

Miss Rumphius

Barbara Cooney

Teacher's Guide

Written By Kathy Sammis

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Synopsis

The narrator of this tale, a young girl named Alice, tells the life story of her great-aunt, Miss Alice Rumphius, who is now a very old woman. The quiet story is well complemented by the author's serene, sweeping landscapes and calm, detailed interiors. It begins around the turn of the century, when Alice as a young girl helps her artist grandfather by filling in the skies on his canvases. Listening to her grandfather's stories of faraway places, Alice declares that she too will go to faraway places and then settle down by the sea. Her grandfather tells her she must do a third thing: do something to make the world more beautiful.

When Alice grows up, she becomes a librarian and then embarks on travels around the world. She walks tropical beaches, climbs tall mountains, crosses jungles and deserts. In a Muslim country by the sea, she hurts her back getting off a camel. So she returns to New England and settles into her new house, a cottage beside the sea. During the next spring and summer, Miss Rumphius has to stay in bed most of the time because of her bad back. She loves the lupines she sees out her bedroom window in her garden and wishes she could plant more.

The following spring, able to walk again, Miss Rumphius is thrilled when she goes over the hill and discovers that her lupines have spread their seed and created a new patch of bloom. Inspired, she orders five bushels of lupine seed and spends her summer days wandering all around the countryside and the town, sowing lupine seed. The next spring, lupines bloom everywhere. Miss Rumphius has done the third thing—she has made the world more beautiful. Now, her great-niece Alice declares that she too will travel to faraway places and come home to live by the sea. Miss Rumphius responds that young Alice must also do a third thing: make the world more beautiful. Alice vows that she will, but she does not know yet what that can be.



Timeline

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|------------------------|--|
| childhood | Little Alice Rumphius lives in a city by the sea around the turn of the century. She resolves to go to faraway places, live beside the sea when she is old, and do something to make the world more beautiful. |
| young adulthood | Miss Rumphius works as a librarian. |
| next decades | Miss Rumphius travels the world and makes friends everywhere. |
| later years | Miss Rumphius settles into a little house by the sea in Maine and sows lupine seeds throughout the countryside and the town. |
| old age | Miss Rumphius tells children tales of faraway places, and tells her grandniece she must make the world more beautiful when she grows up. |

Author Sketch

Barbara Cooney illustrated 110 books in the course of her long career, some of which she also wrote the text for. She twice won the Caldecott Medal, in 1959 for *Chanticleer and the Fox*, and in 1980 for *Ox-Cart Man*. Cooney and her twin brother were born in New York City in 1917. She grew up on Long Island, New York, and spent summers with her grandmother in Maine near the ocean. Her great-grandfather, like Miss Rumphius's grandfather in the story, was an immigrant artist who made cigar-store Indians and painted oils on canvas; her grandmother sometimes helped by "putting in the skies," as Miss Rumphius did. Cooney's mother was an amateur artist who encouraged Barbara's experiments with artistic creations.



After graduating from Smith College, Cooney got a job with a New York publisher who allowed her to work only in black and white because color printing was far too expensive. As printing technology improved, Cooney increasingly was able to work in color. She married Charles Porter, a doctor, in 1949, and they raised four children together in Massachusetts. Cooney traveled widely, soaking up the atmosphere and details for her stories set in countries around the world. Around 1980, she settled in Damariscotta, Maine; in 1997 and 1998, she donated \$850,000 toward the building of a new library for the town. In 1989, the Maine Library Association established the Lupine Award, to recognize outstanding children's books by state residents, in honor of Cooney and *Miss Rumphius*. In 1996, Cooney was named a Maine State Treasure. Cooney incorporated many elements of her own life into *Miss Rumphius*. She called this book, *Island Boy*, and *Hattie and the Wild Waves* her trilogy, because they "come as close to any autobiography as I will ever get." Barbara Cooney died in March 2000 in Portland, Maine.

Critic's Corner

Critics and readers/listeners alike have long admired Barbara Cooney's prolific body of work. Her color illustrations, which she came to later in her long career, are noted for their luminous color and strong evocation of both landscapes and interiors, with great attention to detail. Critics often note Cooney's strong sense of place, especially in books set in her adopted home state of Maine and region of New England. *Miss Rumphius* is one of Cooney's most admired and most popular books, and it won an American Book Award. *School Library Journal* commented, "The beautifully detailed illustrations are enchanting and children will love to discover something new each time they open the book." *Publishers Weekly* admired the book's "exquisite paintings," adding, "What Miss Rumphius experiences is gloriously shown in the pictures." *Horn Book* found the book "particularly well designed for the attention span of young readers," with "glowing pictures" and "entrancing landscapes [that] sweep generously across the pages." *Booklist* wrote, "The artwork, almost primitive in style, is masterful."

Selected Works by Barbara Cooney

Writer-Illustrator

- The King of Wreck Island* (1941)
- Chanticleer and the Fox* (adapted from Geoffrey Chaucer, 1958)
- The Little Juggler* (adapted from French legend, 1961)
- Christmas* (1967)
- Miss Rumphius* (1982)
- Island Boy* (1988)
- Hattie and the Wild Waves* (1990)
- Eleanor* (1996)

Illustrator

- Ake and His World*, by Bertil Malmberg (1940)
- American Folksongs for Children*, by Ruth Crawford Seeger (1948)
- Kildee House*, by Rutherford George Montgomery (1949)
- The Best Christmas*, by Lee Kingman (1949)
- Where Have You Been?* by Margaret Wise Brown (1952)

Peter's Long Walk, by Lee Kingman (1953)
The Little Fir Tree, by Margaret Wise Brown (1954)
Little Women, by Louisa May Alcott (1955)
A White Heron, by Sarah Orne Jewett (1962)
The Owl and the Pussy-Cat, by Edward Lear (1969)
Ox-Cart Man, by Donald Hall (1979)
Emma, by Wendy Kesselman (1980)
The Story of Holly and Ivy, by Rumer Godden (1985)
Louhi, Witch of North Farm, by Toni de Gerez (1986)
Roxaboxen, by Alice McLerran (1991)
Emily, by Michael Bedard (1992)
Letting Swift River Go, by Jane Yolen (1992)
Only Opal: The Diary of a Young Girl, by Opal Whiteley (1994)
Basket Moon, by Mary Lyn Ray (1999)

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Berger, Laura Standley, ed. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*, 4th ed. Detroit: St. James Press, 1995.
Children's Literature Review, Vol. 23. Detroit: Gale Research, 1991.
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 67. Detroit: Gale Research 1998.
Cooney, Barbara, "Caldecott Medal Acceptance," *Horn Book Magazine*, August 1959, pp. 310-13;
Horn Book Magazine, August 1980, pp. 378-82.
_____, "Making Picture Books: The Pictures," *Horn Book Magazine*, March/April 1998, pp. 190-93.
Hale, R.D., "Musings," *Horn Book Magazine*, January/February 1991, pp. 106-07;
January/February 1994, pp. 110f.
Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Books Are by People*. New York: Citation Press, 1969.
Horne, Jackie C., "Six Decades of Picture Book Illustration: The Art of Barbara Cooney," *Children's Literature in Education*, June 2001, pp. 91-109.
McClellan, Constance Reed, "Barbara Cooney," *Horn Book Magazine*, August 1980, pp. 383-87.
Porter, Anna Newton, "Barbara Cooney," *Horn Book Magazine*, August 1959, pp. 314-19.
Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children's Books and Their Creators*. Boston/NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.
Something About the Author, Vols. 59 & 96. Detroit: Gale Research, 1990, 1998.

Book Reviews of Miss Rumphius

Booklist, December 1, 1982, p. 497
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, January 1983, p. 85
Children's Book Review Service, February 1983, p. 63
Horn Book Magazine, December 1982, p. 639
Kirkus Reviews, September 1, 1982, p. 994
The New York Times Book Review, November 14, 1982, p. 43
Publishers Weekly, July 9, 1982, p. 49
School Librarian, June 1983, p. 127
School Library Journal, September 1982, p. 106; February 1984, p. 50 (filmstrip review)

Internet

Barbara Cooney
www.carolhurst.com/authors/bcooney.html
Barbara Cooney
us.penguingroup.com/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,0_1000002642,00.html
Barbara Cooney
www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2005-01/a-2005-01-29-2-1.cfm
Barbara Cooney (1917-2000)
www.ortakales.com/illustrators/Cooney.html
Birthday Bios: Barbara Cooney
www.childrensliteraturenetwork.org/brthpage/08aug/8-6cooney.html

General Objectives

1. To use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read or listen critically, and respond creatively to the story and its illustrations.
2. To expand vocabulary through context clues and word study.
3. To expand responses to the book by completing a variety of related activities, some in other areas of the curriculum.
4. To exercise artistic, craft, and dramatic skills to help interpret reading.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the time frame of the different parts of this story.
2. To understand Miss Rumphius's plans for her life as a young girl and the ways in which she carries out those plans.
3. To note Miss Rumphius's activities in her job as a librarian.
4. To trace Miss Rumphius's travels and adventures around the world.
5. To observe the changing seasons as shown in the illustrations that feature Miss Rumphius's Maine house.
6. To discuss the local people's attitudes toward and reactions to Miss Rumphius and her activities.
7. To identify treasures from the past that Miss Rumphius keeps with her in her old age.
8. To consider the similarities between Miss Rumphius and her grandniece Alice.

The Importance of Setting

The settings reflect various stages of Miss Rumphius's life. As a young girl around 1900, she lives in a city by the sea, in her grandparents' comfortable home, which includes her grandfather's art studio. As a young woman, she works in an elegant, well-appointed library and loves to visit the nearby conservatory, full of tropical plants in the dead of winter. She then embarks on her world travels; we see her on a tropical island, climbing high mountains, and riding a camel in Tunisia. Late in her life, Miss Rumphius moves into her house in Maine beside the sea, a typical New England cottage of grey shingles, scalloped trim, and an open porch. Her bedroom, where she is confined one year with a bad back, contains typical cottage furniture. Her living room, where she entertains young Alice and her friends, is more formally furnished. She devotes herself one year to wandering the countryside—fields, headlands, harborside—and the town alongside the sea, sowing lupine seeds everywhere. The following spring, the landscape is transformed, with beautiful lupine flowers blooming everywhere.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Grandparent Stories

Lenore Blegvad, *Once Upon a Time and Grandma*
Susan V. Bosak, *Something to Remember Me By*
Tomie dePaola, *Tom*
Elizabeth F. Howard, *Aunt Flossie's Hats*
Kathryn Lasky, *My Island Grandma*
Margaret Mahy, *A Busy Day for a Good Grandmother*

Nature Stories

Eve Bunting, *Sunflower House*
Eric Carle, *The Tiny Seed*
Tomie dePaola, *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*

New England Stories

Robert McCloskey, *One Morning in Maine and Time of Wonder*
Celia Thaxter, *Celia's Island Journal*



Travel Stories

Don Brown, *Alice Ramsey's Grand Adventure*
Jean De Brunhoff, *Babar's Travels*
Troon Harrison, *Lavender Moon*
Cynthia Rylant, *Tulip Sees America*
Sheila W. Samton, *Jenny's Journey*

Nonfiction

A Is for Artist
Aliki, *The Story of Johnny Appleseed*
Karen Bryant-Mole, *Flowers*
Flowers (First Discovery Series)
Allan Fowler, *What's Your Favorite Flower?*
Gail Gibbons, *From Seed to Plant*
Steven Kellogg, *Johnny Appleseed*
Susan Kuchalla, *All About Seeds*
Lucy Micklethwait, *A Child's Book of Play in Art*
Joan Sweeney, *Me on the Map*
Anne Velghe, *Wildflowers: A Garden Primer*

CD-ROM

Arthur's Reading (The Learning Co.)
Blue's Reading Time Activities and Blue's Treasure Hunt (Humongus Entertainment)
Jumpstart Artist (Knowledge Adventure)
Jumpstart Reading Series (Knowledge Adventure)
Learn About Life Science: Plants (Sunburst)
Reader Rabbit Series (The Learning Co.)
Reading Blaster: Ages 4-6 and Reading Blaster: Ages 5-7 (Knowledge Adventure)
Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego? (The Learning Co.)

Internet

The Great Plant Escape
www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/gpe/index.html
kidsgardening.com
www.kidsgardening.com/
Lupine
www.wiseacre-gardens.com/plants/perennial/lupine.html
Miss Rumphius—Needs You: A WebQuest for 3rd Grade
teachers.emints.org/allens/webquest2/
National Geographic.com kids
www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/
Why Do Plants Have Flowers?
www.cnps.org/programs/education/pollin.htm
Wildflowers in Bloom
aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wildseed/photoalbum.html

Video/DVD

Going to Grandma's (Around the World) (World Kids Press)
Miss Rumphius (Spellbound Prods.)
Plant Life for Children (Stone House Prods./New York Botanical Garden)
Plant Lifecycles (Educational Video)
Plants: A First Look (Cochran Communications/Rainbow Educational Media)
Plants Around the World (100% Educational Video)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in *Miss Rumphius* should include these aspects.

Themes

- making the world a better place
- dynamic older women
- intergenerational family relationships
- caring for the environment and the community
- world travel
- sowing seeds, growing plants
- charting and following your own course in life

Motifs

- lupines
- period detail
- art
- libraries
- tropical plants
- seashells
- the sea
- ailments
- cats as pets
- old age

Meaning Study

Discuss with students the meaning of the bold-faced words from the story in the following sentences.

1. She is my great-aunt.
(A **great-aunt** is the sister of one of a person's grandparents. The person who has a great-aunt is called a **grandniece** or **grandnephew**. Miss Rumphius's grandniece Alice is the narrator of this story.)

2. The Lupine Lady
(In her town by the sea, Miss Rumphius is known as the Lupine Lady for her sowing of bushels of lupine seed. A lupine is a plant with showy spikes of usually blue, purple, and pink flowers; people grow it in their gardens, and it also grows wild. The Texas state flower, the bluebonnet, is a type of lupine.)
3. making figureheads for the prows of ships
(A figurehead is a carved figure that was placed at the front—the bow, or prow—of many sailing ships. Young Alice’s artist grandfather makes figureheads.)
4. far from the sea and the salt air
(The air on land next to the sea has a smell of salt water to it. Miss Rumphius has moved inland, so far away from the sea that the air has no salt smell to it.)
5. Sometimes she went to the conservatory.
(A conservatory is a greenhouse—an enclosed building that admits a lot of light—for growing and/or showing plants, especially tender ones that need protection from the elements. The tropical feeling to the park’s conservatory prompts Miss Rumphius to go to a real tropical isle, the beginning of her wide travels.)
6. a beautiful mother-of-pearl shell
(Mother-of-pearl is the hard pearly, lustrous substance that lines the inside of some mollusk shells, like the one the Bapa Raja gives to Miss Rumphius.)
7. a hard winter
(Winter in northern New England is characteristically cold, snowy, and icy, but some winters are colder, snowier, and icier than usual. These are called “hard winters.”)
8. her seed catalogues
(Seed-sellers send out usually enticing catalogues—pamphlets—that describe the flower and vegetable seeds they offer, most often with beautiful photographs of the plants. Miss Rumphius sends away for lupine seed.)
9. five bushels of lupine seed
(A bushel is a dry measure equivalent to 32 quarts, so Miss Rumphius has ordered 160 quarts of lupine seed!)

Comprehension Study

Discuss the following questions with your students. You could ask students in higher grades to write their answers to the questions in their own words.

1. Look at the pictures in the book, without reading the story. Write or tell a few sentences about one or more of the pictures. Describe 1) what the people in the picture are feeling or doing at that moment and 2) what is happening in the picture. As you read or listen to the story, see if what you wrote or told about the picture(s) was accurate.
2. What do the pictures on the first five pages of the book tell you about Alice Rumphius?
(She is a young girl at this time. She lives in the late 1800s or early 1900s, a time when most cargo-carrying ships were sailing vessels and people still used mostly horses and wagons. She is a budding artist. She lives in a very comfortable-looking house with her grandparents. Her grandfather is affectionate with her, and she seems happy with her life.)
3. What does young Alice plan to do with her life? What additional advice does her grandfather give her?
(Alice declares that, like her grandfather, she will go to faraway places and, when she is old, she will live beside the sea. Alice’s grandfather tells her she must do a third thing—do something to make the world more beautiful.)
4. What does Miss Rumphius do as part of her work as a librarian?
(From the text, we learn that she dusts the books, keeps them in order, and helps people find the ones they want. From the picture, we learn that she helps people from children to young misses to women to old people who come to read the newspapers.)
5. What do the pictures of Miss Rumphius as a librarian tell you about her?
(She seems calm, elegant, well-groomed, quite attractive, and open to drinking in sensations such as the feel of a tropical atmosphere and the heady aroma of fragrant plants.)

6. What places does Miss Rumphius visit during her travels around the world?
(From the text, we learn that she visits a tropical island, tall mountains, jungles, deserts, Australia [the reference to kangaroos], and Tunisia [the Land of the Lotus-Eaters]. The pictures show her on the tropical island, climbing a mountain, and riding a camel in Tunisia.)

7. What seasons of the year do you see in the first four pictures of Miss Rumphius's Maine house?
(It appears to be late fall in the first picture, just after Miss Rumphius has moved in—the grass is brown, the ferns are brown and reddish, and the smoke from the chimney indicates that the house is being heated. In the scene with Miss Rumphius in bed, we see colorful lupines outside the window, so this is late spring/early summer. The next scene clearly shows the house in winter. The fourth scene shows Miss Rumphius discovering the lupines over the hill, so again it is late spring/early summer.)

8. Why did some people start to call Miss Rumphius That Crazy Old Lady? Do you think is a fair name to give her? Does she seem upset by it?
(Some people call her crazy because she is acting differently, wandering all over sowing seeds. It isn't fair, or accurate, to call someone who acts in her or his own way "crazy." [This is a fruitful subject for class discussion.] Miss Rumphius walks along sowing seeds with her usual calm, serene look; she doesn't seem to care what people think about her seed-sowing activities.)

9. In the spring scene with lupines blooming everywhere, what attitude do people seem to have about Miss Rumphius now?
(Everyone waves at Miss Rumphius as she bicycles through town. Now that they see the beautiful results of her seed-sowing, they appreciate her behavior that some people used to call "crazy.")

10. What family treasures and souvenirs of her world travels do you see in the scene with Miss Rumphius and the children in her house?

(The two paintings on the wall are the same ones that hung in Miss Rumphius's grandfather's parlor, and the wicker chair looks just like the one in that parlor. The photograph on the mantel may be a family portrait. The shells and the dark-skinned figure on the mantelpiece are probably souvenirs from the tropical islands Miss Rumphius visited, and the cockatoo is also a reminder of those travels.)

11. The first part of this story is set in the past [see #2 above]. When is the scene at the end of the story, with Miss Rumphius and the children, set? What tells you this?
(This scene is set in the present. The children's contemporary clothing tells us this.)

12. In what ways do Miss Rumphius and her grandniece Alice resemble each other?
(They both have red hair, and they are both named Alice. As Miss Rumphius had done when she was a young girl, young Alice the grandniece declares that when she grows up she will go to faraway places and come home to live by the sea. Miss Rumphius gives young Alice the same advice she received from her grandfather: Also do something to make the world more beautiful.)

Across the Curriculum

Invite students to complete any of these activities that are suitable for their grade and interest level.

Art

1. Create an illustration of one of your favorite places in the world—a place where you have already been or a place you want to travel to.
2. Two books that Barbara Cooney illustrated won the Caldecott Award. Find out more about this award, and create a class display of other Caldecott winners.
3. Create artworks of lupine flowers; one effective technique is using your fingers dipped into paint.
4. Create a poster with photographs of both a bird-of-paradise flower and a bird of paradise actual bird.

Geography

1. The final stop for Miss Rumphius is the "Land of the Lotus-Eaters." Where is this? Do some research to find out, and tell classmates what you learn.
2. Miss Rumphius visits tropical islands, mountains, jungles, and deserts. Create a display of pictures of these kinds of places.
3. This book mentions the living creatures Miss Rumphius sees during her travels: cockatoos, monkeys, bird of paradise, shellfish, lions, kangaroos, and camels. Do some research and create a chart that shows the native region of each of these creatures. Or, do the same for the plants mentioned: coconut, bird-of-paradise, and jasmine (in the conservatory).
4. As Miss Rumphius spreads lupine seeds, she wanders through fields, headlands, and hollows. Explain what these are and/or find pictures of them to display.
5. Decide which countries Miss Rumphius visited during her world travels, based on the book and on your own guesses. Then create a list of where she went, show these places on a world map, and trace a route she might have followed.

Language Arts

1. This book won an American Book Award. Find out more about this award. Explain what it is, and find out if you have read or listened to any other American Book Award winners.
2. After you have done Geography activity #5, or even if you have not, write a journal that Miss Rumphius kept during her world travels. Or, create a "Trip Around the World" brochure that describes each place Miss Rumphius visited (with pictures), plus travel tips such as tourist attractions to see and clothing to bring.
3. Write a poem about lupines, or list a word that applies to lupines for each letter in lupine.
4. Make up some dialogue for some of the scenes in this book.

Science and Environmental Studies

1. The atmosphere inside the conservatory makes Miss Rumphius think of a tropical climate. What are the features of a tropical climate? Describe them.
2. Create a booklet that explains how to choose and take care of a cockatoo or a monkey as a pet.
3. Create a picture booklet of your favorite flowers with some basic information on each one. (Also Art.)
4. Find out if lupines will grow where you live. Then sow some lupine seeds in a place that will favor their growth. Watch and record the results.
5. Sow some seeds of different plants in your classroom. Keep notes on the results, such as the time it takes for the seeds to germinate and rate of growth.
6. Do you have a favorite flower? If so, create a simple illustrated guide on where and how to plant it and care for it. (Also Art.)

Mathematics

1. After you have done Geography activity #5, calculate the number of miles that Miss Rumphius travels in the course of her journeys.
2. The book says that Miss Rumphius ordered five bushels of lupine seeds. How much is this? Find some way to show this amount, or a part of it, in actual containers.
3. Look again at the picture of Miss Rumphius at work in the library. How many children do you find? How many adults? How many living and not living animal/bird creatures? How many males? How many females?

Student Involvement Activities

1. When she is a young girl, Miss Rumphius declares that she will travel to faraway places when she grows up. What about you? Would you like to do this? Where would you like to go? Share responses with classmates, and show pictures of the places you want to visit.
2. What do you think might be good about staying where you have grown up, keeping your roots? Or do you think it is better to move away to new places? Share ideas with classmates.
3. Do you have any ideas about how you could make the world a better place? Think about a community service project you could develop and carry out. Then try to do this.
4. Plan a garden you would like to plant and tend to. If possible, put your plan into effect.
5. The Bapa Raja gave Miss Rumphius a special, beautiful farewell gift. Decide on and describe the same type of gift you would give to a friend who is leaving.
6. Describe in words and/or pictures an older person who is a special part of your life.
7. Find, and take photos or draw pictures of, wild lupines that grow where you live.
8. Has an older family member ever given you advice about what you should do, as Miss Rumphius's grandfather did? If so, what was this advice? Did you or do you plan to follow it?
9. Act out scenes from this story with classmates, using dialogue you have written in the Language Arts activity.

Alternate Assessment

Depending on student ability level, you could have students write their responses to one of these assessment vehicles or simply discuss their response with you, individually or in a group setting.

1. Explain what the pictures add to this story, or how the pictures fill out the story's words.
2. Describe the three life goals Miss Rumphius announces when she is a young girl. Then tell how she fulfills each of these three goals.

Vocabulary

Read each sentence. Below the sentence, find the answer that could be used in place of the word in bold-face (dark) type. Write the letter of the answer in the blank in front of the sentence.

- _____ 1. Alice stood on the front stoop.
(a) sidewalk
(b) small porch
(c) garden gate
- _____ 2. From there, she could see the wharves.
(a) boat docks
(b) tall buildings
(c) chimneys
- _____ 3. "When I grow up, I too will go to faraway places."
(a) nearby
(b) four miles away
(c) distant
- _____ 4. Alice ate porridge for breakfast.
(a) soft food like oatmeal
(b) scrambled eggs
(c) stew
- _____ 5. "You must do something to make the world more beautiful."
(a) common
(b) quiet
(c) lovely
- _____ 6. Miss Rumphius worked in a library.
(a) building for sick people
(b) building filled with books
(c) school building
- _____ 7. The warm moist air wrapped itself around her.
(a) too hot
(b) slightly wet
(c) dry
- _____ 8. "This is almost like a tropical isle."
(a) island
(b) warm pool
(c) jungle
- _____ 9. She watched the sun sparkle on the water.
(a) rain
(b) shine
(c) fall into
- _____ 10. "It was the wind," she said as she knelt in delight.
(a) sadness
(b) doubt
(c) joy

Comprehension Test A

Part 1: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you choose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. The author of this book is
(a) Patricia Polacco. (b) Cynthia Rylant. (c) Barbara Cooney.
- _____ 2. Miss Rumphius's first name is
(a) Barbara. (b) Alice. (c) Ella.
- _____ 3. When Miss Rumphius was a little girl, she lived by the
(a) sea. (b) mountains. (c) tropics.
- _____ 4. Young Miss Rumphius says that when she grows up, she will visit
(a) faraway places. (b) famous people. (c) the Arctic Circle.
- _____ 5. When she is a young woman, Miss Rumphius works as a
(a) schoolteacher. (b) librarian. (c) nurse.
- _____ 6. The king on a tropical island who becomes Miss Rumphius's friend is the
(a) Bapa Rajah. (b) Sultan Omar. (c) Emir Rama.
- _____ 7. Miss Rumphius hurts her back getting off a
(a) donkey. (b) elephant. (c) camel.
- _____ 8. In her little garden, Miss Rumphius plants a few
(a) pumpkins. (b) flowers. (c) bushes.
- _____ 9. Miss Rumphius says she has always loved these flowers best:
(a) lupines. (b) sunflowers. (c) daisies.
- _____ 10. For a while, some people call Miss Rumphius that
(a) Library Lady. (b) Bicycle Lady. (c) Crazy Old Lady.

Part 2: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| _____ 1. An artist who makes figureheads. | a. Miss Rumphius |
| _____ 2. An old lady who tells stories about faraway places. | b. Bapa Raja |
| _____ 3. A young girl who visits her great-aunt. | c. the grandfather |
| _____ 4. Person who lives on a tropical island. | d. St. Nicholas |
| _____ 5. Patron saint of children. | e. grandniece Alice |

Comprehension Test B

Part 1: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you choose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. The person who illustrated (created the pictures for) this book is
(a) Tomie dePaola. (b) Barbara Cooney. (c) Kevin Henkes.
- _____ 2. When she is old, some people call Miss Rumphius the
(a) Library Lady. (b) Traveling Lady. (c) Lupine Lady.
- _____ 3. Miss Rumphius's grandfather tells young Alice stories about
(a) faraway places. (b) hobbits. (c) climbing mountains.
- _____ 4. Her grandfather tells young Alice that she must make the world
(a) safer. (b) flowery. (c) more beautiful.
- _____ 5. The Bapa Rajah gives this gift to Miss Rumphius:
(a) a cockatoo. (b) a seashell. (c) a monkey.
- _____ 6. On her travels, Miss Rumphius climbs tall
(a) mountains. (b) trees. (c) lighthouses.
- _____ 7. From the porch of her house, Miss Rumphius has a beautiful view of the
(a) sea. (b) mountains. (c) valley.
- _____ 8. One year Miss Rumphius must stay mostly in bed because of a
(a) broken leg. (b) headache. (c) bad back.
- _____ 9. Miss Rumphius makes the world more lovely with
(a) paintings. (b) lupines. (c) jewelry.
- _____ 10. Miss Rumphius has a pet
(a) dog. (b) cat. (c) hamster.

Part 2: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| _____ 1. An artist who paints pictures of sailing ships. | a. Miss Rumphius |
| _____ 2. A librarian. | b. Bapa Raja |
| _____ 3. The character who tells us this story. | c. the grandfather |
| _____ 4. King of a fishing village. | d. St. Nicholas |
| _____ 5. Patron saint of sailors. | e. grandniece Alice |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part 3: True/False (30 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. When she was a girl, Miss Rumphius lived in a one-room house by the sea.
- _____ 2. Grandfather tells young Alice tales of his life with the circus.
- _____ 3. As part of her job, Miss Rumphius helps people find the books that they want.
- _____ 4. Miss Rumphius gets a very bad sunburn on the tropical island that she visits.
- _____ 5. Miss Rumphius visits the Land of the Lotus-Eaters.
- _____ 6. Miss Rumphius moves into a grey house with white trim.
- _____ 7. Children do not like to pick the lupine flowers.
- _____ 8. Some people call Miss Rumphius That Crazy Old Lady.
- _____ 9. Miss Rumphius likes to tell children stories about faraway places.
- _____ 10. Grandniece Alice knows just what she will do to make the world more beautiful.

Part 4: Essay (30 points)

Write your answer to one of these questions in complete sentences.

- 1. What kinds of things does Miss Rumphius do while she visits faraway places?

- 2. In what ways are Miss Rumphius and her grandniece alike?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B |
| 2. A | 7. B |
| 3. C | 8. A |
| 4. A | 9. B |
| 5. C | 10. C |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part 1: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A |
| 2. B | 7. C |
| 3. A | 8. B |
| 4. A | 9. A |
| 5. B | 10. C |

Part 2: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. B |
| 2. A | 5. D |
| 3. E | |

Part 3: True/False (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part 4: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part 1: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A |
| 2. C | 7. A |
| 3. A | 8. C |
| 4. C | 9. B |
| 5. B | 10. B |

Part 2: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. B |
| 2. A | 5. D |
| 3. E | |

Part 3: True/False (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part 4: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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