

The Little Prince

BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

GUIDE FOR GRADES 4–7



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About the Book

First published in 1943, *The Little Prince*, written and illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, is a classic fable about war and conflict. After crashing in the North African desert, a scared, exhausted, and thirsty pilot encounters an inquisitive child who seems to be none of these things, yet has also fallen out of the sky. Over the course of the next week, the Little Prince tells the aviator about life on his tiny home planet before he traveled to six neighboring asteroids and met six solitary men. Landing on Earth, the Little Prince's search for true companionship is finally realized after he heeds the plea of a talking fox, forming a caring relationship that helps the lonely, fragile boy and desperate, alienated man also make a lasting connection. Translated into more than two hundred languages, *The Little Prince* is one of the best-selling and most beloved books of all time.

About the Author

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the "Winged Poet," was born in Lyon, France, in 1900. A pilot at twenty-six, he was a pioneer of commercial aviation and flew in the Spanish Civil War and World War II. His writings include *The Little Prince*; *Wind, Sand and Stars*; *Night Flight*; *Southern Mail*; and *Airman's Odyssey*. In 1944, while flying a reconnaissance mission for his French air squadron, he disappeared over the Mediterranean.

Pre-Reading Activities

Using print and online resources, have students research the life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. What were his early childhood influences? What were his dreams and aspirations? How did he achieve them? What happened in 1935 after his plane crashed in the Sahara Desert? How did World War II influence his life and writings? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3)

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are included with the discussions and activities. You can locate the standards at: www.corestandards.org/the-standards.

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL. 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1 applies to each question, which meet several benchmarks.

- Saint-Exupéry dedicates the English translation of *The Little Prince* to "the child who became [his friend] Leon Werth. All grown-ups were once children – although few of them remember it." How does this statement foreshadow the narrator's attitudes towards adults in the story? What are some of the traits he most admires in young people? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1)
- When the narrator first meets the Little Prince, he describes the child as an "apparition." The aviator then says that the boy is from Asteroid B-612. Is the Little Prince a ghost? An alien? A character in a fairy tale? A figment of the downed pilot's imagination? What purpose does the Little Prince serve in the story? (CCSS. ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6, 6.6, 7.6)
- The narrator notes, "on the little prince's planet there were – as on all planets – good plants and bad plants. The good plants came from good seeds and the bad plants came from bad seeds." What is the figurative meaning of these terms? How do they relate to the environment on the boy's home planet? How might they reflect the narrator's experiences and the living conditions during wartime? (CCSS. ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4, 6.4)

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- What are the personified traits of the rose that serves as the boy's companion on his small asteroid? What happens to the flower after the Little Prince leaves? What does he eventually come to understand about their relationship? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4, 6.4)
- How is contemporary usage of the verb "to tame" similar to and different from the way the fox defines it for the Little Prince? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5, 5.5, 6.5, 7.5)
- The most famous line from *The Little Prince* is, "One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes." What does this phrase mean? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6)
- How does the author contrast the concept of time as it concerns the relationship between the Little Prince and the Fox, the railway switchman and his train passengers, and the sales clerk and her thirst-quenching pills? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3)
- A fable is a traditional tale with animal or inanimate characters that emphasizes a moral or message. How is *The Little Prince* a fable? What is its underlying meaning or theme? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2)
- Axis Powers? How did the war in Europe and North Africa end? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.7-8, 5.7-8, 6.7-8, 7.7-8)
- After dividing the class into small groups, assign each of them one of the six "mostly ridiculous" men the Little Prince meets: the king, the very vain man, the drunkard, the businessman, the geographer, and the lamplighter. Have students look up definitions of challenging words in the vignettes, then record the defining characteristic of each man, his relationship with the Little Prince, and the section's moral or theme. Next, bring the class together to show in one Venn Diagram what each character represents and how they are alike and different from each another and the story's protagonists. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5, 6.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4)
- Have each student select an *aphorism* in the story, that is, a brief saying that reveals a fundamental idea or concept, and then rewrite and illustrate it for a class book to be published electronically. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.6, 5.6, 6.6, 7.6)
- Compare and contrast a print version of *The Little Prince* with the recorded version (2015) and the animated film (2016). Which one do students think is the most effective at conveying the main ideas of *The Little Prince*? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.7)

Activities

Each can meet several English-Language Arts benchmarks.

- To understand the ill-fated flight of the narrator, ask students to identify France and Libya on a map, and also compute the time difference between New York City and Paris. In addition, have them locate other far-flung spots mentioned in the story, including New Zealand and Australia, China and Siberia, and Russia and India. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7, 6.7)
- Using print and digital resources, have students research the major causes and conflicts of World War II. When did it occur? Who were the Allies? The

Post-Reading Activity

How are the author, aviator, and soldier Saint-Exupéry's interests, motivations, and experiences reflected in *The Little Prince*?

Guide written by Julie Corsaro.