

A Hairy Tale Study Guide

- 1) Narrator #1 tries to begin the play with the opening speech from Shakespeare's play *Henry V* (page 1.9). Look up this speech and see if you can discover its meaning. Why is it an appropriate way to begin a play? On page 2.1 the same narrator says he has written a sonnet about the hairy children? What is a sonnet? Why would this narrator been interested in that form of writing? Can you write a sonnet about characters in this play?
- 2) When *A Hairy Tale* is performed by children, Ida's line on page 2.17 usually gets a big laugh. Why do you think this is? Would this line be as funny delivered by an adult? Why or why not?
- 3) *A Hairy Tale*, like the other Wychwood-under-Ooze plays, is full of allusions to popular culture. Can you trace the source of the titles suggested by members of the fairy tale committee on page 4? How do these titles differ from the originals? Can you track down these other allusions:
 - “ . . . that guy who won Jeopardy something like a thousand times in a row.” (5.9)
 - “ . . . we won 17 yen in the Publisher's Clearing House . . . ” (9.14)
 - “Just put it on my Wychwood Express Card.” (17.29)
 - “ . . . on a Monday the princess met the hairy brother and her heart stood still.” (19.27)
- 4) In the cast of characters, Antonio and Luisa are each described as being a “paparazzo.” What does this word mean? What is the plural? What is ironic about the fact that they do not want to take Paprika's picture?
- 5) A “call-back” is a comedy technique in which a previous joke is referred to later on. An example of a call-back appears on page 7.1 when Bill says, “I'd rather eat a bucket of mud.” What previous joke is he referring to? Why is it funny that Bill (rather than one of the peasants) would be referring to this joke? Can you find other examples of call-backs in the play or in a television comedy?
- 6) What does Gloria mean on page 7.27 when she says “Shouldn't he at least throw a stick when he says that?”
- 7) How does the playwright show us the personalities of Rupert and Iphigenia? Where does this occur? You've probably heard the expression “actions speak louder than words.” This is true in writing as well—the actions of characters tell us more about their personalities than anything another character might say about them. Do the first actions of Rupert and Iphigenia accurately portray their characters? Why or why not? Can you write a scene in which the way a character acts tells us something about that character's personality?

- 8) Who do you think is the most comic character on the fairy tale committee? Why? How would you describe his or her personality? In what way does he or she differ from other members of the committee? Which member do you find the least funny? Why?
- 9) When Burt says “Great, only 477 and a third ducats to go” on p. 9.17, do you think he is being cheerful or sarcastic? Why?
- 10) The Fairy Godmother seems to have trouble understanding what a riddle is. How would you define the word “riddle”? In what ways does the Fairy Godmother misinterpret your definition?
- 11) Narrator 1’s line (p. 11.29) that begins “And so from forth the board room . . .” is a direct parody of a line from the Prologue of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Can you find the original line? Can you pick another part of Shakespeare’s speech and write a parody of it? Your parody can relate to *A Hairy Tale*, or to an incident in your life or world events.
- 12) Were you surprised by Ernestine’s line on page 12.35? Why or why not? Do you think the playwright is making a comment on something by showing a peasant family with a collection of expensive electronics? What might the playwright be suggesting here?
- 13) Why do you think Andrew is not surprised by the coincidence revealed at the top of page 14 (see his line at 14.13)? Do you find that coincidence often plays a role in stories or novels? Can you give some other examples of coincidence in books you have read?
- 14) The fairy tale committee decides that every fairy tale should have rules, riddles, and rituals. Can you think of examples of each of these from real fairy tales?
- 15) *A Hairy Tale* has some elements of *Rapunzel*, but near the end of the story, elements of another fairy tale appear. What is this fairy tale? How does the playwright introduce it? Do you think this fairy tale integrates well into the plot of *A Hairy Tale*? Why or why not?
- 16) Rupert and Iphigenia fail to win the love of Rapunzel and Bill because they will not make a sacrifice. What sacrifice or sacrifices might the royal children have made to win the exiles’ love?
- 17) *A Hairy Tale* has several plot strands: the efforts of the fairy tale committee, the problems of the peasants, the exile of Rapunzel and Bill, Paprika’s attempts to get famous. How does the playwright weave these strands together near the end of the play? Are all the various subplots resolved by the play’s end? If not, why do you think the playwright would choose to leave one or more stories unresolved?