

Healthy Transitions for Girls

A Strength-Based Curriculum to Promote
POSITIVE BODY IMAGE
- For Girls ages 8 to 14 -



The ESSENTIAL Prevention Tool
for Parents, Mentors & Professionals

Facilitator's Guide

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Figure 5
Princess Academy Parent Study Guide

Dear Parents, Grandparents, and Mentors:

Princess Academy by Shannon Hale is a Newbery Honor Book about young girls who face the challenges of growing into adolescence. Girls in 4th - 6th grade will enjoy this book. Although the story is a delightfully adventurous fantasy, it has many rich themes which are reflective of the challenges your daughters, granddaughters, and loved ones face today. The main character of the story portrays many admirable character traits; at the same time, she candidly expresses a wide range of realistic emotions.

Reading this book along with the girl(s) in your life offers a shared experience that can lead to profound teaching moments and support at a critical stage of life. Attached is a synopsis of the main themes in the book as they relate to the challenges of modern girls. Included are thought questions which your daughter, granddaughter, or loved one can record in a journal and/or discuss together with you.

Girls want and need help to fight the negative cultural messages which bombard them today. This resource is offered as a supportive reminder that you make a big difference in the lives of girls you love.

Best Wishes and Happy Reading!



Figure 5, continued
Princess Academy Parent Study Guide

Princess Academy Book Club Study Guide
 Important Themes to Watch for As You Read This Book

Theme 1: Recognizing the Power of Positive vs. Negative Beliefs

Miri has many beliefs (“writing on her walls”) about not being able to work in the quarry. What are these beliefs? These beliefs affect how she views herself and her relationship to her father and other members of her community on Mount Eskel. These beliefs affect her emotions and her decisions. Miri talks about these feelings throughout the story. As you read the book, decide if what Miri believes about not working in the quarry is accurate or not.

pp. 8, 9, 12, 33 beliefs about her father; p. 35 the quarry and her self-concept; pp. 175-177, 181-2 she learns to view herself in a new way

Theme 2: Learning “Mindfulness” and Reliance on an Inner Guidance System

What is “quarry speech”? This way of learning to communicate plays an important role in the story. When Miri faces new challenges, she finds new skills, such as “quarry speech,” to help her. Watch how Miri develops her ability to rely on her intuition or “gut feelings” and her thinking skills.

p. 15 discovering quarry speech; pp. 72-75 using quarry speech in her first terrifying situation; p. 112 how quarry speech works; pp. 256-7 using quarry speech in a life-threatening plight

Note what Miri describes in her body when she is worried, embarrassed, afraid, humiliated, or happy. Her body talks—just like yours!

p. 48 anxiety body talk; p. 54 homesickness body talk; p. 165 happiness body talk; p. 262 fear body talk

Theme 3: Increasing Support and Communication with Parents and Mentors

Miri and her father have a misunderstanding about why she cannot work in the quarry. Miri assumes she understands his feelings, but are her assumptions really accurate? She doubts his loyalty to her simply because he does not express his feelings openly. Do you ever play the role of a “mindreader” and think you know what someone is thinking? Communication helps build bridges of understanding. How do communication with her father help Miri overcome her feelings of doubt about his loyalty?

pp. 8, 9, 12, 33 beliefs about her father



Figure 5, continued
Princess Academy Parent Study Guide

As a 14-year-old girl, Miri is deciding how to grow from being a girl to a young woman. She watches other women in her community to help her decide what kind of woman she wants to be, especially since her mother died when she was born. She “writes many new beliefs on her wall” as she attends the Princess Academy. She learns that even young girls can do powerful things. Who are your role models? Who helps you when you need support?

pp. 92-94, 103 poise, conversation; p. 106 remembering Doter’s wisdom; p. 173 help and comfort from Doter

Theme 4: Developing Supportive Rather than Competitive Girl Friendships

This is another important theme of the book. When the girls have to compete against each other to “win” the competition at the Princess Academy, big changes occur in their relationships. Watch for how competition changes their friendships. Similarly, as girls get closer to adolescence (4th, 5th, and 6th grade), there is more conflict and “drama.” Have you noticed this change? Could it be because girls feel more pressure to compete for boys and popularity rather than to support each other? Where do you think this pressure to compete comes from? Miri and the other girls feel an overwhelming need for belonging in their community and with each other. The competition creates much conflict inside Miri and with her peers. Do you relate to her peer dilemmas?

p. 23 competing for the Prince; pp. 34-35 trying to fit in; p. 55, 56, 58, 87 an outcast from the group; p. 67 competition vs. friendship; p. 191 a dilemma—winning or friendship? pp. 194-195 jealousy and “girl drama”

Theme 5: Navigating Boy-Girl Awkwardness and Pressures

Miri has been friends with Peder her entire life. She doesn’t understand why she cannot talk to him anymore without becoming nervous. Their relationship changes during this story. The “rules” for boy/girl relationships on Mount Eskel may be very different than the “social rules” you experience in your own school. Compare Miri’s experience with Peder to your own ideas about boy/girl relationships.

p. 32 changes from friendship to attraction; pp. 42-43, 53, 63 a safe friendship; p. 84 new rules; pp. 167-9 trouble talking, feeling self-conscious about touching

Theme 6: Building Coping Skills and Problem-Solving Skills

You will see Miri confronted with many hard situations. Watch what she does to solve her problems. Pay attention to the new skills she learns in the Princess Academy: *Poise, Conversation, Diplomacy, and Commerce*. How do these skills help her solve even bigger challenges than competing to become the Princess? Are there skills you would like to learn for problem solving?



Figure 5, continued
Princess Academy Parent Study Guide

pp. 52-53 an unfair situation; p. 109 learning diplomacy; p. 262 stays rational in the face of fear

Theme 7: Recognizing How Cultural Messages Impact Body Image and Self-image

Miri has beliefs related to her body size. What does she think about her small size at the beginning of the book? How does this change by the end of the book? Pay attention to your own thoughts about your body size and shape. Where do these beliefs come from? Do your own beliefs change during this story?

p. 29 belittled and defensive; p. 56 feeling weak; p. 141 feeling like a “skinny” outsider; pp. 276-277 big things in small packages

Theme 8: Developing a Strong, Sense of Feminine Gender Role

The beliefs that the “highlanders” on Mount Eskel have toward the “lowlanders” who live in the valley are not unlike many of the beliefs girls may have about people who are from other cultures or social groups. Britta is from the lowlands but comes to live on Mount Eskel because of family problems. The girls have stereotypical beliefs about Britta which change as they come to know her better. Have you judged others because you did not understand their culture or religious beliefs? Have you experienced judgment based upon these issues?

pp. 36, 36 stereotypes about Britta the “lowlander”

When Miri meets the Prince, she is very nervous because of his title: “Prince” or “royalty.” What does she discover? Do we give “titles” to people, such as “popular,” “weird,” “nerd,” or “prep?” Are we afraid others will give us “titles”? Do we glamorize people in the media because they have “titles” like “superstar” or “headliner”? Would you like to be accepted for who you are inside, rather than judged by outer appearances?

p. 160 the “title” of Princess; p. 161 feeling judged like “salt pork”



Help the girls you love gain tools to navigate the minefield of negative media messages **NOW!**

The answer is:

**POSITIVE
BODY
IMAGE**

What **ONE** factor helps build strength to resist:

- *Eating disorders*
- *Substance abuse*
- *Depression and mood disorders*
- *Unhealthy dating behaviors*
- *Risky sexual behaviors*
- *Low self-esteem*



Healthy Transitions for Girls is a strength-based, wellness approach that addresses all factors shown by research to promote positive body image:

- Supports parent and peer relationships
- Supports global and physical self-esteem
- Encourages healthy concepts of femininity (gender role)
- Teaches coping skills and media literacy
- Creates awareness of negative belief systems

Healthy Transitions for Girls speaks to the minds and hearts of girls.

ACCLAIM FOR THE **HEALTHY TRANSITIONS FOR GIRLS** CURRICULUM

"This is an innovative approach to promoting girls' self-esteem and body image resilience. It is well written and informative for both parents and professionals. The activities are well described, easy to implement, and are engaging for participants as they explore their strengths and possibilities for the future."

- **Laura Choate, Ed.D., LPC, NCC**, Associate Professor of Counselor Education at Louisiana State University
Author, *Girls' and Women's Wellness: Contemporary Issues and Interventions* (Published by the American Counseling Association).

"Captivating...Well targeted...It could potentially heal so many individuals and societal ills. I connected with my own femininity in a pleasant way while reading it."

- **Angelyn Ray, LCSW**, Private Practice Counselor, Women's Crisis Center Clinician

"The skills learned from this program are not only important for an adolescent girl vulnerable to negative outside influences, but are also valuable tools she can carry with her into adulthood"

- **Ashlee Voges, MSW**, Child and Adolescent Prevention Specialist

PEGGY A. MCFARLAND, MS, NCC, has over 30 years experience working with girls and teens. As a mother, teacher, mentor, and counselor, she understands the challenges faced today by pre-adolescent and teen girls. *Healthy Transitions for Girls* was developed out of a passion to help other parents, mentors, and professionals have tools to combat the onslaught of media messages that cause girls to develop a devastating, life-long "disconnection" from their bodies. When girls disconnect from their bodies they lose a connection with their intuitive, feminine nature—it is a tragic loss of identity.

Peggy has a private counseling practice in the "outback" of Eastern Oregon. She has four daughters of her own and many "adopted" daughters.



www.healthytransitionsforgirls.com