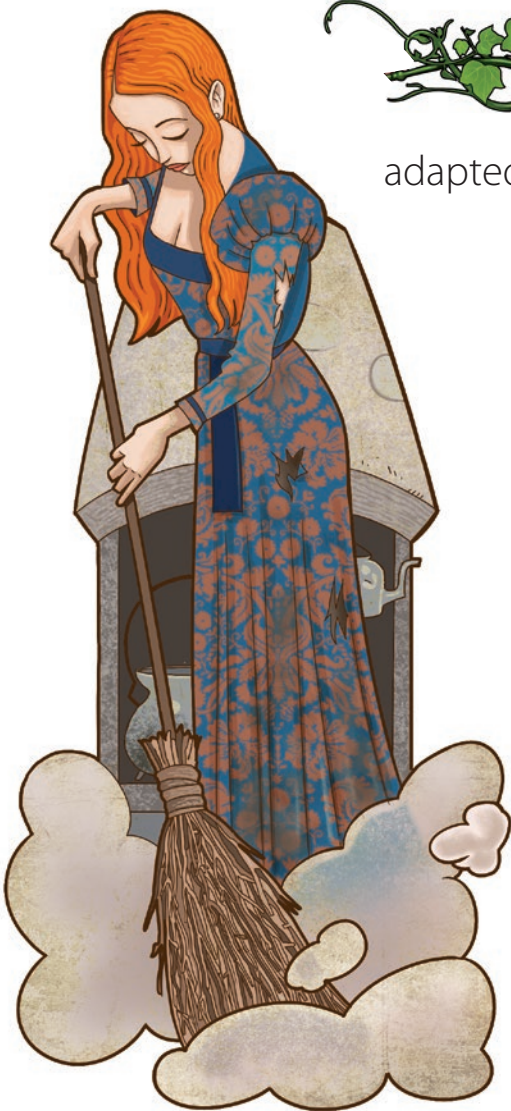


# The Twelve Months



adapted by Judy Rosenbaum *Based on a Czech fairy tale*



Marta lived with her stepsister, Vanda, and her stepmother. Marta was not treated well at all. She did all the housework. Vanda never had to do anything.

One December day, Vanda said, “I want strawberries. Go out and get me some!”

Marta didn’t know what to do. Nothing grew in winter! Still, she went to look in the woods. She carried some bread for her lunch.

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## READ & RESPOND

### Story Structure

**Who is the main character in the story?**

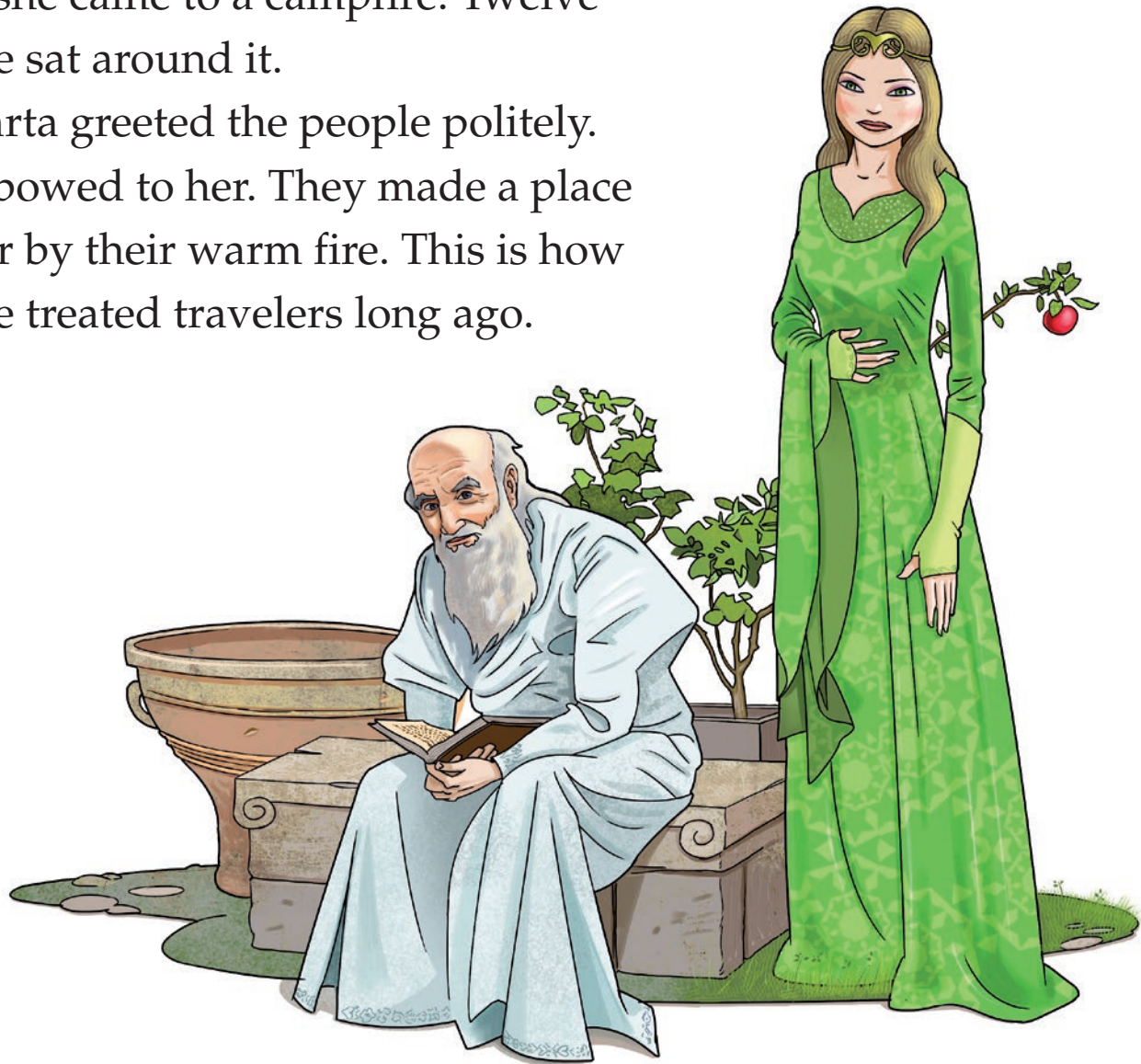
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Snow was on the ground. The trees were bare. Marta walked and walked. Then she came to a campfire. Twelve people sat around it.

Marta greeted the people politely. They bowed to her. They made a place for her by their warm fire. This is how people treated travelers long ago.



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### READ & RESPOND

Make Connections

**How many people were around the campfire?**  
**What else do you know that has this number?**

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Marta shared her bread with the strangers. The oldest man asked why she was in the woods. She explained her task.

The oldest man said, “June, help her.” A woman pointed at the ground. Right away, a strawberry plant sprouted up through the snow. Soon, it had ripe, red berries.

Now Marta knew these people were not ordinary. They were the Twelve Months! The oldest man was December. The woman who made the strawberries grow was the month of June.

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## READ & RESPOND

Story Structure

**What does Marta learn about the people by the campfire?**

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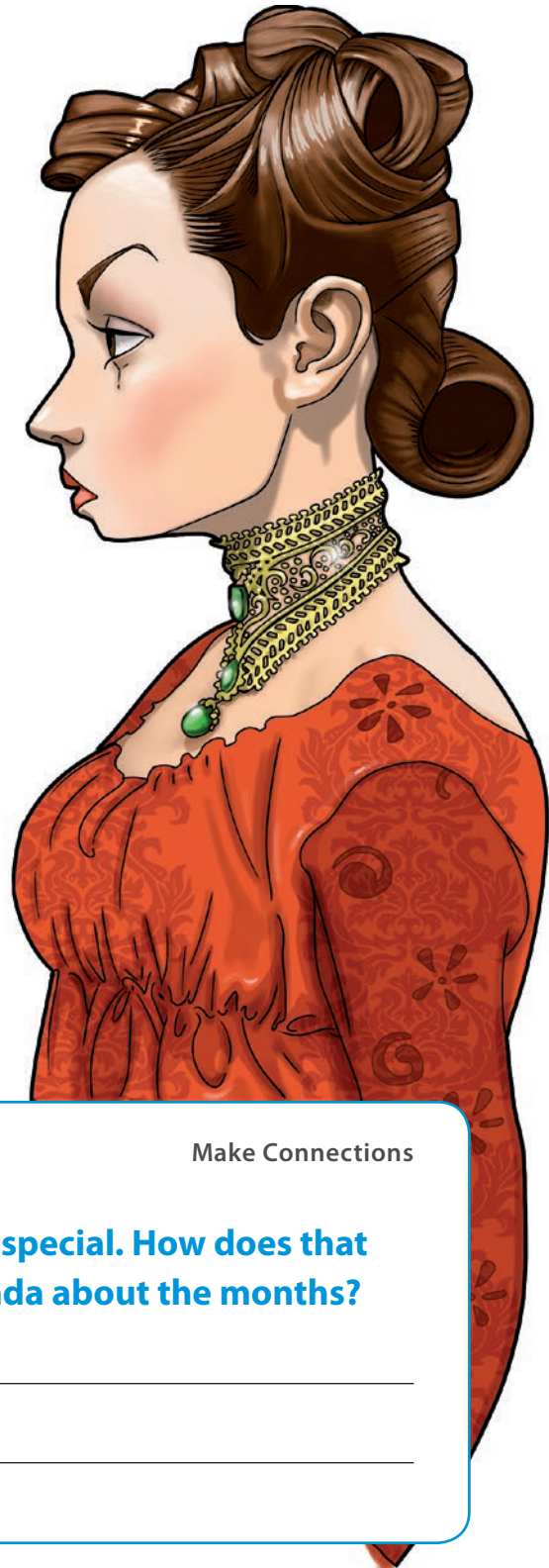




Marta was overjoyed. She picked the berries. “Thank you!” she said.

Vanda met Marta at the door of their home. She grabbed the berries and ate them all. Then the questions started. “Where did you get these? Who gave them to you? Why didn’t you bring more?”

Marta did not tell Vanda about the Months. She just said, “The berries were growing in the woods.”



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### READ & RESPOND

Make Connections

**Think about a time you discovered something special. How does that help you understand why Marta didn't tell Vanda about the months?**

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The next day, Marta's stepmother said, "I want roses."

Marta got ready to go. After she had left, Vanda said, "Mama, I don't trust Marta. I'm sure she has concealed something out in the woods. I think she has hidden something valuable, and I want it! I'll look for the flowers myself."

Vanda put on her warm coat. She carried a basket of food for herself.

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## READ & RESPOND

### Story Structure

**Why does Vanda follow Marta into the woods?**

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It was easy to follow Marta's tracks in the snow. Soon Vanda saw the twelve people around the campfire. She didn't see any strawberries growing. So she didn't think she had reached the right place.

"Hello, traveler. What are you doing out on this cold day?" asked one of the men. Vanda didn't know it, but he was September.

"None of your business," Vanda said rudely. Then she walked away. She didn't share any of her food.



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### READ & RESPOND

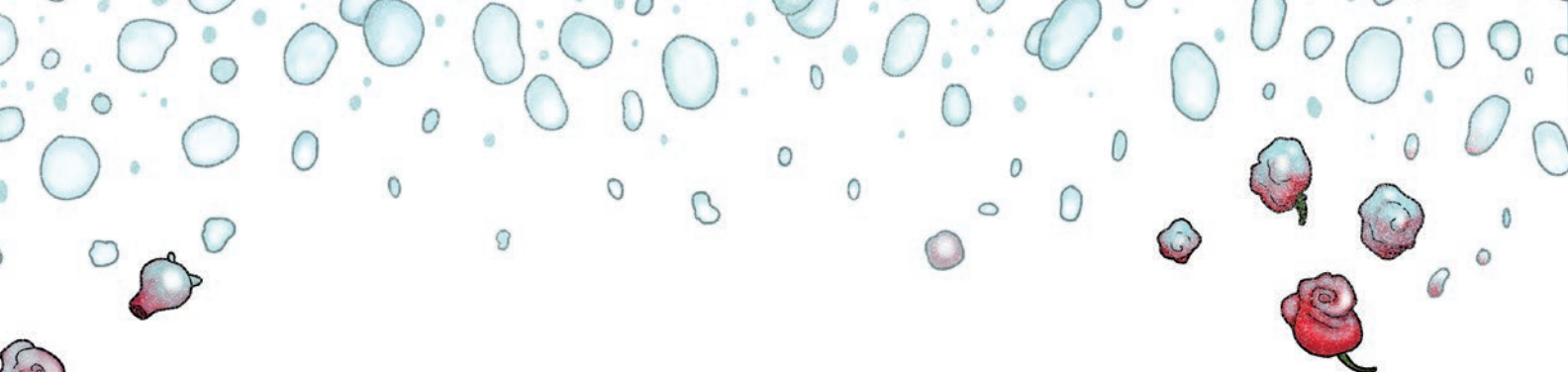
Story Structure

**What does Vanda see after she follows the tracks?**

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December raised his hand. Heavy snow began to fall. It took Vanda hours to get home. Of course, she never found any roses.

A week later, Marta left the house for good. She went away to find a better life. She left two things behind. One was a note saying goodbye. The other was a bunch of roses.

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## READ & RESPOND

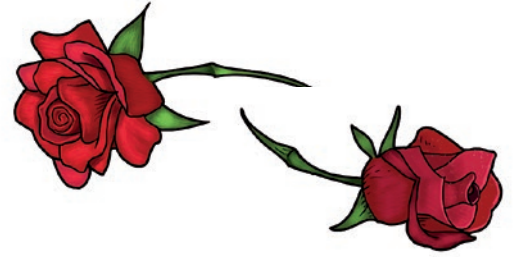
Make Connections

**Does this story remind you of any other stories you know?**  
**What kind of story is this?**

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# Reread and Respond



- 1** What is the first thing that Marta must find in the woods?

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## Hint

For clues, see page 234.

- 2** What different things do June and December cause to happen?

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## Hint

For clues, see pages 236 and 240.

- 3** What does December think of Vanda? How do you know?

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## Hint

For clues, see pages 239 and 240.