



Prime Time Curriculum

Favorites Series – English

Session 1: The Oral Tradition – “What Did People Do Before TV or the Internet?”

A demonstration and background of the oral tradition as it leads to the written word and reading. Examples include Mother Goose rhymes, jump rope rhymes, poems, and narratives. In the first session, use one of the following texts to demonstrate Prime Time reading and discussion techniques.

- ***Fish is Fish***
or
- ***The Big Orange Splot***

Session 2: Fairness – “Do the Right Thing”

- ***The True Story of the Three Little Pigs***
- ***Why Mosquitos Buzz in People’s Ears***
- ***Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day***

Session 3: Greed – “What’ in it for me?”

- ***The Talking Eggs***
- ***Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters***
- ***Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock***

Session 4: Courage – “No Guts, No Glory”

- ***Lon Po Po***
- ***Where the Wild Things Are***
- ***Abiyoyo***

Session 5: Dreams – “Just Do It!”

- ***Fanny’s Dream***
- ***Amazing Grace***

Session 6: Cleverness – “Dare to Dream”

- ***Flossie and the Fox***
- ***The Monkey and the Crocodile***
- ***Doctor De Soto***

When facilitating discussions, please use the following questions:

Session 1: The Oral Tradition – “What Did People Do Before TV or the Internet?”

A demonstration and background of the oral tradition as it leads to the written word and reading. Examples include Mother Goose rhymes, jump rope rhymes, poems, and narratives. Use **either** *Fish is Fish* **or** *The Big Orange Splot*.

Fish is Fish

- Why does the fish imagine the world the way he does: everything fish-like? Do we ever do that: think of the world from only our own perspective? Can you think of an example that has happened to you?
- How does who we are — our background, our upbringing — effect our perspective and our perceptions about the world? Can we ever have a truly objective view of things? Why or why not?
- Like fish and frog, are there some things your friends can do that you can't, or that you can do that they can't? What are they? Can you still be friends then? Why or why not?
- Do you think fish and frog will stay friends now that the frog is on land? Why or why not? Can we be friends with someone who is far away? Can we make new friends with someone who is far away? How?
- Should fish be content to be a fish and not see the world above water? Why or why not? Are there some limitations to what we can and cannot do? Are there ways to change those limitations? Should we try?
- Fish is curious and imagines what the land and its creatures must be like even though he has never seen them. What places do you wonder about and what to see? What do you think they are like? What do you imagine about them?
- The fish and the frog have the same beginnings in life, but they end up in very different circumstances. Has this ever happened to anyone you know? How did things turn out?
- Can you think of any nations in the world who have the same historic roots, but are culturally very different now? How do they relate to each other in modern times? Do their relationships matter to us in the United States?

The Big Orange Splot

- Mr. Plumbean paints on his house “little orange spots and stripes and pictures of elephants and lions and pretty girls and steam shovels.” If you could paint the outside of a house you lived in, what would you paint on it?
- Mr. Plumbean says he painted his house “to look like all my dreams.” What are your dreams, and could you paint a house to look like them?
- At the start of the story, all the houses on the street are the same. Is there some way you can think of that, at the end of the story, all the houses are the same? Why?
- Is Mr. Plumbean a good neighbor? Why do you think that?
- Think about what Mr. Plumbean puts on his lawn. Anything dangerous? (Well, would YOU want your kids living next to a man who kept an alligator chained up in his front yard?) Should he be allowed to do that? Why? Was Mr. Plumbean a responsible neighbor? Citizen? Why or why not?
- Mr. Plumbean insists on the right to paint his house as he pleases, regardless of what his neighbors think. Is that a good thing? Do you care about what your street looks like? Should you? Should your neighbors care about what your place looks like? Why or why not?
- Suppose Mr. Plumbean wanted to decorate his yard with old broken down washing machines and smelly garbage cans. Should he be allowed to do that because it’s his property? Or should the neighbors be able to stop him because it will trash up the neighborhood? Who decides things like this where you live? Who should decide? Why?
- The question of how much to include in a story when you write it, how much to leave out, what questions to answer, and which ones to leave hanging faces all writers. And they all deal with the problem differently. Think back to the beginning of the story. Very early along, the writer, Daniel Pinkwater, tells you, “A seagull flew over Mr. Plumbean’s house. He was carrying a can of bright orange paint.” Now, practically everybody I know would ask him- or herself, “Why in the world would a seagull be carrying a can of bright orange paint through the sky?” The author knows practically everybody would ask that. So, what does he do? How does he handle it? Does it work? Did it make you not think to ask the question? (He does it again on the very next page too!)

Session 2: Fairness – “Do the Right Thing”

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

- If you were a judge in a court, would you find the wolf guilty? Why or why not? What in his story would make you believe him or not believe him?
- The wolf blames the fact that he's being jailed on two things: first, the fact that nature arrange it so that wolves eat animals most people think are cute: bunnies and such. And so, people think wolves are mean and vicious. This raises an interesting question: Would a jury made up of wolves have found him guilty? What is the second thing the wolf blames for being jailed?
- Imagine you are a wolf. You eat bunnies for breakfast and chipmunks for lunch. Would you have found the wolf in this story guilty? Why or why not? Is it fair to have the wolf tried by a jury of pigs? Of people? Why or why not?
- The wolf blames the press, the newspapers, saying they never told his side of the story, only the pigs' side. This too raises an interesting question: Is everything you read in a newspaper or online, or see on the television true? If not, how can you tell what is and what is not true? How do you know whom to believe and whom not to believe? Is there anything in this story that makes you suspect the wolf is not telling the truth?
- Have you ever found yourself with the problem the wolf had: when you insist someone else is to blame but no one will believe you? How did you handle it? Did you ever try to blame something on someone else so you wouldn't get punished? Have you ever been blamed for something someone else did? A brother? A sister? A friend? How did you handle that?

Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears

- Who do you think was really to blame for the sun's not rising? According to the animals, who was to blame? Do you think they were right? Why or why not? If you were on a jury and all the animals were arrested for a crime, which animals would you find guilty? Why?
- Mosquito was found guilty of making the sun not come up, but not for the death of the baby owls. Who do you think was responsible for that? The mosquito again? Or someone else? Why do you think that?
- Some of the animals really had no choice about what they did. When a snake crawls down a rabbit hole, the rabbit HAS to run. It has no choice. But did any of the animals have a choice? The iguana or the snake, say? Could they have done something different than they did? If so, would that make them more to blame? Why?
- Was Mosquito's punishment fair? Why or why not?

- Suppose one morning you get a little lazy and stay in bed too long, so that you might miss the school bus. You rush out the bedroom door, but just then your little brother spills a glass of milk on the floor and you have to stop to help clean it up. Which means someone has to drive you to school. Then that person is then late for work and rushes down the sidewalk, trips, and sprains an ankle. Here is your question: Who is to blame for the sprained ankle? You? (If you had gotten out of bed on time...) Your little brother? (If only he hadn't spilled the milk...) Would it be fair if you were punished? Why or why not?

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

- Who was to blame for Alexander's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day? Who did Alexander think was to blame?
- Did anything happen to Alexander that wasn't fair? Did anything happen that was?
- Have you ever had a day like Alexander's? How did you handle it?
- When you are having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day, do you wish you could be someplace else, far away? Where would that place be for you? Why there?

Session 3: Greed – “What’ in it for me?”

The Talking Eggs

- How is this story like *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*? How is it different? Which one makes a better story? Why?
- One story is set in distant Africa a time long, long ago. The other one is set in the United States not too long ago. Which kinds of stories do you like best? Ones about far off places and other times, or stories about the place and time where you live? Why?

The story also could be used to raise some interesting questions about what it DOESN’T tell us. For example:

- Is there anything that this book leaves up in the air, unexplained? Is there anything you want to know at the end of the story that the author does not tell you? For example, what happens to the Old Lady? Where does the author leave her?
- At the very end of the story, Blanch went off to live in the city, “like a grand lady — though she remained as kind and generous as always.” Where did her mother and sister live? (Look at the picture on the last page.) If Blanch stayed “as kind and generous as always,” would she have left her mother and sister to live that way? Would Nyasha have done that? Why do you think that?

Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters

- Does this story remind you of any other stories you’ve read or heard? If so, which ones?
- How is this story like Cinderella’s? How is it different? Which story do you think is a better one? Why?
- The writer of this story makes it clear from the beginning that the “losing” daughter will be a servant in the palace of the daughter who becomes queen. What kind of servant do you think Nyasha would have made? How about Manyara? Why?
- In this story, the kind and good daughter is rewarded. That happens a lot in fairy tales like Cinderella. Does that happen in real life? Are good people always rewarded for being kind and generous? Are greedy people always punished?
- Do you think Nyasha expected to be rewarded for her kindness and charity? How do you know? Do you think she would have continued being kind and charitable even if she had not become queen? Why do you think that?
- Why do you think the teller of this tale made the animal Nyasha was nice to in her garden a snake? The man who wrote the story could have picked any animal at all. Why do you think he didn’t make it a bunny or baby deer or something cute and fuzzy?
- *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters could also be used to discuss questions about kinds of countries, kinds of governments. After all, it is, finally, about how a ruler is selected and what qualities he or she must have to rule legitimately.*

Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock?

- In the story Anansi is described as lazy. Looking at his antics in the story, do you think Anansi was lazy? Why or why not?
- This story is a trickster story. They are told in many countries and by many cultures. Who is the trickiest character in this story? Why do you think that?
- Which kinds of stories do you like best, stories about animals or stories about people? Why?
- In some of the stories you've read, magical things happen (*Anansi*, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, *The Talking Eggs*), but in the others, no magic happens. Which kind of story do you like best? Ones in which magical things happen like talking eggs turning into jewels or snakes turning into kings or old ladies taking off their heads to comb their hair? Or ones where no magic happens, stories about people — like Alexander — very much like you. Why?

Session 4: Courage – “No Guts, No Glory”

Lon Po Po

- The book’s cover says this is a “Red Riding Hood story from China.” How is it different from the Red Riding Hood story you’ve heard? (*Prompt: Who saves Little Red Riding Hood? Who saves the girls in this story?*)
- The wolf in this story is big and powerful, and the girls are small and weak. Yet they defeat the wolf. How? By using what talent? Do you know any other stories in which small weak people or animals defeat big and powerful ones the same way?
- Let’s say your fairy godmother came down one night with her magic wand and gave you a choice: You could become big and strong and very powerful, but not very smart. Or she could make you small and physically weak, but very, very smart. Which would you choose? Why that one? Do you think everyone would choose the same way? Why or why not?
- Do you think what happened to the girls counts as an adventure? Why or why not?
- In the dedication of the book, the author suggests that we use wolves as symbols for something. What is it? Do you agree with the author? What other stories do you know that contain wolves? How are they portrayed?

Where the Wild Things Are

- This story is about a pretend adventure. Or maybe a dream? How can you tell when you are dreaming? Do you ever dream? Do you know you are in a dream when the events are happening or do the events in your dream seem real? How can you be sure—really sure—that you are not right now, home in bed, dreaming that you’re at a Prime Time meeting?
- There are monsters in this story. Lots of children’s stories from all around the world, and from the most ancient times too, are filled with monsters. Why do you think that is? Why did children in ancient Greece and children in Africa and children in colonial America and children today all like monster stories? And the scarier the better!
- Even adults like monster stories—especially in the movies. Have you seen any monster movies? Even today when we don’t really believe in monsters anymore, people find them fun and exciting. Why do you think that is?
- Sent to his room, bored and alone, Max goes on an adventure in his imagination. And Max has a very good imagination! Have you ever been sent to your room with nothing to do for a long time? How did you pass the time?
- Is adventure necessary for people to lead satisfying, happy lives? Do children need adventure in their lives to be happy? How about to grow up right? Do adults need adventure too? Why or why not?

- Did you ever have an adventure? A real one? Has anyone in your family ever told you about one? What was it?
- Do you think people can have too much adventure? Have you?

Abiyoyo

- Do you think the townspeople were right to run off the boy and his father? (*Prompt: Well would you want someone that annoying around all the time, playing tricks on you?*)
- Think about the end of the story. The man and boy are welcomed back; everyone loves them for killing the monster. Do you think the man will now stop playing his silly tricks on his neighbors? If he doesn't, do you think in a week, a month, a year, the townspeople will still be glad to have him around? Why or why not?
- Of the people in all three stories you read for today's session, who do you think showed the most courage? Why?
- What does it mean to be brave? Can you be both brave and scared at the same time? Why or why not? The boy and his father risk their lives to save the town. Brave? Suppose the boy decided to stand on a railroad track as a train approached to see how close he could let the train get before he jumped out of the way. Would that be brave? Why or why not?
- Lots of stories are about people being brave when they face monsters or giants or criminals or wild animals or enemy soldiers or evil gods and dragons. They are brave in the face of deadly danger. Are there other kinds of courage? Are there other kinds of bravery? Can you think of any examples?
- Who is the bravest person—a real person—you know? Why do you think that? Who's the bravest person you ever heard of? Why do you think that?

Session 5: Dreams – “Just Do It!”

Fanny’s Dream

- Do you think Fanny was right to give up her dream? Why or why not?
- Suppose Fanny’s dream had been something other than just to dance and live in the mayor’s big house. Would you still think she was right (or wrong) to give up her dream? Suppose her dream had been to become a star in the WNBA. Would she have been right to give that up? Suppose her dream had been to find a cure for COVID-19. But she would have to work very hard and long to do it; meaning she might not have a family or family home. Which dream would you choose? Why?
- Are some dreams better than others? Why or why not? Do you think your parents or grandparents had dreams when they were younger? What do you think those dreams were? Why do you think so? Do you think that they still have those dreams? Or do you think they have different dreams? Why?
- Do our dreams change over time? Are there youthful dreams and more “adult” dreams? What are the differences between them? Which type was Fanny’s unfulfilled dream? Why do you think so? If Fanny had had a chance to tell you her dream at the end of the story, what do you think it would be?

Amazing Grace

- Who is the storyteller in Grace’s family? Who is the storyteller in your family? What kinds of stories do that person tell?
- Grace likes to listen to stories from her grandmother’s memory, probably family stories. Are family stories told where you live? Do you like to hear stories about your own family? Is it important to hear those kinds of stories? Why or why not? When you have a family, do you think you will tell your grandchildren stories about what life was like when you were a kid? Why or why not? What’s one story you would tell?
- Grace certainly has a very good imagination. Who else have you read about who has a very good imagination? Why do you think Grace’s imagination is so good? What does she do to help her imagination along? How is your imagination? Do you do anything to help it along?
- The writers of the book give you hints about the stories Grace has been hearing and the stories she’s been reading. Can you tell what some of them are from the pictures?
- You’ve read two stories for today’s session about people who have dreams: Fanny and Grace. One gives hers up and the other refuses to. If you were given a choice—you could become someone like Fanny or someone like Grace—which would you choose? Why that one?
- Do you know any grown-ups who had a wonderful dream when they were young and made it come true? Have any of those grown-ups told you about those dreams? Tell us.
- Do you know any grown-ups who had to give up a dream? Have any of those grown-ups told you about those dreams? Tell us.

Session 6: Cleverness – “Dare to Dream”

Flossie and the Fox

- There are lots of stories about sly foxes. Why do so many stories present foxes as especially sly or sneaky do you think? Why have so many writers picked a fox when they need someone in a story who is sneaky, slippery, and untrustworthy? Can you think of any other stories besides the ones you read for today that use foxes that way? What is there about foxes that makes us think they are especially clever or sly?
- Suppose you wanted to write a story about an animal that was not clever or sly, but one that was cruel and dangerous. What animal would you pick then? Suppose you wanted a story about an animal that was strong and powerful. What animal would you pick then? How about an animal that was gentle and kind? What then?
- Pretend you are the fox in this book. Can you think of anything you could have done to convince Flossie absolutely, definitively, without a doubt, that you were indeed a fox? Do you think it would have worked? Why or why not?
- Should Flossie have been afraid of the fox? Why was it so important to the fox that Flossie admit he was one? By the time they meet the cat, is the fox still out to get the eggs, or is he after something else by then?
- Do you think Flossie has a plan in mind for out-foxing the fox right from the moment she meets him? Why do you think that she does (or doesn't)?

The Monkey and the Crocodile

- What are the reasons the young crocodile wanted to catch a monkey and eat him since crocodiles don't usually try to eat monkeys? Do you think this crocodile is really “hungrier than the others?” Do you think that there might be another reason besides real hunger? What are some reasons why animals or people do things that others are not doing?
- What does the old crocodile tell the young crocodile when one says that he wants to eat a monkey? Why do you think the older crocodile thought differently about the situation than the younger one? Do older people generally think differently than younger ones? Why do you think that they do or do not?
- After the crocodile studied all the monkeys, how did he decide which one to eat? What does his tell you about the crocodile?
- After the crocodile entices the monkey onto his back and starts taking the monkey to the mango trees, he tells the monkey that he is going to drown him. What does this act tell you about the crocodile? Since you have so much information about this crocodile now, how would you describe him?
- How is the monkey able to outsmart the crocodile? Do your conclusions about the crocodile's behavior in the earlier two incidents (3 and 4) have anything to do with your

conclusion about how the monkey is able to outsmart the crocodile? How do we make judgements about other people? On what do we base these judgements?

- After the monkey has outsmarted the crocodile once, the monkey moves down river from the mango tree so that he can get away from the crocodile and live in peace. However, the crocodile still wishes to eat this monkey, so he tracks him down and plots yet again to try to catch him. What does this action tell you about the crocodile? How does the monkey outwit him here? What does the way in which the monkey tricks the crocodile tell you about the monkey?
- The crocodile does not act in a very intelligent fashion throughout this book; however, at the book's end, he is smart enough to admit that the monkey is more cunning than he is. Although the crocodile pledges to leave the monkey alone, what does the monkey tell the crocodile? What does the monkey's statement, that he "shall be on the watch for you [the crocodile] just the same" tell you about the monkey? How is the crocodile similar to human being you know?
- Do you think that you are more like the monkey or more like the crocodile? Why? Which do you admire more? Why? Have you done both monkey-like and crocodile-like things before? What does that tell you about yourself? What does that tell you about people in general?

Doctor DeSoto

- Doctor De Soto gets in trouble when he tries to do a good deed, when he risks his own safety (and his wife's safety!), to help the fox in pain. Should he have done that? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?
- Why do you think stories about little people overcoming stronger ones by out-thinking them are so popular? Why do people like them so much?
- By the end of his first time in the dentist's chair, Doctor De Soto and his wife are pretty sure about the fox's intentions, that the fox will try to eat them. Why then do they let him come back? Is Doctor De Soto's reason for letting him come back a good one? Why or why not?
- We all would like to help someone who is hurt. But suppose helping him or her means risking your own safety. Would you help that person then? Would it matter to you who the person in trouble is? For example, would you risk your life to save a stranger who is being swept away in a rain-filled drainage ditch? Why? Suppose it is a child you do not know who is being swept away? Suppose the person in the ditch is your little brother or sister. Your grandpa or grandma? Would that make a difference? Why?