

# Classroom resources for **Midsummer's Mayhem**



by Rajani LaRocca



Reproducible Activity  
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# About the book



*Midsummer's Mayhem* is the story of 11-year-old Mimi, who wants to win a local baking contest to finally prove she's not the least talented member of her large Indian-American family. But she loses her best helper when her food writer father returns from a business trip mysteriously unable to tell the difference between delicious and disgusting food. Without his help, Mimi will never be able to bake something impressive enough to propel her to gastronomic fame like her celebrity chef idol, Puffy Fay.

Drawn into the woods behind her house by a strangely familiar song, Mimi meets Vik, a boy who brings her to parts of the forest she's never seen. Who knew there were banyan trees and wild boars in Massachusetts? Together they discover exotic ingredients and bake them into delectable and enchanting treats.

But as her dad acts stranger every day, and her siblings' romantic entanglements cause trouble in their town, Mimi begins to wonder whether the ingredients she and Vik found are somehow the cause of it all. She needs to use her skills, deductive and epicurean, to uncover what's happened. In the process, she learns that in life, as in baking, not everything is sweet. . .

## About the Author

Rajani LaRocca was born in India, raised in Kentucky, and now lives in the Boston area with her wonderful family and impossibly cute dog. She's loved books ever since she can remember. She spends her time writing novels and picture books, practicing medicine, and baking too many sweet treats. *MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM* (published June 2019) is her first novel. You can find out more about her at [www.RajaniLaRocca.com](http://www.RajaniLaRocca.com).

## Praise for *Midsummer's Mayhem*

"Loosely based on A Midsummer Night's Dream and inspired by TV shows like The Great British Baking Show, LaRocca's debut is original and compelling. The realistic characters and complex family dynamics augment the tightly knit plot, and the mouthwatering descriptions of food are guaranteed to make readers hungry...A delectable treat for food and literary connoisseurs alike." — *Kirkus, Starred Review*

"This delightful and delicious spin on Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream flows beautifully into a sensitive and thoughtful novel that addresses family dynamics and self-confidence alongside mouth-watering descriptions of food. Readers will relate to Mimi's attempts to stand out and find her place and will be thrilled by the magical baking. VERDICT: A first purchase for most libraries." — *School Library Journal*

An Indies Introduce Selection for Summer/Fall 2019 and an Indie Next Summer 2019 Selection

# About this guide

This guide is aligned with Common Core Standards for grades 4-8 with optional activities for each grade level. You will find pre-reading questions, questions for each chapter of the book, writing activities, and post-reading questions.

## **Pre-Reading Activities:**

Making connections between a visual presentation and text: (RL 4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7)

Expanding Vocabulary (RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4)

Determining Theme (RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2)

## **As You Read:**

Understanding Text and Drawing Inferences: (RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.6.1, RL.7.1, RL.8.1)

Determining Theme (RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2)

Examining Character and Setting (RL.4.3, RL.5.3, RL.6.3, RL.7.3, RL.8.3)

Expanding Vocabulary (RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4)

Considering Prose, Poetry, and Drama (RL.4.5, RL.5.5, RL.6.5, RL.7.5, RL.8.5)

Point of View (RL.4.6, RL.5.6, RL.6.6, RL.7.6, RL.8.6)

## **Figurative Language:**

Similes, Metaphors, and Figures of Speech (RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4)

## **Writing Activities:**

Expanding Vocabulary (RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4)

Understanding Text and Drawing Inferences: (RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.6.1, RL.7.1, RL.8.1)

Compare and Contrast Stories in Different Genres (RL.6.9, RL.7.9, RL.8.9)

## **Post-Reading Questions:**

Examining Character and Setting (RL.4.3, RL.5.3, RL.6.3, RL.7.3, RL.8.3)

Determining Theme (RL.4.2, RL.5.2, RL.6.2, RL.7.2, RL.8.2)

Understanding Text and Drawing Inferences: (RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.6.1, RL.7.1, RL.8.1)

Expanding Vocabulary (RL.4.4, RL.5.4, RL.6.4, RL.7.4, RL.8.4)

Comparing and Contrasting Stories in Different Genres (RL.6.9, RL.7.9, RL.8.9)

## **Themes in *Midsummer's Mayhem* include...**

Navigating family dynamics, including jealousy, love, and competition

Discovering and appreciating what makes you special

Fostering creativity

Appreciating the frantic fun of Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Perseverance, Growth Mindset

# Pre-reading activities



## **The Front Cover**

Take a look at the front cover of MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM, illustrated by Rachel Suggs. What does the cover tell you about the book? What kind of predictions can you make about the story? Do you recognize any of the food items, plants, or the bird?

What does the word "mayhem" mean? What does this imply about what might happen in this story?

## **The Jacket Description**

Read the story description on the inside jacket cover. Does this change your initial predictions about the story?

# Reading comprehension

## Chapter 1: The New Neighbors

1. Mimi wants to follow the song from the woods (p.1). What does she notice about it? Explain using specific details from the book.

2. We are introduced to Mimi and her three siblings—Jules, Henry, and Riya. What kinds of character traits do each of them have?

NAME	CHARACTER TRAITS	CONFLICT WITH
Mimi		
Jules		
Riya		
Henry		

3. Explain what's unusual about the town of Comity (pp. 7-8).

## **Chapter 2: The While Away Café**

4. What do you notice about Peaseblossom's speech? Why do you think she talks this way? What kind of pattern do you notice? What is this poetic form called?

For Grade 6 and up: Compare and contrast the speech patterns of Peaseblossom (pp. 15- 18), Mrs. T (pp. 18-25), the riddle regarding the contest (p.23), and lines from A Midsummer Night's Dream (p.42).

5. Describe Mrs. T's character traits (pp. 18-25).

## **Chapter 3: A Strange Homecoming**

6. Describe Mimi's relationship with her dad before and after his business trip (pp.27-38). How did he act in the past, and how is he behaving now?

## **Chapter 4: Practice Doesn't Make Perfect**

7. Mimi experiences "baker's block." What do you think this means? Have you ever felt blocked or stuck? What did you do about it?

8. How does Mimi feel when her siblings play music together? Why do you think she feels this way?

### **Chapter 5: Leaves of Green and Gold**

9. On pages 41-43, and 62-63, what does Mimi learn about Shakespeare's play A Midsummer Night's Dream? What kinds of mischief happens in the play?

10. What does Mimi want to happen when she goes to the While Away? What actually happens?

### **Chapter 6: Home**

11. Why doesn't Mrs. T like Mimi's entry? What does she want her to do?

12. Read pages 70-74 again. What does the dessert Mimi's mom makes mean to Mimi? How does she describe it?

### **Chapter 7: Into the Woods**

13. What's unusual about the book Mimi finds in her hangout in the woods? (p. 76)



14. Why do you think Mimi becomes friends with Vik so quickly?

### **Chapter 8: Honeysuckle Cookies**

15. What happens during dinner?

### **Chapter 9: Weird and Weirder**

16. What happens in the yard after dinner? Does it remind you of a situation Mimi has learned about in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

### **Chapter 10: A Time for Thyme**

17. Do you think Mimi's new baking idea is a better choice than her previous entry? Why or why not?

18. Summarize a story Vik reads from *The Book* in 4-5 sentences.

## **Chapter 11: Back at the While Away**

19. What is Mrs. T's reaction to Mimi's new entry for the contest? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
20. What do you think is wrong with Mimi's dad? Why doesn't anyone else seem to notice?

## **Chapter 12: The Song**

21. Why is Mimi excited about the announcement at the While Away?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
22. What does Mimi ask Vik in the woods? Is this a change for her?

## **Chapter 13: The Epiphany**

23. What does Mimi believe happened to Henry, Cole, and Fletcher? Do you think she's right? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 14: Mayhem Managed**

24. How does Mimi try to fix her mistake? Does it work? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 15: The Quest for the Remedy**

25. What beast does Mimi encounter in the woods, and how does she escape?

26. Does Mimi's solution work on Cole? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 16: The Worst Song Ever**

27. Why do Mimi and Vik think Henry's song is so terrible? Provide evidence from the text (pp. 191-193). Do you agree?

28. What do we learn about Cole, Jules, Riya, and Fletcher and how they feel about each other before and after the "honeysuckle madness?"

## **Chapter 17: On the Swing Set**

29. What is Mimi's new worry about her dad? What does she discover?

## **Chapter 18: A Review to Remember**

30. What do you predict will be the consequence of Mimi's dad's review of While Away?

## **Chapter 19: The Lullaby**

31. How does Mimi feel when she plays music with her siblings (pp. 221-224)? How does this compare with how she feels in Chapter 4 (p.46)?



32. What do the doctors think is wrong with Mimi's dad?  
Do you agree?

### **Chapter 20: The Goodbye**

33. What does Vik say to Mimi? Were you surprised? Why do you think he acted that way?

### **Chapter 21: Puffy Fay**

34. What does Mimi think of Puffy Fay? Does he say anything surprising?

### **Chapter 22: The Cheater**

35. What does Mimi realize about what she wants? Is meeting Puffy Fay enough for her?

### **Chapter 23: Flour and Flowers**

36. What mishaps happen to Mimi during the bakeoff, and what do you think is the cause of these mishaps?

37. What does Kiera's story about her brownies reveal about her? What about Mimi's story?

### **Chapter 24: The Betrayal**

38. Who is the mystery baker and how does this make Mimi feel?

### **Chapter 25: The Best Cupcakes**

39. How does Mimi feel about Kiera after the contest? How does this compare with how Mimi used to feel about Kiera?

### **Chapter 26: The Play**

40. What clues does Mimi pick up on during the play that indicate that something odd is going on in Comity?

41. What is the “key” that Mimi mentions at the end of the chapter? Do you know what it is?

### **Chapter 27: Questions and Answers**

42. What does the pitta do to help Mimi? Can you guess why?

43. Who is Vik? Did this surprise you? What clues can you find in the previous chapters that might have given you hints? (See pp. 42, 78-90, 92-96, 99-101, 103-115, 121-129, 151-155, 184-189, 191-201, 203-206, 225, 229-234, 274-276)

### **Chapter 28: The Invitation**

44. What hints can you find about Mrs. T's real identity in previous chapters? (See pp. 18-25, 41-43, 59, 65-67, 80-82, 122, 136-144, 255-260, 261-263, 269-271, 276-277, 280-281)

45. What does Mrs. T really want, and why?

### **Chapter 29: Heart's Work**

46. What does Mimi bake in this chapter to finally fix her dad? Does it work? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 30: Dreams and Reality**

47. What does Mimi bake in this chapter, and what is the result?

# Figurative language

Choose what type of figurative language is used in each quotation from *Midsummer's Mayhem*.

**Choices: simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, hyperbole, allusion, idiom, symbolism, imagery, alliteration, irony, sarcasm, pun, anaphora.**

“like an Aleppo pepper—striking and fragrant, but with a substantial kick.” (p.2).

“...in a low, melodious voice like a perfectly played oboe.” (p. 18)

“A beautiful young woman with a river of dark hair.” (p.18)

“...her smile looked like it could stop a war. Or start one.” (p.22)

“I didn't dare try to join them; I'd break the spell and ruin everything.” (p.46)

“It would have been like deflating a perfect souffle.” (p.46)

“If he were a baked treat, he'd be a seven-layer bar—the perfect combination of sweet and salty, exotic coconut and homey caramel, and supported by a good, strong, buttery shortbread crust.” (p.41)

“After a few minutes I crept out of the room, leaving my dejected-looking magazine on the sofa.” (p.46)

“The woods answered with noisy silence.” (p.49)



“...shaking like a flan, like a cup of gelatin. Like a leaf.” (p.64)

“It tasted like home.” (p.74)

“Humidity is the enemy of meringues...” (p.75)

“It had a gigantic central trunk and branches that reached down and became smaller trunks, like gnarled fingers grabbing the ground.” (p.78)

“He had the most unusual eyes I had ever seen. They were bright brown, with bursts of gold in the middle, like sunlight shining through honey.” (p.79)

“My heart inflated like a clafouti in the oven.” (p.84)

“Riya slunk in silently and seemed to suck all the sound out of the room.” (p.118)

“Oh, Mimi’s here! Let’s give a cheer.” The waitress rolled her heavy-lidded eyes. “Won’t win the contest, I sadly fear,” she said under her breath. (p.135)

“...her dress floating behind her like a cloud.” (p.137)

“She scrunched her nose like a rat” (p.146)

“...Vik played a harmony on his pipe, a counterpoint that meandered in and around the main melody like a vine.” (p.153)

“The song was a memory, and an invitation.” (p.153)

“The frozen treats reminded me of Jules—sweet and universally liked, if sometimes stiff and unyielding.” (p.158)

“...she leaped off the stage like a deer.” (p.163)

“Tart. Yes, that’s how it’s supposed to be. A tart tart, ha-ha.” (p.174)

“It sounded like the memory of all the creatures of the forest—birds and beasts, stems and plants, every growing thing. It sounded like an invitation.” (p.181)

“This had to work, for Henry’s own health, because he was making me want to kill him.” (p.193)

“Then, upside down, I saw Dad jog into our yard.” (p.204)

“I got lost in the music.” (p.221)

“I heard a lovely voice, meandering through the air like a vine.” (p.223)

“He looked like a rock star pirate chef.” (p.246)

“You don’t just say no to an enchanting woman like that.” (p.249)

“Dense balls of batter stared at me accusingly.” (p.265)

“My heart’s work. Red roses and pink, in tribute to them both.” (p.276)

“Everyone had forgotten about me. Even the woods.” (p.284)

“As the sun melted like an enormous sherbet ball...” (p.291)

“A breeze set the leaves to whispering.” (p.295)

“I set my intention. I knew the steps. I felt the rhythm of what I wanted. And then I baked my heart out.” (p.322)

“Salty and sour, spicy and bitter—it’s the combination of tastes that makes food delicious. And that’s what makes life worth savoring, too.” (p.324)

“...her beautiful dress was covered in sugar and spice.” (p.325)

“‘Though she be but little, she is fierce.’ Is she not, my lovely queen?” (p.326)

# Writing activities

1. Note the way Mimi describes the song from the woods (p.1), the scones she makes (pp. 55-56) and the lemon-lavender cupcakes (pp.264-269). What kinds of words does she use? Can you describe a favorite treat in a similar way?

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2. Mimi likes to bake in order to relax. What kind of things do you do when you want to relax or feel better?

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3. One of the themes of MIDSUMMER’S MAYHEM is not giving up on your goals in the face of setbacks. Can you find three examples where Mimi or another character acts in this way?

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4. For Grades 6 and up, or students familiar with A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Discuss three or more parallels/similarities between MIDSUMMER’S MAYHEM and A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

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# Post-reading questions

1. Mimi meets a pitta bird (p.10), and the bird visits in the woods many times throughout the book. Why do you think this happens? What do you think the bird represents?



2. Who is the main antagonist in MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM? Did you change your mind about who this was as you read?

3. Another theme of MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM is that intentions matter while you create something. Name at least three instances in which someone's intentions while doing something had a significant effect. Have you ever felt this way in your life?

4. What is Mimi's "deepest desire?" How does this change during the course of the book?

5. What role does music play in MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM? Name three or more examples of ways in which music is important to the story.

6. Think about the way "winning" and "losing" happen in MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM. Does Mimi's opinion about what it means to win or lose change over the course of the book?