

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne

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## Book Information

A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh  
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Book Level: 4.6  
Interest Level: MG

Winnie-the-Pooh and all his friends delight readers with their adventurous exploits.

**Award:** SLJ Best Book

**Topics:** Animals, Bears; Fairy Tales, Fairy Tales (All); Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5

## Main Characters

Christopher Robin the gentle little boy who watches over Pooh and the other animals and often joins in their adventures

Edward Bear or "Winnie-the-Pooh" the "Bear of Little Brain," who lives to eat honey and is dearly loved by Christopher Robin

Eeyore the pessimistic donkey who thinks that no one cares about him; Pooh gives him a birthday party

Kanga the protective mother of Roo; she constantly watches over him to keep him out of trouble

Owl the know-it-all owl who bores the animals with long stories; the animals often come to him for help and assistance in reading and writing

Piglet the nervous little pig who spends a lot of time with Pooh

Rabbit the judgmental rabbit who is annoyed when Pooh eats all his honey and then gets stuck in his doorway

Roo the adventurous young kangaroo who is kidnapped by Rabbit and later falls into a pool

## Vocabulary

**anecdote** a short story

**deceive** to fool or lie to

**gorse-bush** a small thorny shrub also known as furze

**marmalade** a very thick jelly with fruit chunks, often made of oranges

**pathetic** very sad or inadequate

**soothingly** in a comforting or calming manner

**spinney** a small grove of trees

## Synopsis

Christopher Robin's father amuses Christopher by telling stories about Christopher's stuffed bear, Winnie-the-Pooh. In Winnie-the-Pooh's first adventure, he tries to get honey out of a tree. After falling out of the tree, Pooh borrows a balloon to float up to the bee's nest, thinking he is disguised as a cloud. When the bees become suspicious, Pooh asks Christopher Robin to shoot the balloon so he can float down.

In Pooh's next adventure he visits Rabbit. Unfortunately, Pooh eats too much of Rabbit's honey and gets wedged in Rabbit's doorway. Rabbit brings Christopher Robin to help, and Christopher tells Pooh he needs to be thinner to get dislodged. Pooh is upset that he cannot eat for a week, but Christopher Robin promises to read to him until he is free.

One winter day Pooh is joined by Piglet in tracking what they think may be a Woozle. As the friends circle a small grove of trees, they notice more and more tracks. Finally Piglet becomes so nervous and fearful that he excuses himself to go home. Suddenly, Pooh looks up and sees Christopher Robin sitting in a tree. When Christopher describes Pooh's "tracking," Pooh realizes he has been following his own footprints.

Some time later, Pooh finds Eeyore feeling sad and helps out by searching for Eeyore's lost tail. Pooh asks Owl for advice on finding things, but he is soon bored by Owl's explanation of a reward poster. When Owl suggests Pooh look at the sign Christopher Robin made for Owl, Pooh notices Owl's "bell-rope." Owl tells him he found the bell-rope lying on a bush, and Pooh explains to Owl that it is

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actually Eeyore's lost tail. Later Christopher Robin reattaches Eeyore's tail.

After hearing Christopher Robin speak of a Heffalump, Pooh and Piglet decide to trap one. They agree to dig a pit and put a pot of honey at the bottom. Pooh, however, eats most of the honey before it can be used for bait, which is disappointing to Piglet. In the middle of the night Pooh is troubled by images of Heffalumps eating his honey. He goes to the trap and climbs in to check the honey. He finds that he had left a small amount in the bottom of the honey jar. Unfortunately, while licking the bottom, his head gets stuck in the jar. In the meantime, Piglet is worrying whether a Heffalump will be fierce. Restless, he goes to check the trap. When he sees the jar-clad Pooh, Piglet thinks it is a Heffalump and runs to get Christopher Robin, who arrives in time to see Pooh break the jar off his head.

One day Pooh discovers that Eeyore is sad because no one is celebrating his birthday. Pooh goes home to get Eeyore a present. Piglet is there, and Pooh persuades Piglet to bring Eeyore a balloon. Pooh gets a jar of honey to take to Eeyore, but he eats it along the way and decides to give the empty jar as his gift. Owl helps him write a birthday message on it. Meanwhile, Piglet trips and pops the balloon. Piglet sorrowfully gives the remains of the balloon to Eeyore, but when Pooh brings his gift, Eeyore happily puts the broken balloon into the empty pot.

As time passes, two new animals, Kanga and Roo, arrive in the forest, making Rabbit upset. He persuades Piglet and Pooh to help him kidnap Roo so he can blackmail Kanga into leaving. While Pooh distracts Kanga, Rabbit snatches Roo, and Piglet jumps into Kanga's pouch to make her think Roo is there. When Kanga finds Piglet, she decides to pretend that Piglet is Roo. She ignores Piglet's claims to be Piglet until Christopher Robin arrives and says that Roo is playing at Rabbit's house. Piglet flees, and Rabbit discovers that he enjoys playing with Roo. The newcomers are now accepted as friends.

One day Christopher Robin decides to search for the North Pole. All of the animals are invited to join the expedition, and they set out together. When Roo falls into a stream, everyone scurries to save him. Pooh finally rescues him with a pole, which Christopher declares is actually the North Pole.

Pooh shows his bravery again when a flood strikes the forest and Piglet sends a message asking for help. From his refuge on a branch, Pooh sees the floating message bottle and then climbs into an empty honey jar to float to Christopher Robin to have it read. The two realize Piglet needs help immediately, and they dispatch Owl to keep Piglet company until they can get to him. Pooh suggests they float there in Christopher's umbrella, and together they save Piglet from drowning or being bored to death by Owl's stories.

Soon afterward, Christopher gives Pooh a party to honor his bravery in helping to save Piglet. Eeyore assumes the party is for him, but he is corrected when Christopher gives Pooh a gift. The book ends with Christopher's father listening to Christopher drag his stuffed Pooh bear up the stairs to bed.

## Open-Ended Questions

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

### Initial Understanding

How does Christopher Robin feel about Winnie-the-Pooh?

*Although Christopher Robin is often amused by the silly things that Pooh does, such as when Pooh gets the jar of honey stuck on his head, it is obvious that Christopher Robin dearly loves Pooh. Christopher also feels that Pooh has many admirable qualities, such as his willingness to join Christopher's adventures, his helpfulness when Eeyore has troubles, and his bravery when Piglet is trapped by the flood.*

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## Literary Analysis

What is Eeyore's attitude about life?

*Eeyore is very gloomy and easily depressed. Instead of telling people what he wants, he sulks and mutters that no one appreciates him. Although he does take action to help others, such as when he sticks his tail in the water to save Roo, he does little for himself. He does not look for his lost tail or throw himself a birthday party when his birthday comes. When his tail goes numb from being in the cold water, it is Christopher Robin who dries it off for him. These incidents also indicate that Eeyore, in general, does not feel good about himself, which is also shown by his hesitancy when his friends encourage him to join Christopher Robin's expedition and Pooh's party.*

## Inferential Comprehension

How are Rabbit and Owl alike?

*Both animals tend to be rather condescending and impatient with their friends. For example, Rabbit is annoyed by Pooh's visit and eating habits, and Owl criticizes Pooh for talking about gorse-bushes when Owl is referring to ambushes. Both animals are also quite bossy. Rabbit organizes the kidnapping of Roo, and Owl insists that people listen to his boring stories. In general, neither Owl nor Rabbit seems to have much respect for the other animals. Owl is very casual about using Eeyore's tail as his bell-pull, and Rabbit makes the best of Pooh blocking his front entrance by using Pooh's legs as a towel-horse.*

## Constructing Meaning

Would you want to live in Pooh's world? Explain why or why not.

*Responses will vary according to reader. Some advantages of living in Pooh's world would be that there are always lots of exciting adventures and amusing events, and plenty of honey is available. Some disadvantages would be that the animals mainly live alone and usually have to solve problems on their own or travel a distance to find someone to help them deal with their problems. Also, some animals appear to be selfish and uncaring, such as Owl and Rabbit.*

## Teachable Skills

**Comparing and Contrasting** After the students have taken the Literacy Skills test, have them watch the movie version of *Winnie-the-Pooh*. The students should discuss the differences and similarities between the book and the movie. Have them suggest reasons for the changes in the movie version.

**Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning** Pooh invents little songs in response to situations he encounters. Have the students write a song they think Pooh might sing in response to one of the events in this book in which a song is not included. Have the students try to mimic the type of songs Pooh sings in this story.

**Describing Actions or Events** Pooh has many exciting adventures in this story. Have students divide into small groups and make paper bag puppets of the characters in the book. Then have the students choose, rehearse, and act out a scene from this story with their puppets.

**Understanding Characterization** The characters in *Winnie-the-Pooh* each have their own distinct personality. Have the students create a poster showing all the different characters in this book. Have them write a paragraph under each character that sums up the personality of that character.