

# Lamont Books Standing Order

February 2014

*Teacher Notes and Activities*

## **Miaka**

**By Anne-Louise Channon & Beatriz Martin Vidal**

ISBN 9781922081315

\$25.95

Anya lives a happy, carefree life in Russia with her mother, father and beloved pet bird, Miaka. But when hard times come and her father's crop fails she must leave the farm to go and live with the baker and his wife in the local village. Life at the bakery is harsh but as long as she can earn enough to feed Miaka, Anya endures it. Then, one night, she overhears the baker make a terrible bargain that will devastate her life...



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publisher, Windy Hollow Books.

### **Before Reading**

- What do you imagine this book may be about?
- What does the look of the cover suggest to you about the style of story that Miaka may be?

### **After reading**

- Miaka draws on the traditional story telling style of the fairy tales. Can you think of any fairy tales that are like Miaka?
- What are some of the features of fairy tales? Does Miaka have these?
- Fairy tales are often a reflection of the society and time when they were written. Miaka is a story written in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but sounds like a story written long before. When do you think the story is set? If it is a modern setting what do you think it is reflecting in Russian society, and the modern world in general?
- Fairy tales were often seen as moral stories to teach people lessons. What might be a lesson that you could learn from the story of Miaka?
- What do you think Miaka symbolises for Anya? Often birds in fairy tales can represent freedom, salvation and peace. Is this true for Miaka?
- Do you think Anya is a strong or weak female character? What is her role and how is she treated? What does Anya's final act say about her as a character?
- What role do the baker and his wife have to play in the readers understanding of right and wrong, or fairness and kindness?

### **Illustrations & Writing**

- The author does not state what type of bird Miaka is but the illustrator has drawn Miaka as an owl. Why do you think she chose an owl?
- Look at the colour palette that the illustrator has used. Why do you think she has used so few colours?
- How does the tone of the colours change throughout the book and how does this affect your reading of the story?
- What is the emotional effect of the use of gold?
- What might a modern version of Miaka set in Australia be like? Using the same themes as those in Miaka compose a contemporary fairy tale.
- Our interpretation of events is clouded by our emotions and values. Even though the story of Miaka is written in the third person, it uses Anya's point of view to interpret events. For example, the baker and his wife come across as mean and greedy. Perhaps this is just how Anya sees them because they represent to her a separation from her parents. How might the story be different if it was told from the point of view of the baker and his wife? Could they be seen as kind and charitable?