



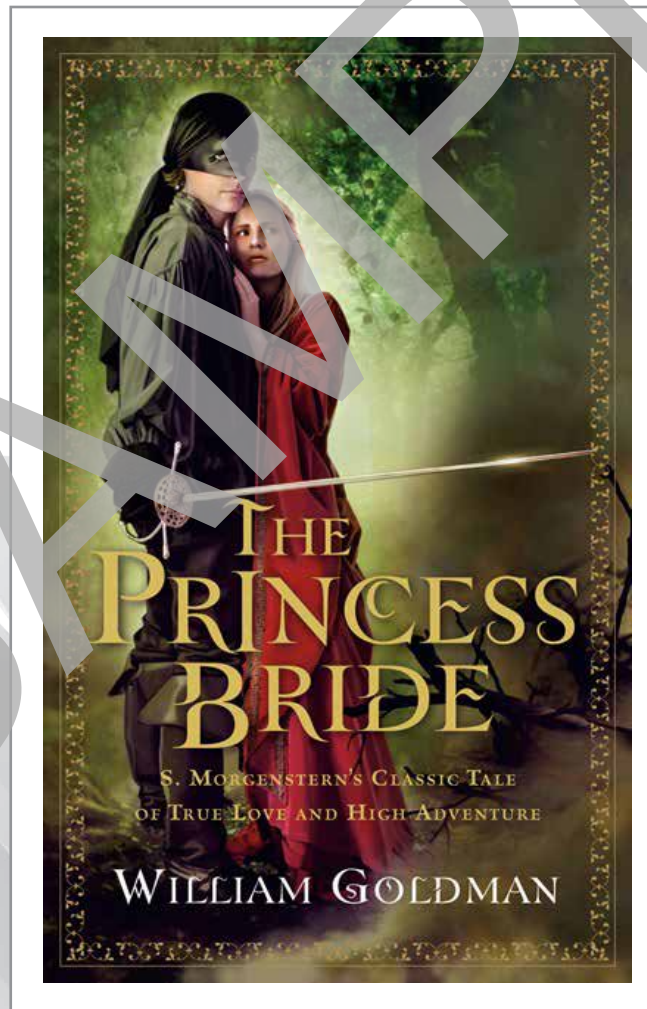
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Princess Bride**

William Goldman



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Princess Bride

William Goldman

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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**ISBN 978-1-50204-094-7**

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## Skills and Strategies

### Critical Thinking

Analyzing, inference, research, opinions, prediction, cause/effect

### Comprehension

Context, compare/contrast, pros/cons, point/counterpoint

### Literary Elements

Theme, irony, symbolism, conflict, characterization, metaphors

### Vocabulary

Definitions, application

### Listening/Speaking

Presentations, reenactments, discussions

### Writing

Essays, poetry, short story, research papers, new ending, news article, synopsis

### Across the Curriculum

Literature—other works by William Goldman, favorite children’s books, autobiographical fiction; Film/Celebrities—cast of *The Princess Bride*, Andre the Giant, casting; Art—alternate cover, paintings, collage, maps, symbols; Sports—fencing, rock climbing, sailing

**Genre:** fantasy/adventure fiction

**Setting:** primarily the fictional lands of Florin and Guilder, with scenes in Spain and the United States

**Point of View:** third person interrupted by the author's first-person narrative

**Themes:** romance, destiny, revenge, death, true love, friendship, survival

**Conflict:** person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. nature

**Style:** fictional adventure pitting heroes against villains and monsters, with personal stories from the author interspersed throughout

**Tone:** humorous, exciting, desperate, wistful, adventurous

**Date of First Publication:** 1973

## Note to the Teacher

Most of the biographical information within the novel concerning William Goldman's family, childhood, and his authorship of the "abridged" version of *The Princess Bride* is fictional. The history of Florin and S. Morgenstern are also fictional, and Goldman uses them only as literary devices to satire the genre of fantasy as well as the publishing industry of which he is part. All stories and information within the novel are Goldman's original creations.

## Summary

In the introductions, William Goldman explains how the story first came into his life—that his father read the Morgenstern tale to him when he was a sick boy. Goldman decides to write a "good parts" version for his own son. Morgenstern's tale begins on a small farm in Florin, where the beautiful Buttercup taunts Westley, a young farm boy, as he tends to her every whim. Though he lives to serve her family, she discovers that she loves him. Westley reveals that he loves her as well but must go seek his fortune in America before they are able to wed. News returns that the Dread Pirate Roberts has captured Westley's ship and there are no survivors. Distraught, Buttercup refuses to love again, but agrees to marry Prince Humperdinck with the understanding that they do not love each other. While out riding her horse, Buttercup is kidnapped by three men—Fezzik the giant, Inigo the swordsman, and Vizzini the Sicilian—but is saved by Westley, the mysterious man in black. Prince Humperdinck and his men capture them all. Buttercup agrees to return and marry the prince if he lets Westley go. Humperdinck agrees, but instead puts Westley in the lowest level of his Zoo of Death, where Count Rugen tortures him. Buttercup learns of Humperdinck's treachery and insists that Westley will rescue her before the royal wedding. With Fezzik and Inigo's help, they escape on Humperdinck's horses, though Goldman leaves their ultimate fate unanswered.

## About the Author

William Goldman was born in Chicago, Illinois on August 12, 1931. He obtained his B.A. from Oberlin College in 1952 and his M.A. from Columbia University. Goldman began writing in college and focused primarily on poetry, short stories, plays, and novels. After researching the story for eight years, Goldman wrote a screenplay, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Based on the true story of the

## Pages vii–36

In the novel's introductions, Goldman discusses his admiration for his teacher Miss Roginski, and his attempt to impress her with his first published novel. When Goldman is stricken with pneumonia as a child, his father reads him Morgenstern's novel. When Goldman buys the novel for his son, he sees that the novel is filled with boring academic information. His obese son, Jason, hates the novel, and Goldman realizes that his father only read the "good parts," which inspires him to write an adaptation based on his father's version.

### Vocabulary

trifle  
abridgement  
delirium  
epaulets  
rote  
petrified  
endeavor  
graft  
sufficient

### Discussion Questions

1. How does William Goldman describe working on a movie set? Why does he feel this way? (*Goldman states that he doesn't enjoy working on a movie set, saying "the best day of your life is your first day on a set and the worst days are all the ones that follow" [pp. ix–x]. He calls movie sets "tedious and horrible" because as a writer there is nothing for him to do. Answers will vary, but because there is little for him to do, Goldman tends to hover on the set and finds himself standing right where the director wants to shoot. His presence sometimes makes the actors nervous because he wrote the script and hopes the story will be communicated effectively.*)
2. How does Goldman describe Andre, and why does Goldman love being around him? (*Answers will vary. Andre the Giant, André René Roussimoff's stage name, is genial and friendly on the set. "Kids went nuts over him" [p. xii] and visited the set to watch him film his scenes. His massive size and his thick French accent make him stand out, but he is very humble and quiet otherwise. Goldman admits that he wrote Fezzik's part for him.*)
3. What do Willy and Goldman find so fascinating about the Morgenstern Museum? Why doesn't Willy like the curator? (*They are awed by the six-fingered sword Inigo wields while fighting Count Rugen, which is on display in the first room they enter. They also see a mold of Fezzik's fingers, a wall of Fezzik's clothes, and Buttercup's wedding dress. They skip the room containing Count Rugen's life-sucking machine and head to the library to read Morgenstern's journals and notes. The curator doesn't seem to know who Goldman is, seems suspicious of them, and offers a backhanded compliment about how Goldman used to be a good writer but isn't any longer.*)
4. Examine how, in Willy's opinion, Morgenstern almost destroys his own story. How does he save the story? (*Willy and Goldman discover a journal where Morgenstern writes that he has decided to let Count Rugen kill Inigo so Westley will triumph as the true hero of the novel by having to defeat both Rugen and Humperdinck. Willy and Goldman are stunned by this news, but are later relieved to find that Morgenstern came to his senses and allows Inigo to win over Rugen, thus having multiple heroes in the tale.*)
5. Describe the reading rehearsals for *The Princess Bride*. What happens during the first reading that shocks Goldman? (*The first reading rehearsal is in a hotel in London in 1986. All the actors playing the major roles are there, including Andre the Giant [Fezzik] and Mandy Patinkin [Inigo]. Other producers and executives are also in the room. The reading is light, with a few comments as they go along. As they read after lunch, Andre has trouble speeding up his lines. He sounds too monotonous, and Mandy Patinkin urges him to read faster. When Andre does not, Patinkin shocks the room when he slaps Andre and says, "Faster, Fezzik!", as if their characters are already interacting with one another. Andre reads faster and finally becomes comfortable with the role.*)

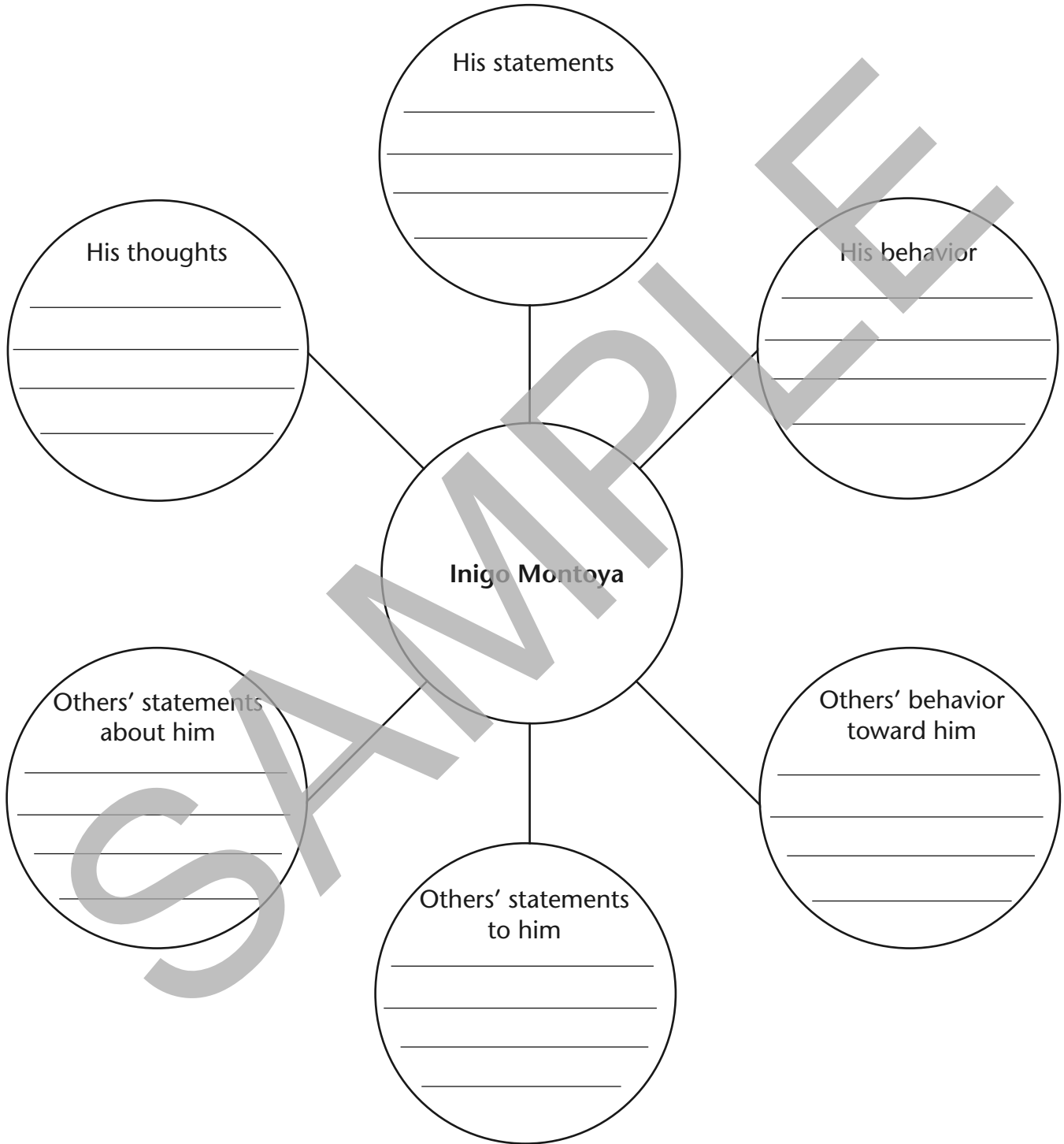
6. How can *The Princess Bride* be Goldman's favorite story if he has never read the novel? (*Answers will vary. Goldman first discovered the novel when he was 10 years old and his father read it to him. Throughout much of his life, Goldman assumed the version he heard was the real novel that he grew to love. When he buys The Princess Bride for his son, he still has not actually read the novel. Even adapting it into a "good parts" version, he didn't actually read all of Morgenstern's drawn-out commentary on the life of royalty...thus never fully reading the novel he considers his favorite.*)
7. How does Goldman hope to impress his former teacher, Miss Roginski? How is Goldman disappointed, and why does his disappointment quickly fade? (*When Goldman's first novel is published, he sends a copy to a teacher he admired in school, hoping to live up to his youthful claim that he is a late bloomer and will one day make something of himself. Miss Roginski's response seems too formal and stiff, and it seems she doesn't remember him at all, crushing Goldman. Later he sees that she wrote another note on the back of her letter mentioning S. Morgenstern and how proud she is, meaning she remembers Goldman and his favorite childhood author.*)
8. What does Goldman's son think of Morgenstern's novel? Why? How does Goldman solve this problem? (*Jason attempts to please his father by saying he liked the novel, but he cannot discuss the novel in detail and admits he didn't finish it because it was boring. Goldman is shocked because he remembers the novel being full of adventure. Upon opening the novel for himself, he finds long academic narratives with little adventure. He understands that his father skipped the boring parts and that Jason did not receive the same treatment, so Goldman decides to abridge the novel into a "good parts" version.*)
9. **Prediction:** Will Jason eventually read and enjoy the "good parts" version of Morgenstern's tale?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Research the actors and actresses who played the major characters in the film version of *The Princess Bride*, and write a brief paragraph about each. Explain why you think each was cast for the role. What other roles has each actor portrayed that are similar or different from their roles in *The Princess Bride*?
2. Choose a novel that was your favorite as a child and bring it to class, giving a brief presentation about the novel and why you still cherish it. Be prepared to answer questions about the novel, the author, and other novels by the same author.

# Character Web

**Directions:** Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to Inigo Montoya.



## Word Map

**Directions:** For seven of the vocabulary words in this guide, write the definition, synonyms, and antonyms, and use each word in an original sentence.

**Synonyms**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Antonyms**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WORD**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition in your own words**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Used in a sentence**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_