

Read this adaptation of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "Ashputtel." Then answer the questions that follow.

ASHPUTTEL

Underlined or highlighted elements may vary

A long time ago, the wife of a rich man fell sick. When she felt that her end drew near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, "Always be a good girl, and I will look down from heaven and watch over you." Soon afterwards, the woman died and was buried in the garden. Filled with sorrow, the girl remembered her mother's wish and continued to be good and kind to everyone.

Not long after her mother died, the girl's father remarried. The new wife had two daughters who were fair in face, but foul at heart.

They took away her fine clothes, laughed at her, and made her sleep in the kitchen. The sisters began to call the girl "Ashputtel" or "dirt-girl" because she slept in the ashes by the fireplace.

One day, Ashputtel's father went into town. He asked the girls what he should bring back from his trip. The stepsisters requested that he bring back jewels and dresses. Ashputtel only asked for the first branch that touched his hat as he rode back home. When her father returned, he had beautiful jewels and dresses for his stepdaughters and a hazel branch for Ashputtel. She planted the branch near her mother's grave in the garden. Ashputtel visited the branch three times a day and watered it with her tears. The branch soon grew into a tree, and then a white dove came and built its nest in the branches and watched over the girl.



Not long after this, the king of that land held a celebration that was to last for three days. Ashputtel begged her stepmother to let her go. The stepmother sneered. "You, Ashputtel? You have nothing to wear and can't even dance." And when Ashputtel kept on begging, her stepmother said at last, to get rid of her, "I will throw this dishful of peas into the ashes, and if you can pick them all out in two hours, you may go." Thinking she had given Ashputtel an impossible task, the stepmother left. Then Ashputtel went to the garden

and called the white dove to help. The bird brought all of its companions to help, and they flew in through the open windows and set to work, peck, peck, pecking to sort the peas from the ashes. They finished in less than an hour and flew away as soon as they were done.

Ashputtel brought the dish to her stepmother, overjoyed that she might go to the festival. But her stepmother looked at the bowl of peas and shook her head. She then dumped two bowls of peas into the ashes, and said, "If you can pick all the peas out in one hour, you may go." The birds came again to help, but when Ashputtel showed her stepmother the bowls of peas, she simply said, "No, you still cannot go because you have nothing to wear and you cannot dance. We would only be ashamed of you." With that, the stepmother and her daughters left for the festival.

Continue reading.**Underlined or highlighted elements may vary**

hen they had all gone out, Ashputtel ran to her mother's grave and cried. The white dove heard her cries and felt sorry for the kind girl. The bird tossed down a gold and silver dress and golden slippers. Ashputtel quickly got cleaned up, put on the fine gown and shoes, and ran to the celebration.

When Ashputtel appeared at the festival in her golden dress, nobody recognized her. They thought she must be a princess from a foreign land. Even her own family never thought it could be Ashputtel, taking it for granted that she was safe at home in the dirt.

When the king's son met her, he took her by the hand and danced with her. He would dance with no other maiden and never let go of her hand. When it got late, the prince offered to escort the girl home, but Ashputtel didn't want him to see where she lived. So she slipped away and ran back home so the prince could not follow her. When her family returned home, she was fast asleep, curled up in the ashes.

The next night, when all the others had left for the celebration, Ashputtel again cleaned off her face, the bird tossed her a beautiful dress, and off she went. The prince was delighted to see her, and they danced together all night. But when the hour grew late, Ashputtel once again ran away so she could get back home before her family arrived and found her missing. However, on the third and final night of the festival,



the prince was prepared. He painted sticky pitch* on the stairs, and as Ashputtel ran away, one of her golden slippers stuck fast on one of the steps.

The prince took the dainty golden shoe and knew he could use it to search for the mysterious girl. When he came to Ashputtel's house, the eldest sister went first to try it on. But the shoe was much too small for her, and her big toe wouldn't

fit. When her mother saw this, she shoved the elder sister out of the way and pulled the younger sister forth. As before, the girl went to try on the golden slipper, but her heel wouldn't fit in the shoe at all. The prince asked if there were any other young ladies in the house, and the stepmother snapped angrily, "Of course not! None but the dirty kitchen maid." When the prince insisted that this girl should also try on the shoe, the stepmother glared, but called for Ashputtel.

Ashputtel cleaned the ashes off her face and went to where they were all gathered. She took her plain shoe off her left foot and put on the golden slipper; and it fit her as if it had been made for her. And when the prince drew near and looked at her face, he knew it was the girl he sought. The stepmother and both sisters were frightened and turned pale with anger as he took Ashputtel on his horse and rode away with her. The white dove sang a song of triumph and then flew and perched upon Ashputtel's shoulder, and went home with her to live happily ever after.

*pitch: a dark and sticky liquid, also called "tar"

Answer the following questions about “Ashputtel.” Use the text to support your thinking.

READING COMPREHENSION

CONNECTIONS

1. What is the genre of the story?

- A. **fantasy** B. horror
C. science fiction D. mystery

2. Who is telling the story?

- A. Ashputtel B. the stepmother
C. a bird D. **an outside narrator**

3. What does Ashputtel ask her father to bring back from his trip?

- A. jewels B. a dove
C. **a branch** D. dresses

4. Who helps Ashputtel get to the festival?

- A. **a white dove** B. her stepmother
C. a fairy godmother D. her father

Answers may vary.

5. Name some other stories that feature a main character dealing with cruel relatives.

1. **Snow White**

2. **Matilda**

3. **Harry Potter series**

Sample answers

DEEPER ANALYSIS

6. Why is the main character called “Ashputtel”?

“Ashputtel” means “dirt-girl.” The main character is called Ashputtel because she sleeps in the ashes by the fire, so she is always covered in ashes and dirt.

7. How is Ashputtel described in comparison to her sisters? What do her actions show about her character? Give evidence from the story.

Ashputtel is described as loving and kind, whereas her sisters are described as cruel and materialistic. Ashputtel shows her true nature by visiting her mother’s grave three times a day and keeping her promise “to be good and kind to everyone.” When the greedy sisters ask for dresses and jewels, Ashputtel only asks for a simple branch, which she plants near her mother’s grave.

8. Why does the stepmother dump the peas in the ashes?

The stepmother does not want Ashputtel to go to the festival, so she dumps the peas in the ashes. The stepmother believes she is giving Ashputtel an impossible task that will keep her so busy that the girl will stop asking. When Ashputtel quickly finishes the task with the help of the birds, the stepmother gives her an even more “impossible” task and humiliates her.

