



# THUNDER CAKE

AUTHOR: PATRICIA POLACCO

ILLUSTRATOR: PATRICIA POLACCO

See a video of the book read aloud here: [Thunder Cake](#)

**\*\* REMEMBER: HAVE FUN AND THE KIDS WILL TOO! \*\***

## OVERVIEW

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Reaching once again into her rich childhood experience, Patricia Polacco tells the memorable story of how her grandma—her Babushla—helped her overcome her fear of thunder when she was a little girl. Ms. Polacco’s vivid memories of her grandmother’s endearing answer to a child’s fear, accompanied by her bright folk-art illustrations, turn a frightening thunderstorm into an adventure and ultimately...a celebration! <https://www.amazon.com>

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Polacco was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1944. Her stories are inspired by her Russian, Ukrainian, and Irish heritage. As a child, Polacco struggled to learn to read and learn that she was dyslexic at the age of 14. In her stories, she shares with readers her cultural background as well as her struggles and achievements in school. She found relief by expressing herself through art and is an inspiration for all, especially those with learning struggles. She is world famous, not only because of her 115 books, but because of humanitarian causes. She wrote her first children’s book at age 41.

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### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

## THE READ ALOUD

### BEFORE READING

Use these questions before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:

- Introduce the author Patricia Polacco and her struggles with reading as a child.
- Examine the cover
- I notice that the sky is dark, what do you think is going to happen?
- Where do you think the story takes place?
- What do you think Thunder Cake is?

### DURING THE STORY

Use these questions while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content.

## THUNDER CAKE

### TOPICS & THEMES:

Conquering fears,  
multigenerational  
relationships, character  
traits

### *Tips for every book!*

### POWER PHRASES:

*I WONDER...*

*I NOTICE...*

*TELL ME MORE...*

### DIGGING DEEPER:

*“Tell me more, why do you think that?”*

*“How do you know that?”*

*“Why do you think they feel like that?”*

*“Interesting, did you notice anything else?”*

Emergent Literacy (Comprehension-connections to world/self-print referencing-open ended questions-phonological awareness).

- (p.2.) I wonder why the author wrote this page
- (p.6) I wonder why the child is hiding under the bed?
- (p.8) Why did the child need to count?
- (p.9) Why were the pages in the book grease stained?
- (p.10) How did you feel when you saw the word, BAROOOOOOOM? Is it a quiet or a noisy word? Look for other words like that in the book.
- (p.20) Is there an ingredient that you do not usually put in a cake?

## AFTER READING

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*Use these questions while after reading the story to help students understand what they just read.*

- What did the girl learn from her grandmother?
- Why did the grandma have the girl count every time she heard a loud noise?
- How did the grandmother help the girl overcome her fears?
- What did the author want to teach you?
- Do you think this is a true story? Why or why not?

## BRING BOOK TO LIFE

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- If you were by yourself and a storm was coming, what would you do?
- What are you scared of and do you have something that makes you feel better? Give an example of your own.

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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- Brainstorm and name common sounds people are afraid of (in pairs).
- Work with another partner to think of situations you might have to find a place to hide.

## SMALL-GROUP IDEAS

### 1. DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

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*Use these questions before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:*

- Review the story with the students using the picture walk strategy.
- What if you noticed that the girl was afraid of more things than the storm. What were they and how did she overcome her fears?
- If you traded places with the grandmother, what ways would you like to be like her?
- Onomatopoeia is a word that imitates a sound. Let's look back to find examples in the story. Then we will say them.
- Do you think you would like to eat Thunder Cake? Why or why not?
- Have you ever baked a cake? How would you know how to make one?
- As you listened to the story, how did you picture the storm? What did you see, hear and feel?
- Who was your favorite character in the story? Why?
- Was there ever a time that you felt afraid and an older person helped you with that fear?

**Suggested Optional Activity:** Cause and Effect. Give the children each a piece of paper to write answers to the following after reviewing cause and effect. Once you review the answers with the children, have them make up cause and effects for their group mates.

1. Cause: Grandma and Patricia count seconds after they see lightning. Children write effect.
2. Cause: Grandma and Patricia get flour, sugar and chocolate. Children write effect.
3. Effect: Patricia climbs the trellis. Children write cause.

4. Effect: Patricia hides under bed. Children write cause.

## 5. WRITING ACTIVITY

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*Use these questions while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content.*

Take a piece of unlined paper and divide in half. On one half of the paper children draw a picture of Patricia or Grandma in the picture. If time, turn paper over and do the same for the other character.

## 6. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

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*Use these questions while after reading the story to help students understand what they just read.*

With permission of school and parents, bring in ingredients for Thunder cake which the children will work together to make the batter. Either take it home to bake or bake in school kitchen.

If eggs are an issue,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup unsweetened applesauce can be substituted for one egg

If you can't make a real Thunder cake have children "make" their own special cake using construction paper, scissors and glue. These do not have to be Thunder Cakes but should have a special name and look. Children may write about their cakes.

Alternatively, the children could come up with another tool for helping to counteract a fear. They could draw this, labelling their picture and how it would work, and feedback to their group at the end.

## COMMON CORE LINKS

CCSS.ELA RL3.1, RL3.2, RL3.4, RL3.8

**Common Core links for reading:**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy RL. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7**