



Classroom Guide for
UNDER THE LEMON MOON
by Edith Hope Fine
illustrated by René King Moreno

Reading Level

Interest Level: Grades 1-3

Reading Level Grades 2-3

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 4.6/.5

Lexile Measure®: 520

Scholastic Reading Counts!™: 4.8

Themes:

Understanding Others, Forgiveness, Compassion, Giving/Sharing,

Synopsis

In this story set in rural Mexico, a young girl named Rosalinda awakens one night to find that a Night Man has taken the lemons from her beloved tree. Soon after this event, the tree begins to sicken. Rosalinda asks her parents, some neighbors, and her abuela (grandmother) for advice. When her grandmother tells Rosalinda about La Anciana—the Old One—the girl begins to search for her. Just when Rosalinda discovers the Night Man selling her lemons in the market, La Anciana appears. “Perhaps he had a need,” the Old One tells Rosalinda and offers instructions for healing the tree. The story ends as Rosalinda gives away the beautiful lemons that her healthy tree now yields, including one to the Night Man whom she tells to plant the seeds while the lemon moon is still in the sky. *Under The Lemon Moon* is a Parents’ Choice Award Silver Honor winner and was listed as a Notable Book for Children by *Smithsonian* magazine.

Background

More lemons are grown in California than in any other state in the United States, and the southern coastal counties of California are the major growing areas of this fruit. The idea for *Under The Lemon Moon* came to the author, Edith Hope Fine, from a friend who had a dream. The dream was set in Mexico but was prompted by a news story further north in San Diego, California. The report told of someone purposely

harming lemons in the groves there and damaging the trees as well. Says Fine, "This outraged us both. It's so inexplicable." And so the seeds were planted for this story of a magical lemon tree in Mexico.

Teaching Tip

Use *Under The Lemon Moon* during your celebrations of Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 14). This annual observance recognizes the contributions of Latinos to American life and is often marked with parades, festivals, concerts, exhibits, and readings.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing *Under The Lemon Moon* to students, you may wish to have students discuss one or more of the following questions as a motivation for reading.

1. How do you feel about other people using your belongings? When is it okay? When does it bother you?
2. Have you ever had to forgive someone for something that person did or caused? How did forgiving make you feel? How do you think your forgiveness made the other person feel?
3. What would you tell someone who took something that wasn't his or hers? What does justice mean to you?
4. How do you feel about giving? Which do you think is better, getting gifts or giving them? Why?

Exploring the Book

Write the book title on the chalkboard. Then ask students: What is a lemon moon? Why might someone describe the moon this way? How would you describe the moon?

Display the book and invite students to study the cover illustration, both back and front. What clues do the pictures give students about the story?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students write down two things they think they might learn from reading *Under The Lemon Moon*. When students have read the book, they may revisit their predictions and compare them to what they actually learned.

Teacher Tip

If you have students in your class whose primary language is Spanish, promote self-esteem and pride in heritage by inviting them to take the lead in reading the book aloud and helping teach the Spanish words to the rest of the students.

Vocabulary

Introduce the word “onomatopoeia” to students. Explain that this term refers to words that sound like the sounds they represent. Give examples such as **buzz** and **boom**. Then tell students that the author of *Under The Lemon Moon* uses a number of words in this way. Work with students to start a chart like the one shown here.

Onomatopoeia	Who/What Says It
puc-buc-buc, skr-a-a-a-wk, buh-brawk	hen
chhht	Rosalinda
wsss-shhh-snap	Night Man at lemon tree
ai-eee	Night man when frightened
thrum-thrum	Mamá’s loom

READING AND RESPONDING

Discussion Questions

After reading the book, use these questions to generate discussion and expand students’ understanding of the story. Encourage students to refer to places in the story and illustrations that support their answers.

1. How does Rosalinda feel when she hears the noise in the garden at night? Do you think she is brave or foolhardy to investigate?
2. Why is Rosalinda so sad when she sees the lemon tree in the morning?
3. What kind of work does Rosalinda’s mother do? What does her father do?
4. Who is La Anciana? Why is she important to people in this story?
5. Why does Rosalinda call for La Anciana instead of talking to the Night Man when she sees him selling lemons in the market?
6. Why would the Night Man take Rosalinda’s lemons? What need might he have?
7. Why does Rosalinda give away her big lemons from the healed tree? Why didn’t she give away lemons from her tree before?
8. How does the Night Man feel when Rosalinda gives him the last lemon? Why?
9. How does Rosalinda feel at the end of the story? Why do you think so?
10. What do you think Rosalinda learned in this story? Is there justice in this story? Is there forgiveness?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing the roles of the circle members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Questions section of this guide to help group members explore the story.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines that tell what Rosalinda is thinking.
- The **Illustrator** might draw pictures showing parts of the story that are not illustrated, such as the lemon tree when its leaves are yellow.
- The **Connector** might find other stories or folktales that reflect peoples' beliefs about growing things.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the story or pages that the group is discussing.
- The **Investigator** might locate other books about village life in Mexico.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Two such books you may wish to refer to are: *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 1994) and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students engage with the story and personalize the text. Students might respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. Is La Anciana a real person or a make-believe figure? Explain your thinking.
2. What advice would you give to the Night Man?
3. What is the message of this book? Tell about a time when you could make use of his message.
4. In many stories the wise character is an "old one." How would you explain this?
5. Rosalinda has a hen as a pet. What kind of pet do you have or would you like to have? Why can't everyone have a hen?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities.

1. Make a chart to compare Rosalinda's way of life with yours. How are they alike? How are they different? Use your chart to write a "compare and contrast" paragraph.
2. Make a mini illustrated English/Spanish dictionary using words from the book. (Point out to students that the Spanish words, their pronunciations, and meanings are all given on page 2 of the book.) Suggest that students leave room under each letter of their dictionary for additional Spanish words they may learn.
3. Retell the story from the point of view of the Night Man.

4. Write a poem about Rosalinda's lemon tree.

ESL Teaching Strategies

The following activities may be used with students who speak English as a second language.

1. If you have students who read and speak Spanish in your class, invite them to teach a few more words to the others. Suggest that these students teach words that are requested by their classmates.
2. Direct students to other Spanish language books or books in English that contain Spanish words. Pair Spanish-speakers with English-speakers to read these books together.
3. Model how to use the illustrations to help read the story in English.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, introduce some of the following activities.

Art

Draw students' attention to the illustration showing Rosalinda's mother at her weaving loom. Plan a weaving project with the class. Beforehand, talk about the colors students might use, the materials (paper strips, cloth, potholder loops, and so on), and the product they will produce. Have students draw diagrams of their patterns before they begin weaving.

Social Studies

Help students locate Mexico on a map of North America. Point out that it is a neighbor of the United States. Have students answer questions such as:

- What U.S. states border Mexico? (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas)
- What river forms part of the border between the United States and Mexico? (Rio Grande)
- What is the capital of Mexico? (Mexico City)
- What bodies of water border Mexico? (Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of California)

Science

Investigate lemons. Begin by making a lemon web on the chalkboard and asking students to tell what they know about this fruit. Then develop a series of questions to investigate such as: What do we use lemons for? How do lemons grow? In what kinds of climates do lemons grow? Have students use the Internet, encyclopedias, and nonfiction books to learn more about lemons. They might record their findings with lemon-shaped covers and pages.

Math

Follow up your lemon study with a measurement activity by making lemonade from lemons or lemon juice. Begin with this recipe for one person, then have students figure out how much they will need to make enough lemonade for the whole class.

(Note: this recipe is better if you can boil the sugar and water for two minutes and then chill the sugar water before adding the lemon juice.)

- 1 cup of water
- 1 1/2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 4 tbsp. sugar

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Edith Hope Fine is both a teacher and a writer. She is the author of numerous books for adults and children including *The Python and Anaconda*, *The Turtle and Tortoise*, and *Snapshots*. Fine's work has also appeared in juvenile publications such as *Highlights For Children*, *Jack And Jill*, and *Humpty Dumpty* magazine. Edith Fine was born in Detroit, Michigan, and now lives in Encinitas, California. She is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University. About writing Fine says, "When an idea comes to you, you play with it, letting it hum around inside you to see what will happen. . . . *Under The Lemon Moon* started out much longer than it is now. You whittle and shape and mold and work, rewriting many times, and then, there you are. It's hard. It's fun." *Under The Lemon Moon* has won numerous children's book awards including a Parents' Choice Award Silver Honor, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (CBC/NCSS), and 50 Best Children's Books from *Parents* magazine

René King Moreno was born in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and she studied fine art at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her illustrations for *Under The Lemon Moon* were created using watercolor and pastel. Says Moreno, "Reading the story gave me such vivid and beautiful images. It was wonderful to illustrate." To add to her inspiration, Moreno's husband Tomas bought her a lemon tree.

Resources on the Web

Learn more about *Under the Lemon Moon* at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/121/hc/under_the_lemon_moon

Under the Lemon Moon in Spanish

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/140/hc/bajo_la_luna_de_limon

Also by Edith Hope Fine

Armando and the Blue Tarp School

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/12/hc/armando_and_the_blue_tarp_school

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