk tales. Tests that characters must pass are another common feature.

Rule of Three: Share with the students that the number three or things happening three times is a common feature of folk tales and other stories. This is because patterns make stories enjoyable and easier to remember, which is important for folk tales which were often passed down orally and not written down. Brainstorm examples of stories that feature three things e.g. *The Three Little Pigs; Goldilocks and the Three Bears; Dawa, the Wise Woman/The Roof of the World* (StoryWorld 2).

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover of *Mizilca* and note the byline *A Tale from Romania*. Ask, *Can anyone tell me where Romania is?* (Eastern Europe) *How would you describe the person in the illustration? Is it a boy or a girl? Why do you think that?*

PP. 2–3: Read the first paragraph and note the word *executed*. Tell the students that *executed* has several different meanings but in this context it means “put to death” or “killed lawfully”. Continue reading and

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then direct the students to the illustration. Ask, *How do you think the knight is feeling? How do you think his daughters are feeling? What would you do in this situation?*

PP. 4–5: Read the text and then ask, *Why did Stanuta volunteer to serve the Sultan?* (To save her father's life.) *Why is she having her hair cut off?* (So she can pass as a man.) *Does she look happy?* (no) Review the sentence: *The knight had no other choice.* Ask, *How do you think the knight felt about sending his eldest daughter to serve the Sultan?* (worried) *Why did he give her his finest horse and his very best weapons?* (To give her the best chance of success, and because traditionally the eldest child always got the best.) Point out the sword and shield she is holding and the armour she is wearing. Ask, *Why do you think that in the past knights wore armour made out of metal?* (As protection from swords, arrows, and other weapons.) Discuss that armour was heavy and uncomfortable, but it did provide protection. Ask, *Is there a modern equivalent to armour? What is it?* (Bullet-proof vests worn sometimes by soldiers and police officers.)

PP. 6–7: Review the text and ask, *Why did the knight want to scare his daughter?* (To test her to see how she would deal with being in a frightening situation.) *Did Stanuta pass or fail the test?* (fail)

P. 8: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How do you think Roxanda is feeling?* (worried and unhappy) *Do you think she has been trained how to use a sword and other weapons?* (no) *Why did Roxanda only receive a good horse and some decent weapons?* (The best supplies had already been given to Stanuta, and as the second-eldest Roxanda was given the second-best.)

P. 9: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How would you feel if you were Roxanda?*

P.P 10–11: Review the text and illustration and note that Mizilca's attitude is different to that of her sisters. She is choosing to cut off her own hair rather than have the maids do it, and she looks strong and courageous rather than sad and

confused. Note that Mizilca is wearing simple male clothing rather than armour and her shield is made from wood rather than metal. Ask, *Why does Mizilca only receive a rusty sword and the old workhorse?* (Because that is all that is left to give to the youngest child.) *Is this fair? Why/why not?*

PP. 12–13: Review the text and illustration and ask, *What does Mizilca do differently than her sisters when faced with danger?* (She confronts the challenge and deals with it, then carries on with her plans.) Discuss that Mizilca shows resilience, which is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties. Ask the students to predict how Mizilca will get on in her service to the Sultan.

PP. 14–15: Review the first sentence: *Once at the castle, Mizilca proved that she could ride and fight as well as any other boy.* Ask, *Is this what you predicted for Mizilca? Why/why not?* Continue reading then ask, *What is a wise-woman?* Tell the students that a wise-woman/witch/woman with magical powers is a common feature of folk tales and other stories. Ask, *What does toothless mean? Why was the wise-woman described in this way?* (Missing some teeth; to indicate that she is elderly and probably poor – not a noble.) Review the second paragraph and discuss that the advice of the wise-woman is based on assumptions about gender. It is assumed that a girl would be interested in cloth but not in weapons. Ask, *Why might this assumption have been more accurate in the past than today?* (Because in the past, particularly in European countries such as Romania, girls were encouraged to be interested in things such as clothes and the cloth they were made from. They would have had no exposure to either the design or use of weapons.)

PP. 16–17: Read the text and note the phrase: *great hall*. Tell the students that a great hall is the main room of a royal palace or nobleman's castle from the Middle Ages (476–1453), which is the time period in which *Mizilca* is set. Note the word *suspicious* and ask, *Can anyone tell me what the word suspicious means?* Tell the students that to be suspicious means to have a distrust of someone or something.

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Brainstorm synonyms for suspicious e.g. doubtful, unsure, distrustful, sceptical, wary, apprehensive. Look at the illustration and note that the other knights shown are adult men. Ask, *How would Mizilca have felt competing against adult men and knowing that the Sultan was always watching her?* (Nervous, uncomfortable, and aware of her inexperience.)

PP. 18–19: Read the text and ask, *Who has eaten porridge? Do you know what it is made from?* (Oats, which are a grain, boiled in water or milk.) Ask, *What are pearls? What are they used for?* If the students cannot supply the answers, tell them that pearls are hard, shiny, white or blue-grey spheres that are formed inside oyster shells. Pearls are valuable gems that are used in jewellery and for decoration on special clothing, such as wedding dresses. Ask, *Why did the wise-woman think this plan would work? Why didn't it work?* (Because a “typical” girl of the time would definitely want to keep the valuable pearls. The plan didn't work because clever Mizilca knew she was being tested and didn't fall for the trap.)

PP. 20–21: Review the first two sentences and ask, *Why was this situation making the Sultan angry?* (Because he thinks Mizilca is a girl, but he can't find a way to prove it. Also, if she is a girl it means he has been tricked both by Mizilca and her father the knight.) Continue reading then ask, *Why does the wise-woman think Mizilca would not wish to squash the peas?* (Because she thinks that girls are naturally tidier than boys so if Mizilca is a girl she would not want to make a mess.) Discuss with the students whether or not they think that girls are naturally tidier than boys. When the discussion is finished, remind the students that Mizilca is aware that the peas are a trap. Ask, *If Mizilca had not known that the Sultan was trying to test her, do you think she would have stood on the peas? Why/why not?*

PP. 22–23: Read the text and ask, *Do you think Mizilca is enjoying her time at the Sultan's castle? Why/why not?*

P. 24: Read the text and ask, *How do you think the Sultan felt when he found out that Mizilca really was a girl, just as he had suspected? Do you think he will now invite girls and women as well as boys and men to come and serve him as knights? Why/why not?*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Consider a class study on the European Middle Ages. The topic could include castles and peasants; the feudal system of kings, queens, or sultans and knights, squires, and pages; cathedrals; crusades, the rise of Islam; and the Black Plague.

Invite the children to learn about the importance of weapons and armour in the Middle Ages.

Share other stories from Romania e.g. *Five Loaves, The Wise Old Men, Stan Bolovan*.

Encourage the children to learn about porridge. Emphasize that porridge is a healthy breakfast choice. It may be possible for the students to make and sample porridge.

Encourage the children to learn about pearls and how and why they are constructed inside oysters and other mollusks. What is the difference between a natural pearl and a cultured pearl?

Invite the children to imagine that they could briefly change into any animal. Ask them to write a description of what it would be like to spend time as their chosen animal.

Are dragons real? Research to learn more about real Komodo dragons or the mythical dragons (either Asian or European) of folk tales. What are dragons symbols of?

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Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *The Real Romania*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Romania and other European countries, traditional cultures, parliament buildings, natural disasters, tourists and tourist attractions, Dracula, castles, protected areas, and wild horses.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Romanian Greeting: *People in Romania speak Romanian. Does anyone know how to greet someone in Romanian? It is bună ziua (BOO-nuh ZEE-wah).*

Cover: Look at the cover and read the title *The Real Romania*. Ask, *Where is Romania?* (Eastern Europe) *What do you notice about the photo?* (There are many people on the street. The buildings are old.) If any of the students come from Romania or have visited there, invite them to share their experiences.

Location of Romania/Geography: Look at the map on P. 1 of *The Real Romania* and note the location of Romania in Europe. Challenge the students to locate Romania on a world map (it is marked on the StoryWorld map if you have one), and discuss its location in relation to Australia and New Zealand.

Traditional Cultures: Read the text and the caption on P. 1 of *The Real Romania* and note that Romania is a traditional country with traditional values e.g. family, folk tales, and folk dances. *Who makes the decisions for your family? Is this the same or different than in Romania? Ask, How is folk dancing different to other dancing?* (Folk dancing is group dancing that reflects the culture it comes from and is for the common people. Folk dancing takes place at a village or community level. It requires no particular skill and anyone can join in and have fun.) *Does anyone know how to dance the Hora?* Encourage the students to share knowledge of folk dances or other traditional dances they are familiar with.

Parliament Buildings: *What are parliament buildings?* Revisit the middle photo and caption on P. 3 of *The Real Romania* and then tell the students that parliament buildings are the buildings in which the laws of a country are made. The laws are debated and decided on by the members of parliament, who are elected by the people of the country. New Zealand's parliament buildings are in Wellington. They are the Beehive, Parliament House, and the Parliamentary Library. Show the students photos of New Zealand's parliament buildings.

Natural Disasters: *The text on P. 3 of The Real Romania tells us that Bucharest has experienced war and natural disasters. What are natural disasters?* Tell the students that a natural disaster is an extreme, sudden event caused by environmental factors, or nature, that injures people and property. Natural disasters include earthquakes, floods, windstorms, volcanic eruptions, cyclones/hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis. It may be necessary to go into more detail describing some of these events if the students are not familiar with these terms.

Tourists and Tourist Attractions: *What is a tourist? What is a tourist attraction?* Tell the students that a tourist is a person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure and that a tourist attraction is a place of interest that tourists like to visit e.g. a museum, a castle, a cultural show, a place of beauty. Discuss that tourist attractions often have flyers, websites, and other promotional material designed to encourage tourists to visit. Revisit PP. 4–5 of *The Real Romania* and ask, *What do you notice about the text on these pages? What is it designed to do?* Tell the students that the text is written as a promotion in a tourist guide book. It gives information on the opening hours of the tourist attraction and information on the features of the attraction. It is an advertisement for the tourist attraction and so it uses elements of persuasive writing.

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Dracula and Bran Castle: *Have you heard of Dracula before? What is a vampire? Are vampires real?* Tell the students that many people think that the fictional character of Count Dracula was modelled in part on a Romanian prince named Vlad Tepes (1431–1476). Discuss with the students that there are many superstitions and legends about vampires in Romania, particularly in the region of Transylvania where Bran Castle is located. Make sure the students understand that vampires are not real. *Would you like to visit Bran Castle? Why/why not?*

Protected Areas: *What are protected areas? Why do we have them?* Discuss with the students that a protected area is a geographical space that is legally set aside and managed to achieve the long term conservation of nature. Protected areas can be national parks, wilderness areas, nature reserves, historic reserves, marine reserves, or scenic reserves. Animals within a protected area may not be hunted or removed. Sometimes they are tagged or monitored in other ways to keep track of their numbers. Read PP. 6–7 of ***The Real Romania*** and ask, *Why is the Danube Delta an important protected area?* (Because it is home to many different birds, plants, insects, and fish, some of which live nowhere else on Earth.)

Wild Horses: Read P. 8 of ***The Real Romania*** and ask, *Do you think it is important that rare animals such as the Hutul horses of Romania are protected in the wild? Why/why not?*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Invite the students to work in groups to research the geography of Romania and produce reports. Research questions to consider could include: How large is Romania? What is its population? What is its climate? Are there mountains in Romania? Does Romania have forests? Romania borders which countries? Romania borders which sea?

Watch online videos of traditional Romanian folk dances such as the Hora and try them as a class.

Challenge the students to learn about traditional folk costumes and traditional foods of Romania. Encourage them to produce PowerPoint presentations of their findings.

Invite the students to learn about New Zealand's own wild horses – the Kaimanawa wild horses. Research questions to consider are: Where do the Kaimanawa wild horses live? How long have they been there? What other living things are the Kaimanawa horses a threat to? The herd is now kept at an agreed number – what is this number?

Using the photo essay on PP. 2–3 of ***The Real Romania*** as a springboard, invite the students to create a photo essay on either New Zealand's capital city or their own home town or city.

Invite the students to learn about natural disasters that have occurred in New Zealand. Encourage them to write reports on one such disaster.

Interested students may like to learn more about Count Dracula or vampires in general, either in folklore or in books and movies.

Invite the students to write their own story about a vampire or a spooky castle.

Research to learn more about the Danube Delta. What are the nine countries the Danube River flows through on its way to the Black Sea? Learn more about the different birds, plants, insects, and fish that live in the Danube Delta.