

The Little Prince Study Guide

Part One

We need to find information about the followings:

- The writer: try finding any information from the biography of the writer that is relevant to the book's themes, characters, events, etc.
- The Historical context of the book.
- Existentialism (definition, principles, main philosophers).

1. Identify the themes presented in the following quotes:

- "Whenever I met one of them who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my Drawing Number One, which I have always kept. I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say :That is a hat ".Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man."
- "On making his discovery, the astronomer had presented it to the International Astronomical Congress, in a great demonstration. But he was in Turkish costume, and so nobody would believe what he said .Grown-ups are like that... So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report.
- "Just so, you might say to them: "The proof that the little prince existed is that he was charming, that he laughed, and that he was looking for a sheep. If anybody wants a sheep, that is a proof that he exists." And what good would it do to tell them that? They would shrug their shoulders, and treat you like a child. But if you said to them: "The planet he came from is Asteroid B-612," then they would be convinced, and leave you in peace from their questions."

 Right at the beginning of the story, through quotes like the ones above, the writer hints at the main conflict of the book. Describe and explain it with regard to the themes of the book.

★ 2. Explain the following quotes in relation to the themes of the book.

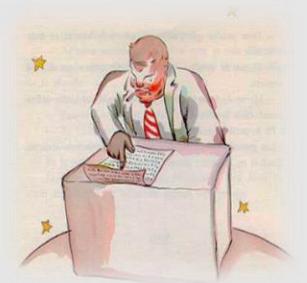
• "The little prince never let go of a question, once he had asked it."

• "Exactly. One must require from each one the duty which each one can perform," the king went on". Accepted authority rests first of all on reason. If you ordered your people to go and throw themselves into the sea, they would rise up in revolution. I have the right to require obedience because my orders are reasonable." ...



• "Then you shall judge yourself," the king answered. "that is the most difficult thing of all. It is much more difficult to judge oneself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself rightly, then you are indeed a man of true wisdom."

• "I myself own a flower," he continued his conversation with the businessman, "which I water every day. I own three volcanoes, which I clean out every week (for I also clean out the one that is extinct; one never knows). It is of some use to my volcanoes, and it is of some use to my flower, that I own them. But you are of no use to the stars . . ."



• "That man," said the little prince to himself, as he continued farther on his journey, "that man would be scorned by all the others: by the king, by the conceited man, by the tippler, by the businessman. Nevertheless, he is the only one of them all who does not seem to me ridiculous. Perhaps that is because he is thinking of something else besides himself."

★ 3. All the characters in the story are symbolic. What does each character represent? How does that link to the themes of the book?

• 4. Describe the setting of the story. Say how it helps build the themes of the book.

• 5. Explain the motifs below and say how they relate to the themes of exploration, self-discovery, imagination, and knowing vs believing.

- Sunsets
- Stars
- Drawing
- Questions





The Writer uses the analogy of the little prince, the fox, and the rose alluding to the themes of **relationships, responsibility, love, loss, connection, and choice**. Explain how in light of the quotes below.

• "To establish ties?" "Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . ."

• "It would have been better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you . . . One must observe the proper rites . . .

• "she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered;because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or ever sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is my rose."

• "what is essential is invisible to the eye."

• "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

• "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."





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Part Two



1. Identify the POV in The Little Prince. Illustrate



2. "In the course of this life I have had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with matters of consequence. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them."

- Both the narrator and the little prince agree that grown-ups are absurd. How?
- Analyze the notion of grown-ups in the Little Prince. Illustrate.
- To what extent do you agree with the portrayal of grown-ups in the novella?
- Explain the dichotomy of growing old vs growing up.

3. "All men have the stars," he answered, "but they are not the same things for different people. For some, who are travelers, the stars are guides. For others they are no more than little lights in the sky. For others, who are scholars, they are problems. For my businessman they were wealth. But all these stars are silent. You-- you alone-- will have the stars as no one else has them--"

- "It is just as it is with the flower. If you love a flower that lives on a star, it is sweet to look at the sky at night. All the stars are a-bloom with flowers" "...Yes, I know" "...It is just as it is with the water. Because of the pulley, and the rope, what you gave me to drink was like music. You remember-- how good it was"
- "It will be as if, in place of the stars, I had given you a great number of little bells that knew how to laugh"...
- "You know, it will be very nice. I, too, shall look at the stars. All the stars will be wells with a rusty pulley. All the stars will pour out fresh water for me to drink"...
- "That will be so amusing! You will have five hundred million little bells, and I shall have five hundred million springs of fresh water"



Explain the quotes above in light of the following statement:

"The world is, of course, nothing but our conception of it."

Anton Chekhov.



4. To practice using textual evidence, discuss the idea of "the invisible essence" in "The Little Prince" using the quotes below to guide you.

- "The men where you live," said the little prince, "raise five thousand roses in the same garden-- and they do not find in it what they are looking for"
- "They do not find it," I replied". And yet what they are looking for could be found in one single rose, or in a little water"
- "The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen."
- "The desert is beautiful," the little prince added .And that was true. I have always loved the desert. One sits down on a deserts and dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams" ...
- "What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well.."
- "I was astonished by a sudden understanding of that mysterious radiation of the sands. When I was a little boy I lived in an old house, and legend told us that a treasure was buried there. To be sure, no one had ever known how to find it; perhaps no one had ever even looked for it. But it cast an enchantment over that house. My home was hiding a secret in the depths of its heart"
- "Yes," I said to the little prince. "The house, the stars, the desert-- what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!"



5. "This was a merchant who sold pills that had been invented to quench thirst."

- "You need only swallow one pill a week, and you would feel no need of anything to drink . "Why are you selling those?" asked the little prince" .

Because they save a tremendous amount of time," said the merchant".Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty-three minutes in every week".

- "And what do I do with those fifty-three minutes"?

"Anything you like"...

- "As for me," said the little prince to himself, "if I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water."

- Explain the metaphor of the thirst pills. How is that mirrored in our modern world?





6. Read the following philosophical quotes and explain how they are reflected in the novella. Illustrate.

You can read more about Existentialism to have a better understanding.

- "We do not know what we want and yet we are responsible for what we are – that is the fact."
- "It is only in our decisions, that we are important."
- "Existence precedes and rules essence."
- "Man is fully responsible for his nature and his choices."
- "We do not judge the people we love."

Jean-Paul Sartre.

- "One must have at least a readiness to love the other person, broadly speaking, if one is to be able to understand him."

Rollo May.

Some Quotes for Reflection

• It may well be that this man is absurd. But he is not so absurd as the king, the conceited man, the businessman, and the tippler. For at least his work has some meaning. When he lights his street lamp, it is as if he brought one more star to life, or one flower. When he puts out his lamp, he sends the flower, or the star, to sleep. That is a beautiful occupation. And since it is beautiful, it is truly useful."

• "No one is ever satisfied where he is," said the switchman.

• "Only the children know what they are looking for," said the little prince. "They waste their time over a rag doll and it becomes very important to them; and if anybody takes it away from them, they cry..."

