**Little Prince**

The Little Prince is a **poetic tale**, with watercolour illustrations by the author, in which a pilot stranded in the desert meets a young prince fallen to Earth from a tiny asteroid. The story is philosophical and includes social criticism, remarking on the strangeness of the adult world. It was written during a period when Saint-Exupéry fled to North America subsequent to the Fall of France during the Second World War, witnessed first hand by the author and captured in his memoir Flight to Arras.[11] The adult fable, according to one review, is actually "...an allegory of Saint-Exupéry's own life—his search for childhood certainties and interior peace, his mysticism, his belief in human courage and brotherhood, and his deep love for his wife Consuelo but also an allusion to the tortured nature of their relationship."[12]

Though ostensibly styled as a children's book, The Little Prince makes several observations about life and human nature.[13] For example, Saint-Exupéry tells of a fox meeting the young prince during his travels on Earth. The story's essence is contained in the lines uttered by the fox to the little prince: "One sees clearly only with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eye." [14] Other key thematic messages are articulated by the fox, such as: "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed." and "It is the time you have lost for your rose that makes your rose so important." The fox's messages are arguably the book's most famous quotations because they deal with human relationships.

**Inspirations**

In The Little Prince, its narrator, the pilot, talks of being stranded in the desert beside his crashed aircraft. The account clearly drew on Saint-Exupéry's own experience in the Sahara, an ordeal described in detail in his 1939 memoir Wind, Sand and Stars (original French: Terre des hommes).[13]

On December 30, 1935, at 02:45 am, after 19 hours and 44 minutes in the air, Saint-Exupéry, along with his copilot-navigator André Prévot, crashed in the Sahara desert.[25] They were attempting to break the speed record for a Paris-to-Saigon flight, in a then-popular type of air race, called a raid, and win a prize of 150,000 francs.[26] Their plane was a Caudron C-630 Simoun,[Note 5] and the crash site is thought to have been near to the Wadi Natrun valley, close to the Nile Delta.[27]

Both miraculously survived the crash, only to face rapid dehydration in the intense desert heat.[28] Their maps were primitive and ambiguous. Lost among the sand dunes with a few grapes, a thermos of coffee, a single orange, and some wine, the pair had only one day's worth of liquid. They both began to see mirages, which were quickly followed by more vivid hallucinations. By the second and third days, they were so dehydrated that they stopped sweating altogether. Finally, on the fourth day, a Bedouin on a camel discovered them and administered a native rehydration treatment, which saved Saint-Exupéry's and Prévot's lives.[26]

The prince's home, "Asteroid B-612", was likely derived as a progression of one of the planes Saint-Exupéry flew as an airmail pilot, which bore the serial number "A-612". During his service as a mail pilot in the Sahara, Saint-Exupéry had viewed a fennec (desert sand fox), which most likely inspired him to create the fox character in the book. In a letter written to his sister Didi from the Western Sahara's Cape Juby, where he was the manager of an airmail stopover station in 1928, he tells of raising a fennec that he adored.[citation needed]

In the novella, the fox, believed to be modelled after the author's intimate New York City friend, Silvia Hamilton Reinhardt, tells the prince that his rose is unique and special, as she is the one that he loves.[29] The novella's iconic phrase, "One sees clearly only with the heart", is believed to have been suggested by her.

The fearsome, grasping baobab trees, researchers have contended, were meant to represent Nazism attempting to destroy the planet.[29] The little prince's reassurance to the pilot that his dying body is only an empty shell resembles the last words of Antoine's dying younger brother François, who told the author, from his deathbed: "Don't worry. I'm all right. I can't help it. It's my body".[30]