



Sootface: An Ojibwa Cinderella Story

by Robert D. San Souci

Why This Book Matters

Sootface: An Ojibwa Cinderella Story provides students with an opportunity to experience a multicultural version of the familiar Cinderella tale while learning about the traditions and values of the Ojibwa people. The story emphasizes that kindness, honesty, humility, and inner beauty are more important than physical appearance or material possessions. It also encourages students to compare stories across cultures, recognize universal themes, and appreciate diverse perspectives and traditions.

Comprehension Focus

- Theme / central message
- Comparing and contrasting versions of a familiar folktale
- Character traits and character development
- Making inferences using text and illustrations
- Understanding how actions reveal character

Before Reading

- Show the cover and ask: What do you notice about this version of Cinderella? How does it look different from the one you know?
- Discuss briefly: What qualities make someone truly beautiful?
- Introduce the idea that many cultures tell their own versions of Cinderella stories.
- Introduce key vocabulary as needed (e.g., Ojibwa, warrior, village, invisible, humility, courage, tradition).

During Reading

Pause strategically to promote active thinking:

- What do Sootface's actions tell us about the kind of person she is?
- Why do you think the older sisters cannot see the Invisible Warrior?
- What clues help you understand why Sootface is successful?
- How is this story similar to and different from other Cinderella stories you have read?

Encourage students to explain their thinking using details and examples from the text.

After Reading

- What is the central message of the story?
- Why was Sootface able to recognize the Invisible Warrior when others could not?
- How do Sootface's choices show kindness, honesty, and humility?
- What lessons can readers learn about judging others by their appearance?
- How is this Cinderella story different from the traditional version?

Use turn-and-talk opportunities before whole-group sharing to support oral language.

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Extension Activity

Students may:

- Create a Venn diagram comparing *Sootface* with another Cinderella story.
- Draw and label character traits that describe Sootface, using evidence from the story.
- Write or dictate a sentence explaining the story's lesson about inner beauty.
- Illustrate their favorite scene and explain why it is important to the story.
- Research one interesting fact about the Ojibwa people and share it with the class.

Writing Activity

- Pretend you are Sootface after marrying the Invisible Warrior. Write a journal entry describing: How you felt when your sisters treated you poorly. How you felt when you recognized the Invisible Warrior. What you learned from your experiences.
- Write a friendly letter to Sootface. Tell her: What you admire about her. What advice would you give her, and what lesson would you learn from her story?
- Respond to the prompt: Inner beauty is more important than outward appearance. Support your opinion with reasons and examples from *Sootface*, your own life, or other stories.

Teacher Reflection

- Did students identify the story's central message using evidence from the text?
- Were students able to compare and contrast *Sootface* with a traditional Cinderella story?
- How effectively did students use character actions to infer personality traits?
- Did classroom discussions help students understand the importance of kindness, honesty, and inner beauty?
- How did students demonstrate appreciation for cultural diversity through their responses?

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