

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Folktale Magic

Jan Brett's *The Mitten* is more than just a fun winter story—it reflects many elements of traditional folktales. Folktales are stories passed down from generation to generation, often teaching lessons, featuring repeated patterns, and including animals with human-like qualities. *The Mitten* follows these storytelling traditions, making it feel like an old tale that could have been told around a fire on a snowy night.

One way *The Mitten* reflects a folktale is through its simple but engaging plot. Many folktales begin with a small event that leads to something much bigger. In this story, Nicki's lost mitten sets off a chain of events that leads to a group of animals squeezing inside, stretching it beyond its limits. The pattern of one animal entering after another, each one larger than the last, mirrors the repetitive structure found in classic folktales. This makes the story predictable in a fun way, allowing young readers to guess what will happen next.

Another common element of folktales is the use of animals that behave like people. In *The Mitten*, the woodland creatures don't just act like wild animals—they share space, make room for newcomers, and react with emotions. The bear tolerates the smaller creatures, the rabbit hops on top of others, and the tiny mouse unknowingly causes a giant sneeze that changes everything. While animals in real life wouldn't cram into a mitten, in the world of folktales, anything is possible.

Folktales also teach important lessons, often through humor or exaggeration. *The Mitten* suggests ideas about sharing, kindness, and even the importance of listening to advice. Nicki's grandmother warns him about losing his white mitten, but he doesn't take her seriously. In the end, he unknowingly retrieves his mitten after it has gone through an incredible adventure. The stretched-out mitten serves as a reminder that small actions—like ignoring a warning—can lead to big consequences.

Like many classic folktales, *The Mitten* blends fantasy with reality, using a repeating structure and teaching a lesson in a lighthearted way. Jan Brett's story, inspired by an old Ukrainian folktale, continues the tradition of passing down memorable and meaningful stories from one generation to the next.