

# The Emperor's New Clothes

Written by Hans Christian Andersen

Illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Jennifer Lee Richards

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## Synopsis

There was once an emperor who loved fine clothes so much he spent all his time and money in order to be well dressed.

Two swindlers trick the Emperor into ordering a new suit made from magic cloth. The clothes made from this magic cloth cannot be seen by those who are unfit for their offices or who are very foolish.

Although none of the officers or the Emperor can see the magical clothes (since there are none to be seen!) they all pretend they do so that they are not thought to be stupid or unfit for their office.

Not until the innocence of a child opens the eyes of the kingdom do any of the Emperor's subjects admit that there are no magic clothes to be seen.

## About the Author

The fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, Denmark's most famous author, are among the most widely read works in world literature. His stories have enchanted generations of young readers around the world.

Andersen was born April 2, 1805, in Odense, Denmark. He was the son of a shoemaker and a washerwoman. His father died when Hans was only eleven years old.

Andersen was illiterate at the age of fourteen. He began grammar school studies at the age of seventeen and finally attended the University of Copenhagen, passing degree examinations in 1829.

Andersen published the first of his 168 fairy tales in 1835. He wrote them until he died. He was also a playwright, a novelist, and a writer of travel books. Beginning at the age of eleven, Andersen worked in a cloth factory, a tobacco factory, and as an apprentice shoemaker. He unsuccessfully tried to become an actor, singer, and dancer.

Andersen, a sensitive man who sought fame and success, never married. He fell in love with three women, including Swedish singer Jenny Lind, none of whom returned his love. Andersen died August 4, 1875.

His autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of My Life* (Paddington Press, 1975), holds more fascinating facts about his strange and amazing childhood, and his "fairy tale ending" adulthood.

A 1952 movie about Andersen's life, *Hans Christian Andersen*, starred Danny Kaye as Andersen.

## About the Illustrator

Virginia Lee Burton was born August 30, 1909, in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of Alfred E. Burton, the first dean of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Lena Dalkeith Burton. She married George Demetrios, a sculptor and teacher, on March 28, 1931. They had two sons, Aristides and Michael. Burton studied ballet privately in San Francisco, California. She studied art at the California School of Fine Arts and at Boston Museum School.

Burton was at one time a swimming instructor and art counselor at Young Men's Christian Association summer camps. She also sketched for music, dance, and theater sections of the *Boston Transcript* from 1928-1931. She wrote and illustrated children's books from 1935 until her death in 1968.

She said of her own books, "I draw directly from life, and I literally draw my books first and write down the text after . . . I pin the sketched pages in sequences on the walls of my studio so I can see the book as a whole. Then I make a rough dummy and then the final drawings, and at last when I can put it off no longer, I type out the text and paste in the dummy." (*Something About the Author 2*.)

## Critic's Corner

### Author

"Andersen wrote with wisdom, deliberate simplicity, and often with sly humor. (His) fairy tales can be considered both children's and adult literature. Many of the fairy tales have serious moral meanings and are intended for adult readers.

Andersen gave each tale its own style, but his stories can be roughly classified into several groups: folk tales, tales based on Andersen's life, tales about Denmark, tales that make fun of human faults; such as 'The Emperor's New Clothes,' and philosophical tales." (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 1985.)

Hans Christian Andersen received a grant from the King of Denmark from 1833-35, for travel in Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy. He received the Swedish Order of the Knight of the Polar Star, the White Falcon of Weimar, the Red Eagle of Prussia, the Order of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and was an honorary Danish Councillor of State.

Andersen's collections of fairy tales have been translated into numerous languages within variously titled editions. Some of the tales have been made into recordings, filmstrips, plays, and movies.

### Illustrator

Burton's nickname was "Jinnee." Lee Kingman, a Horn Book interviewer said that, "To do a book, (Burton) filled wastebaskets full of what other artists might well have considered satisfactory work."

Burton's work was not published immediately. "Her first book manuscript, *Jonnifer Lint*, was turned down by thirteen publishers, and she quit trying on *that* one when her son, then three, fell asleep before she finished reading it to him. From then on she worked with her own boys to adjust stories to their interest or lack of it. Stressing a sense of movement in her drawings, Burton created two of America's most beloved children's books, *The Little House* and *Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel*." (*Something About the Author*.) *The Little House* won the Caldecott Medal in 1943 for being the best-illustrated book for children.

### Objectives

1. To discuss the concept of conceit
2. To learn about the inner structure of an emperor's court
3. To discuss the concepts of honesty and innocence

### Comprehension/Discussion Questions:

1. After reading the dedication have students share titles of books their parents enjoy reading with them.
2. Discuss Burton's use of "blank" faces on her characters, especially in panoramic views of many people. Do the students like this method of illustration?
3. Why would the word emperor be capitalized?  
(*When used as a title.*)
4. Notice how the clock changes in the dressing room above the mirror on pages 2-3. How long does the Emperor spend changing his clothes on these pages?
5. How many suits would the Emperor have if he had "one for every hour of the day?"  
(*If daytime then probably 12, but technically there are 24 hours in a day, so have students decide.*)
6. Discuss and define the words: nor, theatre and suit.  
(*Page 2*)
7. Examine the clothing seen on pages 4-5 and try to pinpoint a historical time period for the story to have taken place during.  
(*Between the late 1600s - early 1800s.*)
8. Notice the architecture of the buildings. In what location of the world could the story have taken place?  
(*European countries such as France, Italy, or Andersen's homeland, Denmark.*)
9. Discuss and define the words: council, Ministers, reply, and officers.
10. Notice the parasols women are seen carrying on page 4. What were these "umbrellas" used for?  
(*Sun protection and fashion.*)
11. Notice the activities occurring on pages 4-5 and discuss how time "passed merrily" in the big town.
12. Discuss and define the words: court, clever and robbers.  
(*Page 6*)
13. Why did the two men bow to the Emperor?  
(*Page 6*)
14. Discuss and define the words: magnificent, magic, and unfit.  
(*Page 7*)
15. How do the students feel about the fact that only *men* serve in offices? Discuss what opportunities are available for both men and women today, that were only open for men in the past.
16. Discuss and define the words: splendid, positions, wise, foolish, immediately, and sums. (*Page 8*)
17. Notice the hairstyles of the characters. Learn that many people during these time periods wore wigs. Would the students like to wear wigs? Compare the hairstyles of today to those of the past. Why are hairstyles important to people?
18. Discuss and define the words: loom, delicate, purest, knapsacks, and the term, "in reality." (*Page 9*)
19. Notice the curly threads leading from the spools into the robbers' knapsacks and how this "borders" the text. (*Page 9*) Notice that page 8 has a similar border, but by examining how these gray curly lines are used throughout the book, it can be seen that they are used to border someone's thoughts. Why would the illustrator do this?
20. Notice the formal language used throughout the book. (For example, "I should like to know . . ." [page 10].)
21. Notice the ? shaped smoke coming out of the houses on the top of page 11. Notice that the houses seem to have "faces" with open mouths and eyes.
22. Discuss and define the words: anxious, neighbors, faithful, suitable, and the expressions, "getting on" and "a man of sense." (*Page 11*)
23. What do the students think the Minister will see when he goes to see the magic cloth? What will he tell the Emperor he saw?  
(*Page 11*)
24. Discuss and define the words: wicked, honest, and the expression, "with all their might." (*Page 12*)
25. Why did the minister not say aloud that he did not see any thread of cloth on the looms? (*Page 12*) Would the students have been afraid to tell the Emperor that they could not see the magic cloth?
26. Discuss and define the words: politely, design, (*Page 13*), peering (*Page 15*), and costly (*Page 16*).
27. What do the students think the next officer sent will see and tell the Emperor? (*Page 17*)
28. Discuss and define the words: comfortable, odd (*Page 20*), "Imperial Majesty," extraordinary (*Page 21*).
29. Notice how the houses now appear to be leaning down to "hear" the gossip about the Emperor's clothes that the men and women in front of the houses are making. Notice their "facial" expressions again as well.  
(*Pages 22-23*)

30. Discuss and define the words: tales, beauty. (Page 24)
31. The Emperor trusted the Minister and the officer he sent to see the cloth to come back and tell him the truth. Do the students think it was right for the two men to have lied to the Emperor? What do they think would have happened if they had told him the truth? What would the students have done?
32. Discuss and define the words: glorious (page 26), worst, delighted, charming, praised and the expression, "on no account." (Page 27)
33. How do the students feel about the Emperor lying that he can see the magic cloth? What would they have done if they were the Emperor?
34. Notice the capitals used for the name, "His Majesty the Emperor" on page 28.
35. Discuss and define the words: followers, strained, nevertheless, exclaimed, advised, material, and procession.
36. Notice the surprised and confused facial expressions of the officers on pages 27-28. Why are they confused?
37. Discuss and define the words: charming, magnificent, gay, pleasure, rogues, title, and "an order of Gentlemen." (Page 29)
38. Discuss the simile, "as light as a cobweb" and define the word trousers. (Page 32)
39. Discuss and define the words: delicate (Page 33), graciously and undergarments (Page 34), royal (Page 35), canopy, admiring, ceremonies, and handsome (Page 36).
40. What do the students think the Lords of the Bedchamber do all day? Would the students like this job?
41. Discuss and define the words: simpleton, gracefully, and train. (Page 39)
42. Why would a child tell the truth about the Emperor being naked and the adults would or could not? Discuss the concepts of honesty and innocence.
43. Discuss and define the word "truth." Do the students always tell the truth? (Always?)
44. Notice there are even people watching the procession from the rooftops of buildings. (Pages 40-41)
45. Notice the use of all capital letters for some words to show exclamation. (Page 43) Help students learn to use added expression when reading these words aloud.
46. Notice that the little child who cried out that the Emperor had on no clothes is the only child shown watching the procession on pages 40-43. Why would the illustrator do this?
47. Notice how the body positions of the procession spectators change from pages 40-41 to 42-43. What do these motions imply?
48. What is around the Emperor's waist? (A garter to hold up his stockings.)
49. Would the students been able to finish the parade if they were the Emperor? Do they think the Emperor is brave or foolish, or both?
50. Why did the Lords of the Bedchamber hold their heads higher and take greater trouble to hold up a pretend train?
51. Would the students have been embarrassed if they had been the emperor or one of the court members who had pretended to have seen the magic clothes?
52. Do the students think the Emperor will try to have the robbers caught and brought back? Will the Emperor charge the weavers with the crime of robbery? What would the Emperor do if he did catch the two men?
53. Who do the students think was "more wrong": the Emperor for lying that he could see the magic cloth and for spending all his money so foolishly or the weavers for tricking the Emperor and his court and for stealing all the silk and gold thread?

**Student Activities:**

1. Read the book aloud to or with your students.
2. Read other books written by Hans Christian Andersen.
3. Read other books written and/or illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton.
4. Research about the Caldecott Medal award.
5. Experiment with the illustration technique Burton uses for this book. (Pen and ink with marker or paint?)
6. Read other fairy tales.
7. Make a play version of this story with students choosing the dialogue. Teacher-made transcripts of these dictations can be used for scripts until lines are learned. (Be sure to allow for improvisation.) Use practices for opportunities to adapt scripts for easy learning. Have students make props and play programs for visiting classroom audiences.
8. Research about emperors and the places that they have ruled over.
9. Create decorative crowns using paper and cloth scraps and costume jewelry. (Have a royal procession showing these off!)
10. Make models of the Emperor's palace.
11. Learn how to tell time and practice using the clock faces shown on pages 2-3.
12. Make paper doll versions of the Emperor with all his fancy suits. Be sure and label the suits on the back telling what hour of the day the outfit is to be worn, or for what event.
13. Research about the late 1600s - early 1800s to learn about lifestyles of the people. Listen to some music by Mozart and other composers of the time. Make costumes of the period clothing and wear them during a "ball" where students can perform dances of the times.
14. Research about the "theatre" of the time period during which the story took place. What types of performances would people see?
15. Try on a variety of wigs, especially those worn during the late 1600s-1800s.

16. Research about "capital cities" and what is commonly contained in one. Learn the names and locations of the 50 state capitals of the United States.
17. Locate Washington, D.C. on a map and research about its importance.
18. Have someone come in the classroom and play a violin for the students to dance to. (See Page 5.)
19. Learn how to juggle and go see a performer walk a tightrope or research about how to do these activities.
20. Research about the type of architecture seen in the capital city. Make a wall mural of the city or a map showing the location of the palace, the shops and the parks all seen in the book. Name the parks and shops.
21. Learn how to weave, have a weaver come to the classroom, or visit a weaver and see a loom with cloth making in production.
22. List the various offices that could be held in the Emperor's court. Have the students choose positions they would have liked to have held and create a "classroom court" with students role-playing their positions.
23. Have students take turns improvising the actions of the two robbers as they "were working with all their might at the empty looms." (Page 12)
24. Have students draw patterns on paper of how they would imagine the magic cloth should have looked if it were visible and real. (Use the materials the Emperor gave the two robbers.)
25. Research about colors and learn to identify and name various shades of colors. Use paint to learn how to mix colors to make others.
26. Research about the square signs that are posted outside the shops of the city. Find out what professions existed in these times and have students choose one, make an appropriate sign to hang on their desk ("shop") and have the class become the Emperor's capital city with students role-playing the townspeople.
27. Have the class improvise to illustrate the actions of the townspeople on pages 22-23 as they are gossiping about the Emperor's purchase of the magic cloth.
28. Have students create modern versions of the story. Read *The Principal's New Clothes* by Stephanie Calmenson as an example.
29. Make a list of all the complimentary and descriptive words used in the story to describe the magic cloth or clothes.
30. Research about knights. Design "ribbons of Knighthood" and have an official Knighting Ceremony before students may wear their ribbons in their buttonholes.
31. Notice on page 30 that the weavers must work by candlelight. Research to find out when electricity was discovered and then used for indoor lighting.
32. Have pairs of students role-play as the robbers working all night on the Emperor's new suit. (Pages 30-31)
33. List the jobs the Chief Master of Ceremonies probably had to perform in order to prepare for the procession.
34. Have students think of compliments the townspeople could have called out to the Emperor as the procession went by. Have students improvise illustrating how the townspeople would have sounded.
35. Have students act out the change in motions the spectators have from simply viewing the Emperor's clothes in awe, to their excitement in realizing the Emperor and they have all been tricked. (Pages 38-43)
36. Have students take turns role-playing a news reporter holding a live news interview at the scene of the procession immediately after the young boy has revealed the truth that the Emperor is naked. Have the other students improvise the roles of the young boy, the townspeople, and some officers.
37. Have students create newspaper front pages with headlines and stories reporting about the fraud the Emperor fell for.
38. Have students create commercials advertising the magic cloth and its many uses.
39. Read other illustrated versions of the tale, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and have students judge their favorites.

#### **Bibliography:**

*Yesterday's Authors of Books for Children*, Vol. 1, 1977.

*World Book Encyclopedia*, 1985 ed.

*Something About the Author*, Vol. 2, 1971.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT THINKING SKILLS**

To ensure that students are using various levels of thinking skills use the following guidelines: (adapted from Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive thinking skills.)

### **Comprehension and Recall:**

Exercises which ask students to: match, discover, identify, listen, research, locate, or observe. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #8, 36, and 47.  
Student Activities #10, 13, 17, and 37.

### **Application:**

Exercises which ask students to: list, construct, paint, sketch, manipulate, interview, or experiment. Such as:

Student Activities #20, 22, and 29.

### **Analysis:**

Exercises which ask students to: classify, categorize, compare, contrast, survey, or advertise. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #25 and 43.  
Student Activities #38.

### **Synthesis:**

Exercises which ask students to: invent, compose, predict, role-play, imagine, create, produce, estimate, combine, or infer. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #5, 40, 50, and 52.  
Student Activities #23, 27, and 36.

### **Evaluation:**

Exercises which ask students to: evaluate, judge, debate, discuss, recommend, choose, or decide. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #15, 31, 49, 51 and 53.  
Student Activities #34 and 39.

### Vocabulary Test:

Match the underlined words in the following sentences with their definition.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Emperor walked in the middle of the procession showing all the townspeople his new clothes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The weavers pretended to hold up the Emperor's beautiful new trousers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "Oh! It is most beautiful!" said the Minister, peering down at the loom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The Emperor ordered large sums of money to be given to both the weavers.

- a. looking
- b. amounts

- c. pants
- d. parade

### Comprehension Test:

Circle the correct answer for the following questions.

1. The robbers told the Emperor they could weave magic cloth that could:
  - a. make the Emperor be able to fly.
  - b. be seen only by those who are foolish or stupid.
  - c. be seen only by those fit for their office.
  
2. The magic cloth was to be made out of:
  - a. spider's cobwebs.
  - b. delicate silk and the purest gold thread.
  - c. wool.
  
3. When the Minister could not see anything on the looms:
  - a. he told the weavers they were crazy.
  - b. he thought he was unfit for his office or foolish.
  - c. he told the Emperor to put the robbers in jail.
  
4. The first person to admit that the Emperor was not wearing any clothes during the procession was:
  - a. the Lord of the Bedchamber.
  - b. the honest old Minister.
  - c. a little child.

## ANSWER KEY

### Vocabulary Test:

1. d      2. c      3. a      4. b

### Comprehension Test:

1. c      2. b      3. b      4. c



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