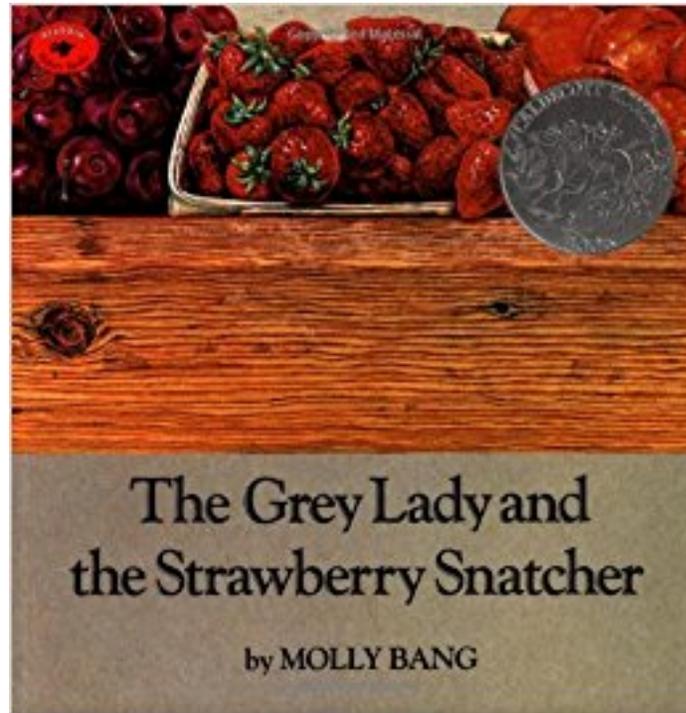


Literature in Context:
A Community-Based Education Guide to
The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher



by Robin Huntley
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Summary

The grey lady is out for a day of errands, stopping by her local farmer's market for what appears to be the season's final quart of delicious strawberries. She is quite pleased with her purchase, and nestles it safely inside a reusable mesh shopping bag before beginning her journey home. It's not too long, however, before readers see that the grey lady's berries might be in danger. A cloaked blue figure is following her, stopping at nothing to snatch the strawberries that the grey lady covets!

The figure moves carefully, gliding down the sidewalk behind the grey lady – gaining and gaining while waiting for the perfect moment to snatch the berries from her bag. With each step, mushrooms appear from the ground – hinting at the figure's mysterious origins. With every step, the blue figure draws nearer until an opportunity to snatch appears. The grey lady saves her berries, but must hurry away to thwart the thieving figure's plan.

The figure follows the grey lady's bus out of town and into the woods, where she leaves the bus to make her way home. The two are close as the grey lady travels around a swamp and into a forest, the grey lady looking over her shoulder as she moves. After a dramatic swing on a vine, the grey lady leads the figure to a patch of delicious, just-ripened blackberries – and lo and behold! The figure loses its appetite for strawberries and is satiated by the fresh berry patch. While the figure munches greedily, the grey lady arrives at home and shares her delicious last-of-the-season strawberries with her family who happily enjoy every last one.

The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher is unique in that it lacks words; the action is told entirely through Molly Bang's intricate and fantastical illustrations, done in a manner that evokes a fairytale world. The text can be used as a tool for deriving meaning from images with young readers, or as a source for a study of symbolism in images and storytelling with older readers. It can also, of course, simply be enjoyed for the fantastic book that it is.

Critical Thinking Questions

As *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher* is a text without text, there are two types of questioning that can take place while exploring its pages: readers can be asked to determine the meaning of each illustration, and/or readers can be asked to reflect upon and make connections to the text. The questions here are listed together, regardless of purpose, but are listed in the order in which they can be used alongside the text.

Questions for Understanding the Story

- How does the grey lady feel about her strawberry purchase? How can you tell? Why does she feel this way?
- Where does the strawberry snatcher first appear to readers?
- At first, the grey lady doesn't notice the strawberry snatcher. Who does notice? Why do you think none of these other people let the grey lady know what's happening?
- The strawberry snatcher leaves something behind in its footprints. What could this symbolize?
- How does the grey lady try to rid herself of the strawberry snatcher?
- Do you think that the grey lady actually needed to travel through the swamp and the woods to get to her home? Why or why not?
- Sometimes, the scenery is missing color just like the grey lady is. Do you think there's a connection? Explain.
- How does the grey lady finally lose the strawberry snatcher? (Was it before or after the strawberry snatcher discovered the blackberries, do you think?)
- The berries that the grey lady leads the strawberry snatcher to happen to be berries that come into season after strawberries. Do you think that Molly Bang did that on purpose? Explain.
- Why do you think did Molly Bang chose the make the grey lady look the way she does? Explain.

Community-Based Learning Map

The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher is perfect for early summer, just as strawberry season launches! The delicious berries that provide a centerpiece for the story can serve as a catalyst for all kinds of community-based learning, using a variety of resources for support!

Resources for Self-Directed Learning During Strawberry Season

Strawberries Take Center Stage in Western MA Moonlight

<https://hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com/2015/06/16/htf-121/>

Explore the history behind June's Full Strawberry Moon and find the season's roots in Native American culture! This resource also includes links to guides for local berry-picking in western Massachusetts.

Learning Ahead: Farmers' Markets

<https://hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com/2017/05/16/htf-575/>

This excerpt from the May/June volume of the Learning Ahead Cultural Itinerary for Western MA spotlights the region's farmers' markets as a catalyst for learning. In addition to providing fresh local food, these markets serve as a vehicle for collaborative consumption and even intergenerational skill-sharing.

Sense of Place: Season of Farmers' Markets

<https://hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com/2017/05/16/htf-579/>

Use this resource to deepen your sense of place through the lens of local farmers' markets. Consider recipe development, produce sourcing, community resilience, and learning to grow your own.

Recipe Collections and Storytelling

<https://hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com/2017/05/16/htf-577/>

Food is a part of all cultures, and the recipes that our foods are derived from tell stories about who we are. This resource encourages the creation of a home recipe collection for both food production and storytelling purposes, and includes inspiration from food great Michael Pollan.