



Reading Roundup

Thunder Cake

Written and Illustrated by
Patricia Polacco

Reading Roundup
Partners



Introduction

Gather the students around you so that they are able to see the illustrations of the book. Most classrooms will have an area rug defining this space. Introduce yourself and tell the students that you are excited to share Thunder Cake, a story based on Patricia Polacco's real-life relationship with her Russian grandmother, her babushka.

Before Reading

Close your eyes and imagine a thunderstorm coming your way. What are you seeing as the thunderclouds are building? Are the clouds black? Is the sky dark and gray? Do you see leaves and trash flying through the air, tree branches bending? What do you feel? Is the wind blowing in your face; is the temperature getting cooler? Can you smell the rain in the air? How are you feeling? Are you feeling like taking a nap? Do you want to curl up with a good book? Are you frightened? As we read together, think about the relationship between a little girl and her grandmother, and how they may help each other.

During Reading

- Begin reading the book by starting on the title page. Hold the book so that students are able to see the illustrations. Give plenty of time for students to “read” and think about the pictures. Continue to read through page 9.

- **Page 8-9** Remember, Patricia Polacco is the author of *Thunder Cake*, and she's also the illustrator. Look at the pictures on these pages. – **P**– What do you notice about how the words and the pictures work together to tell us about Young Patricia Polacco and Babushka?

(We only see Young Patricia's feet sticking out from under the bed. This tells us she's terribly afraid of thunderstorms. Babushka is standing with her shoulders back and pointing her finger. This tells us she is speaking to Young Patricia in a stern voice.)

- **Page 15** Young Patricia is afraid of Nellie Peck Hen. “I knew she would try to peck me,” she thought to herself. Babushka says lovingly, “I'm here, she won't hurt you.” Look at Babushka. Notice her finger pointing at the angry hens. – **T/T** – What do you think grandmother is saying and how is she saying it? Encourage children to talk the way a Russian grandmother might speak and point their finger to show they are saying something important. (“Don't you even think about scaring my child. You give her them eggs and let her be.”)
- **Page 23** – **T/T** – We're learning that Young Patricia is frightened of thunderstorms, and she's afraid of many other things too. What does Babushka say and do to help Young Patricia? Why does she say and do these things? (Babushka says in a soft voice, “I'm here, child.” She helps Young Patricia by keeping her busy making thunder cake. Grandmother believes if Young Patricia stays busy and knows her Babushka is close, she won't be afraid.) If children do not remember the words Babushka used, turn back to pages 14, 20, and 23 where she repeats, “I'm here.” It is important to recognize her words as comforting, rather than demanding she not be afraid.

After Reading

Young Patricia and Babushka loved each other very much. They trusted each other, and Young Patricia knew Babushka would never let anything harm her. – **P** – What are some words we could use to describe Babushka? (old, stern, loving, understanding, creative...) What does she teach us about calming someone's fears? (Let the frightened person know you are there for them. Try to keep the frightened person busy doing something else.)

Remember- sometimes, the best thing we can do for someone who is afraid, is to make sure they know they're not alone. Sometimes, all we need to say is, “I'm here.”

Note – Patricia Polacco is known for her sophisticated word choice. She champions the idea that children are able to understand many unknown words when heard or read in context. The vocabulary words listed below are a few of the descriptive words Ms. Polacco chose for this book.

Vocabulary

Surveyed – looked closely p.12

Penned – wrote p. 12

Luscious – delicious p.23

Beamed – smiled really big p.30

**WORD
WAGON**

