

Title/Author: *The Spider and The Fly* by Mary Howitt with illustrations by Tony DiTerlizzi

Suggested Time: 5 Days (five 20-minute sessions)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RI.1.1, RI.1.2, RI.1.4, RI.1.6, RI.1.7; W.1.2, W.1.8;

SL1.1, SL.1.2, SL.1.5; L.1.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to an illustrated narrative poem read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, discussion and listening) to understand the central message of the poem.

Teacher Instructions:

**Before the Lesson:**

1. Read the Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. ***Please do not read this to the students.*** This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

Key Understandings:

How does the Spider trick the Fly into his web? The Spider uses flattery to trick the Fly into his web.

What is this story trying to teach us? Don't let yourself be tricked by sweet, flattering words.

Synopsis

This is an illustrated version of the well-known poem about a cunning spider and a little fly. The Spider tries to lure the Fly into his web, promising interesting things to see, a comfortable bed, and treats from his pantry. At first the Fly, who has been told it is dangerous to go into the Spider’s parlor, refuses. But when the Spider compliments her gauzy wings and brilliant eyes, she finds herself unable to resist and winds up trapped in his web. The final stanza of the poem reveals the author’s intended “lesson from this tale”: don’t let yourself be tricked by sweet, flattering words. *Note: a full transcript of the poem is included in the resource section of this guide.*

2. Go to the last page of the lesson and review “What Makes this Read-Aloud Complex.” This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
3. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Note: you may want to copy the questions, vocabulary words and activities onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*

### The Lesson – Questions, Activities, Vocabulary, and Tasks:

The majority of questions, activities, and tasks should be based on the writing, pictures, and features unique to *The Spider and The Fly*. In other words, they should be text-specific. Questions that address text-to-self or text-to-world connections—or text-inspired questions or activities—should be held until after students have really gotten to know the book.

This lesson is designed to be flexible. Feel free to insert or delete rows as needed for additional questions, activities, or tasks.

Questions, Activities, Vocabulary, and Tasks are all aligned to the CCSS for ELA and can address any of the following through reading aloud rich selections:

- Academic language exploration and learning (vocabulary and syntax)
- Speaking and Listening activities
- Writing activities
- Language activities and questions
- Creative performance tasks and activities that are text-specific or text-inspired
- Foundational reading skills reinforcement where appropriate

| Questions, Activities, Vocabulary, and Tasks   | Expected Outcome or Response (for each)   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>FIRST READING:</b></p> <p>Pull the students together or use a document camera so that all can enjoy the illustrations. Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruption.</p> <p>Since the poem is written as a dialogue between the Spider and the</p> | <p>The goal here is for students to enjoy the book—the words, the rhythm, and the pictures, and to experience it as a whole. Don't be concerned if students understand very little on this first reading. The idea is to give them some context and a sense of the characters and story before they dive into examining parts of the book more carefully.</p> |

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| <p>Fly, consider pulling in a second reader and taking parts, or reading in two distinct voices.</p> <p>After the first reading, have each student create two stick puppets, one of Spider and one of Fly to use during subsequent readings.</p> <p><i>Note: you may want to make a couple of extra puppets while your students work, so absent students will have them to use in subsequent lessons.</i></p>  | <p>Puppets are downloadable from the author’s website <a href="http://diterlizzi.com/home/project/the-spider-and-the-fly/">http://diterlizzi.com/home/project/the-spider-and-the-fly/</a>, or can be drawn by the students and attached to popsicle sticks.</p>   |
| <p><b>SECOND READING:</b></p> <p>Be sure each student has two stick puppets, one of Spider and one of Fly.</p> <p><b>Reread page 1</b><br/>(display on a document camera or projector if possible)</p> <p>QUESTIONS:<br/>Who is talking here? Show me by holding up a puppet.<br/>How do you know Spider is talking?</p> <p>A parlor is like a living room in a house. What might a spider’s “parlor” look like?</p> <p><b>Reread page 4</b><br/>QUESTIONS:<br/>Who is talking here? Show me by holding up a puppet.<br/>How do you know Fly is talking?</p> | <p>Students respond by holding up the appropriate stick puppet based on who is speaking at the time. Help students to notice cues that signal a character is speaking like the phrase, “said the Spider to the Fly” and the quotation marks.</p> <p>Some students may make the connection that a spider’s parlor is his web, others may draw on the fanciful illustrations in the book to answer. These ideas will be confirmed or revised as you reread the rest of the story.</p> <p>Students respond by holding up the Fly stick puppet and noting the words, “said the little Fly”. Ask students to hold up their puppets to show who is speaking for the next few stanzas so that they come to understand the poem’s</p> |

| <p>Ne'er is an old fashioned word. What word do you know that sounds like ne'er? Why do you think the bugs "ne'er come down again"?</p>   | <p>structure (a dialogue that alternates between two characters).</p> <p>Ne'er sounds like "never". The bugs never come down again because the Spider eats (or captures) them.</p>  |   |                                     |   |            |
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| <p><b>ACTIVITY - Acting out the passages:</b><br/>Establish the following pattern of activities to help students paraphrase the poem (repeat after each exchange between Spider and Fly):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reread the two stanzas fluently (Spider's invitation and Fly's response), clearly showing the change in speakers with your voice.</li> <li>2. Choose two students to act out these two stanzas by paraphrasing what the characters say, and showing actions and reactions with their bodies. Reread sections of the text as needed to ensure that the dramatic interpretation accurately reflects the words in the story.</li> <li>3. Direct the rest of the class to watch the scene and then pose the following questions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the Spider try to trick the Fly into his web?</li> <li>• What does the Fly say?</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Record a response to each question on a class chart using words, pictures from the text, quick sketches or some combination of the three.</li> </ol> | <p>Check to see that students are able to paraphrase the poem and add support as needed.</p> <p>Sample student dialogue:<br/><i>Spider: Come into my living room, little fly. It's right upstairs and there are lots of cool things to see there.</i><br/><i>Fly: No way! I know that when someone goes into your living room, they never come out again!</i></p> <p>Help students to better understand the character's actions and reactions by asking the class to notice, or give suggestions about, the actors' body language and expressions.</p> <p>See sample graphic organizer in Teacher Notes. Possible responses:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1092 1161 1890 1364"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1092 1161 1522 1258"><b>How does the Spider try to trick the fly into his web?</b></th> <th data-bbox="1522 1161 1890 1258"><b>What does the Fly say or do?</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1092 1258 1522 1364">Tells her there are cool things to see in his parlor.</td> <td data-bbox="1522 1258 1890 1364">Oh no, no!</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | <b>How does the Spider try to trick the fly into his web?</b> | <b>What does the Fly say or do?</b> | Tells her there are cool things to see in his parlor. | Oh no, no! |
| <b>How does the Spider try to trick the fly into his web?</b>   | <b>What does the Fly say or do?</b>   |   |                                     |   |            |
| Tells her there are cool things to see in his parlor.   | Oh no, no!  |   |                                     |   |            |

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| <p><b>Reread pages 5 &amp; 7:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>         What do you think “weary” means?<br/>         Why does the Spider think the Fly might be weary?</p> <p>What does the Spider <u>really</u> mean when he says, “I’ll snugly tuck you in.”? Turn and talk to a partner about your ideas.</p>   | <p>Weary means very tired.<br/>         The Fly might be weary because she has been flying so high.</p> <p>The Spider means he is going to wrap her up to get ready to eat her. (If students have not learned about spiders through nonfiction articles or chapter books like <i>Charlotte’s Web</i>, the teacher may need to provide brief context about how spiders live and get their food.)</p> |
| <p><b>Act out the passages:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reread both stanzas aloud fluently.</li> <li>2. Choose two students to act them out.</li> <li>3. Pose the questions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the Spider try to trick the fly into his web?</li> <li>• What does the Fly say?</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Record a class response on the chart.</li> </ol> | <p>Check to ensure that dialogue accurately paraphrases the passage. Reread all or parts of the passage as needed.</p> <p>See graphic organizer for sample responses and key understandings.</p>  |
| <p>Have students help you read what is on the chart to summarize what you have read today.</p>  |   |
| <p><b>THIRD READING:</b></p> <p>Explain that today you will continue to explore <i>The Spider and the Fly</i>. Reread up to page 8 without stopping, inviting students to participate by holding up their puppets as each character speaks. Then, call on a few students to briefly summarize what you have read.</p>   | <p>If helpful, use the class notes to help students concisely summarize. (See completed chart in the Resource section for the key information students should remember from each section.)</p>  |
| <p><b>Reread pages 9 &amp; 12:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>         What is a “pantry”? What clues in the words and illustrations can help you to figure this out?</p> <p>Look carefully at the illustration. What do you think the Fly “does not wish to see”?</p>  | <p>Students should infer from the pictures of the table and Spider’s invitation to “take a slice”, that a pantry is a place where food is stored.</p> <p>Bugs prepared to be eaten.</p>   |

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| <p><b>Act out the passages and add to the chart using the established routine.</b></p>  | <p>See graphic organizer for sample responses and key understandings.</p>  |
| <p><b>Reread page 13:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/> Wise means “very smart”. Why might Spider tell Fly that she is “wise”?</p> <p>Use the pictures and the words. What do you think “looking glass” means?</p> <p>Repeat these words from the text after me:<br/> <i>“How handsome are your gauzy wings, (pause for students to repeat) how brilliant are your eyes.” (pause for students to repeat)</i></p> <p>How does Fly look?</p> <p>What might “gauzy” mean? “Brilliant?” Use the pictures to help you figure this out.</p> <p>What does Spider want Fly to see when she looks into the mirror?</p> | <p>To make her feel smart, or to make her like him.</p> <p>“Looking glass” is a glass that you look into. The pictures show that it is a mirror.</p> <p>“handsome” with “gauzy wings” and “brilliant” eyes.</p> <p>Point out Fly’s “see through” wings and shining eyes in the illustrations to define these terms.</p> <p>How beautiful she is.</p> |
| <p><b>Reread page 16:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/> What is different about the way Fly answers him here?</p> <p>Why do you think she answers differently?</p>  | <p>She doesn’t say, “no” – she thanks him and says she’ll come back.</p> <p>She liked being called handsome and getting compliments.</p>   |
| <p><b>Act out the passages and add to the chart using the established routine.</b></p>  | <p>See graphic organizer for sample responses and key understandings.</p>  |
| <p><b>Reread page 17:</b><br/> <i>Note: Students should be at their desks or tables with access to drawing paper and crayons during this part of the reading.</i></p>   |  |

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| <p><b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>In the last stanza, the Spider told the Fly that she was wise. What word in this part tells you that he doesn't really think that she is wise?</p> <p>What is a spider's "table"? What does "set his table ready" mean?</p> <p>Draw a picture to show what the Spider did.</p> <p>What does Spider think is going to happen? How do you know?</p>                             | <p>"silly" little fly</p> <p>Spider's table is his web. "Set his table ready" means to make a web to eat on.</p> <p>Reread the last two lines of the stanza while students draw. If students draw a real table, point out that there is no table in the book's illustration—Spider's web is his table.</p> <p>Spider thinks the Fly will come back and he will eat her. The words say that he knows she will "soon come back again" and he is spinning a web, so he must be planning to catch her.</p> |
| <p>Have students briefly share their drawings with a partner to end the lesson.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>FOURTH READING</b></p> <p>Compliment students on how carefully they have been reading the book and explain that today you will continue to explore <i>The Spider and the Fly</i>.</p> <p>Reread up to page 18 without stopping, inviting students to participate by holding up their puppets as each character speaks. Then, call on a few students to briefly summarize what you have read.</p> | <p>During this reading, use strategically placed pauses to encourage students to use the rhyme pattern to help you finish some of lines in the poem.</p> <p>If helpful, use the class notes to help students concisely summarize.</p>  |
| <p>Give each student a picture of the Fly and be sure they have access to crayons.</p> <p><b>Reread page 19:</b><br/>Give the following directions:<br/>Listen very carefully to the words Spider uses to describe Fly.<br/>As I read each line, use your crayons to color in the picture to show what Fly looks like.</p>   | <p>Students' coloring should match the description in the poem: white and silver wings, green and purple body, bright eyes.</p> <p>As students draw, help them "unpack" and visualize each line as needed. Use questions like:<br/>What color is a pearl? What might Fly's "robes" be? Why does the poem say her eyes are like diamonds?</p>   |



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| <p><b>Reread page 21:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>         What did the “silly little fly” hear?<br/>         What do you think “flattering” means?<br/>         What flattering words was Fly thinking of as she flew near him?</p>  | <p>Spider’s “wily, flattering words”.<br/>         To say nice things that you do not mean.<br/>         The words he used to describe how beautiful she was.</p>  |
| <p><b>Act out the passages and add to the chart using the established routine.</b></p>   | <p>See graphic organizer for sample responses and key understandings.</p>  |
| <p><b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>         Now turn and talk to a classmate:<br/>         What did Fly do?<br/>         Why do you think she did this?</p> <p>What do you think “foolish” means?<br/>         Why does the author call Fly a “poor, foolish thing”?</p>   | <p>Fly flew nearer and nearer to the Spider’s web.<br/>         Answers about why she did this may include ideas like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She wanted to hear more about how beautiful she was.</li> <li>• She was thinking only about her own beauty and forgot to be careful.</li> <li>• She thought the Spider was nice because he said nice things.</li> </ul> <p>Foolish means, “stupid”.<br/>         She went too close to the Spider, that wasn’t very smart.</p> |
| <p><b>FIFTH READING</b><br/>         Explain that today you will finish your work with <i>The Spider and the Fly</i>. Reread up to page 21 without stopping. To encourage focus, students <u>should not use their puppets</u> during this last reading. Together, review the information on the class chart. (This will serve to summarize the events in the story.)</p> | <p>By this point, many students will know parts of the poem by heart. Encourage them to “read” along with you wherever they can.</p>   |
| <p><b>Reread Pages 22 &amp; 23:</b><br/> <b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>         What happened to the “poor foolish little Fly”?</p>  | <p>Spider grabbed her and dragged her up the winding stair to his web and she never came out again.</p>  |

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| <p>Does the last line remind you of another part of the poem? Which one?</p> <p><b>THINK:</b><br/>If the Fly knew that she might “ne’er come out again” why did she fly so close to the Spider?</p>  | <p>When they first met, Fly told Spider that, “who goes up your winding stair can ne’er come down again”.</p> <p>Allow a silent minute to think about this question before directing students to discuss their ideas with a partner.</p>  |
| <p>Group students in pairs and discuss this next question:<br/>How does the Spider trick the Fly into his web? Explain your thinking to a partner.</p>   | <p>Answers will vary, but should indicate some connection between the Spider’s flattering words and the Fly’s poor decision to fly near him.</p>  |
| <p><b>Reread Pages 25 &amp; 26:</b><br/><b>QUESTIONS:</b><br/>The poem tells us to “close heart and ear and eye”.<br/>Show me how you might “close your ears”.<br/>Show me how you might “close your eyes”.<br/>Now show me how you might “close your heart”. (Pause to allow students to try.) What do you think “close your heart” might mean?<br/>What do you think the author wants us to do when we meet someone like Spider?</p> <p>Give students a piece of drawing or “picture story” paper and explain the directions for the culminating task below. Circulate as students work, encouraging them to tell you more about their drawings and writing. Share responses in small groups or display on a bulletin board.</p> | <p>If needed, repeat the full line again, covering your heart, ears and eyes with your hands as the lines are read.</p> <p>Explain that sometimes words in a story mean something different than they seem to. Here, “close your heart” means don’t care about or don’t pay attention to.</p> <p>Listen for answers that show an understanding that that the poem is warning us not to listen to the “silly, flattering words” of people like Spider.</p> |

## Culminating Task

What is the lesson of this tale? What is this story trying to teach us? Use pictures and words to show what the author wants us to learn from the story in this book.

## Vocabulary

| <p><b>These words merit <u>less</u> time and attention</b><br/>(They are concrete and easy to explain, or describe events/ processes/ideas/concepts/experiences that are familiar to your students)</p> | <p><b>These words merit <u>more</u> time and attention</b><br/>(They are abstract, have multiple meanings, and/or are a part of a large family of words with related meanings. These words are likely to describe events, ideas, processes or experiences that most of your student will be unfamiliar with)</p> |
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| <p>Page 1: <b>parlor</b> – living room<br/>Page 2: <b>ne'er</b> – never<br/>Page 9: <b>pantry</b> – place where food is stored</p>  | <p>Page 3: <b>weary</b> – tired<br/>Page 14: <b>wise</b> – smart<br/>Page 21: <b>flattering</b> – saying nice things that you do not mean<br/>Page 21: <b>foolish</b> – stupid</p>   |

## Fun Extension Activities for this book and other useful Resources:

1. The author's website includes downloadable paper puppets to make and Spider and Fly screensavers:

<http://diterlizzi.com/home/project/the-spider-and-the-fly/>

2. A short video of Tony DiTerlizzi talking to a class about the process of illustrating the book:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEKEaoNDSU8>

3. A BBC video of *The Spider and The Fly* being read aloud:

<http://diterlizzi.com/home/videos/#lightbox/8/>

4. Extension: Have students explore the following question: Whose fault is it that the fly “ne’er came out again”?

*Include activities like:*

- Stand under the picture of the Spider if you think the Spider was to blame.
  - Stand under the picture of the Fly if you think the Fly was to blame.
  - Choose a partner who has a different opinion. Explain your thinking to a partner.
  - Write a paragraph. Use evidence from the poem to explain your opinion and reasoning.
5. Give students a copy of the poem to illustrate. Older students may be interested in preparing a choral reading (divide students into groups and have each group learn one stanza) or a puppet show. Mary Howitt’s poem is in the public domain and reproduced below.

**THE SPIDER AND THE FLY**by Mary Howitt (1799-1888)

"Will you step into my parlor?" said the spider to the fly;  
"Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy.  
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,  
And I have many curious things to show when you are there."  
"O no, no," said the little fly, "to ask me is in vain,  
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

"I'm sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;  
Will you rest upon my little bed?" said the spider to the fly.  
"There are pretty curtains drawn around, the sheets are fine and thin,  
And if you like to rest awhile, I'll snugly tuck you in."  
"O no, no," said the little fly, "for I've often heard it said,  
They *never, never* wake again, who sleep upon *your* bed."

Said the cunning spider to the fly, "Dear friend, what shall I do,  
To prove the warm affection I've always felt for you?  
I have within my pantry good store of all that's nice;  
I'm sure you're very welcome; will you please to take a slice?"  
"O no, no," said the little fly, "kind sir, that cannot be;  
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see."

"Sweet creature!" said the spider, "You're witty and you're wise!  
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!  
I have a little looking-glass upon my parlor shelf,  
If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold yourself."

"I thank you, gentle sir," she said, "for what you're pleased to say,  
And bidding you good-morning *now*, I'll call *another* day."

The spider turned him round about, and went into his den,  
For well he knew the silly fly would soon be back again:  
So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,  
And set his table ready to dine upon the fly.  
Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing  
"Come hither, hither, pretty fly, with the pearl and silver wing:  
Your robes are green and purple; there's a crest upon your head;  
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead."

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little fly,  
Hearing his wily flattering words, came slowly flitting by.  
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew  
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue;  
Thinking only of her crested head — *poor foolish thing!* At last,  
Up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held her fast.  
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,  
Within his little parlor; but she ne'er came out again!

And now, dear little children, who may this story read,  
To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed;  
Unto an evil counselor close heart, and ear, and eye,  
And take a lesson from this tale of the Spider and the Fly.

**Note to Teacher**

Below is a sample of a completed class chart of “public notes”. In this type of group note taking, the teacher helps the class to decide what to record. Notes may take the form of words, illustrations from the book, drawings, or any combination of the three. Notes may be paraphrased or quoted. Refer to your public notes frequently. Drawing attention to the patterns in the chart will help students figure out how the Spider is able to trick the Spider into his web.

| <b>How does the Spider trick the Fly into his web?</b>        |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>How does the Spider try to trick the fly into his web?</b> | <b>What does the Fly say or do?</b> |
| Invites her to see cool things in his parlor                  | O no, no                            |
| Says she can rest in a comfortable bed                        | O no, no                            |
| Offers her yummy things to eat                                | O no, no                            |
| Tells her to look in the mirror to see how pretty she is      | I thank you, gentle sir             |
| Tells her that her wings and body and eyes are beautiful      | Comes nearer and nearer             |

**What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex?**

**1. Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your read-aloud in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile measure in this database.



Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 2-3 band | 420-820L  |
| 4-5 band | 740-1010L |

**2. Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

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| <p>The story has an overall message: “And take a lesson from this tale...”: Don’t let yourself be tricked by sweet, flattering words.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Meaning/Purpose</b></p> | <p>The poem takes the form of an alternating dialogue between Spider and Fly: “...said the Spider to the Fly.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Structure</b></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Language</b></p> <p>Figurative language: “close heart and ears and eyes”</p> <p>Old fashioned language: parlor, ne’er</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Knowledge Demands</b></p> <p>Some students may need background on what spiders eat and how they catch their food.</p>                |

**3. Reader and Task Considerations**

*What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?*

- The archaic and figurative language structures and vocabulary will be challenging. Support using repeated readings, questions to clarify word meanings and careful attention to how the illustrations and text connect. Build in frequent opportunities for drama to paraphrase text, and drawing to visualize complex sections.

*How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?*

- Many lines and images from this poem are iconic (“Come into my parlor...” “He wove a subtle web.”). Students familiar with this story and its language will have a basis for understanding expressions and imagery they will encounter later, in conversation and literature. The book also teaches an important lesson.

**4. Grade level**

*What grade does this book best belong in?*

- Grades 1 and 2

\*For more information on the qualitative dimensions of text complexity, visit [http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion\\_to\\_Qualitative\\_Scale\\_Features\\_Explained.pdf](http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf)