

Summary: Chapter I

The novel's narrator says that when he was six years old, before he became a pilot, he saw in a book a picture of a boa constrictor devouring a wild animal. In the same book, the narrator read that boa constrictors must hibernate for six months after swallowing their prey in order to digest it. Fascinated by this information, the narrator drew his first drawing, which he calls Drawing Number One. The drawing, a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant, looked like a lumpy blob with two flat lines tapering off to the left and right. But grown-ups were not frightened by the picture, because they thought it was supposed to be a hat.

To explain his drawing to adults, the narrator drew Drawing Number Two, an x-ray view of Drawing Number One that showed the elephant inside the snake. Disturbed by this image, grown-ups advised the narrator to give up drawing and pursue geography, arithmetic, and grammar instead. Realizing that grown-ups would always require things to be explained to them, the narrator decided not to be an artist and became a pilot instead. He admits that the geography he learned did prove to be useful for flying.

The narrator's opinion of adults never improved. Every time he met a grown-up, he would test him by showing him Drawing Number One. The grown-ups would always think it was a picture of a hat. Consequently, the narrator knew he could talk with the grown-ups only about boring, pragmatic topics like politics and neckties.

Summary: Chapter II

The narrator feels lonely his whole life until one day, six years before he tells his story, he crashes his plane in the middle of the Sahara desert. As the situation is beginning to look dire, the pilot is shocked to hear an odd little voice asking him to draw a sheep. He turns to see the little prince. The prince looks like a small, blond child, but he stares intently at the pilot without the fear that a child lost in the desert would have. The pilot does not know how to draw a sheep, so instead he sketches Drawing Number One, and he is astounded

when the little prince recognizes it as a picture of an elephant inside a boa constrictor. The little prince rejects Drawing Number One, insisting that he needs a drawing of a sheep. After drawing three different sheep that the prince rejects, the pilot finally draws a box and gives it to the little prince. He says that the box contains exactly the type of sheep for which he is looking. This drawing makes the little prince very happy. The prince wonders if the sheep will have enough grass to eat, explaining that the place where he lives is quite small.

Summary: Chapter III

The pilot tries to find out where his mysterious new friend comes from, but the little prince prefers asking questions to answering them. He questions the pilot about his plane and what it does, and the pilot tells the little prince that it allows him to fly through the air. The little prince takes comfort in the fact that the pilot also came from the sky, asking him what planet he comes from. The pilot is surprised by this question and tries to find out what planet the little prince comes from. But the little prince ignores the pilot's queries and admires the sheep the pilot has drawn for him. The pilot offers to draw a post and a string to tie the sheep to so that it won't get lost, but the little prince laughs. The sheep will not get lost, he says, because he comes from a very small planet.

Summary: Chapter IV

From his conversation with the little prince, the narrator realizes that the planet the little prince comes from is only the size of a house. The narrator explains that when astronomers discover new planets, they give them numbers instead of names. The narrator is pretty sure that the little prince lives on Asteroid B-612, which was first sighted by a Turkish astronomer in 1909. The astronomer's presentation of his discovery was ridiculed at that year's International Astronomical Congress because he wore traditional Turkish clothes. After a Turkish dictator ordered all his subjects to begin wearing European clothing, the astronomer presented his report again in 1920 and was well received.

The narrator insists that he is telling us these details about the prince's planet only to satisfy his grown-up readers. He says that grown-ups can understand only facts and figures; they never wonder about essential qualities like beauty and love. Grown-ups decide what is beautiful by measuring how old a person is or how much a house costs. To believe in the existence of the little prince, grown-ups need more proof than simply being told that the prince asked the narrator to draw him a sheep. They demand further, quantifiable proof of the little prince's existence.

The narrator also mentions that he wants his book to be read carefully, as it has been very painful for him to recollect these memories of his little departed friend. The narrator worries that he is growing old, and he writes and illustrates his story so he will not forget the little prince. Drawing the pictures in particular reminds the narrator of what it's like to be a child. He acknowledges, however, that he cannot see sheep through the walls of boxes, because like all humans, he has "had to grow old."

Summary: Chapter V

Each day, the pilot learns a bit more about the little prince's home. On the third day of the little prince's visit, he finds out that the prince wants the sheep to eat the baobab seedlings that grow on his planet. Baobabs are gigantic trees whose roots could split the prince's tiny planet into pieces. The little prince notes that one must be very careful to take care of one's planet. Since all planets have good plants and bad plants, one must remain vigilant and disciplined, uprooting the bad plants as soon as they start to grow. The prince remembers a lazy man who always procrastinated and ignored three small baobab bushes that eventually grew to overtake the man's planet. At the prince's instruction, the narrator illustrates the overgrown planet as a warning to children. He adds that the baobabs pose an everyday threat that most people deal with without even being aware of it. The narrator states that the lesson to be learned from the story of the baobabs is so important that he has drawn them more carefully than any other drawing in the book.

Summary: Chapter VI

On his fourth day with the little prince, the narrator becomes aware of just how small the little prince's planet really is. The little prince is surprised that on Earth, he has to wait for the sun to go down to see a sunset. On his planet, a person can see the end of the day whenever he likes by simply moving a few steps. The prince mentions that one day he saw forty-four sunsets and that sunsets can cheer a person up when he or she is sad. He refuses to tell the narrator, however, whether or not he was sad on the day he saw forty-four sunsets.

Summary: Chapter VII

On his fifth day in the desert, the little prince wonders if his new sheep will eat both bushes and flowers. The pilot, who is trying to repair his plane, replies that sheep will eat anything, and the little prince asks him what use a flower's thorns are if they don't protect the flower. The pilot, frustrated with his engine and worried by his lack of food and water, yells that he is too busy with "serious matters" to answer the prince's questions. Furious, the little prince accuses the pilot of acting like a grown-up instead of seeing what's really important. The little prince argues that if a truly unique flower exists on a person's planet, nothing is more important than wondering if a sheep will eat that flower. He then bursts into tears. Suddenly realizing that his new friend's happiness is the most serious matter of all, the narrator cradles the little prince in his arms and comforts him by assuring the little prince that his flower will be fine. He offers to draw a muzzle for the sheep.

Summary: Chapter VIII

The prince tells the narrator all about his flower. One day, the prince notices a mysterious new plant sprouting on his planet. Worried that it might be a new type of baobab, he watches it cautiously at first. The sprout soon grows into a rose, a beautiful but vain creature who constantly demands that the little prince take care of her. The little prince loves the rose very much and is happy to satisfy her requests. He waters her, covers her with a glass globe at night, and

puts up a screen to protect her from the wind. One day, however, the little prince catches the rose on the verge of making a minor lie. The rose says to the prince, “Where I come from,” even though she grew from a seed on the little prince’s planet and therefore does not “come from” anywhere. The rose’s lie makes the prince doubt the sincerity of her love. He grows so unhappy and lonely that he decides to leave his planet. The prince tells the pilot that he would not have left if he had looked at the rose’s deeds instead of her words. He realizes that the rose actually loves him, but he knows he is too young and inexperienced to know how to love her.

Summary: Chapter IX

On the day of the little prince’s departure from his planet, he cleans out all three of his volcanoes, even the dormant one, and he uproots all the baobab shoots he can find. He waters his rose a final time. As he is about to place the glass globe over the rose’s head, he feels like crying. He says good-bye to the rose. At first, she refuses to reply, but then she apologizes, assures the little prince that she loves him, and says she no longer needs him to set the globe over her. She says she will be fine without him to take care of her. Urging the little prince to leave, the rose turns away so he will not see her cry.

Summary: Chapter X

At the beginning of his journey, the little prince finds himself near asteroids 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, and 330, and he decides to visit them one by one. On the first asteroid, he encounters a king sitting on a throne and wearing a magnificent fur cloak. The king, happy finally to have a subject, begins ordering the little prince around. The king claims to reign over every star in the universe, but in reality he always tailors his orders to fit the actions of the person he commands. For example, when the little prince yawns, the king quickly “orders” him to yawn. When the prince asks the king to order a sunset, the king replies that the sun will obey him but that it will have to wait until 7:40 P.M., a time he arrives at after consulting an almanac.

The king insists that his commands be obeyed, but he is a kindly man and so always makes them reasonable. The king asserts that it is because he is so reasonable that he has the right to command. When the prince decides to leave, the king hastily tries to get him to stay, ordering him to become minister of justice. The prince finds the request ridiculous, since there is nobody else on the planet to judge. The king points out that his planet has an old rat, whom the prince can continually condemn to death, pardon, and then condemn again. The prince says he has no interest in condemning anyone to death. As the prince is departing, the king names the prince his ambassador. The prince comments that grown-ups are strange.

Summary: Chapter XI

On the second planet the prince visits, he encounters a vain man, who asks the prince to clap his hands and then modestly tips his hat in acknowledgement. The prince enjoys the game at first but begins to tire of its monotony. The vain man asks whether the little prince really admires him, but the prince does not understand the meaning of the word “admire.” The vain man explains that he wants the prince to say he is the most intelligent, good-looking, and wealthy man on the planet. The prince points out that such a request is absurd since the vain man is the planet’s sole inhabitant. With a shrug of his shoulders, the prince says, “I admire you,” but he asks why his admiration means anything to the man. The prince departs, commenting again that grown-ups are very strange.

Summary: Chapter XII

The prince visits a third planet, where he meets a drunkard. When the prince asks the drunkard why he drinks, the drunkard claims that he drinks to forget. Feeling pity, the prince inquires what the drunkard wants to forget. The drunkard answers that he is trying to forget that he is ashamed of his drinking. The drunkard then falls into stubborn silence. Confused, the little prince continues his journey, observing that grown-ups are very, very strange.

Summary: Chapter XIII

The little prince visits a fourth planet, which is occupied by a businessman so immersed in numerical calculations that the man hardly acknowledges the little prince. The little prince, who never lets a question go unanswered, repeatedly asks the businessman what he is doing. The businessman protests that he is a serious person and has no time for the little prince's questions. Exasperated by the little prince's persistence, the businessman eventually explains that he is counting "those little golden things that make lazy people daydream," which the prince eventually identifies as stars. The businessman explains he counts the stars because he owns them.

The little prince thinks that the businessman's logic is as absurd as the drunkard's, but he accepts that the businessman owns the stars because the man was the first person to think of claiming ownership of them. The prince asks what the businessman does with the stars, and the businessman replies that he notes their numbers and places the numbers in a bank. The prince argues that such actions do not deserve to be called serious matters. He owns a rose and three volcanoes, he points out, but he takes care of them. His ownership is therefore useful, he claims, whereas the businessmen's is not. The businessman is left speechless by this remark, and the little prince moves on, observing that grown-ups are truly "extraordinary."

Summary: Chapter XIV

The fifth planet the prince visits is extremely small, just big enough for a street lamp and its lamplighter. The prince considers the lamplighter to be as absurd as the others he has met, yet he finds that the lamplighter performs a beautiful—and therefore useful—task. The lamplighter, who is under orders to extinguish his lamp during the day and light it at night, frantically puts the lamp out and then turns it back on. He explains that his orders used to make sense, but his planet now turns so fast that a new day occurs every minute. The prince admires the lamplighter's sense of duty and notes that of all the people he has met, the lamplighter is the only one whom he could befriend. He advises the lamplighter to walk along with the sunset in order to avoid having to extinguish and rekindle the light continually. The lamplighter says what he

really wants is sleep. Unfortunately, the planet is too small for two people, and the prince departs, sad to leave the lamplighter and a planet that has 1,440 sunsets every twenty-four hours.

Summary: Chapter XV

On the sixth planet he visits, the little prince meets a man who writes books. The man explains that he is a geographer, a scholar who knows the location of all the seas, mountains, cities, and deserts. When the prince asks the geographer about his planet, the geographer says he knows nothing about his own planet because it is not his job to explore it. A geographer collects information from an explorer and then investigates the explorer's character. If the explorer has a good character, the geographer investigates the explorer's discoveries.

The geographer asks about the little prince's planet. The little prince tells him about his three volcanoes and his flower. The geographer says that he doesn't record flowers because they are "ephemeral," which he defines as "threatened by imminent disappearance." The little prince is shocked to learn that his rose is in such danger, and he begins to regret having left her. He asks the geographer where he should go next, and the geographer tells him that Earth has a good reputation. Thinking of his rose, the little prince departs for Earth.

Summary: Chapter XVI

The narrator introduces Earth to the little prince, who had never even imagined such a big planet. The narrator describes the almost two billion grown-ups the earth contains: hundreds of kings, thousands of geographers, hundreds of thousands of businessmen, and millions of drunkards and vain men. The narrator also mentions that before the advent of electricity, Earth held 462,511 lamplighters who would perform a kind of global dance each day, unconsciously coordinating their movements as the sun swept across the turning planet. Only the lamplighters at the North and South Poles were not part of this choreography, since they had to work only twice a year.

Summary: Chapter XVII

The narrator admits that his description of Earth gives a distorted picture because humanity actually takes up only a very small percentage of the space on Earth and is not nearly as important as most people think it is.

When the prince arrives on Earth, he is surprised to see no one. He meets a snake, who informs him that he is in the African desert, where there are no people. The little prince remarks that it must be lonely in the desert, and the snake enigmatically replies that it can be lonely among men also. Alluding to his poisonous bite, the snake suggests that he could send the prince back to the heavens with one “touch,” but then he decides that the prince is too “innocent” for him to do so. The prince asks why the snake always speaks in riddles. “I solve them all,” the snake says, and they both fall silent.

Summary: Chapter XVIII

Searching the desert for men, the little prince encounters a three-petaled flower. The flower, who has at one point seen a caravan pass by, tells the little prince that there are only a handful of men on Earth and that they have no roots, which lets the wind blow them away and makes life hard for them.

Summary: Chapter XIX

The little prince climbs the highest mountain he has ever seen. From the top of the mountain, he hopes he will see the whole planet and find people, but he sees only a desolate, craggy landscape. When the prince calls out, his echo answers him, and he mistakes it for the voices of humans. He thinks Earth is unnecessarily sharp and hard, and he finds it odd that the people of Earth only repeat what he says to them.

Summary: Chapter XX

The prince eventually finds a road that leads him to a huge rose garden. He is stunned to find so many flowers that look just like his rose, who had told him she was unique. He begins to feel that he is not a great prince at all, as his

planet contains only three tiny volcanoes and a flower he now thinks of as common. He lies down in the grass and cries.

Summary: Chapter XXI

As the little prince cries in the grass, a fox appears. The prince asks the fox to play with him because he is so unhappy. The fox replies that first the prince needs to tame him. The prince does not understand the word tame, and the fox explains that it means “to establish ties.” The fox says that at the moment, he and the prince mean nothing to each other. However, if the little prince tames the fox, they will need each other, and each will become unique and special to the other. The little prince says he thinks he has been tamed by a rose, and he lets slip that he is from another planet. At first, this fact excites the fox, but he loses interest when it turns out that the little prince’s planet has no chickens.

The fox explains that his life never changes. He hunts chickens, and people hunt him. He says that if the prince tames him, he will have footsteps to look forward to rather than run from. The prince’s golden hair will make the fox’s view of the grain fields come alive because the golden wheat will remind him of his friend.

The little prince is apprehensive at first. He says he does not have much time and that he is looking for friends. The fox says that if the prince wants a friend, he will have to tame the fox. The prince asks how such a thing is done, and the fox coquettishly takes him through the ritual. He explains that rites and rituals are important because they allow certain moments to stand out from all the others.

The prince tames the fox, but when the time comes for the prince to go, the fox says he will weep. When the prince explains that it’s the fox’s fault for insisting they become friends, the fox says that he knows and that it has all been worthwhile because he can now appreciate the wheat fields. The fox tells the little prince to visit the rose garden again so he can see why his rose is so

special. The fox says he will reveal a secret when the little prince returns to say good-bye.

At the garden, the little prince realizes that, even though his rose is not a unique type of flower, she is unique to him because he has cared for her and loved her. He tells the roses that his rose is like the fox. He has tamed her and cared for her, and now in his eyes she is the only rose. The prince then returns to say good-bye to the fox. The fox tells him a threefold secret: that only the heart can see clearly because the eyes miss what is important; that the time the prince has spent on his rose is what makes his rose so important; and that a person is forever responsible for what he has tamed.

Summary: Chapter XXII

The little prince continues his journey and meets a railway switchman (a worker who changes trains from one track to another). As the trains roar by, the switchman explains that the trains shuttle people from one location to another. The prince asks the switchman if people are moving because they are unhappy, and the switchman explains that people are always unhappy with wherever they are. The prince asks if the people are chasing something, and the switchman replies that the people aren't chasing anything at all. He adds that only the children press their faces against the train windows and watch the landscape as it rushes by. The prince remarks that "[o]nly the children know what they're looking for," and he says that children can make a rag doll so important that when it's taken from them, they cry. The children, the switchman replies, are the lucky ones.

Summary: Chapter XXIII

The little prince then meets a salesclerk who is selling pills invented to quench thirst. The merchant explains that taking the pills means a person never has to drink anything, which can save as many as fifty-three minutes a day. The prince replies that if he had an extra fifty-three minutes, he would spend them by walking very slowly toward a cold fountain.

Summary: Chapter XXIV

By the time the little prince finishes the story of his travels, the pilot has been stranded in the desert for eight days and has run out of water. He is too worried that he will die of thirst to want to hear any more about the prince or the fox. The prince replies that it is still good to have a friend, even if one is about to die of thirst. The prince says he is also thirsty and proposes that they search for a well. Despite the absurdity of such an endeavor, the narrator agrees.

As they walk, the prince and the pilot talk about beauty. The prince explains that the desert is beautiful because somewhere it conceals a well.

Remembering a boyhood home that was made special for him by rumors of buried treasure, the narrator is stunned to realize that the source of beauty is always something secret and invisible. The prince is happy that the narrator agrees with the fox's lessons and drops off to sleep. The narrator continues to walk with the sleeping prince in his arms, stirred by the fragile beauty of the little prince who loves his rose so deeply. At daybreak, he finds the well for which they have been searching.

Summary: Chapter XXV

The narrator and the prince hoist the water from the well, which looks like a village well, unlike anything one would expect to find in a desert. As they drink, the narrator is struck by the sweetness of the water, which revives the heart like a good feast and which is made special by its setting in the same way that a Christmas present is made special by the celebration that surrounds it. He and the prince agree that men on Earth lose sight of those things for which they are looking. People on Earth raise five thousand roses when they could find what they really want in a single rose or drop of water. But people look with their eyes instead of their hearts, the prince remarks.

The prince reminds the narrator of his promise to draw a muzzle for the prince's sheep. When the narrator takes out his drawings, the little prince good-naturedly laughs at their primitiveness but says that children will

understand them. As the narrator gives the prince the drawing of the muzzle, he realizes that the prince has secret plans and guesses that they are related to the fact that the next day marks the anniversary of the prince's arrival on Earth. The prince refuses to admit that he has plans, but the narrator can tell from the prince's blushing that he has guessed correctly. Suddenly, the narrator feels very sad. He remembers the fox's lesson that tears are the pain you risk by being tamed.

Summary: Chapter XXVI

The following day, the pilot returns from fixing his plane to see the little prince sitting on the wall of a ruin beside the well. The prince is discussing plans for that evening with someone who cannot be seen, and the topic of poison is mentioned. The prince asks his unseen companion to leave so the prince can get off the wall, and when the narrator looks down, he sees a snake. It is the same snake who greeted the prince when he first arrived on Earth. The narrator draws his gun, but the snake escapes, and the narrator is left to take care of the prince, who is pale and frightened. The prince congratulates the pilot on having fixed his plane, and when the narrator asks the prince how he knows about his plane, the prince says only that he will be going on a much longer, more difficult journey.

The prince says he will be even more afraid that night and tries to console the narrator by pointing to the stars and saying they will all have a special, unique meaning for the narrator now that he knows someone who lives among them. Then the prince becomes serious again and asks the pilot not to accompany him that night. The prince cautions that it will look as if he is dying. Also, he does not trust the snake to stop at just one bite and is worried that the snake would bite the pilot as well.

That night the little prince sneaks off by himself, but the narrator catches up and refuses to abandon him. The prince assures the narrator that he will be fine, that his dead body will just be an empty shell too heavy for the prince to take to the heavens with him. The narrator is not convinced, and even the

prince grows less certain of his reasoning and finally breaks down in tears. Growing more frightened, the little prince explains that his rose needs him, and then falls silent. The snake strikes at the prince's ankle, and he falls so gently that he does not make a sound.

Summary: Chapter XXVII

Six years later, the narrator reflects on the fate of his friend. He knows the prince made it back to his planet because the morning after the snake bit the prince, he could not find the prince's body. The narrator's friends are glad to have him back again, and when he looks at the stars, he hears the sounds of many tiny bells.

The narrator worries, however, since he forgot to draw a strap on the sheep's muzzle, which means it may eat the rose. He sometimes reassures himself that the prince would never let such a thing happen, but then he thinks that accidents can happen, and the sound of bells turns into the sound of tears. He admits that his emotions are a puzzle, as they certainly are for all of us who also loved the little prince. All the same, when he looks up at the sky, the question of whether the sheep has eaten the rose or not has changed the way he sees everything. He remarks, rather incredulously, that a grown-up will never understand this concern.

In a short epilogue, the narrator shows the same illustration of the desert landscape he showed in his final chapter, only he leaves out the prince. He calls his final picture the saddest and loveliest landscape in the world. He asks us to keep an eye out for this landscape if we are ever in the Sahara and to linger under the stars for a while if we do see it. The narrator asks us to lessen his sadness by sending immediate word if we happen to meet the little prince.