

# Reading Group Guide

## for PRINCESS ACADEMY



1. Miri's father tells her that her mother named her "after the flower that conquered rock and climbed to face the sun" (page 14). Do you know why your parents chose your name? Does your name have a special meaning to you and your family?
2. Does *Princess Academy* remind you of any other novels you have read? If so, which ones and why? If not, what makes it unique?
3. The people of Mount Eskel use a kind of telepathy to communicate with one another in the quarry. Miri learns that the "quarry-speech" works by sharing memories through the rock of the mountain itself and can be used to communicate many things besides warnings or instructions in the quarry. Have you ever imagined a secret way to communicate with your friends and family? How might it work?
4. Miri makes a dramatic difference in the life of her village by sharing what she has learned at the academy about commerce. Have you ever had an idea that you thought might make a difference? Describe one change you would like to make in



your community that could have a positive influence on people's lives.

5. At a critical moment in the mountain girls' training at the academy, they must all pass an oral test in order to attend the ball with the prince. At one moment, Miri notices Gerti struggling to answer a question. Convinced it would be unfair for the girls to be banned from the dance if they can't pass the test, Miri finds a way to help Gerti get the answer through quarry-speech. Do you think Miri did the right thing or not? Why?
6. Miri treasures the carved linder hawk that Peder gave her when they were small. In a fateful twist, it helps her escape from the bandit Dan, though she loses it as it falls down the mountain. What do you think the hawk means to Miri, and to Peder? What do you think is the symbolic significance of the hawk?
7. Many of the characters in *Princess Academy* learn to look past the masks that people wear. Which of the characters wear a mask that hides their true feelings, and what is their motivation for doing so?
8. Shannon Hale spends a great deal of time describing the natural world that surrounds Miri, and she vividly expresses how Miri feels about the mountains, flowers, snow, and rock that make up her world. Take a moment to think about your favorite place. How does it look and smell? How do you feel when you are in this place?

9. At the end of the novel we learn that Tutor Olana was intentionally cruel and even lied to the girls in order to motivate them to learn. Do you think this was a wise choice on her part? What might have been different in the story had she been friendly and encouraging?
  
10. Were you surprised when you learned about Britta's secret? How did you feel about Prince Steffan's final choice?

