A Likely Place

In this lesson, we will explore the plot and characters in Paula Fox's children's book 'A Likely Place.' We will meet Lewis and learn lessons about intercultural communication and understanding cultural differences.

**In Search of a Hiding Spot**

Children's author Paula Fox wrote *A Likely Place* in 1967. It's a short (57 page) illustrated book. Written in the third person, Lewis (almost ten years old) is the central character. In 4 chapters, we follow Lewis as he explores New York's Central Park in search of a place to call his own.

On his journey, he meets an older Spanish man named Mr. Madruga. With the help of Mr. Madruga, Lewis discovers a 'likely place:' a cave tucked away in the woods. It's a hideout, a safe haven, and a secret hiding spot all in one.

*A Likely Place* invites elementary school readers age 8-12 into Lewis's world. The book explores themes of cultural diversity and friendship.

* [**Lesson**](https://study.com/academy/lesson/a-likely-place-by-paula-fox-summary.html#quiz-course-links)

* [**Quiz**](https://study.com/academy/practice/quiz-worksheet-a-likely-place-synopsis.html)

* [**Course**](https://study.com/academy/course/teaching-resources-for-childrens-books.html)

1.9K views

**Lewis's World**

Lewis lives with his extended family (mother, father, aunt, uncle, and cousin) in New York City. Lewis's favorite pastime is reading picture books to the younger kids in their apartment building. Henry, Betty Anne, and Thomas are all around 7. They like to sit on the stairs and listen to Lewis read *The Monkey's Paws* over and over.

Everybody - his parents, teachers, adults in general - all tell him what he must be feeling. His parents have an annoying habit of always assuming he's doing something wrong. To put it bluntly, they're a little overprotective.

He's struggling in school. His teachers berate him for every little mistake. It bothers Lewis. He feels misunderstood. But he's got a plan: he's going to run away to Canada.

When his parents take their annual trip to Chicago to visit family, they leave Lewis in the care of Mrs. Fitchlow, the last in a long line of babysitters. Lewis wishes he could go to Chicago, too, but his parents are concerned about his grades.

Mrs. Fitchlow is a world traveler, and she introduces Lewis to yoga and Indian cuisine. She lets Lewis run on a loose leash, which he appreciates. One day, on an outing at the park, Lewis meets an old man sitting quietly on a bench. He's muttering to himself in a language that Lewis doesn't recognize. As they get to talking, the old man tells Lewis all about his home in Barcelona, Spain, his work as a **cobbler** (shoemaker), and his rocky relationship with his daughter and son-in-law. He feels stranded here in America.

Lewis likes Mr. Madruga because he doesn't presume to know what he's thinking. Lewis bonds with Mr. Marduga because they both have trouble with English spelling. Mr. Madruga spells the boy's name: 'L-U-I-S.' Lewis convinces Mr. Madruga to let him transcribe a letter to his son-in-law. In exchange, Mr. Madruga will help Lewis find 'a likely place' to hide.

|  |
| --- |
| cave |
| ***A cave in Central Park*** |

Exploring the park, Lewis and Mr. Madruga find a cave deep in the woods. It's ten long strides deep. There's a candle stuck into a soup can, a shoe, and a booklet entitled *Mosquito Control in Southeast Delaware*. This is the place. Here, Lewis and Mr. Madruga will compose the letter.

**Lessons Learned**

*A Likely Place* is a lesson in intercultural communication as well as a study in how grownups should treat children.

The relationship between Lewis and Mr. Madruga works both ways; they need each other. Lewis is in desperate need of a sympathetic ear. Despite their age difference and cultural background, Lewis and Mr. Madruga turn out to have a lot in common.

Surrounded by adults who shower him with advice, Lewis is thinking of running away. Then his parents go away for a week, trusting him to the care of Miss Fitchlow, who lets him make his own decisions. Wandering in the park, he meets Mr. Madruga, an elderly man who makes Lewis feel useful for the first time in his life. Their unlikely friendship forms the center of this touching story. "A very funny book".

**Newberry Medal-winning author Paula Fox pens “a very funny book, full of lightning transitions from the matter-of-fact to fantasy which make an imaginative child’s world continuously exciting” (*The New York Times).***  
  
If there is one thing Lewis has enough of, it’s good advice from his overprotective parents. But when they go away for a week, Lewis’s parents leave him in the care of Miss Fitchlow, a tall, freckle-faced, free-spirited woman who stands on her head and eats carrot pudding to see better in the dark.  
  
Miss Fitchlow lets Lewis explore the neighborhood park alone for the first time, where he meets Mr. Madruga, a retired Spanish shoemaker. The two become friends, and together, find ways to show everyone that they can think for themselves.

1.) Why does Lewis have trouble getting “the hang of answering grown-ups”? (p.114)   
  
      Lewis feels uncomfortable and weird about adults tell him what to do and what to be like.   
  
2.) Why does Lewis think about running away when people offer to help him?  
         Lewis thinks about running away because he doesn't need help and " everyone wanted to help Lewis." (pg.109)    
  
3.) Why is Lewis’s one wish “to make people stop asking him how he felt – or telling him how he felt”? (p. 111)  
 It is none of there business  
  
4.) Why doesn't Lewis try to explain to adults what is bothering him?  
     They would not understand him or help him in any way as possible   
  
5.) Why is Lewis more successful at doing what Miss Fitchlow and Mr. Madruga ask him to do that what his parents and teachers as him to do?  
         They understand him and they don't judge Lewis the way he is    
  
6.) Why does Lewis grow more confident after a week with Miss Fitchlow and Mr. Madruga?  
     They know him better and  he is allowed to be what he is.  
  
7.) Why is Lewis bored to death by the fish his parents gave him?  
 Because the fish does nothing   
  
8.) Why does Miss Fitchlow remind Lewis of “agreeable things even though he didn't always understand what she was talking about”? (p. 129)  
    It is a life reminder and she is  not forcing him to do that.   
  
9.) Why is Lewis able to write an effective letter for Mr. Madruga?  
    It is a favor not pressure doesn't care about school.    
  
10.) Why does the story end with Lewis telling his parents, “I’ll get bigger,” and Miss Fitchlow agreeing with him? (p. 140)  
      He will get bigger and he is flexible with life.  
  
  
**Vocabulary:**  
1.) **Absolute (p. 112)**  
  
Quote: "An**absolute** stranger would say."   
  
Definition (based on context/in your own words):   complete   
  
Synonym:   finished   
  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word):  I am absolutely sure that I will graduate.     
  
2.) **Objection (p. 114)**  
  
Quote: " The only **objection** he had to reading to them was that they liked to hear the same story over and over again."  
  
Definition (based on context/in your own words):  not like  
  
Synonym: dislike   
  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word):       The objection in court is for a reason.   
  
3.) **Amplify (p. 115)**  
  
Quote: " If we can **amplify**that note of yours    
  
Definition (based on context/in your own words):  make louder   
  
Synonym:   turn it louder   
  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word):  
  
4.) **Probable (p. 120)**  
  
Quote: "**"**Possible**,** but not probable"  
  
Definition (based on context/in your own words):  true   
  
Synonym:  not fake   
  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word):   It is probable that I will go to the NBA for basketball   
  
5.) **Meditate (p. 128)**  
  
Quote: **"**Meditate, she replied."  
  
Definition (based on context/in your own words): silent   
  
Synonym:  relax   
  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word): I don't meditate