



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *The Fortune Teller and the Forty Thieves/Incredible Iran* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *The Fortune Teller and the Forty Thieves*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of imbalance between the lives of the rich and the lives of the poor; fortune telling and coincidence; greed; royalty, power, and fear.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Rich and Poor: *Should rich people have special privileges? Why/why not? Are rich people happier than poor people? Why/why not?* Discuss imbalances between the lives of the rich and the poor, particularly as it applies to folk tales and other stories. Ask, *In folk tales, people are often very rich or very poor. Why do you think this is?* (Because folk tales often simplify life/reality to make a point, teach a lesson, or entertain.)

Fortune Telling and Coincidence: *Can some people really look into the future and tell fortunes, or do they use tricks or generalisations that are easy to believe?* Being sensitive to the beliefs of the students, discuss that no one can really know what the future will bring, or “see” things that they haven’t actually seen. Discuss that before science helped people understand more about the world, there were many people that relied on fortune tellers or other mystics. Introduce the word *coincidence* and define it as something that is not planned or arranged but seems like it is; an occurrence of events that happen at the same time by total accident. Ask, *Who can give me an example of a coincidence?*

Greed: *What is greed?* Define greed as a selfish and intense desire to have more of something, such as money, than is needed. Discuss that greed can motivate people to do terrible things e.g. steal, threaten people, lie.

Royalty, Power, Fear: *If a king asked you to do something that you knew was impossible, how would you feel? What if the consequence of failure was that you would be put in jail? What would you do?*

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover of *The Fortune Teller and the Forty Thieves*. Ask, *What is the man doing?* (telling fortunes) *Does he look like he is comfortable with what he is doing?* (no)

PP. 2–3: Review the text and point out the second sentence: *They were not rich, but they were both happy*. Note that at this stage of the story, Kira does not need to be rich to be happy. Tell the students that in the past, public baths were very popular in countries such as Iran. There were separate baths, and sometimes showers, for men and women. People used these facilities to keep clean in a time before there were bathrooms in people’s homes. But they were also a social gathering place where people went to relax, catch up with friends, and debate the news and issues of the day. Public baths still exist in Iran today, but they are not used by as many people as in the past. Reread the last paragraph

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and ask, *Why might the wife of the king's fortune teller have enough power to stop other people from using the public bath? Is it fair that one person should be able to stop everyone else from using a public facility simply because they are rich or powerful? Why/Why not?* Look at the illustration and note that the women both have their heads covered. Tell the students that women in Iran are expected to have their heads, bodies, and arms and legs covered, especially when they are outside their home.

PP. 4–5: Note that Kira is now concerned with money and power. Ask, *Why do you think Kira suggests that Armin become a fortune teller rather than doing it herself?* (Because in the past it was socially unacceptable for women in Iran to work outside the home.) Review the last sentence on P. 4 and ask, *Is it fair for Kira to threaten to leave Armin if he does not become a fortune teller? What is this kind of behaviour called?* (bullying or emotional blackmail) Direct the students to the illustration on P. 5 and ask, *Does Armin look happy?* Reread the final paragraph on P. 5 and ask, *Does Kira believe that fortune tellers really do see into the future?* Ask the students to show evidence in the text to support their answer.

PP. 6–7: Review the second sentence and describe *some dice, a mystical book, and fortune teller's robes* as “tools of the trade” for a fortune teller. Brainstorm the equipment needed to do other jobs e.g. a builder, a doctor, a bricklayer, a teacher. Point out the word *mystical* and define it as relating to magic, or having hidden or spiritually symbolic meaning. Ask, *Why did Armin hope “no one would come”?* (Because he knew he had no ability to tell people's fortunes.) Review the phrase *The poor man* and ask, *Is the author saying that Armin has no money or does the word “poor” in this context mean unfortunate?* (It means unfortunate.) Review the first sentence on P. 7 and ask, *Why did Armin sigh?* (Because he had hoped he would have no customers and he particularly doesn't want the servant of the princess as a customer.) Ask, *What was the advice Kira had given to Armin?* (P. 5: *Just say the first thing that pops into your head.*)

P. 8: Ask the students to read P. 8 then refer back to the earlier discussion on coincidences. Point out that the first paragraph describes a coincidence. Ask, *Now that Armin has coincidentally given an accurate description of where to find the princess' ring, what do you think will happen next?* Revisit the sentences: *Armin could not believe his luck.* and *“We were lucky today,” he told her, “but I cannot risk it again.”* and draw the students' attention to the words *luck/lucky*. Together, define luck e.g. success or failure brought by chance rather than through one's own actions. Review the third paragraph and ask, *Why isn't Kira listening to Armin? What is she feeling?* (greed)

PP. 10–11: Read the first paragraph and note that Armin is passive and does not appear in charge of his own actions: *Once again, Armin found himself sitting in his fortune teller's robes.* Ask the students to recall why Armin is working as a fortune teller if he doesn't want to. (Because Kira, motivated by money and power, threatened to leave him if he didn't.) Note the use of the exclamation mark for emphasis on: *This time it was by a minister of the king!* Continue reading and note the use of exclamation marks in the third paragraph. Ask, *Why do you think the king's fortune teller was being taken to jail?* (For failing to be able to tell the king who has robbed him.) *Why was Armin feeling scared?* (Because he knows that he has no ability to tell fortunes so he will probably end up in jail as well.)

P.P 12–13: Read the text and ask, *Why did Armin say that forty thieves stole the forty chests?* (He quickly used logic to realize that the fastest way to steal forty heavy chests of treasure would be for forty thieves to carry one chest each.) *Was this something that Armin knew, or was he just taking a guess?* (He was taking a guess.) Tell the students to continue reading then ask, *Why did Armin say he would need forty days?* (To delay being found out as a fraud and being sent to jail.) *Look at the illustration. How do you think Armin is feeling?* (terrified)

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PP. 14–15: Read the text and note that this problem affects both of them – Armin faces imprisonment and Kira faces poverty with no husband working to provide for her. Note Armin's statement: "See what you have done!" Ask, *Is this situation all Kira's fault or is Armin responsible for going along with her plan? What else could he have done?* Look at the illustration and review the sentence: *But still Kira thought that he could find the answer.* Ask the students to suggest what they think Kira might be saying. Read the third paragraph and tell the students that southern Iran is one of the world's largest date producers, and that both fresh and dried fruit is used in many Iranian dishes. Ask, *How would you keep track of forty days?* (Mark the days off on a calandar.)

PP. 16–17: Review the first sentence and point out the phrase *band of thieves*. Explain to the students that the word *band* is a collective noun, which means that it is a name given to a group of the same thing. Other collective nouns for a group of thieves are *den*, *skulk*, and *gang*. Rewrite the sentence using the alternative collective nouns. Continue reading and ask, *Was it a coincidence that there were exactly forty thieves?* (yes) Look at the illustration and note that the thieves are wearing a range of head coverings. Tell the students that in Iran men traditionally kept their heads, their bodies, and their arms and legs covered. Today, it is acceptable for men to have their head uncovered.

PP. 18–19: Read the text and ask, *Why is the thief shocked?* (Because he thinks Armin is talking about him, rather than talking about a date.)

PP. 20–21: Revisit the earlier discussion about fortune telling and coincidences and apply it to the text. Make sure the students understand that Armin does not know that there are forty thieves, or that the thieves are standing outside his house, listening to him. Direct the students to the illustration and ask, *How do you think Armin is feeling? How do you think Kira is feeling? Do you think she has changed her attitude? Why/why not? How do you think the thieves are feeling?*

PP. 22–23: Read the first two paragraphs and ask, *What does Armin mean when he says "...this is the last one. The game is up."?* (This is the last date so my forty days have run out. I can no longer pretend to the king that I am a fortune teller. Tomorrow I will be exposed and thrown into jail.) *What does the leader of the thieves think Armin means?* (This is the last thief. They have been discovered and now they will be exposed and punished.) Read the third paragraph and point out that the thief doesn't want to be turned in as a thief just as much as Armin doesn't want to have to turn himself in as a fraud. Read P. 23 and point out that this is the exact solution Armin needs as the king had said of the chests on P. 13: *"They must be returned to me."*

P. 24: Read the text and note that Armin's problems were solved by a mixture of good luck or happy coincidences and his own quick thinking. Ask, *Do you think it would have been easy for Armin to give up fortune telling? Why/why not?* Note from the text and illustration that both Armin and Kira are happy now. Ask, *Do you think Kira is happy because they are now rich? Or do you think Kira is happy because she thought she was going to lose her husband, which made her appreciate him more. Explain your answer.*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Using the illustration on PP. 6–7 of *The Fortune Teller and the Forty Thieves* as a springboard, challenge the students to research and learn about the markets, or bazaars, of Iran. Focus questions could include: What can you buy at an Iranian bazaar? What are some of the largest/most well-known bazaars in Iran? Which Iranian Bazaar is listed as a World Heritage Site? Besides shops or stalls, what else can be found in some bazaars?

Learn more about the history of public baths in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries.

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Challenge the students to research and list collective nouns for either people, animals, or things e.g. a class of students; a murder of crows; a fleet of ships. How many can they find? Encourage the students to use the collective nouns they find in their writing.

Invite the students to write a letter to the king as Armin, giving a reason/reasons why he is giving up fortune telling.

Tell the students that date fruit palms are thought to be the world's first plant cultivated by people to produce food. Challenge the students to learn about the importance of dates in Iran, including their varieties, production, export, health benefits, and use in Iranian cooking. If possible, have the children sample dates and try some simple cooking using dates as an ingredient e.g. date scones.

Share other folk tales from Iran e.g. *The Three Dolls*, *The Fool and the Donkey*, *The Fox that Rode a Camel*.

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read **Incredible Iran**, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Iran and Iranian culture, gardens, windmills/wind turbines, mosaics, and endangered animals.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Persian (Farsi) Greeting: *People in Iran speak Persian (Farsi). Does anyone know how to greet someone in Persian? It is salam.*

Cover: Look at the cover and read the title **Incredible Iran**. Ask, *What does this photo tell you about Iran?* (That it has large, incredible buildings. That it is a country with an ancient culture. That it is a country with artisans and an appreciation of beautiful things.)

Location of Iran/Geography: Look at the map on P. 1 of **Incredible Iran** and note the location of Iran in the Middle East, and in relation to Australia and New Zealand. Tell the students that Iran is home to 80.5 million people (you may like to discuss that 75% of Iran's population is under 30) and the capital and largest city of Iran is Tehran. Iran is a multiethnic and multicultural country. Iran has many mountains – in fact, it is one of the world's most mountainous countries. If any of the students come from Iran or have visited there, invite them to share their experiences.

Iranian Culture: *What is culture?* Discuss that the word *culture* has more than one meaning. When we talk about the culture of a country we are talking about the ideas, beliefs, customs, arts, and social practices or “way of life” that are shared by the people. Culture is passed on to the next generation by learning. It can be seen in the food people eat, the clothes they wear, and their religious beliefs. Revisit P. 1 of **Incredible Iran** and note the use of the word *culture*. Reinforce that Iran is one of the world's oldest cultures and civilizations. Tell the students that Iran is an Islamic country, and religion plays an important part in Iranian culture. Ask, *Why do you think Iranians might be proud of their culture?* Discuss that cultures are what make countries unique.

Gardens: *Why are gardens important to Iranians?* Read the second paragraph and caption on P. 1 of **Incredible Iran** and share with the students that Iranians greatly value being outdoors, but because much of Iran is desert they have built gardens as comfortable outdoor spaces. Garden design has been of great importance to Iranians for thousands of years. Iranian gardens are divided into four sections symbolizing the four elements of sky, earth, water, and plants. Nine Iranian gardens of different styles have been named as World Heritage Sites due to their cultural significance. Iranians also like to bring the outdoors inside and their carpets are often decorated with designs of flowers and animals.

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Windmills/Wind Turbines: Read PP. 2–3 of *Incredible Iran* and discuss that using wind as a source of energy is an ancient practice that is now being used more and more. Ask, *Why are wind turbines increasing in popularity?* (Because wind is a natural resource that is renewable, which means that it is replaced naturally. Wind energy is also non-polluting, which makes it a positive choice for our planet.)

Mosaics: *Why are mosaics important in Iran?* Read PP. 4–5 of *Incredible Iran* and share with the students that mosaics were first made to weatherproof the clay bricks used for building and to make the buildings beautiful. Mosaics first developed in Iran and spread around the world. *What is turquoise?* Turquoise is a blue-green stone that was often used in Iranian mosaics. The colour turquoise was named after this special stone.

Endangered Animals: *What is an endangered animal?* (An animal/species that is disappearing fast and is likely to become extinct.) Read P. 8 of *Incredible Iran* and follow it with a discussion on the plight of endangered animals and the need to protect their natural habitats.

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Invite the students to work in groups to research the geography of Iran and produce reports. Research questions to consider could include: How large is Iran? What is its climate? What is Iran's highest point? Can you name the mountains of Iran? Does Iran have deserts? Does Iran have forests? Iran borders which ocean and which sea? What can you learn about the rivers and lakes of Iran?

Challenge the students to learn about the flag of Iran, including its history, meaning, and the symbolism of its colours.

Invite the students to explore the concept of New Zealand culture. They could ask family members the following questions: What makes New Zealanders special? What aspects of our food, clothing style, and behaviour are distinctly New Zealand? What are the official symbols of New Zealand? What other items and icons (kiwiana motifs) are seen as representing New Zealand?

Encourage the students to learn about famous New Zealand mosaic art e.g. the Hundertwasser toilets in Kawakawa; The Giant's House mosaic sculpture garden in Akaroa; L'Arte Gallery and Sculpture Garden in Taupo; the 1066 Medieval Mosaic from Geraldine; The Mosaic Garden in Waihi; and NZ Mosaic Art in Waikino. Create a visual display of photos of New Zealand mosaics.

Challenge the students to follow the procedural text on PP. 6–7 of *Incredible Iran* and make a mosaic tea light holder.

Using P. 8 of *Incredible Iran* as a model, invite the students to select another endangered native Iranian animal and write a question/answer style report on their animal. Appropriate animals include: Baluchistan bear, Caspian seal, Persian fallow deer, Caspian sea wolf, Persian leopard, Latifi's viper.

Learn about endangered animals and birds of New Zealand and what is being done to help them. Challenge the students to present an oral or written report on their findings.