

Once, in a faraway palace, there lived a beautiful princess. Her hair shone like golden beams of evening sunlight and her eyes twinkled like the diamonds which adorned her stepmother's crown. The princess's name was Allegra; it meant 'happy' and she wore it well.

From a young age, Allegra was a joy to all who knew her. She was only three months old when her mother was cruelly taken from her, leaving her father, the king, to bring her up alone. Allegra, having no real memories of her mother, delighted everyone who met her with her lively manner and her endearing stories. Allegra's father did a grand job of raising her and the two were extremely close. That is until he met Emilia.

Emilia was a failed merchant's daughter who had visited the palace, turning up uninvited dressed in rags and begging for an audience with the king. Once inside, she beguiled him with tales of her woes and platitudes about the king's generosity. It was true; the king was a very generous soul and perhaps rather vulnerable to exploitation.

Time passed and the king quickly became close to Emilia, who soon came to reside in the vast palace. After a brief courtship, the two were married, Emilia demanding the most opulent dress in which to flaunt her new-found status to her subordinates. Eventually the king started spending less and less time with Allegra in favour of keeping company with his wife. That's not to say that Emilia didn't spend time with Allegra – she did; it was inevitable, since the king often spent many weeks travelling and meeting his subjects. During these periods of absence, Allegra and Emilia were left alone. It was during these times that the atmosphere in the palace changed.

Everyone in the palace felt it; it was impossible not to feel the icy glares Emilia shot Allegra and the sharp words she spat at her. By this time, Allegra was a young teen and keen to ensure her father's happiness; after all, he'd done so much for her and she loved him dearly. So if that meant keeping peace with her stepmother, she would do it.

Whenever the king disappeared on one of his journeys, Allegra would take a deep breath in, knowing her life would be made almost unbearable by the imposter that was her stepmother. She'd be made to do every chore imaginable in less than half the time necessary, meaning she'd have to forego meals and sleep in order to complete the tasks. She was exhausted. She tried to catch a few naps here and there but if she were caught, she'd be made to do even more work and be locked in her room as soon as she had finished.

And yet, whenever her father returned, she placed her smile back on her face, let her heart finally beat again with love and never, ever disclosed her misery. Her father would hand over the gifts he'd been instructed to obtain for his wife, along with a small but cherished gift for Allegra. Life would return to normal and her stepmother would adjust her behaviour so the king's trust and love for her would continue to grow.

And so, life continued this way for several years, Emilia demanding ever more extravagant gifts on his homecoming and Allegra wishing for nothing but her father's safe return.

One day, the king didn't return from his journey. Allegra waited patiently, worrying for her father's safety. Emilia waited impatiently, snapping at everyone in the palace, resenting the king for his tardiness and greedily anticipating the gifts he was due to deliver.

But, sadly for Allegra, the king never arrived.

Match the part of the beach with an activity suggested in the text.

tardiness

display something to provoke admiration or envy

disclosed

to do without

subordinates

allowed something to be known

flaunt

people in a lower rank or position

forego

lateness

What would happen if Emilia caught Allegra having naps in between doing chores?

Compare the characters of Allegra and Emilia. Explain how they are different, using evidence from the text to support your opinions.

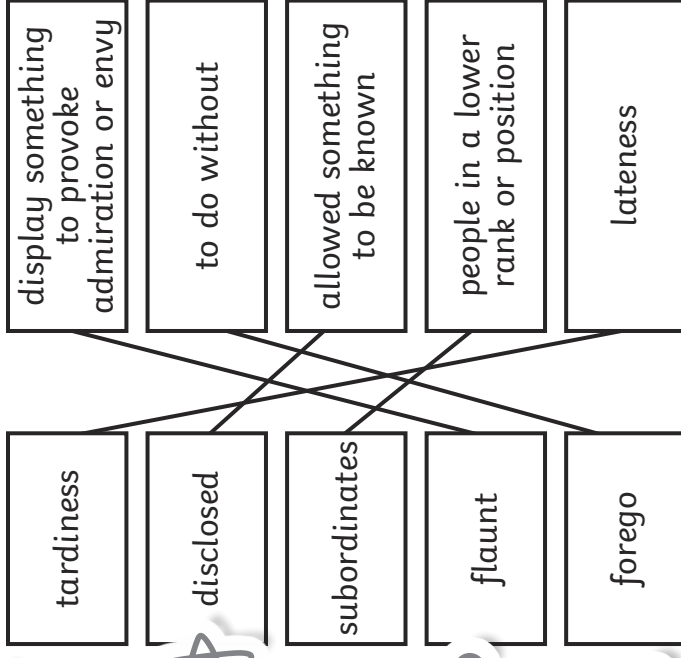
It was true; the king was a very generous soul and perhaps rather vulnerable to exploitation.

What does 'vulnerable to exploitation' mean?

What genre of text do you think this is? Why?

Using what you know about the characters and the genre, explain what you think will happen next.

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Compare the characters of Allegra and Emilia. Explain how they are different, using evidence from the text to support your opinions.

Allegra is a happy princess and is loved by her father, the king. She does not want gifts from her father; she is just happy that he returns safely from his journeys, whereas Emilia is only thinking about the gifts and she resents him for being late.

Allegra is thoughtful: she thinks about her father's feelings and decides not to let him know how his wife is treating her. She knows that her stepmother is a bad person - an 'imposter' who treats Allegra poorly. But she also knows that her father loves Emilia and Emilia makes him happy and she wants to see her father happy.

Emilia is not bothered about anyone's happiness but her own and she uses manipulation to get what she wants. It says she beguiles him with tales of her woes and platitudes about his generosity, knowing he'll fall for it.

It was true; the king was a very generous soul and perhaps rather vulnerable to exploitation.

What does 'vulnerable to exploitation' mean?

It means that the king was unable to or didn't know how to protect himself from harm or from being treated badly in order for someone else to benefit. This means he does not really realise that Emilia is using him for her own gain.

What genre of text do you think this is? Why?

This is a fairy tale. It has a vague setting of a palace far away. There are no details about when the story takes place. Royalty is often used in fairy tales. There are good characters (Allegra and her father) and an evil stepmother.

Using what you know about the characters and the genre, explain what you think will happen next.

Answers will vary. For example:

- I think Allegra will think of a way of taking control now her dad isn't around and she doesn't need to ensure his happiness.
- I think Emilia will try to get rid of Allegra so that she can keep the palace and all of the riches for herself.
- I think that someone magical will arrive to help Allegra teach Emilia a lesson.

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