

A Reading Guide for Parents

PRINCESS PERSEPHONE LOSES THE CASTLE

by Sheila Bair

 Ages: 7+



If you're borrowing money —read the fine print. This clever tale turns a cold castle into a warm lesson on smart borrowing.

RADIX

Story Snapshot



Real-Life Tip

This book introduces complex ideas—like mortgages, high-interest loans, and fine print—in a kid-friendly, rhyming format. It shows how reading, asking questions, and spotting red flags can protect you from costly mistakes.



Princess Persephone is tired of living in a freezing ice castle and jumps at the offer of \$1 million siding from a smooth-talking salesman, Aluminum Jim. He offers financing with easy monthly payments, but she signs a 50-page contract without reading it—despite warnings from her dragon, Spice. When her \$33,000 monthly bill arrives, she can't pay. After ignoring the debt, she loses her castle. Eventually, Persephone learns the loan was unfair and predatory—and with help from a fairness commission, she gets her castle back. From then on, she reads every contract and becomes a lawyer, focused on predatory lending.

Conversation Starters

Before Reading:

- What do you think a loan is?
- Have you ever heard someone say, 'read the fine print'?

While Reading:

- Why didn't Persephone read the contract?
- Do you think it's fair to charge so much interest?

After Reading:

- What mistakes did Persephone make?
- How did the interest and fees make her loan much more expensive?
- Why is it important to understand what you're agreeing to?
- What would you have done if you were Persephone?
- What's the difference between a fair loan and a tricky one?
- Why do you think she became a lawyer in the end?



Key Themes



Read Before You Sign

Persephone signs a long contract without reading it and pays the price. Kids learn that understanding a deal is just as important as agreeing to one—and it's okay to ask for help first.



Not All Loans Are Equal

The loan Persephone takes has sky-high interest and hidden fees. This introduces the concept that **how** you borrow money matters—especially the interest rate and repayment terms.



Predatory Lending Warning Signs

A flashy offer, a pushy seller, and fine print are red flags. The book helps kids recognize that not all deals are fair, and some lenders take advantage of those who don't ask questions.



Ask Questions & Get Advice

Spice the dragon is a voice of reason—encouraging caution and questions. Kids are reminded that asking for advice can be a smart move, especially when a deal seems too good to be true.

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Talk about it with your kids

- What does it mean to borrow money—and why do people do it?
- How can borrowing help you when it's done right?
- Why do some lenders make borrowing sound easier than it is?
- What's a safe interest rate vs. a risky one?
- Why do contracts exist—and who should help you understand them?
- What are some questions to ask before agreeing to something big?



Activities to try at home

- **Write Your Own Silly Contract:** Create a funny agreement with your child (“You must feed the dragon cookies every day!”). Then talk about why it’s important to read everything before signing.
- **Loan Calculator Game:** Use simple math to show how interest adds up (e.g., “If you borrow \$10 and pay back \$2 each month, how much will it cost with no interest vs. 20% interest?”).
- **Spot the Red Flags Challenge:** Look at ads and identify what seems “too good to be true” (hidden fees, vague terms, “limited time only” language).
- **Ask Before You Agree Roleplay:** Practice saying: “Can you explain that?” or “Can I read it first?” to build confidence in asking questions before signing anything.

Family Money Moments

Mini Challenge: Contract Detective

Write a fun, kid-level “contract” for a family chore or privilege (e.g., “You’ll get 30 minutes of screen time after feeding the dog for 3 days”). Hide silly or tricky clauses in the fine print (“...if the moon is full”). Challenge your child to read it carefully and catch anything odd.

This encourages reading details, asking questions, and recognizing why terms matter.

Daily Practice Tip:

Use everyday agreements (like app downloads or school permission slips) to pause and say, “Let’s read this together first.” It normalizes taking time to understand terms.

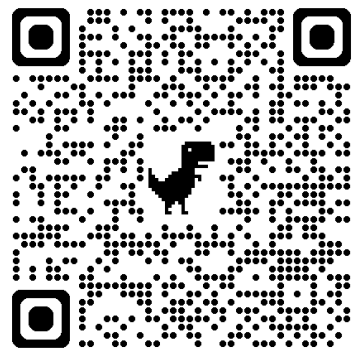


Want more money moments?



See the full book list

We've curated a full list of age-appropriate, story-driven books to help kids build a strong foundation in financial confidence.



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