How is it possible that twelve princesses each wear out their shoes every single night? Who will solve the mystery of the tired princesses and their tattered shoes? Preschoolers will enjoy this puzzling fairy tale with a surprise ending.

Meet the Writer

Vicky Shiotsu
Like the brave little duck in her favorite fairy tale, The Ugly Duckling, children’s author Vicky Shiotsu followed her dreams, leaving her native British Columbia for Los Angeles. Vicky recalls biking to the library each week as a child to pick up a new volume of fairy tales. Now enjoying a fulfilling writing career, she loved penning these new takes on her old favorites.

Meet the Illustrator

Livia Coloji
It’s difficult for the Romanian illustrator, Livia Coloji, to choose a favorite fairy tale—from Hansel and Gretel to The Giant Turnip and Baba Yaga, sweet or scary, she loves them all. A big fan of mysteries, Livia especially loves the way the soldier discovered the secret of the ruined shoes in The Twelve Dancing Princesses!
Reading aloud to your child is fun for you both. Plus, it’s the best way to encourage a lifelong love of reading and promote the skills necessary for school success. Here are some tips.

**Begin at the Beginning**
- Set aside a special time to read aloud each day and stick to it.
- Choose a comfortable spot: the couch, your child’s bed, a picnic blanket under a shady tree, a “reading hideaway” created by throwing a sheet over the table, etc.
- Vary the reading materials: different genres (fairy tales, fiction, non-fiction, poetry), children’s magazines on topics from nature to sports, joke and riddle books, newspapers and comics, etc.
- Invite your child to help plan your reading routine.

**Experience the Fun**
- Read slowly and with expression. Use different character voices.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Stop to answer your child’s questions. Discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Encourage your child to chime in on repetitive phrases, complete rhymes, and predict what might happen next.
- Follow the words with your finger to reinforce important reading basics, such as text is read from left to right.

**A Family Library**
Your neighborhood library is a treasure! But a home library demonstrates the value of books to your family. Used book stores, garage sales, and flea markets are all great places to pick up inexpensive books that your family will treasure for years!

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Here are some hands-on activities to spark enthusiasm for learning and get your child excited about reading.

**Let’s Dance**
Play different types of music from rock to reggae and dance! Be sure to play some music appropriate for your child to bow, twirl, and pirouette to his or her heart’s content.

**Shoes, Shoes, Shoes!**
Gather six or more pairs of shoes from family members. The more pairs you can gather, the better. Then, work with your child to categorize the shoes in different ways: color, size, material, laces or buckles, heels or flats, etc.

**Leaf Rubbings**
In the story, the soldier collects leaves from trees of silver, gold, and diamonds. Take a leaf collecting walk in your neighborhood to gather several different types of leaves. Provide lightweight paper, such as copier paper, and peeled crayons in different colors. Tape the leaves to a flat surface with the veined side of the leaf facing upwards. Show your child how to lay the paper over the leaf and use the side of the crayons to take a rubbing of the pattern formed by the leaf’s veins. When you have rubbings of the different leaves, discuss the patterns, noting similarities and differences.
Once, there was a king who had twelve beautiful daughters. Every night, the princesses slept in one large room. Every morning, they woke up tired with their shoes full of holes.

The king was puzzled. He proclaimed that any man who could discover the secret could marry one of the princesses. Many men tried, but failed.
A soldier decided to try too. On his way, he met an old woman.

“Do not drink anything the princesses give you,” she warned. “And you must pretend to fall asleep at night.”

She gave him a cloak and said, “This will make you invisible. You will find it useful.” The soldier thanked the woman and left.
When the soldier reached the castle, he was led into a room next to that of the princesses. Soon after, the eldest princess came in with a cup of tea. The soldier pretended to drink. Then, he lay down on the bed and started to snore.
When the princesses heard the snoring, they quickly changed into their finest dresses.

The youngest said, “I don’t know why, but I feel something is not right.”

“Don’t be silly,” said the eldest. Then, she clapped her hands, and her bed sank into the floor.
A tunnel appeared, and the princesses entered. The soldier put on his cloak and followed them. As he did, he stepped on the gown of the youngest princess.

The princess cried out, “Someone stepped on my gown!”

“Nonsense!” said the eldest as she led the way.
Soon, they reached a group of silvery trees. The soldier snapped off a leaf.
The youngest princess said, “Did you hear that?”
“You’re imagining things,” laughed the eldest.

Next, they passed trees of gold, and then trees of diamonds. Each time, the soldier broke off a leaf and kept it.
The princesses came to a lake where twelve princes waited for them in twelve boats. The soldier climbed into the boat with the youngest princess.

The princes rowed across the lake to a castle filled with light and music.
Everyone went into the castle and started to dance. The soldier danced too. On and on they danced. By morning, the shoes of the princesses were all worn out.

The princes rowed the princesses back across the lake and promised to meet them the next night.
The soldier ran ahead of the princesses so they would find him asleep when they returned. When they heard him snoring, they said, “It is safe.”

The princesses took off their shoes. They put away their fine dresses and went to bed.
In the morning, the soldier said nothing about what he had seen. For two more nights, he followed the princesses to the secret castle.

On the last night, the soldier carried away a golden cup.
The next day, the king called for the soldier. The soldier told him all that had happened. Then, he took out the three leaves and the golden cup.

When the princesses saw that the soldier knew their secret, they told their father the truth.
The soldier chose the eldest princess for his wife. She was happy to marry such a clever man. At their wedding, everyone danced and danced—even the king!