

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth? by Louis Sachar

Book Information

Louis Sachar, Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth?

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Interest Level: LG

Marvin believes he's really a lost prince who was kidnapped at birth.

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Main Characters

Casey Hapleton one of Marvin's classmates

Clarence the meanest kid in Marvin's class; he is usually mean to Marvin but starts to act differently when he thinks Marvin is a prince

Jacob Redpost Marvin's older brother, who is eleven years old

Jennifer the woman who answers the phone when Marvin calls to speak to the King of Shampoo; she is also the woman behind the desk when Marvin goes for his blood test; she likes Marvin because he is polite

Linzy Redpost Marvin's little sister; she cries when she thinks Marvin is dead

Marvin Redpost a nine-year-old boy with red hair and blue eyes; he thinks he is the Lost Prince of Shampoo

Mr. Redpost (Dad) Marvin's dad

Mrs. Redpost (Mom) Marvin's mother

Nick Tuffle one of Marvin's best friends, who is brave except when it comes to Stuart's dog

Stuart Albright one of Marvin's best friends, who Marvin thinks is smart; he has a little dog named Fluffy

Vocabulary

accent pronunciation; a way of speaking

former belonging to an earlier time

haze an unclear memory

logical reasonable

odds chances; the probability of a certain thing happening

polo a game played on horseback

Synopsis

Marvin, a nine-year-old boy, writes a report on an article his class read about the King of Shampoo's lost son. The lost prince is the same age as Marvin and has red hair and blue eyes just as Marvin does. After school, Marvin and his friends, Nick and Stuart, go to Stuart's house. When Nick and Stuart squabble over Stuart's dog, Marvin tells them he thinks that his parents picked the wrong baby, and they're not really his parents. He doesn't actually believe this, but he wants to keep his friends from fighting. Stuart jumps to the conclusion that Marvin is the King of Shampoo's lost son. Together, the three friends concoct a story to explain how Marvin could be the missing Prince Robert. Stuart thinks the Redposts might even be the kidnappers.

When Marvin goes home from Stuart's house, his mom is mad because he hadn't called to tell her where he was. She wants him to finish his homework because his grandparents are coming to visit. When his homework is done, Marvin goes downstairs to talk to his father. He asks his dad if he was adopted. Although his dad tells him that he wasn't, Marvin continues to pester his dad with questions about his birth. Marvin's grandparents arrive, but Marvin has become interested in the news. The King of Shampoo is on television. He asks anyone who might be Prince Robert to call. Mr. Redpost turns off the television at this point. Marvin's grandmother makes a big fuss over how Linzy looks like her mother, and Jacob looks like his father. She tells Marvin that he looks like them both. He thinks she really means he doesn't look like either of them. He is becoming convinced that he

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really is the prince because he looks like the King of Shampoo.

At school the next day, Marvin finds out that Nick has told everyone that he is the Prince of Shampoo. He and his classmates come up with plausible answers to their teacher's questions about how he could be the prince. One classmate suggests that the real Marvin Redpost is dead and that the hospital gave Mr. and Mrs. Redpost the kidnapped prince instead. It makes Marvin sad to think that the real Marvin Redpost is dead. Stuart gives Marvin the number to call if he thinks he is the prince. After school, Nick and Stuart go home with Marvin, and Marvin makes the phone call. He is told to go to the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C., for a blood test.

At dinner that night, Marvin breaks the news to his family that he is the lost Prince of Shampoo. Mrs. Redpost, as Marvin now refers to her, agrees to take him to the hotel for the blood test.

The next day Marvin goes to the Watergate Hotel for the blood test. He sees a lot of boys with red hair. He sees a nasty woman forcing her son to have the blood test even though the boy says he is not the prince. Marvin finds out from a woman at the desk that Prince Robert has to have blood type O negative. Any boy with blood type O negative will take a second, more complicated, blood test to determine for certain if the boy is really Prince Robert.

When Marvin's blood test comes back as O negative, he figures he must be the prince. Then he begins to think about his family and suddenly remembers something. The King of Shampoo spoke with a weird accent on television. He decides he can't be Prince Robert because he doesn't have an accent. Marvin decides not to take the second blood test. When his mother, brother and sister come to pick him up, he tells them that Marvin Redpost isn't dead. Later, he realizes that he is special because he is the one and only Marvin Redpost.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Describe what happened between the boy named Arnold and his mother at the Watergate Hotel.

The boy's mother was dragging him across the lobby as he shouted that he didn't want to go. She yelled at him, and he cried. He insisted that he wasn't Prince Robert. She told him to shut up. She forced him onto the elevator and then dragged him into the room with the other boys. Later, she shouted at him because it turned out that he wasn't the prince. He kept saying he was sorry.

Literary Analysis

Tell about one part of *Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth?* that you think the author wanted to be funny.

Answers will vary, but may include Stuart's theory on Marvin's kidnapping, the name of the King of Shampoo, or Marvin's explanation of his kidnapping to his teacher. Other funny parts might be Marvin's conversation on the phone with Jennifer and the way Marvin broke the news to his family at the dinner table.

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Inferential Comprehension

As Marvin looked at the nasty woman and her son, he was glad that Mrs. Redpost was not like that woman. Explain how Mrs. Redpost and the nasty woman were different.

The nasty woman forced her son Arnold to go to the hotel for a blood test even though she knew he wasn't the prince. Mrs. Redpost took Marvin because he asked, even though she knew he wasn't the prince. She spoke kindly to Marvin and stuck up for him in the elevator. The nasty woman was constantly saying mean things to her son. When the blood test proved that Arnold wasn't the prince, the nasty woman asked him, "Can't you ever do anything right?" Marvin remembered his mother being very patient with him when he was learning to ice-skate, even though they both fell down a lot. When Marvin told his mother that he wasn't the prince, she said she was sorry because she thought he was disappointed.

Constructing Meaning

Name at least three things that Marvin did that showed he thought Jennifer was really a duchess.

He didn't laugh when she told him she was Lady Jennifer, Duchess of Bathwater. He called her Lady Jennifer on the phone. He told his parents that he had spoken to Lady Jennifer, Duchess of Bathwater on the phone. When he met Jennifer, he called her Lady Jennifer and bowed to her.

Teachable Skills

Making Predictions In the story, Marvin decides not to take the second blood test. He decides he is special because he is the only Marvin Redpost. Have the students imagine that Marvin took the second blood test and found out that he actually was Prince Robert. Have them write the new ending and then brainstorm ideas for a sequel based on the new ending.

Responding to Literature Clarence is described as the meanest kid in Marvin's class. Ask the children if they know someone like Clarence. Without putting anyone on the spot, talk with the

students about ways they can deal with bullies. Perhaps the school guidance counselor could come in to talk on this topic. Students could also write about a time they were bullied by someone and how they dealt with it.

Identifying Persuasive Language The King of Shampoo appeared on television to make an appeal to his son to return to his rightful place as the prince. Discuss with the students that the King could also have placed ads in the paper or had posters hung in public places. Have the students write a newspaper ad or make a poster explaining what people should do if they thought they knew anyone who might be the prince. Have them include a phone number, the name of the contact person and the place they should go for a meeting. Students might also include a possible description of the prince.

Understanding Sequence Work together as a class to list the main events of the story. Create a time line, placing the events in their proper sequence. Students may want to illustrate certain events and place their drawings along the time line.