

Is le petit prince a  
story for children?



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Is *The Little Prince* a children's book, or is there more to it than meets the eyes? The Little Prince was written by Antoine de Saint Exupéry, a French writer, an aviator, and an aristocrat. The story is about a young prince who visits various planets in space, including Earth and focuses on themes such as loneliness, friendship, love, and loss. Despite stylistically reading like a children's book, The Little Prince makes insightful observations about life, and it makes readers consider if the book is also aimed at an adult readership. Although at first sight, the Little Prince might seem to be an uncomplicated children's book about the quest for friendship, the book can be interpreted on many different levels.

Throughout the whole of the book, we are told next to nothing about our narrator, and we do not learn anything new about him, other than the fact that he is an adult and a pilot. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry deliberately creates a mysterious narrator for two reasons. Firstly, the narrator's primary role is to describe the Little Prince's odyssey to the reader, and so our story does not have to know who the narrator is. Secondly, the narrator is meant to embody all adults, just as the Little Prince represents children in a general sense. Therefore by not creating a particular and vibrant character, the narrator can be made applicable and relatable to each one of us grown-ups, and the reader has the creative freedom to imagine the narrator as they wish.

There are characters throughout the book which explore different themes. Saint Exupéry once noted that adults become selfish and forget small things that made them happy when they were younger. " All grown-ups were once children ... but only a few of them remember it". The fact that The Little

Prince has an uncomplicated personality and a naive humanity shows he doesn't wear the metaphorical glasses that mangle most adult's view of the world. This essay will argue that the book is much more than a children's book and should be read by adults who are better able to interpret its imagery.

On the whole, the book is an expose of adult desires and a celebration of the innocence and curious nature of children. Saint Exupéry uses symbols and imagery that refer to ideas or emotions to help simplify life lessons. The inquisitive Little Prince asks the adults a series of questions throughout the book. The Little Prince comments on a modern society in which people are busy doing what he perceives as useless things and neglecting what to him, is truly important, such as creativity and friendship.

At the very beginning, there is an illustration representing the young Aviator's attempt to draw a snake swallowing an elephant. He explains that he then showed some adults and asked if it scared them, but the adults were confused as they thought the drawing was of a hat. The adults tried to influence his future, advising him to leave illustration and art behind and interest himself in more intellectual and practical subjects. Saint Exupéry shows that adults see things from a different perspective compared to children. Saint Exupéry also suggests that you should not let people dictate your talents as the Narrator in Little Prince could have had a very different life if he had not been pressured to leave his passions and interests behind in childhood.

The Little Prince visits many planets that are inhabited by different characters where he meets the Aviator, whom he forms a strong bond with because the Little Prince reminds the Aviator of his childhood. The Little Prince is a story of friendship bridging generations and background. The innocence and goodwill of the Little Prince permit him to engage with a variety of people, and his youthful energy makes the people he encounters want to spend time with him.

The characters which The Little Prince meets throughout the novel all represent something in the real world that supports the argument that this book is also written for adults. The Little Prince meets the King, who is a self-centred person, an egomaniac; however, his 'superiority' over others brings him loneliness as everyone leaves him. The King represents people who think they are the best at everything, and how they encounter only disrespect rather than the very respect that they feel that they deserve. The author shows the different types of people in modern society, and the Little Prince is slowly meeting all these different types of people with his innocent view. With his naive and refreshing point of view, he takes each person at face value.

The Clown is another person whom the little Prince meets. The Clown is like the King as he loves himself and wants people to admire him. The Clown is focused on himself rather than seeing the beauty of the world and the people around him. He doesn't recognize his faults as he cannot reflect on his own existence. He lives a life that is meaningless and as he wholeheartedly believes he's the most beautiful person in the world, even though he does nothing to build that reputation. Hence, the author shows

that a Clown is a person we can't judge by their appearance or the way they talk but by the actions that they do. This urges us to judge people on their actions rather than their appearance, as children are more likely to do.

During his travels, the Little Prince meets the Businessman. The Businessman is a really busy man who spends all his time counting the stars that he thinks belong to him. The Businessman then records the number of stars on his piece of paper and puts it in the bank. We learn that the Businessman is a symbol of human greed because he wants to own all the stars and is continuously thinking about adding them all. Not only is the Businessman a terrible friend because he neglects the Little Prince, but he also does not support the Little Prince on his journey to find the truth. The Businessman insists that he owns the stars because he has counted them even though this is not the truth. He is, hence, following a lie, and because he is greedy, he does not focus on seeking the 'truth' and real beauty, but instead, he focuses on materialistic things.

The most compelling character and most important thing for the Little Prince is the Rose. She is vital to the novel as a whole because her overdramatic, independent nature is what causes the Prince to go away from his planet and start his travels. However, the Prince's memories of the Rose also inspire his return. Although the Rose is, for most of the time, arrogant and ignorant, The Prince nonetheless loves her deeply due to the time he has spent watering and worrying for her.

The Rose is compared to Saint Exupery's wife, Consuelo, but the Rose can also be read as a symbol of universal love. Antoine Saint- Exupéry said "

*C'est le temps que tu a perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante."*

This shows how much love the Little Prince has for the Rose as he's describing how the time he lost for the Rose makes the Rose so important. The author shows that time away and distancing from one's beloved causes a person to better appreciate that love. The Rose can be compared to mothers as they nag their children, but they do it with good intentions like the Rose does to the Prince, and when we lose our mothers, that's when we realize their importance.

The Baobabs in the story represent the aggravating forces of evil in the world. The Little Prince removed all the seeds of the enormous baobab trees from his small planet every morning. *" Il faut s'astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu'on les distingue d'avec les rosiers auxquels ils ressemblent beaucoup quand ils sont très jeunes."*(page 23, *The little prince*)

This emphasizes how dangerous baobabs can be. It is necessary to control them when they are young before they get older and cause mayhem and destruction. The Little Prince did this out of fear that they might grow too large. If they did, their giant roots would destroy everything he knew and loved. The baobabs could have a darker meaning as they may be symbolic of the rise of the Nazi Party in Europe. Antoine de Saint Exupéry fought in WWII against the Axis and Nazis and subsequently wrote *The Little Prince*.

In conclusion, *The Little Prince* is more than an entertaining children's story. It seems to me that the use of allegory and symbolism throughout *The Little Prince* indicates that it was written as a story that adults could reflect upon and interpret. Like other classic works of fantasy such as *Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it contains references to the contemporary

political situation that young readers would not necessarily be aware of. In contrast, children enjoy the fantastical characters, illustrations and vivid storytelling, without the need to look any deeper into the imagery.

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