



CEC READING LIBRARY • GRADE 6 • R3 CHALLENGE

A Little Princess

24 Chapters

Day 1-24

Q1 W01-W08

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 1: A Princess Without a Palace

VOCABULARY Sara, father, rich, princess

When Sara Crewe arrived at Miss Minchin's school in London, she came in a carriage full of trunks. Her father, a kind and wealthy captain, had sent her from India. He gave her fine dresses, a doll named Emily, and a private sitting room, and he called her "my little princess." Everyone at the school whispered about how rich she was. Then, on her eleventh birthday, terrible news arrived. Her father had lost all his money and had passed away in India. Overnight, Sara went from being the richest girl at the school to a poor servant in an old dress. The other children laughed at her torn clothes and her cold attic room. But Sara held her head high and never stopped smiling. She believed that being a princess was about her heart, not her dress. ★ **I am still a princess.**

THINK What did Sara's father call her?

Chapter 2: The Hardest Jobs

VOCABULARY Sara, Becky, kind, hardest

After her father's death, Sara's life changed completely. At six o'clock each morning, she woke in the cold attic, lit the kitchen fires, and carried heavy buckets of coal up the back stairs. Miss Minchin gave her the hardest jobs and the smallest meals, and she scolded her if a single spoon was out of place. Lavinia and the wealthy students laughed at Sara's worn-out dress, and some of them whispered that the "little princess" had fallen into the ashes. Sara did not answer their cruel words. When she was tired and hungry, she still stopped to help Becky, a shy servant girl who was even younger and more tired than she was. She knew that how we treat others shows who we are inside. ★ **A true princess is kind even when life is not kind to her.**

THINK What time did Sara wake up?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 3: One Thin Blanket

VOCABULARY attic, blanket, candle, princess

The winter in the attic was bitterly cold and deeply lonely. Sara had only one thin blanket and a short candle that flickered in the draft. The wind whistled through the broken window, and she could hear rats scratching behind the walls. Miss Minchin gave her too much work and no kindness at all. The students who had once admired her now looked straight past her in the halls. But every night, before sleeping, Sara spoke quietly to herself in the dark. She reminded herself that her father had always called her his princess. A crown cannot be seen, she told herself, and a palace is only a building made of stone. True royalty lives in the heart and cannot be taken away by poverty. ★ **Whatever comes — if I am a princess in rags, I am still a princess.** She tucked the thin blanket under her chin and, a little warmer, she fell asleep.

THINK What could Sara hear behind the walls?

Chapter 4: Head Held High

VOCABULARY dignity, Sara, attic, head

The morning after Sara moved to the attic, she walked down the school stairs in her old, too-short dress, and every head in the classroom turned. Miss Minchin stood by the desk with her lips pressed tight. She expected the girl to hang her head, to cry, or to beg. Instead, Sara walked quietly between the desks with her head held high and her hands folded, just as she had when she wore silk. She did not look angry, and she did not look ashamed. The students stared with open mouths. There was something about this girl, something calm and clear like a bell, that no change of fortune could reach. She never begged for sympathy, and she never complained about how unfair life was. ★ **Dignity comes from within.** That morning Miss Minchin felt uneasy, though she could not say why.

THINK What did Sara's dress look like?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 5: The Servant Who Stayed Calm

VOCABULARY dignity, servant, worth, poverty

Sara lost her father and her fortune in a single dreadful day. Within hours, she found herself working as a servant for the very woman who ran her school. She carried trays, swept stairs, and ran errands in the snow. The wealthy girls laughed at her torn clothes and at her new duties, and Miss Minchin did nothing to stop them. Yet Sara stayed calm and kept on speaking kindly to everyone. She never lowered herself to cruelty, even when cruelty was shown to her. Her worth, she knew, had nothing to do with her bank account. If it had, she would have lost it the day her father's money vanished. But a person's worth lives somewhere deeper than coins or silk. ★ **True dignity cannot be taken away by poverty.** Sara carried this thought as lightly as she carried the tray.

THINK What did Sara run errands in?

Chapter 6: Money Cannot Buy Character

VOCABULARY Lavinia, wealth, poverty, character

At Miss Minchin's school, Lavinia had the most money and the finest dresses. She wore ribbons of pink silk and carried a lace handkerchief. She used her privilege to look down on others and to say cruel and hurtful things, and her friends giggled whenever she did. Sara, by comparison, had almost nothing: a cold attic, hard work, and very little food. And yet Sara was the one whom the younger girls trusted, and the one who made others feel valued. Little Lottie ran to her whenever she cried, and Becky's eyes lit up when Sara said her name. Lavinia's money could buy beautiful clothes, but it could not buy character. Sara's poverty had taken away her comfort, but it could not touch her kindness or grace. ★ **True dignity comes from within — it cannot be given by wealth or taken by poverty.**

THINK Who ran to Sara when she cried?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 7: Thank You, Cook

VOCABULARY servants, cook, Becky, kitchen

Miss Minchin's school was full of students from wealthy and powerful families. These girls often ignored the servants and spoke to them with no respect at all. They dropped their coats on the floor and expected someone to pick them up. But Sara had always believed that every single person deserved to be seen. Each morning she went into the warm, smoky kitchen and thanked the cook, even when the breakfast was only plain porridge. She sat for a minute beside Becky, asking about her day as if they were real friends. She greeted the youngest kitchen boy in the same cheerful way she greeted any student. Sara had been rich and was poor now, but she did not behave differently to either group. It was simply how she had always lived, and how she always meant to live. ★ **Sara treated everyone kindly.**

THINK What did the students do with their coats?

Chapter 8: Lavinia Asks Why

VOCABULARY Lavinia, servants, worth, position

One afternoon in the schoolroom, Lavinia tossed her curls and asked Sara in a sneering voice why she bothered to chat with the servants. "They are different from us," she said, "and they should be treated differently." Sara looked at her calmly. She put down her sewing and answered in a clear voice. "I do not see the world that way," she said. She had once been the richest student in the school, and she was now a servant herself, so she knew something that Lavinia did not. A person's worth does not change with her position. Becky deserved kindness not because of what she did but because of who she was. Lavinia's mouth opened and closed, but no words came out. ★ **Sara treated everyone with equal kindness.** She never adjusted her warmth by the size of someone's purse.

THINK What did Sara put down?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 9: The Rules of the School

VOCABULARY rules, kitchen, Miss Minchin, respect

The social rules at Miss Minchin's school were very clear and very strict. Rich students sat at the front of the room and were served first at dinner. Poor servants stood at the back, in the shadows, and were treated as if they were invisible. Miss Minchin believed this was the natural order of the world, and she scolded anyone who forgot it. But Sara moved through this world as if the rules simply did not apply to her. She gave the same warm attention to the kitchen boy that she gave to Miss Minchin's grandest guests. She listened to Becky's stories about her grandmother's cottage with the same real interest she gave to any student's secrets, and Becky's cheeks glowed pink with surprise each time. To Sara, every person carried the same worth and deserved the same basic respect. ★ **Sara treated everyone with equal kindness regardless of their wealth or social position.**

THINK *Where did poor servants stand?*

Chapter 10: The Castle in Her Mind

VOCABULARY imagination, attic, warm, fire

Sara's attic room was bare and cold. It had no carpet, no fireplace, and only a broken chair to sit on. On the hardest nights, she had almost nothing to comfort her tired body. But Sara had one gift that no one could ever see or take away from her. She could close her eyes and imagine that the cold room was warm and beautiful. She pretended the cracked walls were covered with rich tapestries and soft curtains. She pictured a fire burning brightly, with red sparks dancing up the chimney, and a warm meal waiting on a snowy table. She could even smell the cinnamon. Her mind became the one place where no hardship could follow or find her at night. ★ **Imagination sustained her.** When the wind howled outside, she turned over, smiled at her palace, and slept.

THINK *What could Sara smell in her imagination?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 11: The Story Before Sleep

VOCABULARY story, night, tired, father

Every night in the attic, Sara was tired, cold, and often very hungry. The work had been long, Miss Minchin had been unkind again, and her fingers were stiff from the cold water in the washtub. But before she closed her eyes, Sara always did one important thing. She began to tell herself a story, softly, as if she were talking to a close friend. In the story, her father was alive, and they sat together by a warm fire, eating buttered toast and laughing at old jokes. He asked about her day, and she told him everything. The story made the cold room feel a little less empty and a little less frightening. Sara had learned that the mind can be a shelter when the body has no comfort to turn to. ★ **Imagination kept Sara strong in dark times.** And then, between one sentence and the next, she was asleep.

THINK What did they eat in the story?

Chapter 12: Melchisedec the Rat

VOCABULARY despair, rats, stories, spirit

There were days in the attic when Sara felt closer to despair than ever before. The cold reached into her bones, and the hunger made it hard to think clearly. Miss Minchin had been cruel that day, and not one person in the school had been kind. On those darkest nights, Sara used the one tool that had never failed her. She lay very still and began to build a world inside her mind with great care. She named the attic rats, and one fat, whiskery fellow she called Melchisedec, after an old king in a book. She invented stories for every one of them: Melchisedec's family, his strange wedding, his many children. She made the bare walls glow with imaginary warmth until sleep finally came. Her spirit did not break, because she never stopped feeding it beautiful stories. Outside, the snow fell softly on the sleeping roofs, and for a while the attic seemed almost cozy.

★ **Sara's imagination sustained her through her darkest days and kept her spirit alive.**

THINK What did Sara call the fat rat?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 13: Not Bitter

VOCABULARY bitter, Sara, Becky, hard

Many people at Miss Minchin's school expected Sara to grow bitter and defeated. They thought that losing everything would turn her into someone cold and unkind, like a flower that withers when the frost arrives. The cook said it. The teachers said it. Even the younger students said it behind their hands. But the Sara who scrubbed floors was exactly the same Sara who had once owned a hundred dresses. She was patient with the youngest children, and she was gentle with the cook, who was often cross. She smiled at Becky every morning and still found stories to tell herself each night. The hard times had not changed her. They had simply shown everyone who she already was. We learn who people truly are not when life is easy, but when life becomes very hard. ★ **Adversity reveals character.**

THINK What did the people compare Sara to?

Chapter 14: Two Girls, Two Hearts

VOCABULARY Lavinia, generous, patient, character

Lavinia had always been wealthy, and she had always been quietly unkind to those around her. When life was comfortable for her, it was easy to miss how small her character was. Her pink ribbons and silk gloves covered it up like a pretty lid on a dusty box. But when Sara lost everything, a clear and important comparison became visible to all. Sara, with nothing, remained generous, patient, and truly interested in other people. She shared her bread with a hungry sparrow on the windowsill. Lavinia, with everything, remained petty, jealous, and concerned only with herself. Their circumstances were very different, but their characters had simply become easier to see. Hard times do not change who we are. They remove what was hiding it from the world. ★ **Adversity reveals the true character inside a person.**

THINK What did Sara share with a sparrow?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 15: Already There

VOCABULARY Sara, father, hardship, qualities

Some people say that going through hard times is what makes a person strong and good. But Sara's story asks us to think about this very carefully before we agree. Sara was kind, imaginative, and dignified long before any hardship came to find her. Her father had raised her to care about people and to value character over comfort. When poverty arrived, it did not build these qualities. They were already fully formed inside her, like seeds that had been planted years earlier in good soil. What the hard times did was remove the wealth and comfort that had been surrounding her goodness. And so everyone around her finally saw clearly what had been inside Sara all along. A storm does not put a mountain in the ground. It only shows how tall the mountain already is. ★

Adversity does not create character — it reveals the character already there inside us.

THINK What did the author compare Sara's qualities to?

Chapter 16: The Easy Way Out

VOCABULARY integrity, kitchen, rumors, easy

Life at Miss Minchin's school offered Sara many chances to take easy, dishonest shortcuts. On the nights when she was starving, she could have stolen food from the kitchen cupboard. Nobody would have known. She could have spread rumors about Miss Minchin to make herself feel better. She could have said cruel things to Lavinia, who was so often unkind to her. But Sara refused every one of these easy paths without any hesitation. One day she found a small coin in the muddy street and bought six hot buns at the bakery. She was so hungry that her hands shook. Yet when she saw a ragged beggar girl sitting on the steps, she gave away five of the buns and kept only one. She believed that what she chose to do was more important than what was done to her.

★ **She kept her integrity.**

THINK What did Sara buy with the coin?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 17: Impossible Tasks

VOCABULARY cruel, tasks, anger, bitterness

Miss Minchin was often deliberately and openly cruel to Sara in front of the students. She gave her impossible tasks, like polishing every candlestick in the house before breakfast, and then scolded her when she could not finish them in time. Lavinia added her own cruelty with mocking words and cold, dismissive looks. When Sara walked into the schoolroom, she would whisper, "Here comes the princess in rags!" and her friends would giggle. Any reasonable person would have understood if Sara had responded with anger or spite. Instead, she continued to work honestly and speak to others without bitterness. She seemed to understand that lowering herself to cruelty would be a loss she could not afford. The world outside could treat her badly, but it could not make her treat others badly in return. ★ **She never lost her integrity even in cruelty.**

THINK What would Lavinia whisper?

Chapter 18: The Coldest Night

VOCABULARY winter, supper, despair, memory

The coldest winter night in the attic was the hardest night Sara had ever known. She had been unfairly blamed for something she had not done, given no supper, and left completely alone in the dark. Her fingers were blue, and the tea she had made earlier sat frozen in its cup. Something very close to despair sat quietly beside her on the thin, cold mattress. But Sara made herself sit up straight and think about who she was and who she wanted to remain. She had her name, her father's memory, and the values he had given her to keep. She decided that Miss Minchin could have her comfort and her freedom, but not her self. A person can lose everything on the outside and still hold the most important thing inside. ★ **Even when life was most cruel, Sara never sacrificed her integrity or sense of self.** Then she heard a tiny scratching at the window, and she smiled.

THINK What was frozen in the cup?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 19: Deciding Before Dawn

VOCABULARY morning, decision, kind, cold

Every morning, Sara woke up in the cold attic before anyone else in the house was awake. She had a long and hard day of work ahead, and very little breakfast waiting for her. She could have decided to be cold and distant toward everyone she would meet that day. Nobody would have been surprised, and nobody would have blamed her for it at all. But Sara made a different and more deliberate decision every single morning before she rose. She decided to be kind, not because she felt like it, but because she had chosen it. She had learned that kindness will not wait for a better mood. It arrives when we invite it on purpose. She would lie under her thin blanket in the dim gray light and say to herself, "Today I will be kind." ★ **Kindness is a choice.** Then she stood up, shivered, and went down to face the day.

THINK What did Sara say to herself?

Chapter 20: Becky in the Hallway

VOCABULARY Becky, hallway, stairs, comfort

One afternoon, Sara was scolded harshly by Miss Minchin in front of all the students. She was embarrassed and exhausted, and she desperately wanted to be alone with her sadness. As she walked toward the stairs, she passed Becky in the narrow, dimly lit hallway. She could see at once that Becky had also been crying and was very upset. A cold part of Sara wanted to keep walking. She had so little left to give. But she stopped, even though every part of her wanted to hurry on and be alone. She asked Becky gently what had happened and listened to every word with her full attention. Becky had broken a plate and was afraid she would be sent away. Sara hugged her and offered what comfort she could before climbing slowly up the cold, dark stairs. ★ **Kindness is always a deliberate choice we make.**

THINK What had Becky broken?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 21: Sara's Rule

VOCABULARY rule, feeling, sunrise, Lavinia

By midwinter, Sara had developed a clear and personal rule about how she would live. She had noticed that waiting to feel kind before acting kindly almost never worked. On the hardest days, the feeling of kindness was the hardest feeling to find inside herself. So she stopped waiting for the feeling and began making the decision before each day began. Each morning in the cold attic, she chose kindness before getting up and facing the world. This meant that when Lavinia was cruel, the choice had already been made, and Sara held to it. Her new friend Ermengarde, who adored her, said it was like having a lighthouse that never went out. Her kindness became something people could count on in exactly the way they count on the sunrise. ★ **Kindness is**

always a choice — Sara chose it every day no matter how she was treated.

THINK Who called her a lighthouse?

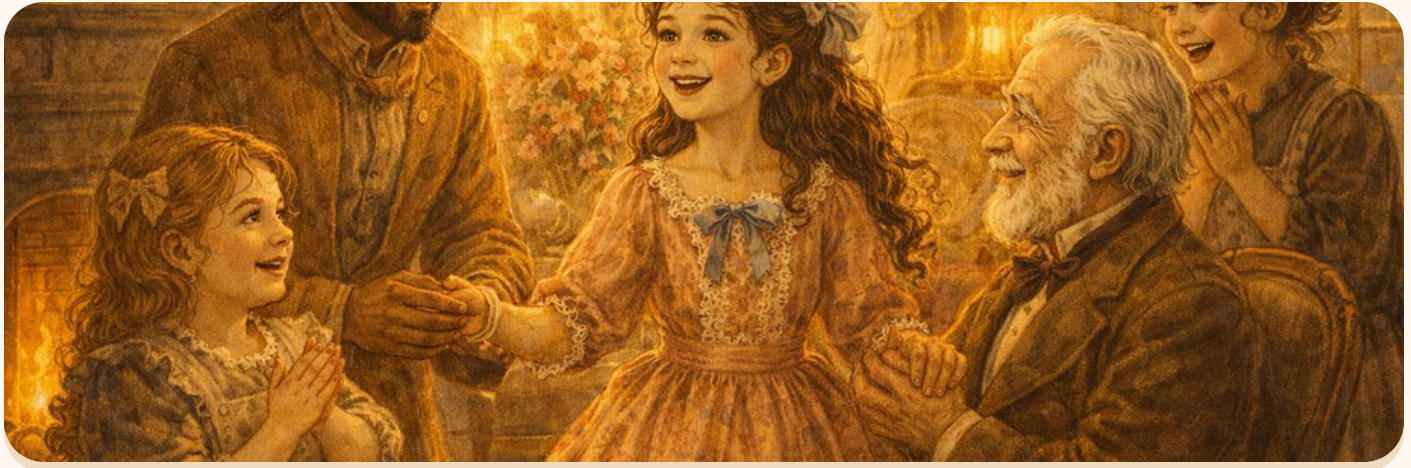
Chapter 22: The Most Admired Girl

VOCABULARY Lavinia, admired, wealth, fragile

Before Sara arrived, Lavinia was the most admired student at Miss Minchin's school. Her wealth and her confidence made everyone want to impress her and earn her approval. She had never once seriously imagined that her position might change or disappear. Then Sara arrived with greater wealth and a natural warmth that drew everyone toward her. The younger girls followed her down the hall like ducklings. Lavinia lost her special position almost overnight, and she felt something she had never felt before: a cold, sharp envy. She had based her whole sense of self on being the most important person in the room. When that position was taken, she discovered just how fragile that foundation had always been. ★ **Privilege is not permanent.** It can arrive in a single day, and it can leave in a single day, just like a coat blown away by the wind.

THINK How did the younger girls follow Sara?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 23: What Is Your Worth Built On?

VOCABULARY identity, wealth, foundation, worth

Sara and Lavinia both began at Miss Minchin's school with wealth and social advantage. But they had built their identities on completely different and very revealing foundations. Lavinia used her money to decide how important she was compared to everyone else. Every new dress was a little brick in the tower of herself. Sara had never allowed her wealth to become the core of what she thought she was inside. When Sara lost everything, her identity remained stable, unchanged, and clear. When Lavinia's position was briefly challenged, she felt shaken to her very foundation. A person's worth must be built on something deeper than what she happens to own right now. Houses made of money fall in the first storm, while houses made of character stand through every wind. ★ **Privilege should never be used to define identity.**

THINK What was every new dress to Lavinia?

Chapter 24: Everything That Could Not Be Taken

VOCABULARY character, privilege, Sara, insecurity

By the end of Sara's time at Miss Minchin's school, something had become impossible to ignore. Sara had lost every material thing, and yet she had emerged kinder, stronger, and more fully herself. Lavinia had kept all her privilege, and yet she seemed somehow smaller and less certain inside. The cruelty she had shown Sara had revealed the deep insecurity that privilege had been hiding. She had needed to put Sara down because she had nothing of her own strong enough to stand upon. Sara had never used privilege as a weapon, because she had always had something far more lasting. She had her character, built carefully over years and impossible for anyone else to take. Then, one winter day, a kind gentleman named Mr. Carrisford, who had been searching for Sara for years, found her at last, and the attic was filled with warm blankets and a hot dinner. ★ **Privilege is not permanent — those who define themselves by it lose everything when it goes.** But Sara's goodness had never been something that could be lost.

THINK Who found Sara at last?