

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Little Prince

by

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Book Information

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, The Little Prince

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This enchanting fable tells the story of a pilot downed in the Sahara and a boy from outer space who teaches him the meaning of life.

Award: NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

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Main Characters

businessman a man consumed with owning stars

conceited man a man who is obsessed with being admired by others

flower a rose on the little prince's planet who is filled with pride

fox an animal who tells the little prince the secret of what is important in life

geographer a scholar who records information about physical features of planets but does not explore

king a man who believes he reigns over the universe

lamplighter a man who is in charge of lighting the lamp on a planet the little prince visits

little prince a small prince who explores the universe and finds the importance of life

narrator the adult who tells the story of his experience with the little prince

tippler an alcoholic who drinks to forget his shame of drinking

Vocabulary

ephemeral lasting for a brief time; temporary

insubordination the act of refusing authority

intoxicated made drunk by alcohol

tippler a person who consumes alcohol excessively

Synopsis

The Little Prince begins with the narrator's description of an event from his childhood. The narrator recalls that when he was six years old, he drew a picture of a boa constrictor eating an elephant. When he showed the picture to adults, they saw it as a hat. When he showed them Drawing Number Two, also a boa eating an elephant, they advised him to stop drawing and concentrate on things that matter, like math and grammar. From that point on, the narrator lives his life alone, until he meets the little prince.

When the narrator has a plane accident in the Sahara Desert, he is confronted by a very small person, the Little Prince, who demands the narrator draw him a picture of a sheep. After several tries the narrator gives up and draws a picture of a box. He claims the box contains a very small sheep. The little prince is pleased and soon after begins to relate his story to the narrator.

Before he came to Earth, the little prince lived on his own tiny planet that had two active volcanoes and one inactive one. Every day the little prince tended to his flower, and each week he cleaned out all three volcanoes. The little prince began to doubt his pride-filled flower, however, and decided to leave his planet.

The little prince visited several planets on his journey. On one planet, he met a king who claimed to rule over everything. The king first attempted to make the little prince his Minister of Justice and then his ambassador. On the next planet, the little prince met a conceited man. The man was only concerned with what others thought of him. Consequently, he

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wanted the prince to say, "I admire you."

The next planet was inhabited by a tippler. The man claimed to drink to forget his shame about drinking. When the little prince reached the next planet, he met a businessman who was obsessed with counting stars. The man claimed he owned the stars, and the little prince questioned the necessity of his actions. The prince told the businessman that in order to own something, one must be of use to that which one owns. Since the businessman is of no use to the stars, how could he possibly own them?

Next, the little prince met the lamplighter. It was the lamplighter's job to keep the lamp lit on his planet. The man never had any rest because the days of his planet were very short. The little prince made a suggestion that would allow the man rest, yet the man continued his job.

Finally, the little prince met the geographer, who explained that he did not know anything about his own planet because geographers were too important to explore. The geographer explained the meaning of the word "ephemeral" and the little prince began to worry about the frailty of his little flower.

When the little prince reached Earth, he met a fox who shared a secret of life: "what is essential is invisible to the eye." When the prince finally meets the narrator, he imparts this advice to him and then decides to go back to his own planet. The narrator is saddened by his friend's departure, but is always reminded of the little prince when he looks up and listens to the stars laugh.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

When the geographer explains the meaning of "ephemeral," why does the little prince begin to worry about his flower?

The little prince realizes the flower is much more fragile than he thought. He realizes her four thorns are not much protection against danger. He worries that without his protection, she might not be able to defend herself against danger.

Literary Analysis

Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from the narrator's point of view rather than the little prince's?

The author probably chose to use the narrator to tell the story instead of the little prince, because the moral of the story is directed at the people on earth. The little prince imparts the wisdom he learned from the flower and the fox to the narrator. As the narrator begins to understand the secret of life's importance, so does the reader.

Inferential Comprehension

At the end of this story, the narrator is concerned that he forgot to draw the strap for the sheep's muzzle. He is worried that the sheep will eat the flower. Do you think the sheep will eat the flower? Why or why not?

Students' answers will vary. Some may answer that the little prince will keep a vigilant watch on both the flower and the sheep and prevent any harm from coming to the flower. However, the little prince needs to rest at some point, so perhaps he will train the sheep to stay away from the flower or devise an effective restraint.

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Constructing Meaning

Personification is the literary device which gives human characteristics to non-human objects. *The Little Prince* has several instances of personification. List some examples and explain their importance to the story.

The flower's human qualities become apparent in the following quote: She "was not satisfied to complete the preparations for her beauty in the shelter of her green chamber. She chose her colors with the greatest care. She dressed herself slowly." Human traits are also revealed when the fox speaks to the Little Prince and asks him to tame him. The author seems to personify non-human characters in order to emphasize human qualities such as wisdom, evil, and pride.

ask your students to write a short response on how it feels to miss something.

Responding to Literature The little prince is responsible for keeping his planet clean. He is also responsible for the welfare of his little flower. Ask your students for their definition of responsibility. Have them write a short essay about some of the responsibilities they have at school and at home.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors The fox explains "rites" to the little prince. He describes how the hunters dance with the village girls every Thursday, so he gets a day of rest from them. He explains that rites "are what make one day different from other days." Ask your students to identify and discuss some rites in past history or modern society. Then ask them to write a paragraph describing a rite they have in their family.

Comparing and Contrasting Each of the characters the little prince meets has distinct qualities. Some are self-serving, others impart wisdom. Have your students list all the characters in the novel and write a brief description of each character. Then ask the students to create a short monologue based on a character of their choosing. Have the students present to the class. Discuss the similarities and differences of each of the characters.

Recognizing Feelings After the little prince's conversation with the geographer, the prince begins to miss his home. Ask your students to think of an object or place they miss that means a lot to them. Have them create a list of all the things they miss about this place or object. Then,