

## The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

- This book presents a version of the story of the Three Little Pigs, but is told entirely from the wolf's perspective. The "Big, Bad Wolf" is looking for some brown sugar for his granny's tea and asks the first pig if he has some. The wolf waits at the door and then breaks into a sneezing fit, blowing the house down. In the middle of where the house once was, the pig lay face down in the dirt, lifeless, presumably from exposure to the elements. Not wanting a good meal to go to waste, the wolf gobbles up the pig. The second pig also faces the same sequence of events. Upon asking for sugar from the third pig, the pig makes derogatory comments about the wolf's granny, angering the wolf. The wolf begins pounding on the door when the police show up to arrest him. The wolf then gets incarcerated and supposedly writes the book as his final plea for innocence.
- I read this story in my 5th grade English class; this story was used to show the importance of perspective. I was very surprised to see that the so-called "Big, Bad wolf", who was evil and conniving in the original text, was misrepresented and slandered; he was looking for sugar, not blood. The story taught me that it's critical to understand the multiple perspectives of an issue to get a more informed and objective view. This made me more analytical, searching for others' perspectives when approaching a problem. This story also made me more compassionate towards those who have faced unfair treatment, as the wolf was unfairly vilified and hauled off to prison. In summation, this story showed me that to truly understand someone, I must understand how they are a protagonist in their world.

## On the Sidewalk, Bleeding by Ed McBain

- This story is about a young man named Andy in a gang called the "Royals". He gets stabbed by rival gang members of the "Guardians", because he was wearing a "Royals" jacket. He collapses in the pouring rain of the night, lying on the pavement of the alleyway, unable to move because of his injuries. A young couple finds him, but the man in the couple is reluctant to help Andy for fear of being tracked down and attacked by the "Guardians". Andy then reflects on his life's choices and realizes that joining the gang, which he once thought was an amazing achievement, was his worst decision. Moments before his death, he strips off his purple "Royals" jacket and tosses it aside. After he dies, his girlfriend Laura tries to inform the police officer Andy's name to identify the body, but the police officer shrugs it off as just another "Royal".

- This story demonstrates how we often categorize others based on facets of their identity, rather than acknowledge their individuality. This was hugely impactful to my personal growth, as I learned to be more conscious about categorizing people based on stereotypes, to take notice of their identities, and respect their individuality. Moreover, Andy facing prejudice in the form of being stabbed, left alone for fear of being attacked, and his death being justified as part of a gang war, taught me that pieces of your identity such as the way you dress speak volumes about who you are and who you associate with. Furthermore, this story showed me that when meeting someone for the first time, it's important to maintain a proper first impression, as your first impression speaks for you and affects how others treat us before getting to know us.

### Lord of The Flies by William Golding

- The Lord of the Flies is about a group of boys who are stranded on a desert island. Ralph and Piggy try to institute some form of order, using the conch shell to call out and demand civilized behaviour. Ralph is voted to be the leader of the group, and he appoints Jack to oversee hunting. After exploring the island with Jack and Simon, Ralph declares to start a signal fire, which is started but not controlled, leading the fire to grow out of control and consume a large part of the forest along with a little boy. Jack comes back with his first kill, and becomes enraptured by the dance the other hunters and he are doing. Jack starts a new group of people, calling his hunters, and runs away, while Ralph builds a signal fire with the remaining boys. Simon discovers something new about a figure in the forest, and rushes to tell everyone, only to be mauled to death by the other boys in a frenzy. Jack's camp invades Ralph's camp the next day and steals Piggy's glasses. Ralph attempts to reason with Jack, but Jack will not listen, preferring Ralph try to fight his way out. Another boy rolls a boulder down the mountain, killing Piggy, while Ralph barely escapes with his life. Jack's camp attempts to hunt down and murder Ralph by driving him out to the beach. On the beach, Ralph finds a British naval officer whose ship came to the island after seeing the island in a blaze. The other boys also step onto the beach, noticing the British naval officer.
- When I first read this story, I didn't understand it; it seemed like a savage tale about a group of once civilized schoolboys creating a sort of Hobbesian society, and they killed 3 other boys for the fun of it, tore one apart in a frenzy of chaotic rage, and let one die from negligence. But the more I thought about, the more I realized that this story was so much more than a gruesome tale about a bunch of schoolkids

murdering each other. This story reflected our society, from shunning the intelligent to murdering unbiased reason. This story showed me that chaos can very easily erupt without effective leadership. In relatively controlled settings, chaos can manifest itself into passive-aggressive behaviour, creating silent, but disastrous tension that builds over time. In situations without control, chaos will run rampant, leading to the events in Lord of the Flies. Moreover, this story showed me how fragile our moral principles are if we only keep them when we must; when an accountability system exists. If this accountability system ceases to exist, there will be chaos and a breakdown of our moral compass.

### Monty Python and the Holy Grail

- This movie is about King Arthur's quest for the Holy Grail, commissioned by god. He seeks the aid of the knights who would become the Knights of the Round Table. King Arthur and his knights split up after facing the Frenchmen, who launched a cow at them. Each knight faces difficulty in their paths, from facing a three-headed giant, to Castle Anthrax, to the Knights Who Say Ni. King Arthur and his knights regroup and learn of a cave protected by the Killer Bunny, who proceeds to viciously kill several of them, before being blown up by the Holy Hand Grenade. Once in the cave, King Arthur and his knights face off against an animated giant and only win because the animator had a heart attack. King Arthur and his knights then must cross the Bridge of Death to get to the castle where the Holy Grail is kept. Upon approaching the castle, King Arthur notices that the same Frenchmen who launched a cow at them were the inhabitants of this castle. The Frenchmen launch other animals at them until King Arthur and his knights fall back. After conjuring an army, King Arthur charges the French castle but is interrupted by the police investigating the murder of a historian. The historian's widow identifies King Arthur as the murderer and King Arthur is arrested.
- The film satirizes many elements such as the class system once in Europe, duels, kings, the witch trials, the holiness and strength of knights, the Bubonic Plague, the riches of the king, the indifference of the elites to the common people, facets of Christianity, governmental systems, and the chivalry of knights. This film inspired me to think critically of all information presented to me, through any form of media, including the news. It inspired me to look behind the curtain to notice an illegitimate response or solution, and not doing so would result in failing to truly understand how absurd the information might be. Moreover, it taught me to challenge beliefs that I

had assumed to be true, to be logically and reasonably skeptical, to have a low bar for illegitimacy and to use good, rational thinking.

### Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

- Ender's Game is about humanity's final fight against the Formics, or buggers. The buggers had attacked Earth decades before and humans were determined to end all future conflict by destroying the planets the buggers called home. To do so, they trained Ender Wiggin, a child genius, in various forms of military strategy using simulations of battles. His final simulation was the test that would state if he was ready for real warfare. Ender wins this final simulation, but at the cost of many battleships and soldiers. Unbeknownst to him, this final simulation was not a simulation, but a real battle. Ender feels very conflicted with himself and flies off to resurrect the buggers.
- Ender's game demonstrated that the version of right and wrong I held in my mind can't be correctly applied to everything; there will be some grey areas made up of good and bad elements. The idea of someone or something's actions being neither right nor wrong but a combination of the two, can be applied to get a more informed understanding of the controversial problems of our time. Moreover, Ender's Game showed me that actions fall on a spectrum between good and evil, and actions motivated by self-interest are often unfairly considered closer to good. This story, using the final simulation as the real battle, showed me that the people who often claim to be the "good guys" do bad things, and the people who are the "bad guys" are often misunderstood.