

The Little Prince



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Born into an aristocratic family, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was the third of five children and one of two sons in the family. After failing his final exams at the preparatory Naval Academy, Saint-Exupéry enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts as an auditor to study architecture for 15 months, before dropping out again to take odd jobs and eventually to become an aviator. During his years as a pilot, Saint-Exupéry began writing, and several years later, with the publication of his novel *Vol de nuit* (Night Flight), he was established as a rising star in the literary world. Saint-Exupéry continued to fly, joining the French Air Force upon the beginning of World War II. However, after the Fall of France, Saint-Exupéry and his wife Consuelo Suncin fled to New York, where he would eventually write and illustrate *The Little Prince*. Following the publication of *The Little Prince* in 1943, Saint-Exupéry decided to return to war to fight with the Allies. In 1944, during his final reconnaissance mission in the Rhone Valley, however, his aircraft disappeared dramatically, without a trace.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After the outbreak of World War II, Saint-Exupéry originally flew reconnaissance with the French Air Force. However, after France's defeat in 1940 and subsequent armistice with Germany, Saint-Exupéry fled with his wife Consuelo Suncin to New York, where he eventually wrote *The Little Prince* in 1942. He was very concerned with the plight of those still in France, dedicating the novella to his Jewish friend Léon Werth, another writer who had opted to stay in France after the German invasion.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

There are two sequels to *The Little Prince*, neither one written by Saint-Exupéry himself. One was written in 1997 by Jean-Pierre Davidts, and is titled *Le petit prince retrouvé* (*The Little Prince Returns*), and Ysatis de Saint-Simone, the niece of Saint-Exupéry's wife, Consuelo Suncin, wrote the other, titled *The Return of the Little Prince*. Saint-Exupéry also published several other books in addition to *The Little Prince*, many of which also draw upon his experience as a pilot.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Little Prince* (French: *Le Petit Prince*)

- **When Written:** 1942
- **Where Written:** New York
- **When Published:** 1943
- **Literary Period:** Existentialism
- **Genre:** Fable/Novella
- **Setting:** Sahara Desert
- **Climax:** The fox teaches the little prince the value of his rose
- **Antagonist:** Grown-ups
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

The Tale of the Rose. The character of the rose in Saint-Exupéry's novella is likely based on his real-life wife, Consuelo Suncin—herself a writer and artist—who wrote a memoir about her life and relationship with Saint-Exupéry, entitled *The Tale of the Rose*. The manuscript was found and published two decades after her death, in 1979.

Desert Crash. As a pioneering aviator, Saint-Exupéry had a brush with death when he crashed in the Sahara desert with his mechanic-navigator, André Prévot, in 1935. This crash is referenced in *The Little Prince*, with the narrator's opening dilemma, and Saint-Exupéry writes about it in more detail in his memoir, *Wind, Sand, and Stars*.



PLOT SUMMARY

The narrator, the pilot, crashes in the Sahara desert. He attempts to fix his engine, knowing that he only has a limited supply of **water**. As he begins to work on the engine, however, he hears a small voice asking him to draw a sheep. The narrator turns around to meet the little prince, and after making several attempts at drawing the sheep, he settles on sketching a box—he tells the little prince that the box contains a sheep, and to the pilot's astonishment, the little prince is delighted.

The pilot begins to learn more about the little prince, discovering that he comes from the asteroid known as B-612. Eventually, he begins to learn other details of the little prince's planet as well, including the fact that **baobab trees** are a major menace and that the object of the little prince's affection is a rose. This rose is very vain, however, and tells lies, making the little prince unhappy. He decides that he cannot trust her anymore and leaves his planet.

The little prince first encounters a king who claims to rule over everything, including the **stars**. He has no subjects on his own planet to rule, however, and the little prince grows bored and

leaves. The second person the little prince meets is a conceited man who enjoys applause and admiration. The third is a tippler who says that he drinks to forget that he is ashamed of drinking. The fourth grownup is a businessman who is busy counting the stars so that he may own them.

At this point, the little prince finds all the grownups very strange, and he continues onto the planet of the lamplighter, who lights a lamp on his planet when night falls and puts it out again when the sun rises. The little prince finds the lamplighter to be the least ridiculous of all the grownups because he thinks of something other than himself.

The little prince then comes across a geographer who tells the little prince that his rose is "ephemeral," or in other words, "in danger of speedy disappearance." This alarms the little prince and makes him regret leaving his rose. Nevertheless, he continues on his journey to the planet Earth.

The little prince lands in the middle of the Sahara desert, where he encounters a snake. The snake speaks in riddles, hinting that he has a powerful poison that can take the little prince back to his planet. The little prince continues to travel on Earth, however, eventually discovering a bed of roses, all identical to his own rose on asteroid B-612, making him question his own rose's contention that it is unique.

He then meets a fox, who teaches the little prince what it means to tame—or to establish ties—with another. The little prince realizes that his rose has tamed him, making her unique in the universe, even if she's outwardly identical to all the other roses on Earth.

The little prince goes on to meet a railway switchman and a merchant before returning to the Sahara where he meets the pilot. By the end of his story, the little prince and the pilot are both very thirsty, and they decide to walk and find water. They discover a well around daybreak, and together they savor the drink as well as their time together.

The little prince explains that the next day is the anniversary of his descent to Earth. He sends the pilot away to fix his plane and tells him to come meet him at the same spot the following evening. The pilot fixes his engine and returns the next evening to find the little prince conversing with the poisonous snake. The little prince warns the pilot that he must return to his planet and that it will "look a little as if I were dying." The little prince allows the snake to poison him, and he falls gently to the sand. The narrator is reassured by the fact that the little prince's body is gone the following day and believes that it means he made it back to asteroid B-612. He worries, however, whether the sheep he drew will eat the prince's rose.

The Pilot/Narrator – The narrator of the story, the pilot crashes in the middle of the Sahara desert when his engine fails. The pilot is a grownup, but one who has always been an explorer and is sympathetic to the values and perspectives of children, a trait that grows even more pronounced as he becomes close with the little prince. Although he's desperate to fix his engine so that he won't die of thirst in the desert, he comes to realize that his ability to comfort the little prince and to listen to his stories is even more essential. He decides to write and illustrate the book in order to remember his friendship with the little prince.

The Little Prince – The title character of the story, the little prince ventures to other planets in the universe after discovering that the rose he loves has lied to him. Innocent and curious, the little prince begins to miss his rose as he explores more, learning that his rose's lies were less essential than the time they had spent together. He tells his story to the pilot, helping the pilot regain the perspective of childhood as well.

The Fox – The little prince's meeting with the fox is the climax of the story—it's the moment when the little prince realizes why his rose is so important to him. The fox is skittish around the prince at first, but he teaches the prince how to tame him. Afterwards, he shares his secret with the little prince in the novella's iconic phrase, "One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye."

The Snake – The snake speaks in riddles, and he meets the little prince at the beginning and the end of his journey on Earth. The snake possesses a deadly poison that he promises will send the prince back to where he came from, and at the end of the story, the little prince takes his offer, making a departure that he warns the pilot will look "a little as if I were dying."

The Rose/Flower – The rose is the object of the little prince's affection. She is beautiful and vain, given to telling dramatic lies, which prompts the little prince to leave his planet and set off on his journey. She apologizes right before he leaves, but he decides to go anyway—eventually, he feels sorry for leaving her and tries to return to his planet to protect her.

The Lamplighter – The lamplighter is a faithful but unhappy grownup, who is miserable because his job allows him no rest. His planet makes a full turn every minute, and in order to keep up, he is constantly lighting or putting out the lamp. The little prince thinks more highly of him than of the other grownups because he is the only one who thinks of something beside himself.

The Geographer – The geographer is the last man the little prince meets before he ventures to Earth. The geographer is a scholarly grownup who spends his life waiting for explorers to venture to his planet so that he may fill his books. He teaches the little prince the meaning of the word "ephemeral," causing the little prince to miss his rose, who he fears is in danger of speedy disappearance.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Merchant – The little prince also meets a merchant on Earth. The merchant claims to sell a pill that can quench a person's thirst, saving fifty-three minutes each day. The little prince defiantly responds that he would use the extra fifty-three minutes to walk at his leisure towards a cool spring of **water**.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The King – The king is the first grownup the little prince meets on his journey. He is bossy but fair, vowing to make only reasonable demands of his subjects. He believes, however, that everything in the universe—even **the stars**—is one of his subjects.

The Conceited Man – The conceited man is the second grownup the little prince meets, and his personality fits his character name. He only wants the little prince to admire and applaud him, which the little prince finds very bizarre.

The Tippler – The third man the little prince meets, the tippler drowns his disappointment in himself by drinking. He uses circular logic, telling the little prince that he drinks to forget that he is ashamed of drinking.

The Businessman – The businessman is another grownup the little prince meets on his travels. He is distracted and busy, attempting to count all **the stars** in the sky so that he can own them.

The Railway Switchman – On Earth, the little prince meets a railway switchman who operates trains on which the grownups sleep or yawn, while the children flatten their noses to the windows, enjoying the journey.

encountered on Earth—even if all the roses appeared alike from the outside.

The characters grow in the story through their relationships. For the little prince, the main lesson is about responsibility to those you've tamed, or befriended, and for the pilot, the main lesson is about "matters of consequence"—he learns that relationships are of the most consequence, even in a desert with a broken-down plane and limited **water**.



THE TRUE AND THE ESSENTIAL

At the beginning of his journey, the little prince is most concerned with the truth. He leaves his planet after catching his rose telling a lie, and although they reconcile just before he departs, he decides to explore the universe in order to discover what's true. As he encounters more on his travels, however, he realizes that what's true is not always what's essential—his rose's lies were less important than the fact that he cared for her and was therefore responsible for her. This turning point comes when the little prince meets the fox, which tells him, "What is essential is invisible to the eye." Similarly, motivated by the fact that he will die without **water**, the pilot is mostly focused on fixing his engine at the beginning of the story. As he begins talking to the little prince, however, this fact—or truth—becomes less essential. He finds himself comforting the boy instead of fixing his engine, and when they finally abandon the project to start walking to find water, what's essential isn't that they find the water and therefore live—it's that they found the water together and that it's sweeter for the walk they took under the **stars** to find it.

The story also contains double meanings that require the reader to decide on the truth. The snake suggests that he can help the little prince return to his planet, alluding to death—but then, when the narrator returns to retrieve the little prince's body at the end of the story, the body is gone, suggesting that the prince really did embark on some kind of journey, maybe to return to his planet.



EXPLORATION VS. NARROWMINDEDNESS

The two main characters of the book—the pilot and the little prince—are both explorers, in a very literal sense, but also in a figurative sense. Compared to those characters that inhabit only their own tiny planets and homes, the pilot and the prince have traveled and gained more perspective on life and the universe. While the others are caught up adding sums, drinking, ruling over imaginary subjects, or completing other futile projects, these two explorers observe, talk, and listen, learning lessons that the narrator passes on to us. They have a willingness to travel outside of their comfort zones and mental boundaries that the



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



RELATIONSHIPS

Both the pilot's and the prince's stories revolve around their relationships. For the pilot, the entire purpose of writing the story and making his drawings is to remember his relationship with the little prince. The little prince, in turn, tells the story of his journey in terms of the characters he's met along the way. The chapter with the fox, in particular, emphasizes the importance of taking time to get to know someone. The fox uses the language of "taming," which emphasizes the gradual nature of building trust. The fox also helps the little prince realize that it was the time spent with his rose that made his rose unique from all the others he

other characters don't have—and through this willingness, they develop in the story.

One of the main lessons the characters learn on their journeys is about what's truly essential. By leaving their homes and the relationships they've already formed, they learn the value of those ties. It's not until the little prince leaves his rose and explores the universe, for example, that he realizes how important his time with his flower really was.



CHILDHOOD VS. ADULTHOOD

The story often compares children to grownups, depicting grownups as a group of people who have lost their sense of imagination and the ability to see what's essential. The various grownups presented throughout the story have only utilitarian concerns and are ruled by vices like pride and greed. Unlike children, they've lost the ability to understand the true value of a friendship, the beauty of a house, or the things that aren't explicitly shown in a drawing.

However, the pilot's case shows that this condition can be reversed. The little prince's appearance helps him start to see the importance of establishing ties and wasting time on drawings again, even though, as he admits, he has "had to grow old."



INNOCENCE

Innocence is a trait that both the pilot and the little prince value. For the pilot, the little prince's innocence makes it important to protect and comfort him. For the little prince, his rose's naïveté similarly makes it important for him to return to his planet to protect her. Innocence itself serves as protection as well—when the little prince encounters the snake, the snake refrains from poisoning the boy because of his innocence.

Grownups are those who have lost their innocence—and as a result, have stopped seeking the truth. They care more about sums and titles than about the traits contained beneath the surface. The state of innocence is therefore valuable because it comes with perceptiveness and an ability to see the important things in life.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



STARS

Stars take on different meanings throughout the book—as the little prince says before his final departure, "All men have stars, but they are not the same things

for different people." For explorers, the stars are guiding lights; for the businessman, stars are a number to count and own; for the king, the stars are subjects to rule; and for the pilot, the stars represent the little prince's presence on another planet. For the pilot, the stars contain the laughter of the little prince, and when he watches the stars, only he will be able to hear them laughing. The stars in *The Little Prince* represent what each character holds most dear.



WATER

Water represents spiritual nourishment and the joy that we can take in everyday moments. Water begins as a seemingly ordinary resource that we take for granted in our lives, but in the desert, it becomes a rarity. The pilot and the little prince grow very thirsty by the end of the book, and they abandon their storytelling to search for water, walking beneath the desert **stars**. When they finally find a well in the middle of the desert, they drink the water as if it were a "present," something that has become more special for the walking and the waiting that they have had to endure to find it. Additionally, when the little prince meets a merchant who sells a pill that quenches thirst, thereby saving fifty-three minutes everyday, the little prince says that he would use those fifty-three minutes to walk toward a spring of fresh water—suggesting that there is no replacement for the ordinary joy of journeying towards water to take a cool drink.



BAOBAB TREES

Baobab trees are a dangerous menace in *The Little Prince*. They resemble rosebushes at first, but if they aren't carefully monitored, their roots may destroy a small planet like the little prince's. Symbolically, the trees may represent any sort of bad habit that isn't taken care of early—the tippler's drinking habit, for example, or the businessman's obsession with sums. They could also be interpreted as having some historical significance, with the menace of the trees representing a problem like anti-Semitism or a person like Hitler—whose danger didn't become obvious until it was too late, prompting the German invasion of France that caused Saint-Exupéry to flee to New York.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harcourt Brace & Company edition of *The Little Prince* published in 1970.

☛ 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.

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator is explaining his test for learning whether or not he can speak of essential, interesting things to other grown-ups that he meets: whether or not they are able to see that his drawing is of not a hat but an elephant inside a boa constrictor. When the narrator says "matters of consequences," he uses the term to mean things of importance to grown-ups, which have little to do with what the book will argue is *really* important.

Here, the narrator sets out to prove his authority in telling the story that follows. Since he has spent time among other grown-ups, he knows what they are like, and he is able to adequately judge the difference between them and children. Already, of course, we know which side the narrator is on, but his rhetorical openness also helps to win over the reader as the case is made for an embrace of the innocence, wonder, and magic of childhood.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey. Absurd as it might seem to me, a thousand miles from any human habitation and in danger of death, I took out of my pocket a sheet of paper and my fountain-pen.

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

The pilot has crashed in the desert and has met the little prince, who is insisting that he draw him a picture of a sheep. The pilot is confused and disoriented. He's not sure where he is and has no idea how he might get back to civilization. However, although he is certainly concerned with such practical matters, the pilot also reveals himself to be open-minded enough to acquiesce to the little prince's

request.

One of the markers of childhood, as opposed to adulthood, is a whimsical desire for beauty that has nothing to do with fixation on a certain task or goal. Most adults might find that the little prince's desire makes no sense, and is exasperating: while the pilot (an adult himself) is similarly confused, he is willing enough to humor the little prince, opening himself to whatever might happen next.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☛ 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...

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

The pilot is relating the story of the discovery of the planet, asteroid B-612, where he believes the little prince comes from. People only believed the report about the planet, he notes, when the astronomer - a Turkish man - wore European dress: when the same man had worn his native Turkish costume, no one had believed him.

The pilot thus uses this story to critique narrow-mindedness, particularly regarding Western prejudices against people from other places and with other customs and appearances. But he makes an even more provocative statement than that when he argues that the story does not just account for European prejudice, but for prejudice by grown-ups in general. It is a characteristic of all adults, the argument goes, to be narrow-minded and petty, and to refuse to hear what is true because of superficial things like what someone looks like. Only children are open-minded and curious enough to really listen to what someone has to say, and to concentrate on the essential rather than being distracted by the irrelevant and the superficial. The pilot does not account for why this capacity shrinks, but it is implied that it must take place somehow in the process of growing up.

☛ For I do not want any one to read my book carelessly. I have suffered too much grief in setting down these memories. Six years have already passed since my friend went away from me, with his sheep. If I try to describe him here, it is to make sure that I shall not forget him. To forget a friend is sad. Not every one has had a friend. And if I forget him, I may become like the grown-ups who are no longer interested in anything but figures...

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker), The Little Prince

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 18



Explanation and Analysis

The pilot has apologized for not beginning his book with "Once upon a time..." and states that although he looks down upon the obsession of grown-ups with precise facts and figures, he reluctantly decided to be as precise as possible at the beginning. His reason for doing so, however, is so as *not* to become like the adults he scorns. Part of what these grown-ups miss, according to the pilot, is the joy and beauty that comes from deep, meaningful relationships. This sort of relationship is something that the pilot has had with the little prince, and he recognizes that it is precious and rare enough that he should do all he can so as not to forget him.

The pilot/narrator thus seems to foretell a rather melancholy ending to the story, since it seems that it will end with the separation between the pilot and the little prince. What rescues the story from being a tragedy though, is, at the very least, the fact that the pilot has gained something essential through his relationship with the prince.

☛ In certain more important details I shall make mistakes, also. But that is something that will not be my fault. My friend never explained anything to me. He thought, perhaps, that I was like himself. But I, alas, do not know how to see sheep through the walls of boxes. Perhaps I am a little like the grown-ups. I have had to grow old.

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker), The Little Prince

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis



As the narrator continues to explain why he has tried to be as precise as possible - in order to never forget his friend, the little prince - he acknowledges that he will sometimes make mistakes or fail to tell the story exactly as it was. The way the narrator excuses himself from these mistakes is by referencing the fundamental difference between himself and the prince. As the epitome of childhood innocence and beauty, the prince is creative and imaginative - he can "see sheep through the walls of boxes," a gift that allows him to be flexible and, more importantly, to see through what is only seemingly there into the essential truth lying beneath.

Although the narrator tends to consider childhood and adulthood as two separate, totally distinct things, here he admits that this separation can be blurred. Children, of course, grow up, and part of the bittersweet tone of this passage stems from the narrator's wistfulness at having to lose the innocence of youth as he has grown old. Still, he insists and will continue to insist that childhood is a state of mind as much as it is a physical range of ages: it is something that can easily be lost as one ages, but if one works hard enough, one can also try to keep it from slipping away.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☛ "I don't believe you! Flowers are weak creatures. They are naïve. They reassure themselves as best they can. They believe that their thorns are terrible weapons..."

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

As the pilot attempts to fix the motor on his plane, the prince continues to ask him question after question. Just before this passage, in a tone of frustration, the pilot has finally told the prince that since thorns will not stop sheep from eating roses, the roses must have thorns simply out of spite.

The prince is clearly deeply upset by this opinion. Thinking, almost certainly, of his own rose, he attempts to convince himself that flowers are not spiteful but simply weak, needing of someone to protect them. For the prince, it is important to consider such flowers as innocent, for by doing so he can continue to believe in his rose's essential goodness.

☝ "I know a planet where there is a certain red-faced gentleman. He has never smelled a flower. He has never looked at a star. He has never loved any one. He has never done anything in his life but add up figures. And all day he says over and over, just like you: 'I am busy with matters of consequence!' And that makes him swell up with pride. But he is not a man—he is a mushroom!"

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The Businessman

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 29



Explanation and Analysis


The little prince is growing increasingly frustrated with the pilot, who is, in turn, frustrated with the prince for distracting him while he attempts to fix the motor of his plane. When the pilot finally exclaims that he is dealing with "matters of consequence," the prince is appalled: he has thought that the pilot was unlike the grown-ups he has seen, but now he realizes that the pilot reminds him of a particularly unsavory grown-up - the "red-faced gentleman" who does nothing but add up facts and figures.

The prince has nothing but scorn for this gentleman, who believes that nothing in the world could be more important than his work. In reality, according to the prince, the man is so narrow-mindedly focused on his job (a job that, in the scheme of things, isn't actually all that important) that he is unable to see the fascinating, inviting world around him. Not only does the man remain fixated on the meaningless numbers before him, but he is also unable to develop true relationships with others, since these figures are all that concern him. The businessman is a reminder to the pilot, once again, of how perilously easy it is for him to slip out of the mentality of childhood and embrace the sorry, limited concerns of adulthood.

☝ "If someone loves a flower, of which just one single blossom grows in all the millions and millions of stars, it is enough to make him happy just to look at the stars. He can say to himself, 'Somewhere, my flower is there...' But if the sheep eats the flower, in one moment all his stars will be darkened... And you think that is not important!"

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The Rose/Flower, The Pilot/Narrator

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 29-30

Explanation and Analysis

The prince objects to the hierarchy created by the pilot, forcing him to reconsider what he assumes to be more or less important. For the pilot, the most pressing task of the moment is the obvious problem with his plane's motor. Fanciful stories about far-away roses in danger simply do not seem relevant to him.


But the little prince's speech implies that there may be a better way to think about what is important than simply equating it with what is immediate, present, and materially urgent. Instead, importance for the prince rests on the significance of relationships – even when there is no physical presence to bear witness to a certain relationship. As the prince looks out towards the stars, he can derive joy from knowing that the rose he loves is there, somewhere, even if he cannot see her. This distance, however, makes the relationship perilously fragile, even as it underlines how essential the rose is to the prince.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝ "But there is nobody here to judge!"

"We do not know that," the king said to him. "I have not yet made a complete tour of my kingdom. I am very old. There is no room here for a carriage. And it tires me to walk."

Related Characters: The Little Prince, The King (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

The little prince is beginning to get bored by his time on the planet with the king. It is increasingly clear that the king doesn't have the ultimate authority that he claims to have, and the prince is able to see through such empty claims. Here, though, the problem that the prince has with the king is slightly different. It has been evident from the beginning that the king doesn't actually have any subjects: he rules over an empty planet. But while this seems obvious to the prince, it is not so to the king.

The king makes a variety of excuses about why he cannot make an exploration of his planet to find any possible

subjects, but his excuses seem to either suggest that the king is refusing to believe what he knows, deep down, to be true, or else that the king is so single-mindedly focused on his own power that he doesn't care enough to see what else is present even on his own planet. In the king's excuses there is also an implied criticism of adults in general: they not only can no longer see what is important and real in the world, but that they actively try to stop themselves from seeing such things as a way of making themselves feel more important.

☞ "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."

Related Characters: The King (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 46



Explanation and Analysis


Although the prince has essentially given up on the king as another one of those grown-ups who are only concerned with their own affairs and lack a spirit of curiosity and openness towards the world, this statement by the king does actually show some degree of wisdom. The king is attempting to get the prince to stay on his planet, so he suggests that the prince become his Minister of Justice. Since there is no one else to judge, the king says he must simply judge himself. Part of what the prince will learn in the course of the book is, precisely, to take a critical perspective on his own beliefs and actions, in order to see through appearances to what is essential. It is ironic that it takes the wild conjectures of the king to suggest this, but this is also a reminder that the essential can come in all kinds of guises.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☞ "Oh, no. Little golden objects that set lazy men to idle dreaming. As for me, I am concerned with matters of consequence. There is no time for idle dreaming in my life."

Related Characters: The Businessman (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

The prince and the businessman are both actually interested in some of the same things: here, namely, the stars in the sky. But while for the little prince these stars are an object of wonder and admiration, the businessman has nothing but contempt for the curiosity and dreaming that these "little golden objects" might inspire. Instead, the interest he has in them is purely material: he is interested by the stars in terms of what they can do for him, the riches that they can gain for him. These riches are what count for the businessman as "matters of consequence," a term that comes up again and again in the book. We are meant, of course, to see that what the businessman considers so important actually is entirely inessential and irrelevant to stars in their essential beauty.

☞ "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..."

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The Businessman

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

The prince is attempting to continue his conversation with the businessman, and as he does so he tries to understand what the businessman is saying by making some kind of a connection to his own experience. The businessman has told him that it is important that he own the stars because, even if he cannot take them with him, he can put them in his bank - or at least put the record of them in his bank. The prince finds this incomprehensible, because for him something is valuable if it can be of use to someone: for instance, owning the volcanoes allows him to take care of them as well as to protect his rose.

Ownership, then, for the prince, has more to do with caretaking, protection, and the development of relationships than it has to do with pure numbers and

figures. Once again, an adult seems to have lost all sense of what it really means, or should mean, to own something.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☞ "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."

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The King, The Conceited Man, The Businessman, The Lamplighter

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 57-58

Explanation and Analysis

The little prince observes the lamplighter on a small planet with no other inhabitants, who nonetheless lights the lamp each morning and each night. Here, the prince attempts to distinguish this task from the tasks of the king, conceited man, and businessman, and asks himself why such tasks seem so different. He settles on the notion of beauty.

For the prince, use and ownership are not only related to a sense of care and protection: they also gain meaning by supporting beauty in the world. However, for him beauty is also something that only makes sense in terms of relationships - allowing *another* person to experience beauty is one of the greatest gifts he can imagine. This sense of generosity, as well as the creative mind that allows the prince to think in such a way, is another reminder of what distinguishes him from grown-ups.

☞ "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."

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The King, The Tippler, The Conceited Man, The Businessman, The Lamplighter

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

The lamplighter, according to the questions that the little prince has asked him, is not a saint: he is growing frustrated by the shorter and shorter length of the day on his planet, and he does complain to the prince. However, the prince believes that the lamplighter is more dignified and important than any of the other people he's met, people who believed themselves to be so essential despite their narrow-mindedness. T

The lamplighter's entire profession is based on a task whose sole purpose is to light the way for others, to ease a journey and to help people to see. For the prince, this emphasis on others is something that too many grown-ups have lost (it's also ironic that the king and business man would almost certainly look down on the lamplighter, thinking his menial job is beneath them).

Chapter 15 Quotes

☞ "Exactly," the geographer said. "But I am not an explorer. I haven't a single explorer on my planet. It is not the geographer who goes out to count the towns, the rivers, the mountains, the seas, the oceans, and the deserts. The geographer is much too important to go loafing about. He does not leave his desk. But he receives the explorers in his study..."

Related Characters: The Geographer (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 63-64

Explanation and Analysis

Upon reaching the geographer's planet, the little prince thinks he is in for something more exciting: a geographer, after all, must know useful, relevant, and fascinating knowledge about the world around him. All too soon, however, this geographer also disappoints the prince's expectations. The geographer may not treat the prince as someone lesser than he - instead, he happily welcomes the prince into his study as an explorer - but it becomes clear here that he does indeed consider himself as more important than the explorers who go "loafing about."

As readers, we are meant to understand that the geographer simply has things backwards. His insistence on staying inside and learning about things only second-hand is not a strength but a severe limitation, preventing him from

the true learning that happens when one goes out into the unknown. We thus are given another example of the weaknesses of adults compared to children: grown-ups are all too willing to be satisfied with second-hand "authority," rather than being curious and brave enough to seek it out for themselves.

☝ "My flower is ephemeral," the little prince said to himself, "and she has only four thorns to defend herself against the world. And I have left her on my planet, all alone!"

Related Characters: The Little Prince (speaker), The Rose/Flower

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

As the geographer asks the prince about the qualities of the prince's planet, he soon brushes off the prince's description of his flower by saying that he does not deal with "ephemeral" things - that is, qualities of a place or landscape that can easily disappear.

For the geographer, a flower can easily wilt or be trampled, making it unimportant relative to the mountains, forests, and seas that he deems significant enough to study. But for the prince, of course, that very fragility is frightening, since he thinks of the rose not as a key to his own map but rather as an innocent being that needs his help and care, as something that he loves. When the geographer describes the rose as ephemeral it is an insult, a dismissal. But for the prince, the rose's very ephemerality, the fact that it can be lost or destroyed, is part of what binds him to it and makes him love and want to care for it.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☝ All humanity could be piled up on a small Pacific islet.

The grown-ups, to be sure, will not believe you when you tell them that. They imagine that they fill a great deal of space. They fancy themselves as important as the baobabs. You should advise them, then, to make their own calculations. They adore figures, and that will please them. But do not waste your time on this extra task. It is unnecessary. You have, I know, confidence in me.

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 68-70

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator shifts his focus from the prince's adventures on the tiny planets he has visited to the planet Earth, where in the story he is about to land. He has just contrasted Earth to the small planets and their solitary inhabitants, but now he suggests that, although humans take up a great deal of space as they live now, they could in fact be confined to almost as small a surface as those minuscule planets.

That grown-ups would refuse to believe this statement, according to the narrator, is not because they are skeptical of such mathematical calculations - indeed, the pilot notes how much adults adore such figures - but because they have such an inflated sense of self-worth. In the minds of adults, in addition, taking up physical space is equivalent to being important - an equivalence that is just another reminder, in the book, about the silly mistakes that can stem from adults' narrow-minded focus on what is in front of their eyes, as opposed to what is really valuable.

Chapter 20 Quotes

☝ And he was overcome with sadness. His flower had told him that she was the only one of her kind in all the universe. And here were five thousand of them, all alike, in one single garden!

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker), The Rose/Flower, The Little Prince

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

In wandering around the planet Earth, the prince has stumbled upon a garden with thousands and thousands of roses. Although this garden is beautiful, the prince is horrified. He had believed his own rose when she had claimed she was unique in the universe: indeed, he had taken such good care of her in large part because he believed that she was irreplaceable. Now, the prince must grapple with the difficult realization that the flower that he loves, that he has tended to with such care, is literally one among thousands.

At the moment, the prince cannot do anything other than cry. He is too distraught to fully come to terms with what

this realization means. This scene, however, can be thought of as a turning point, in that the prince must now think about how to value what he loves for reasons other than that the object of his love is unique. Indeed, what it means to be unique, beyond simply one-of-a-kind in the universe, will be a question that he will return to.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☞ "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..."

"I am beginning to understand," said the little prince. "There is a flower... I think that she has tamed me..."

Related Characters: The Fox, The Little Prince (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis



Still recovering from the painful realization about the roses, the little prince nonetheless is granted a chance to learn how he can reconsider what it means to value and love something as unique. The fox helps the little prince along in this understanding by explaining to him what "taming" means: by choosing one fox out of thousands to teach and to relate to, the prince chooses to treat it as unique in the universe, even though it may not be literally unique.

This is thus a more complex view of the value of relationships than the one the prince originally had. People choose to love and respect each other not necessarily because they cannot imagine finding anyone else similar to or even better than them, but because there is value in the choice itself. In some ways, this is another example of the point that the book has been making about the importance of valuing something in and of itself, rather than based on what it can do for you.

☞ "Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

Related Characters: The Fox (speaker), The Little Prince

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

The fox has wanted the little prince to tame him, but now it has become clear to him that the prince will leave him to go on to other places. Before he leaves, the fox gives him one last piece of advice – advice, however, that he has been preparing the prince for all throughout their time spent together. The lesson of taming has introduced the prince to the idea that value and uniqueness might have less to do with the external qualities of the loved thing or being, and more with the act of loving – of attempting to see through the external and superficial to what is essential.

By making this lesson explicit, the fox reminds the prince to continue to ponder this difficult lesson – difficult especially since the rose, whom the prince loves, is indeed externally beautiful. But rather than fixating either on her outer beauty or on her superficial weaknesses, like vanity or a propensity to lie, the prince must learn to look with his heart and not his eye.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☞ "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..."

"They are lucky," the switchman said.

Related Characters: The Little Prince, The Railway Switchman (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

The little prince is speaking with a railway switchman, who tells him that the adults on the train journeys are usually

bored and restless, their reasons for travel seeming pointless, while the children are fascinated by what is outside their windows. The prince mulls over this difference. For him, it is yet another example of what grown-ups are missing: as they focus on the destination, even if that destination is of questionable importance, they miss the beauty of what lies between two points, and they miss out on the opportunity to be struck with admiration or awe. Still, the prince doesn't make a contrast between goal-driven adults and aimless children: instead, he argues that children are more likely to know what they are looking for, because they focus on what is important rather than growing obsessed with irrelevant, even random goals. The switchman seems to acknowledge that adults have lost something wonderful, even as he hears the story of children crying when a rag doll is taken away from them: he seems to imply that choosing to cherish something freely and lovingly is a gift in itself, even if it may risk being taken away.

Chapter 24 Quotes

☞ "Yes," I said to the little prince. "The house, the stars, the desert—what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!"

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

The prince and the pilot are walking together through the desert in search of water, when the pilot begins to realize that the fact that water is hidden in the desert is what makes it so alluring. Ironically, it is the pilot's goal-driven, very adult focus on finding water that pushes him to learn an entirely different lesson.

He recognizes that, just as the fox had told the little prince, beauty truly does lie in what is invisible. Equipped with this realization, the pilot looks around him with new eyes. Ready and willing to believe that there is more to the world than what he sees and for which he possesses material evidence, the pilot is imbued with wonder.

☞ I said to myself, again: "What moves me so deeply, about this little prince who is sleeping here, is his loyalty to a flower—the image of a rose that shines through his whole being like the flame of a lamp, even when he is asleep..." And I felt him to be more fragile still. I felt the need of protecting him, as if he himself were a flame that might be extinguished by a little puff of wind...

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker), The Little Prince, The Rose/Flower

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 93-94

Explanation and Analysis

As the pilot watches the little prince sleep, he too begins to learn a valuable lesson about friendship and love. Just as the prince has chosen to love a rose and take care of her as best he can, making her unique in the world as his chosen object of love (if not as the *only* rose in the world), the pilot has developed a true friendship with the prince. As a result, he too feels the need to protect the prince and to keep him innocent, free from the corruption of the world and the schemes of the adults who have lost their sense of wonder and compassion. At the same time as the prince is learning more about what it means to seek out the essential beyond the superficial, the pilot too is learning to modify his adult understanding of the world.

Chapter 27 Quotes

☞ Here, then, is a great mystery. For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has—yes or no?—eaten a rose...

Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: is it yes or no? Has the sheep eaten the flower? And you will see how everything changes...

And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance!

Related Characters: The Pilot/Narrator (speaker), The Little Prince, The Rose/Flower

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

As the narrator comes to the end of his story, he directly

addresses the reader, asking us to align ourselves with the world view that he has developed through his relationship with the little prince. Throughout *The Little Prince*, we have seen a contrast between two ways of thinking: there is the grown-up way of thinking, which chooses what to value based on strange, distanced, and close-minded calculations; and there is the child's way of thinking, which chooses what to cherish based on essential, real values. Children do not need to think about whether what they love is "valuable" in economic or political terms: instead, their very act of

choosing to love is what creates value.

If the sheep has eaten the flower, this will undeniably be a great, painful loss for the prince, and the fact that even one person has loved the flower should make it a loss for us too. As he closes, then, the narrator challenges us to think about what is essential and what is truly valuable, and to break out of the way of thinking that most adults are condemned to follow.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The narrator, a pilot, discusses his childhood attempts at drawing a boa constrictor eating an elephant. First, he draws the image from the outside, and all the grownups believe it's a hat—so the narrator attempts to draw the boa constrictor from the inside, and this time the grownups advise him to quit drawing boa constrictors and devote his time to other subjects like geography, arithmetic, grammar, or history instead.

The narrator chooses another profession instead, becoming a pilot. As a pilot, he claims that he has spent a great deal of time among grownups. When he meets one who seems clear-sighted, he says, he shows them his childhood drawing of the boa constrictor from the outside, but the grownups always say that the drawing is of a hat. As a result, the pilot brings himself down to their level, talking of sensible matters instead of **stars**, boa constrictors, or primeval forests.

The grownups have lost their imagination and ability to see the drawing for the truth it contains in the narrator's eyes—they can only jump to the most obvious conclusion that the hat-shaped creature is a hat.



If the grownups do not pass the pilot's boa constrictor test—and none of them do—the pilot dismisses their ability to see and appreciate the important things in life, like stars. Instead, grownups are more interested in the tangible, practical realities of everyday life, missing (or dismissing as pointless) the beauty and wonder.



CHAPTER 2

The pilot lives his life alone, until one day, he crashes in the Sahara desert, a thousand miles away from any human civilization. As he's attempting to fix his engine, he hears a small voice behind him asking him to draw a sheep. The pilot, startled, turns to find a little boy behind him—the little prince. The Prince appears to be in fine condition—not fatigued, not thirsty—despite being in the middle of the Sahara desert.

The pilot attempts to ask what the little prince is doing there, but the little prince insists that he draw him a sheep. The narrator obliges, but the little prince rejects his first three attempts, saying that the first one is sickly, the second one is a ram, and the third one is too old. Frustrated, the narrator draws a box with holes for air and tells the little prince that the sheep is inside. To his surprise, the little prince is delighted with this drawing.

The pilot lives a life without relationships, until his exploration unexpectedly brings him to the desert where he encounters the little prince, who eventually broadens the pilot's mental and emotional horizons as well. The pilot's exploration leads him to become more open-minded, seeing the world in a more child-like view.



The little prince's ability to imagine a sheep in the pilot's drawing of the box directly contrasts the grownups' inability to tell a boa constrictor from a hat. The little prince is able to see the essential aspects of each drawing, delving into their details and their deeper meanings rather than settling on surface appearances.



CHAPTER 3

When the little prince sees the pilot's airplane, he asks what that object is. The pilot replies that it isn't an object—it flies and it's his airplane. The little prince asks whether he fell from the sky then, and when the pilot responds that he did, the little prince laughs and asks which planet he came from. Surprised and curious, the pilot prompts the little prince, asking whether he came from another planet; however, the little prince, as usual, avoids answering questions.

The little prince instead mentions that it is good that the pilot drew a box for his sheep—that way, the sheep will have a place to sleep at night. The pilot offers to draw him a string and a post to tie the sheep to, if the little prince behaves, and the little prince seems shocked by this idea. He asks why he would want to tie the sheep, and the narrator responds that the sheep might wander away otherwise. The little prince claims that this will not matter on his planet, since it is so small.

Both the pilot and the little prince discuss their backgrounds as literal explorers—paving the way for the figurative exploring they'll do as they continue to tell and listen to stories in the desert.



The narrator, who has not explored other planets like the little prince's, can be narrow-minded and make grownup assumptions at times. For example, he thinks that the little prince will like to tie up his sheep to make sure he can keep him, but the little prince, in his innocence, doesn't understand why he would restrain the sheep in such a way.



CHAPTER 4

In this way, the pilot discovers that the planet the little prince is from is no larger than a house. He believes that the planet the little prince comes from is known as asteroid B-612, first discovered by a Turkish astronomer in 1909. This discovery was dismissed at first, however, due to the fact that the astronomer wore a Turkish costume at his presentation. When the astronomer then made the same demonstration wearing a European costume in 1920, everybody accepted his report.

The pilot explains that he tells us of these details about the asteroid because of the grownups and their ways. They don't ask about a friend's personal qualities, but about figures like weight and the income of his parents. The pilot says that grownups can't help it, however, and that children must always be very patient when dealing with them.

The pilot says that for those who truly understand things, figures are of no consequence, and that he would have been better off starting his book by writing: "Once upon a time there was a prince..." He wants to make sure no one reads his book carelessly, for he has suffered in setting down his memories, and he wants to be able to remember his friend—for not everyone has had a friend. If the pilot forgets his little prince, he says, he may become like the grownups, who are interested in nothing but figures.

The grownups make many surface assumptions that cause them to miss important points (like the discovery of B-612). They reveal how narrow-minded they are, and how biased, when they dismiss an exciting report based on surface details such as the astronomer's appearance. The adults also don't seek to explore further—either literally or figuratively.



The pilot complains again that grownups miss the important points. They get caught up in appearances and surface details instead of exploring the truth that lies beneath.



The pilot hints at the main lesson of the novella—that the friendships we form with others are the most essential part of life. Grownups, however, miss this important part too, when they get caught up in figures, which the novella implicitly connects not with life but rather mere survival or getting by.



The pilot apologizes for his drawings, which he says are sometimes good and sometimes bad. He says that he may make some other mistakes too, for he is perhaps a little like the grownups and has not been able to stop himself from growing old.

The pilot acknowledges that he's lost some of his innocence with age, and consequently, some of his ability to perceive what's truly important in life.



CHAPTER 5

The little prince asks whether sheep eat **baobabs**, and the pilot replies that even a whole herd of elephants could not eat a single baobab. The little prince laughs at this image and points out that baobabs are quite small before they have a chance to grow into trees as big as castles. The pilot agrees and inquires as to why the little prince wants his sheep to eat baobab trees. The little prince says, "Oh, come, come!" as if the answer is obvious.

The little prince makes a wise point when he says that even giant baobab trees begin as small shrubs—just as big problems all come from a smaller root source. When he says, "Oh, come, come!" without any further explanation the little prince is also inviting the narrator to explore with his mind—to consider why a baobab tree might be dangerous on a small planet like the little prince's.



The pilot realizes that **baobab trees** pose a great danger on the little prince's tiny planet. Although they resemble rosebushes when they are little, baobab trees can eventually destroy a small planet with its roots, making it imperative to pull up baobabs when they are still young. The little prince likens pulling baobab shoots to a morning routine for the planet.

The baobab trees resemble bad habits and problems that appear small and harmless at first, but that can quickly spiral out of hand. It's important to watch them closely and observe their true nature to determine whether they must be pulled.



The pilot discusses his drawing of **the baobab trees**, which he displays in the book, explaining that they are the most magnificent drawings in the book because he was moved by urgent necessity. He warns everyone to beware of baobabs because they can destroy a small planet if neglected.

The narrator claims that the baobab drawings are the best in the book because they are essential and teach an important lesson about the tendency of bad habits and small problems to grow into bigger issues. It's important to take care of them early.



CHAPTER 6

The little prince says that he is very fond of sunsets and suggests that he and the pilot go watch the sunset. The pilot says that they will have to wait for it, and the little prince, surprised, laughs and says that he keeps thinking he is home. Because the little prince's planet is so small, he can watch multiple sunsets a day simply by walking to a new position on the planet. The little prince claims that he once saw the sun set forty-four times in a day. A bit later he also says that one loves the sunset when one is sad, but he doesn't answer the pilot when he asks whether the little prince was very sad on the day of forty-four sunsets.

The little prince again mentions his faraway origins. The narrator is becoming more understanding, quickly making a connection between the tiny size of asteroid B-612 and the abundance of sunsets on the little prince's planet. As the pilot talks more and figuratively explores with the little prince, the pilot becomes more open to making connections between Earth and other planets.



CHAPTER 7

On their fifth day together, the little prince asks whether sheep eat flowers with thorns as well. The pilot answers that sheep eat anything in their reach, and the little prince, dismayed, asks what good thorns are for if sheep will eat them anyway. The pilot, busy with his engine, doesn't answer, but the little prince keeps insisting until the pilot answers that thorns have no use at all—flowers have them just for spite.

The little prince is offended by this notion and defends flowers as weak creatures who naively reassure themselves that their thorns are terrible weapons. The pilot, still busy with the engine, snaps that he is busy with "matters of consequence," which immediately infuriates the little prince. He accuses the pilot of talking just like the grownups. The little prince makes a speech about his flower, unique in the entire universe, which might be destroyed by a hapless sheep—and bursts into tears. The pilot abandons his work to comfort the little prince, assuring him that he will draw a muzzle for the sheep.

This passage contrasts what the little prince and the pilot each find essential in the moment. The pilot is busy working with his engine, which he finds essential because it is a matter of life and death for himself—and the little prince finds his own question essential because it is a matter of life and death for his flower.



The little prince defends his flower as an innocent, helpless creature, rather than one who grows thorns out of spite. This innocence and naïveté is important to him, as is his relationship with the flower. When the pilot doesn't recognize the importance of this relationship, the little prince accuses him of being as superficial as the grownups, who cannot recognize the importance of friendship.



CHAPTER 8

The little prince tells the pilot more about his flower, the rose. She appears one day on his planet as a shrub and takes her time growing, blooming one morning with the sun. The little prince is enchanted by her beauty and tends to her, but her vanity makes her a difficult plant to take care of. She asks for a screen and a glass globe to shield her at night, beginning to explain that where she came from, the climate was warmer—before realizing that this was an obvious lie, since she came in the form of a seed and could not know anything of other planets. The little prince begins to doubt her and grows unhappy.

The little prince confides to the pilot that he did not understand anything then and shouldn't have run away from her. The little prince says that he was too young to know how to love his rose.

The little prince builds his relationship with the rose by taking care of her each day. However, he discovers that not everything she says is true, which bothers him greatly because he finds importance in truth.



Later, the little prince will realize that the truth is not necessarily essential and that the time he spent with his rose, and the care he feels for her, was more important than her lies. Also, he mentions that he was too young back then to appreciate her—which is surprising, considering that youth is usually a positive trait in this book. This shows that some of the divisions between adulthood and childhood are not so clear—both can benefit from exploration and open-mindedness, though it also raises the distinction between growing old and growing wise.



CHAPTER 9

The little prince takes advantage of the migration of a flock of wild birds to leave his planet. Before he goes, he cleans the three volcanoes on his planet, pulls the last **baobab** shoots, and waters his rose. He feels sad, believing that he'll never return. As he's about to place the glass globe over the rose, he says goodbye, and she apologizes, admitting that she's been foolish and that she loves him. She tells him not to cover her with the globe, as the cool air will do her good, and she can protect herself with her four thorns.

Both the little prince and the rose open themselves up to exploration—the rose allows herself to be exposed to the open air and the little prince departs physically. The little prince's imminent departure prompts the rose to open up about her true feelings as well, and she admits that she loves the little prince. At the time, this is not enough for the prince, still preoccupied by the rose's lies.



CHAPTER 10

The little prince decides to explore other asteroids in order to increase his knowledge. The first one he comes across contains a king, who's delighted to have a subject to rule at last. The little prince yawns before the king, who orders him not to yawn—however, when the little prince says that he cannot help it, the king revises his order, demanding that the little prince yawn. The little prince, frightened, says he cannot do that either, so the king becomes vexed, trying to come up with a reasonable order for the little prince to obey.

The king is the first grownup the little prince meets, and he showcases the irrational desire of grownups to be obeyed. This need in the king is so great that he will revise his orders endlessly just so that they definitely will be obeyed. In other words, the king displays no leadership. He just wants to see, in his own narrow-minded view, that the prince is obeying him.



After the little prince sits down, he wonders what the king actually rules over, since there are no subjects on the planet. The king responds that he rules over the entire universe. Impressed, the little prince asks the king to order the sun to set, since he is sad about leaving his own little planet. The king, however, says that it would be unreasonable for him to order the sun to set until conditions are favorable—which will occur at approximately twenty minutes to eight.

The king says that he rules the entire universe—when the truth is that he shapes his orders to obey universal rules.



Bored, the little prince decides to move on to another planet. The king desperately tries to get him to stay, first making the little prince a Minister of Justice. The little prince objects that there is no one on the planet to judge and gets ready to leave. At the final moment, as the little prince departs, the king calls out that he has made the little prince his Ambassador.

The little prince sees through the king's faulty logic and gets bored. The king, in his adult desperation to rule over something, tries to prevent the little prince from leaving and finally settles on naming the prince his ambassador, in order to create the illusion that the little prince, in traveling away, is following the king's orders.



CHAPTER 11

The little prince goes to another asteroid, where he encounters a conceited man who believes that the little prince is his admirer. He instructs the little prince to clap his hands together in applause and, in response, raises his hat in salute. The little prince grows bored with this game after five minutes, and the conceited man asks him if he really admires him very much. He explains that to admire someone means that you regard him as the handsomest, the best-dressed, the richest, and the most intelligent man on the planet. The little prince points out that he is the only man on the planet. Still, the conceited man insists, so the little prince says that he admires him and then departs, thinking that grownups are very odd.

The conceited man reveals another common grownup fault—the desire to be admired. The conceited man desires to be admired so much that he ignores the truth that the little prince's admiration means nothing on a planet where the conceited man is the only inhabitant.



CHAPTER 12

On the next planet, the little prince encounters a tippler, who sits before a collection of empty and full bottles. He tells the little prince that he is drinking to forget that he is ashamed of drinking, and the little prince travels on, puzzled.

As with the other grownups the little prince meets, the tippler exercises faulty, circular logic that serves only to conceal the truth, and to reveal the way that grownups deceive themselves rather than create true connections with others.



CHAPTER 13

The fourth planet contains a businessman who hardly notices the little prince's arrival. The little prince finds the man adding sums and inquires as to what the businessman is counting. After the little prince repeats his question several times, the businessman realizes that he will not be left alone unless he answers—and he explains that he's counting the objects in the sky "that set lazy men to idle dreaming."

The fourth grownup showcases the adult tendency to be preoccupied with figures. He ignores the little prince's questioning at first because he is busy counting. The businessman's contempt for "idle dreaming" points out his inability or unwillingness (or both) to engage with the world and others.



The little prince understands that the businessman is counting the **stars** and asks what one does with five hundred millions of stars. The businessman replies that he does nothing with them—he simply owns them. If he owns the stars, he says, he will become rich, and will therefore be able to buy more stars, if they are ever discovered. The little prince asks how he can own the stars if he cannot take them with him, and the businessman says that he can put them in his bank, and that is enough. The little prince then mentions that he owns three volcanoes and a flower on his own planet, and that he is of use to them, but that the businessman is of no use to the stars. He continues on his journey, leaving the businessman speechless.

The businessman's adult greed is juxtaposed with the little prince's desire to be of use to the things he owns. To the little prince, it is his relationship with the volcanoes and the flower that matters more than what he can gain from owning them. After all, as the businessman describes it, owning things he has no real connection to only allows him to own more things he has no connection to, with the result that what he really owns is nothing.



CHAPTER 14

The fifth planet is the smallest of these planets, with only enough room for a street lamp and a lamplighter. The little prince muses on the fact that it is rather absurd for a lamplighter to exist on a planet with no people or homes, but he concludes that the lamplighter is less absurd than all the other men he has visited. After all, each time the lamplighter lights the street lamp, it is as if another **star** is brought into the world, and this is a thing of beauty—and because his job is beautiful, it is truly useful, in the eyes of the little prince.

The little prince asks the lamplighter why he lights and puts out the lamp with such frequency, and the lamplighter responds that these are his orders. He complains that he follows a terrible profession, since his planet has turned faster and faster each year, and now he has no time to rest between lighting and snuffing the lamp. The little prince advises the lamplighter that he need only walk slowly around his planet in order to follow the sun and make the day last longer—but the lamplighter rejects this advice, saying that the one thing he loves in life is to sleep.

The little prince continues on his journey, thinking that the lamplighter is the least ridiculous of the grownups he has met because the lamplighter at least thinks of something other than himself. The little prince regrets that he cannot stay on the planet, as there is no room for two people—he does not admit, however, that he also regrets leaving the planet because it has 1440 sunsets each day.

CHAPTER 15

The little prince then arrives on a much larger planet with a geographer, who is eager to talk to an explorer. He tells the little prince that a geographer is a scholar who knows the location of all the seas, rivers, towns, mountains, and deserts, but when the little prince asks him whether his planet has any of these things, the geographer says that he doesn't know. He explains that it is an explorer's job to go out and count these things and that geographers are too important to go loafing about.

The little prince claims that what is beautiful is essential, even if it serves no obvious practical use.



The little prince admires the lamplighter's faithfulness—but part of what makes the lamplighter so sad is his lack of desire to explore even the other parts of his planet. He could find some reprieve from his job if he were to walk across his planet, but he's not interested in the walking or exploring, longing only for sleep, which is what he can't have.



The little prince has already seen several examples of grownups in his exploring. He believes that the lamplighter has the least ridiculous job because he has a relationship with something other than himself, and this hints at the novella's main lesson about the importance of establishing ties.



Although the geographer's profession seems promising at first, he reveals himself to be just as self-important as the other grownups when he says that he doesn't go loafing about and exploring. His lack of exploration is also a symbol of his narrow-minded approach to creating geography books. His requirements are so strict that he can't actually write any books based on them. His focus is entirely on second-hand knowledge, not personal experience of the world



The geographer then takes an interest in the little prince, asking him about his planet. The little prince brushes this aside, saying that his planet is not very interesting and only contains three volcanoes and a flower. The geographer interrupts to say that he does not record flowers because they are "ephemeral," or "in danger of speedy disappearance." The little prince faces his first moment of regret upon hearing this, but he asks the geographer which planet he would recommend visiting next. The geographer says that the planet Earth has a good reputation.

For the geographer, only things that are eternal are important, but for the little prince, his flower matters more because she is ephemeral. The little prince realizes at this point that his time with the flower has always been limited, making it precious.



CHAPTER 16

The pilot explains that Earth is not just an ordinary planet. It has numerous kings, tipplers, geographers, conceited men, and businessmen—all in all, around 2,000,000,000 grownups. To give further evidence of Earth's size, the narrator says that before the invention of electricity, there were 462,511 lamplighters. They would create quite a spectacle, lighting their countries' lamps in succession, all except the lamplighters on the North and South poles, who would only be busy twice a year.

The pilot suggests that Earth is a collection of grownups who all share the faults of the men the little prince has encountered on his journey so far.



CHAPTER 17

The pilot revises his earlier statement, saying that grownups would in fact take up only a small amount of room on Earth if they were all crowded together into one public square miles long. The grownups, however, would protest this fact, as they believe they are just as important as the baobabs.

The pilot's revision shows that the grownups are not as important as they think they are.



When the little prince lands on Earth, he sees no people and worries that he is on the wrong planet. He meets a snake that tells him that he is on Earth, in Africa. The snake explains that there are no people in the desert, but that the Earth is large. The little prince says that the snake is a funny creature, and the snake winds himself around the little prince's ankle, saying that he can send anyone back to their planet of origin, just by touching them. He hesitates with the little prince, however, because the prince is weak and innocent. The snake instead offers to send the little prince back to his planet should he ever get too homesick.

The snake speaks in riddles, making the reader guess at the truth of his words, which seem threatening. The little prince's innocence saves him, however—the snake takes pity on him because the little prince seems so helpless.



CHAPTER 18

The little prince meets a flower with three petals and asks her where the men are. The flower, who has only once seen a caravan pass, responds that she believes there are only six or seven men in existence and that they are rootless creatures, which makes their lives very difficult.

This simple flower lacks the ability to explore, which causes her to make mistaken assumptions about the existence of men. The implicit point is that men who don't constantly explore are similarly limited. The flower's absurd level of limitation simply drives home the fact that only through exploration and experience can one gain a fuller understanding of the world.



CHAPTER 19

The little prince then climbs a high mountain, believing that he will be able to see the whole planet from that height. Instead, he can only see peaks of rock, which answer him in echoes when he attempts to speak. The little prince is puzzled by the planet, which he finds harsh and unfriendly, with inhabitants who only repeat what is said to them. He recalls his rose, who was always the first to speak.

The little prince increasingly recognizes the importance of his relationship with the rose as he spends more time exploring. Here he prefers the rose to the mountains because the echoes are not authentic connections—they are just reactions. The rose, by speaking first, would actually attempt to connect with the prince.



CHAPTER 20

After walking for a long while, the little prince comes across a road leading to a bed of roses. The little prince is devastated to discover that his rose was lying to him when she said that she was unique in the entire universe. He reflects that he is only prince over three little volcanoes and a common rose and realizes that he is not very great prince at all. He lays in the grass and cries.

The little prince's exploration has opened his brought him to the conclusion that he and his rose are not that special or unique. He thought that their uniqueness stemmed from there being nothing else like them, but now, in realizing that isn't true, he becomes sad. Much of the rest of the novel will supply a different way of thinking about what makes something unique.



CHAPTER 21

A fox appears, and the little prince asks the fox to play with him because he is so unhappy. The fox replies that he cannot play because he is not tamed. After a while, the little prince asks what the meaning of "tamed" is, and the fox explains that to tame is to establish ties, meaning that if they are tamed, then the fox and the boy will need each other and become unique in each other's eyes, despite all the other boys and foxes in the world. The little prince says that he believes there is a flower who has tamed him.

The little prince learns about what it means to form a relationship with another. The fox teaches him that this process forms an important bond between the tamer and the tamed—it is not being unlike anything that makes something unique, it is the connection a something or someone has with another person or thing. Uniqueness grows out of a relationship.



The fox discusses his monotonous life of hunting chickens and being hunted by men, and he asks the little prince to tame him so that his life might have more meaning. The fox teaches the little prince how to observe the proper rites and tame him, and the little prince does so. When the little prince is about to leave one day, the fox says that he will cry, but that being tamed has nonetheless done him good because the color of the wheat-grain will now always remind him of the little prince's hair.

The fox sees the normal actions of his life—hunting, being hunted, and which might be compared to grown-ups focus on "figures"—as lacking meaning when he has no relationship with anything. The meaning comes not from the fact that he hunts; it comes from whom he hunts for, or who it would be important to that he escapes hunters. Although relationships can open one up to sadness, the fox's comment about the wheat suggests that the sadness is not as important as the fact that the wheat fields hold special meaning for him now—that it is a reminder of his relationship to the prince.



The fox tells the little prince to go observe the bed of roses again, and this time the little prince tells the roses that they are not at all like his rose at home because no one has tamed them, and so they are empty. The little prince then returns to the fox to say goodbye. As they part, the fox tells him a secret: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." The little prince realizes that he is responsible for his rose.

The little prince realizes now that his relationship with his rose is more important than her outward appearance and her superficial lies. He learns this by exploring and interacting with the fox, by "looking" with his heart at his relationships rather than with his eyes at whether something is original, whether it lies, etc.



CHAPTER 22

The little prince continues his travels and meets a railway switchman. He asks the switchman what the train passengers are pursuing, and the switchman replies that they are pursuing nothing at all. He says that the adults are either asleep or yawning, and that only the children look outside the windows during the journey. The little prince says that only the children know what they are looking for, and the switchman responds that they are lucky.

The children understand that the journey and process of exploring are more important than the destination. Their innocence, their innate curiosity, allows them to understand this essential fact better than the grownups who allow the landscape to pass them by. What are the children looking for? Experience—a connection to the world.



CHAPTER 23

The little prince next meets a merchant who claims to sell a pill that will quench thirst, thereby saving fifty-three minutes a week. The little prince retorts that if he had fifty-three extra minutes, he would use it to walk to a spring of fresh **water**.

While grownups are only interested in destinations and achievements, the little prince recognizes that the process of exploring and finding water is sweeter than the lack of thirst that comes from drinking.



CHAPTER 24

Back in the Sahara desert, it is now the eighth day, and the pilot and the little prince are both thirsty. The little prince suggests that they search for a well in the desert. Although he believes it is hopeless, the pilot nevertheless walks with the little prince, and as night falls, he begins to notice how beautiful the desert is. The pilot realizes that the beauty of the desert depends on the fact that there is water hidden in it somewhere.

The pilot finally opens up to the idea that they might find water in the desert and begins walking with the little prince. In this state, of experiencing and interacting with the desert rather than trying to escape it and focusing on his plane, he realizes the truth of the phrase, "What is essential is invisible to the eye."



The little prince falls asleep, and the pilot lifts him up and carries him as he continues walking. The pilot gazes upon the little prince and believes him to be very fragile and precious. The pilot admires how passionate the little prince is about protecting his rose. At daybreak, the pilot finds water.

The pilot wants to protect the little prince's innocence and loyal attachment to his rose. In addition, the pilot's thoughts about the prince's fragility and preciousness suggest that the prince and the pilot have now developed a true friendship. Now the pilot recognizes—feels—the prince's uniqueness to him. It is no accident that this is the moment where they find water, the essential thing in nature to keep them alive.



CHAPTER 25

The well they find in the desert looks like a village well, but there is no village nearby. The pilot pulls up a bucket of **water**, tired but happy about his achievement. He gives the little prince a drink, realizing that the water is sweeter for their walk beneath the **stars** and for his effort acquiring it from the well.

The water is sweeter to the little prince and the pilot because they have explored together and formed attachments to one another.



Despite the sweetness of the **water** and the happiness he feels in drinking it, the pilot nevertheless feels a sense of grief. The little prince asks him to draw the muzzle for his sheep, and the pilot does so reluctantly, sensing that the little prince has plans he has not revealed yet to the pilot. The little prince says that the one-year anniversary of his descent to Earth is the next day and that he landed very near where they are. The pilot feels a little frightened, but the little prince tells him to go fix his engine and return the following evening.

As the fox taught the little prince, one risks weeping a little after being tamed. The pilot is sad because he has formed a bond with the little prince, but now he senses the little prince's imminent departure.



CHAPTER 26

When the pilot returns the next evening, he overhears the little prince conversing with the snake. The little prince asks whether the snake has good poison that will not make him suffer long and sets up a meeting with the snake for later that night. The pilot arrives, asking if what he just heard is all a bad dream. The little prince responds that he will make the pilot a gift of his laughter. Every time the pilot sees the **stars**, he shall hear the little prince's laughter.

Passing on the fox's lesson, the little prince teaches the pilot that he can remember the little prince through the stars—just as the fox remembers him through the color and texture of the wheat—and that associations like this are actually deep connections to their relationship, and eternal between them.



The little prince then tells the pilot not to come to the site that night, as it will look a little as if he were dying. The narrator refuses and arrives that night anyway. As they walk, the little prince tries to reassure the pilot, saying that his body is only a shell. The pilot does not respond, and when they reach the spot, the little prince takes a few more steps by himself before sitting down. He says that he is responsible for his flower and must return to take care of her. He gets up again and takes a step before the snake flashes by, and the little prince falls silently.

The little prince reiterates that it is essential that he return to protect his flower, who is helpless without him. The pilot similarly refuses to abandon the little prince in his final moments, hoping to offer protection and comfort to his innocent friend, even as the little prince assures him that his body and outward appearance do not reflect what's truly happening as he returns to his own planet. Once again the prince insists that his relationship to the rose is greater than the surface details, even something death-like.



CHAPTER 27

Six years later, the pilot writes this story. He is reassured by the fact that the little prince's body disappeared the day after the scene with the snake and believes that the little prince really did make it back to his planet. However, the pilot realizes that he forgot to add a leather strap to the muzzle he drew for the little prince's sheep, and so he worries that the sheep may have eaten the rose. He asks the readers whether they believe the sheep has eaten the rose or not and emphasizes how essential the outcome of this question is.

The pilot draws the landscape of the little prince's site of arrival and departure—two desert hills and a single **star**—and beseeches readers to pay attention should they find themselves in this spot in Africa. If so, the narrator asks that they stay for a while under the star and send word if the little prince appears.

The pilot, after building his relationship with the little prince and allowing that relationship to grow in his mind even after the prince has left, now recognizes the importance of questions like the one with the sheep and the rose. He understands that the rose is dear to the little prince, and its existence therefore makes a difference in the universe.



The narrator remembers his relationship with the little prince and asks that readers remember it too, should they go exploring. The implication is that relationships grow; they can go from being shared between two to being shared between many. And relationships are what the narrator considers most important.





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