

**The Goose Girl**  
**By Shannon Hale**

**About the book:**

What do you get when you take a traditional fairy tale and mix it with a heroine who rescues herself? *The Goose Girl* by Shannon Hale! This heroine's journey commences when the princess is betrayed by her lady-in-waiting who steals both her title and her future. Forced to hide her identity from those who would destroy her, Ani becomes a common goose girl in service to the prince she should marry. For the first time in her sheltered life, the princess learns what it is like to earn one's place and make true friends. Ani masters her fear of people, discovers her magic with animals, and creates a future for herself.

**About the guide:**

This guide includes discussion questions, and projects intended to extend the use of the novel into classrooms, book clubs, and literature circles.

**Prediction Activity:**

Read this from the jacket:

“From the Grimm’s fairy tale of the princess who became a goose girl before she could become queen, Shannon Hale has woven an incredible, original and magical tale of a girl who must find her own unusual talents before she can lead the people she has made her own”

Why will she become a goose girl before she will be queen?

Will she want to be a goose girl? Would you by the sound of it?

What do you think Ani’s “unusual talents” might mean?

What do you think this story will be about? What will happen in the end?

**Prediction Guide**

Great readers keep themselves involved in the story while they’re reading by making predictions about what they think may happen next. They look for clues to help them make these guesses. Often the author deliberately tries to surprise the reader with extra details that may not turn out to be critical. As you read The Goose Girl create questions AS YOU GO (at least one per chapter) about what you think might happen next- don’t worry whether your predictions turn out correct or not. Here are some phrases that may help you create your predictions... “I wonder whether...” “I think that Ani will probably...” “I think the next obstacle may be...” “I hope that...”

### **Comprehension Check:**

1. Describe how Anidori-Kiladra Talianna Isilee changes from the beginning of the tale to the end.
2. Explain why Ani loses her claim to the throne and what her mother demands instead.
3. Retell the events that lead to Ani becoming a Goose Girl.
4. Who betrays Ani and who proves to be true friends and loyal to the end?
5. Which one of the literary elements was your favorite part of the book- the characters, setting, theme, plot or magical elements?
6. Compare the female characters to the male characters in the book. What qualities do they share? How are they different?
7. What would have happened if Ani was not able to develop her skills with the animals? What might her fate have been? Do you think she could have found happiness as a common goose girl?
8. How would this story be different if told through the eyes of Selia, Enna, or Galic? How would main events be described differently?
9. Explain what you think is the most pivotal moment in the story. Why did you choose this one over others?
10. How are the women characters different from traditional fairy tales such as Rapunzel or Cinderella? What does Ani learn from each of the women in her life?

### **Discussion Guide:**

1. The Queen tells Ani that, “Anidori, a crown princess, like a queen, can succeed only by staying apart. Separation, elevation, delegation.” (p. 25) Define these three terms in your own words and then discuss whether you agree with the queen’s assumptions or not. What do you think it would be like to live under these expectations? How do you think this would impact Ani’s ability to make true friends and keep them?
2. If you were to become the director for The Goose Girl who would you like to see cast in each role? Why would you pick these particular actors?
3. Although Ani has the gift of animal-speak, she is forced to hide it from others. How would her life have been different in Kildenree had this been a valued gift in her own kingdom? Have you ever known someone who hid their own gifts? Can we always reveal all our talents all of the time? Why or why not?
4. Ani is stripped of her rightful crown by her mother and forced into poverty and virtual slave labor by those who were hired to protect and care for her. While these life changes were traumatic and dramatic, in the end they proved to be good for Ani; she became a stronger, more insightful person and met people she may never have met. How so? What does she learn about herself? What does she learn

from those who befriend her along her journey? How would things have been different between Geric and Ani had she not gone through these trials?

5. Discuss Ani's relationship with her mother. Do you think the Queen truly loved her daughter if she was able to deny her daughter's birthright? Do you believe her mother's actions a betrayal? A political move? A move to protect her daughter? A selfish act? What makes you believe this?
6. A character's intentions (both good and bad) can be revealed through several methods- their words, actions, their treatment of others and how people treat them. How are the intentions of Selia, Ungolad, Talone, Geric and Enna shown through each of these methods? Were their hints to Selia's unhappiness before the journey began?
7. Compare the Kildenreans to the Bayern. How are they similar? How are they different? Are there important differences between them? For example, what did the Kildenreans do to repulse the Bayern? Do you think the author was trying to make a point about cultural differences between all people? What can we learn from Ani's experience and apply to our own lives today?
8. Discuss how appearance and prejudice helps and hinders Ani in her quest for justice and her title. For example, what does Gilsa know about Ani by her appearance alone? (p.92-92) What does Geric assume? Why do you think people make assumptions based on appearance alone?
9. Discuss the romance between Geric and Ani. Geric is described on p. 152 "He had thick black hair, cut just longer than his shoulders, that he tied back in a low pony's tail, and the kind of prominent jaw and chin that would stay prominent for all his life. His shoulders were broad, and it was not just a trick of a well-cut tunic, as his was a thing cotton, roughly made." Does he sound attractive? How would Geric describe Ani? How does their relationship bloom and then wilt? Were you surprised to learn who he really was?
10. Once in the forest, Selia's treatment of Ani becomes obviously hostile and then leads to her betrayal. It culminates when she proclaims, "Royalty is not a right, Captain. The willingness of the people to follow a ruler is what gives her power. Here in this place, by this people, I have been chosen." (p. 79) Do you agree with Selia's assessment? Is this action similar to those taken by commoners throughout history who wished to gain power over their own destinies? How does Ani, by the end of the story match Selia's description?
11. At first Ani believes the handkerchief her mother gave her is protecting her, but after the tragic events in the forest she realizes, "... the idea was completely ridiculous, a bed-tale, a lie."(p. 88) Why is this an important moment for Ani?

- How does it serve her for the rest of the novel? What ideas or objects do you cling to when you face difficult times as Ani did?
12. What do you think Ani's mother, brother, and sisters would say when they learned how she saved their kingdom from annihilation? Do you think they would regret their treatment of her? What would Ani's Aunt say? Whose approval do you think would be most important to Ani? Why?
  13. On cold evenings, Ani joins the other animal workers and roasts nuts by the fire and learns to play games. For the first time in her life, Ani must learn to build friendships with people who are not paid to be her companions. What skills does she develop? How does she turn these strangers, especially Enna, into such dear friends they are willing to put their lives in danger for her?
  14. The author, Shannon Hale, said about the setting of *Goose Girl*: "I felt it was important to make the setting as close to the setting of the tale as I could. It felt to me like a place we know, a place that is here somewhere, but in the past, just as tales are about us but long ago. To do that, I based Bayern loosely on the Germany of old, the birthplace of the Brothers Grimm. This is not a true historical setting, but resources such as the writings of the Roman historian [Tacitus](#) helped me build a foundation for what I hoped was a believable, and familiar, world." What details of the setting are your favorite and why? Does it seem familiar and true to you? Why or why not? Did you think it is important for an author of fantasy to pay close attention to a setting's detail? Why or why not? How could this inform your own writing?
  15. In traditional fairy tales, the main character is often rescued by another person. In this modern adaptation, Ani is able to save herself by learning to harness her own gifts and overcoming her inadequacies with people. Do you think one type of story is more valuable than another? Which story would you rather read about? What can we learn about ourselves by reading tales?
  16. Fairy tales often share common characteristics- the use of the number three, magical elements, transformations, and the conquest of good over evil. Additionally, the hero or heroine is often infallible. Which elements did Shannon Hale decide to incorporate into the *Goose Girl*? Which ones did she eliminate? Why do you think so? What makes a fairy tale different from other types of stories?
  17. Discuss this quote from the author: "Tales are fascinating things. They seem to me to be the poetry of history-all the superfluous bits are worn down, tossed away, leaving only the sharpest images, the strongest words, the barest stories. But those stories survive. To do so, I believe they must hold some real human truth. They speak to each reader in a different way, and yet appeal universally to readers and storytellers over decades and centuries." Do you agree with the

author? What do you think she means by the phrase, “real human truth”? How is this shown throughout the novel?

### **Projects:**

#### **Art:**

Your school has just announced The Goose Girl as the spring play. Make at least three sketches for the set design. Be sure to include the background and any furniture or props that would be needed in a large, poster-size format.

-or-

Sketch or create the costumes or headdresses that the characters will need. Identify the characters in at least three different scenes.

#### **Language:**

Write two petitions to the queen or king (you parent or a principal perchance?) about something you would like changed in your own village (like a larger allowance for the wintermoon festival?) One should be written by someone who has the gift of people-speak, the other by a common person.

#### **Vocabulary:**

Find the invented words that add authenticity to the language of Kildenree and Bayern. (For example: nurse-mary) and write a brief definition of the word and use it in a complete sentence.

#### **History:**

Ani uses thornroot—a brown, pinkie-sized root she trades for an apple, then cuts in strips and bruises with vinegar to create a dye. She uses this concoction to darken her fair eyebrows and disguise herself better in Bayern. Research other herbs, insects and beauty secrets used throughout the ages by both women and men.

#### **Drama:**

Write the scene with dialogue between Ani and her mother when they finally meet again. What will Ani reveal? What will her mother expect of her?

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of *Reaching for Sun* from Bloomsbury Children’s Books. Visit her website to find many guides to children’s literature.