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Sample MonkeyNotes

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The Little Prince

by

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

1943



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by TheBestNotes Staff

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTINGS

The book is not set in a particular period or in one specific place. In the first chapter the narrator writes about his childhood experiences with drawings and about his low opinion of adults. In the second chapter the narrator starts narrating a particular series of incidents. He writes of the time when his plane crashed in.....

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Major Characters

The narrator - The narrator is really the author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The reader hears his voice throughout the book as he relates the story of the Little Prince and of his own friendship with him. The narrator says plainly that he is a romantic who does not like adults, whom he finds too practical; instead, he prefers children, whom he finds natural and delightful. The narrator writes this story of his encounter with the Little Prince in order to deal with the sorrow of losing his precious friend.

The Little Prince - The novel is named after the Little Prince, who is a mystical and loveable person. He is the sole inhabitant of a small planet, which the narrator refers to as B-612. The Prince leaves his planet to visit other places and finally lands on Earth. In the Sahara Desert, he meets the narrator and befriends him. The narrator tells of his encounter with the Prince and also relates the adventures of the Prince on the other asteroids that the latter has visited.

The fox - The Little Prince meets the fox in the desert. The fox is a wise creature, which.....

Many additional characters are identified in the complete study guide.

CONFLICT

Protagonist: The protagonist of the short novel is the Little Prince. He is a simple, yet mystical, creature from asteroid B-612. One day a seed arrives on his planet and blooms into.....

Antagonist: The problem, or antagonist, of the Little Prince is his thirst for answers. He visits many planets and meets many people, whom he questions about life. In particular, he.....

Climax: The climax of the plot occurs when the Little Prince decides to return to his planet and care for his special flower. He has learned from the fox that the important things in life cannot be seen with the eye, only felt with the heart. This lesson eventually makes the Little Prince realize that the flower from which he has fled is really very special. After meeting the narrator and explaining all that.....

Outcome: The story ends in comedy. The Little Prince finds the answers to his questions about what is important in life. When he realizes his love for the flower, he accepts that he

SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

The narrator begins the tale with an explanation of his dislike of adults; he claims he does not enjoy them, for they are much too practical. Instead, he prefers the company of children, who are natural and curious.

The narrator next tells of how his plane crashed in the desert, where he met the Little Prince, a mystical creature from another planet. The narrator tells why the Prince left his planet and where he visited before coming to Earth. His adventures on six different planets are recounted, including the encounters with the.....

MOOD

The mood is mostly adventurous and mysterious, with a philosophical overtone. At first the Little Prince does not reveal his identity, creating an initial sense of mystery. Then as the Little Prince recounts his.....

THEMES

Major Themes

In *The Little Prince*, Saint-Exupéry explains the importance of seeing the whole truth in order to find beauty. He believes that visible things are only shells that hint at the real worth hidden inside. He points out that man has not learned to look beneath the surface, or perhaps, has forgotten how to do so. Because adults never look inside, they will never know themselves or others.

All his life, Saint-Exupéry thought that grown-ups cared mostly about inconsequential matters, such as golf and neckties. When they talked about important matters, they always became dull and boring. They seemed afraid to open up their hearts to the real issues of life; instead, they chose to function on a surface level.

In the book, the fox teaches that one can see only what is important in life by.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is both a pioneer of aviation and a well-known French writer. He was born in Lyon, France, in 1900. At an early age, he dreamed of a life of adventure and wanted to become a naval officer. Unfortunately, he failed the exam to qualify him for naval officer training school. As a result, he turned his attention to the field of aviation. Even though flying was dangerous and risky in Saint-Exupéry's time, he joined the military and trained to be a pilot. After his military service, he presented himself to the director of an airline company and expressed his desire to become a commercial pilot. The director told him he.....

LITERARY/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Though it is not simply a book for young people, *The Little Prince* ranks number five in the world on the list of best-selling children's books of all time. *Wind, Sand, and Stars* and *Night Flight* also remain among the top ten best-selling French language books of all time.

The Little Prince is a profound and deeply moving book written in riddles and laced with.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

CHAPTERS 1 & 2

Summary

The narrator begins the book by writing of the time when he was a child, endeavoring to be an artist. He remembers that his first drawing was that of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. When he showed the picture to several adults, none of them could make out what he wanted them to see. They all insisted that the drawing looked like a hat. As a result, the narrator drew another picture, which he believed clearly showed a boa constrictor swallowing an elephant. On seeing the second one, the adults advised him to devote his time to serious studies instead art. The narrator complains about adults having a lack of imagination. He finds it tiresome for children to always have to explain things to them. He also blames the adults for discouraging him from what would have been a marvelous career as a painter.

The narrator says that as an adult he meets many grown-ups; whenever he thinks that he has met someone who is clear sighted, he shows him his first drawing and asks him to say what it is. None of them ever decipher that the drawing is that of a boa constrictor swallowing an elephant. When they say the picture looks like a hat, the

narrator does not bother to talk to them about important or fantastic things; instead, he goes down to their level and chooses practical topics of conversation.

The narrator next explains that he finally chose a career in aviation. During one of his flights, the narrator's plane crashes in the desert. While he is repairing his plane, he is surprised by the voice of a stranger who asks the narrator to draw a picture of a sheep for him. The narrator is very surprised, but agrees to make the drawing for the stranger, who is a small built man with wavy hair. As the narrator gazes at the stranger more closely, it seems he is almost like a child, filled with innocence and simple ways. The stranger is the Little Prince.

The narrator decides to first draw an elephant inside a boa constrictor. He is surprised when the Little Prince recognizes the drawing for what it is. The narrator then draws three sheep, but the Prince ignores the picture. The narrator next draws a box and puts the sheep inside it; the Prince is satisfied with this drawing.

Notes

The novel begins with the narrator explaining his earliest attempts at drawing. The message is that adults do not look beneath the surface of things; therefore, they are not able to see beauty or comprehend true value. It is obvious that the narrator does not have a very high opinion of adults. He thinks that children are able to see more than they see; he also thinks that he has to bring down his level to converse with them, for they are unable to talk about boa constrictors, primeval forests, and stars.

The real story begins in the second chapter when the narrator meets the Little Prince in the desert after his airplane has crashed there. With his small build, wavy hair, and child-like innocence, he does not seem to be a human, but a visitor from another planet. When the narrator draws for him a picture of a boa constrictor eating an elephant, the Little Prince immediately recognizes it for what it is. The narrator is amazed and delighted that he has finally found someone who understands his drawings.

The Little Prince asks the narrator to draw for him a picture of sheep, a request that seems as mysterious as the little man himself. When the narrator draws the first picture for him, composed of three sheep, the Little Prince does not respond. In the next drawing, the narrator makes a box and puts the sheep inside it; this drawing pleases the Prince.

The first two chapters set the mood of the novel; it is to be adventurous, but mysterious. After all, the narrator has a plane crash in the middle of a desert, where he encounters a strange, but sensitive, little man who seems to come from a different planet and who requests a drawing of sheep. The tone of the novel is also set; the narrator respects children more than he respects adults. As a result, he immediately likes the Little Prince with his child-like simplicity and his ability to see beneath the surface.

CHAPTERS 3 & 4

Summary

The Little Prince does not answer any questions about himself, making him seem very mysterious to the narrator. His curiosity is further aroused when the Little Prince asks him whether he has also come from another planet. Finally, the Prince says that the place from where he has come is so small that nobody can go very far by going straight ahead. The narrator is certain that the little man has come from another planet and speculates which one it might be. He decides that the Prince is probably from asteroid B-612 and explains how a Turkish astronomer discovered the asteroid.

The narrator interrupts the plot to explain his purpose in writing this book, which he has written in memory of his friend, the Little Prince. In it, he wants to show how adults are obsessed with facts and figures and fail to

understand the real meaning of things. He then explains how important this book is for him and how he does not want it to be misinterpreted.

Notes

As he converses with the Little Prince, the narrator closely observes his character traits. He seems quaint in his habits, persistent in having his own questions answered, and a bit sad. He is also mysterious, refusing to answer any direct questions related to himself. The narrator, however, does find out that he comes from another planet, which is very small; he assumes that asteroid B-612, discovered by a Turkish astronomer, is probably the Little Prince's home. The narrator then tells how most adults did not take the Turkish astronomer seriously at first; then when he dressed in formal wear and gave a formal presentation, filled with facts and figures, the people believed in his discovery. The narrator is again pointing out the hypocritical ways of most adults, who thirst for meaningless facts and figures and fail to see what is really important.

The narrator says it is important to give the homeland of the Little Prince a name. Otherwise, he fears that no adults will take the Prince's story seriously. They will, however, probably pay attention to a tale about a Prince who hails from Asteroid B-612.

The narrator wants people to read the book with care and sensitivity, for he has suffered in writing down these memories of the Little Prince, whose friendship is of great importance to him.

During these two chapters, it becomes clear that the book will be about the Little Prince and the narrator's friendship with him. It is also obvious that the narrator will not become omniscient, pretending to know and understand everything. Instead, he is vulnerable and uncertain, which makes him appealing to the reader.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Narrator - The narrator is present throughout the book to tell the story of his friendship with the Little Prince and comment on what he has learned from him. He is very attracted to the Prince, largely because he is childlike, innocent, and pure. The narrator admits that he prefers the openness, honesty, and naiveté of children to the pretensions and blindness of adults, who cannot see beyond the surface of life. The narrator feels very close to the Little Prince because he is able to see the truth and importance of things. Even after six years, he remembers everything about this little man from another planet; as a result, he writes the book in memory of him.

Ever since childhood, the narrator has felt frustration with adults. As a young boy, he drew pictures of a boa constrictor eating an elephant, but none of the adults could see beyond the surface of the picture to the real meaning. They all claimed the drawing looked like a hat. When the narrator explained what the picture really was, the adults suggested that he.....

The Little Prince - The Little Prince is the main character and protagonist of the novel. The book is the story of his search for answers about what is important in life.

The Little Prince has always lived on a distant star, Asteroid B-612. One day a new flower grows up on his planet. He finds the plant to be lovely and believes it is one of a kind in the universe; as a result, he believes himself to be a rich man, the owner of a.....

THEMES – THEME ANALYSIS

Major Themes

The main theme of *The Little Prince* is the importance of looking beneath the surface to find the real truth and meaning of a thing. It is the fox who teaches the Prince to see with one's heart instead of just with one's eyes. Unfortunately, most adults have difficulty doing this. In the beginning of the book, the narrator points out how grown-ups can never see the real meaning of a drawing; instead, they look at the surface, failing to probe a deeper meaning.

When the Little Prince first comes to earth, he also suffers from looking at.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Other than the first and last chapters, which serve as an introduction and epilogue, the plot of *The Little Prince* is unified mainly by character and theme. The novel begins with an introduction to the main idea of the book. The narrator explains the drawings of boa constrictors that he made as a young boy. None of the adults who viewed the pictures were able to see the meaning of the drawings. As a result, at an early age, the narrator discovered that most people do not look beneath the surface to see the.....

OTHER ELEMENTS

AUTHOR'S STYLE / LANGUAGE

Because at one level, the novel is really a children's book, its language and style are simple. Because the plot and dialogue are easy to follow, a young person will find the book easy to understand. A child can also.....

STUDY QUESTIONS – BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. Fully describe the appearance of the Little Prince.
2. From where does the Little Prince come? What is it like?.....

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