

*Congratulations! You have just downloaded the free literature based unit on *The Story About Ping*, by Marjorie Flack and illustrated by Kurt Weise! This unit is from *Five in a Row*, Volume 1, written by Jane Claire Lambert.*

*This unit based on *The Story About Ping* is a favorite among “rowers” and has a great FoldNLearn to go along with it! (Subscribe to the blog to have access to all of our free FoldNLeads!) Ping is a favorite character in homes of *Five in a Row* families all around the world, and we expect he will quickly be a favorite with your family as well!*

*There is one important matter we feel can't go unaddressed as we offer you this sample. *Five in a Row* is comprised of many unique and individual unit studies, each based on a different children's book. Each one of these books is appropriate for different levels of emotional maturity, as are the related lessons themselves. Additionally, the units are appropriate for varied academic levels as well. Ping is considered one of our “younger” stories. We believe it's a great starting point, so it only made sense to choose this for our sample unit. The book is unique, and therefore you'll find the lessons in the unit are unique. Each book lends itself to different lessons on a wide variety of topics and different depths of study. This curriculum was written based on an elementary school scope and sequence, and when executed the way it is intended, it provides a very thorough education. So for example, if this unit seems to have not enough art or too much science, another book will fill in where this unit may seem to lack. As you enjoy this unit with your children, the important point to understand is that this unit is only one small fraction and one very unique slice of *Five in a Row*, just one small part of a whole that will lead your family on a delightful journey of loving learning!*

*There is a much more developed introduction to using *Five in a Row* in the manuals, but here's a quick guide to get you started. This quick start guide is only a small fraction of Jane Claire's instruction on how to do *Five in a Row*, so I would encourage you to get your hands on a manual and spend some time reading the introduction. The eight page introduction is not challenging, technical or boring reading. Rather it is encouraging, empowering, and will open the door to a much richer *Five in a Row* experience!*

*Acquire a copy of *The Story About Ping*, by Marjorie Flack.*

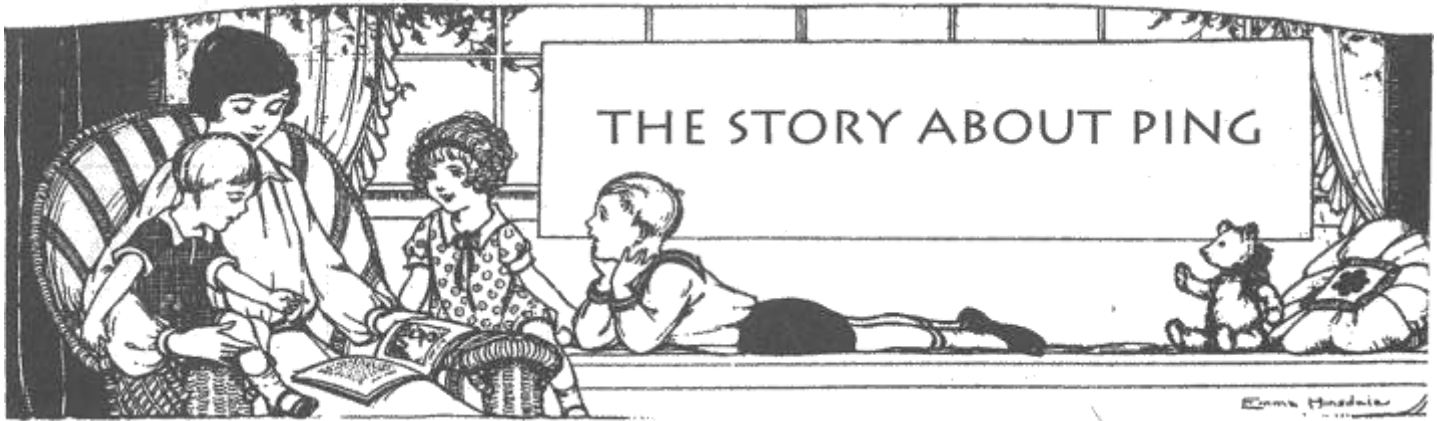
*Look through the unit and note the topics you'd like to study this week with your student. Some families pick one lesson for each subject, some pick several. Some do art every Monday and Math every Tuesday, etc. Some choose one theme to delve into deeper for each unit and explore the others on a more introductory level. The beauty of *Five in a Row* is that you choose what works for your family! You may even do it differently for different children. You may want to get library books on the concepts you've chosen to explore with your child.*

**Five in a Row* is designed to be used in conjunction with a notebook that you create from your lessons. When learning about Ping, your student might draw a picture of Ping and label his significant body parts. You might print off a map of China and draw the path of the Yangtze River. You may try to practice using the art media used in the illustrations. (*Five in a Row* is in the process of creating a notebooking component that will make this very easy to implement! Will be released early Spring 2013.) Try to avoid the pressure to complete a lot of worksheets. *Five in a Row* is so much more than that! It is exploring topics and allowing your child to narrate through drawing, writing, dictating, etc. what he has learned. Narrating allows your child to share what he has remembered as fascinating as opposed to only remembering the one fact someone else thought was important enough to put on a worksheet. Additionally, there's almost no wrong answer in narration. What a delightful for a child to express the exciting things he's learned!*

*The one practice we really encourage is reading the book five days in a row. *Five in a Row* was designed and tested to be read daily! The repetition is essential to your student's learning process, and the time you spend reading together is just as important as the lesson material itself. (See [“Do I really Have to Read it Five Days in a Row?”](#) on the blog. There are many creative ways to help your reluctant student get involved in the book over and over again.)*

*Enjoy your journey!*

*Five in a Row Publishing*



Title: The Story About Ping  
Author: Marjorie Flack  
Illustrator: Kurt Weise  
Copyright: 1933  
Category: Classic  
Summary: A duck learns there are worse than things taking consequences for one's mistakes.

### **Social Studies: Relationships - Discernment**

Ping learns on pp.16-18 that everything that looks good (like the rice cake trap) isn't necessarily good. Discernment is an important life skill that comes with maturity. You can discuss with your student examples of things which may look better than they really are. Discussions might include offers of candy from strangers, smoking cigarettes, or diving into unfamiliar ponds or streams.

Ping runs away because he doesn't want to take his punishment. He discovers that the loneliness, fear and danger he encounters are far worse than any punishment he might receive. In the end, Ping learns that family relationships and a sense of community are a vital part of life. Everyone is tempted to avoid the consequences of his mistakes. Consider sharing an example from your own life of trying to run away from consequences or punishment.

### **Social Studies: Geography - China**

*The Story About Ping* takes place along the banks of China's Yangtze river. (YANG- see) Longer than any other river in the world except the Nile and the Amazon, the Yangtze is nearly four thousand miles long. Discuss with your student how long four thousand miles is by comparing it with a familiar distance. You might say, "Grandpa's house is four hundred miles away and so the Yangtze is like driving to grandfather's house ten times." You can also compare it with how far your student went on vacation last summer, etc.

The Yangtze is so wide in places that you can stand on one bank and not see the other shore. Ask if the student has ever been to one of the Great Lakes or to the ocean. From these

places you can't see the other side either. Imagine together what it might be like to live on such a long and, in some places wide, river.

Nearly one third of China's population, 350 million people, live on or near the Yangtze river. In fact one of every fifteen people in the world live along the Yangtze. That's half again as many people as live in all of the United States combined. Help your student visualize how alone and frightened little Ping must have felt on such a huge, busy river. Be sure to place your geography story disk where Ping lived-in China, and on the Yangtze River!

## **Social Studies: Geography - Culture**

As you read about Ping, point out the traditional clothes, hats, hair styles, houses and boats (one type of boat is called a "junk") of Chinese culture. Wonder with your child about life on a boat! Discuss the differences and similarities between our culture and the Chinese. In America, for instance, there is a long history of people living on house boats sometimes called "shanty boats" along the Mississippi River and throughout the bayou country (a small stream that wanders through lowlands or marshes) of southern Louisiana.

You may also want to discuss the eating of duck as a delicacy in traditional Chinese cooking. Little Ping nearly becomes someone's special dinner when he leaves the safety of family and friends. Ask if your student has ever eaten at a Chinese restaurant. What sort of foods did people eat there? Did they use chopsticks? Has the student ever eaten duck? Do you think people along the Yangtze ever eat pizza or hamburgers? Have a rice lunch! If you have an older student listening in, he could research the foods of China and help prepare a special Chinese meal, which you might eat sitting on the floor around a low table.

## **Literature: What is a Classic Story?**

This book is a classic. A "classic" is a book that generations of children have enjoyed. Ping was written in 1933. Even though the lifestyle, clothes and boats of the people in China may not be the same today as when Ping was first written (the Chinese do sometimes eat hamburgers!), the story of Ping is still as fresh today as it was in 1933.

When you begin any new book with a student, help him calculate how many years have elapsed since the story was written. You might try to identify an individual whose life dates from the early 1930s, in order to help your student comprehend how many years Ping has been in print. For example, you might say, "When Ping was written, your grandmother was about your age." Because Marjorie Flack wrote this story about Ping that you, your parents and grandparents could all enjoy when you were children, someday, perhaps your student's children and grandchildren will enjoy Ping, too. That's what makes Ping a "classic."

## **Literature: Fiction**

Explain that fictional stories originate in the author's imagination and therefore are not necessarily true. Explain that often a fictional story begins, "Once upon a time...." You'll find other stories included in *FIAR* which also begin "Once upon a time..." and you'll want to call the student's attention to this fictional device each time. You can even allow your student to make up their own fictional story which begins "Once upon a time..." **Note:** There are occasional non-fiction stories that have the "once upon a time..." beginning, but they are the exception. This is usually a fictional story starter.

## Literature - Literary Device: Repetition

The story of Ping both begins and ends with a list of Ping's family members. Throughout the book, the author makes repeated references to Ping's family. The use of repetition as a literary device helps bring the reader "full circle" and provides both a continuity and a sense of completion when the book is finished. Younger children particularly love the use of repetition. Many stories are built on repetition and children often memorize the familiar phrases and passages. Your student might enjoy creating his own story using repetition.

## Art: Medium

See if your student can recognize what medium Kurt Wiese used in illustrating *Ping*. Most of the illustrations look like colored pencil or crayon. Encourage the student to try using colored pencils to do an illustration of their own. Notice how Wiese combines colors to create new tones in the sky on p. 9. At first glance, the sky appears gray, but have your student look closer and discover the variety of colors the artist has used to create the appearance of an evening sky. Similarly, notice the many colors Wiese used for the back-ground on p. 32. Try using multiple colored pencils to create various effects.

## Art: Drawing Water

Illustrator Kurt Wiese has drawn water throughout *The Story About Ping*. Discuss with your student the use of broken reflections to give the impression of water. For example, on p. 4, Wiese shows the sun's reflection in the Yangtze's surface. Cover up the reflection with your hand and see how the illusion of water is lost. Give your student a chance to try drawing his own sun and reflection to give the impression of water.

You'll also want to note the use of small, irregular blue circles to show puddles on p. 22 beneath the boy. Let your student try drawing a simple figure like the ice cube below and adding "puddles" beneath it. Note the use of ripples on p. 15 to illustrate action. Allow your student to try drawing broken, irregular circles around any object and see how it suddenly appears as if the object is surrounded by water. On pp. 10 and 14 Wiese has used trailing wavy lines to show motion. This pattern is repeated behind boats, ducks, etc., to create the illusion of movement. Let the student add trailing wavy lines to a simple boat drawing and discover how the boat suddenly appears to be moving. If your student can't draw a boat, draw one for him, or use a magazine photograph and let him draw the back-ground motion lines. Or try a line of

ducks, each with their own wavy lines behind them!  
Notice the Teacher's note at the end of the unit about this lesson.\*\*



## Art: Viewpoint

The cover illustration shows Ping from a traditional viewpoint. Ping's profile, the outline of his wing, tail and bill all help to identify Ping as a duck. But, discuss with your student Wiese's use of a head-on point of view on the title page. Without the profile, bill, etc., Ping looks quite different.

Notice how the illustrator has drawn Ping from many different points of view such as "bottom up" on p. 6, "head beneath wing" on p. 9, and "swimming away" on p. 12. Have your student try drawing an egg or a football in profile. Now have him draw it again looking end-on. Point out how our **viewpoint** changes the way we see the world around us. Discuss how picking a different viewpoint adds variety and can make everyday subjects more interesting. Encourage your student to try drawing like Kurt Wiese, by exploring common subjects from uncommon points of view. In an excellent story called *Daniel's Duck* by Clyde Robert Bulla, a young artist tries an uncommon viewpoint for his hand carved wooden duck. (**Note:** You will see *Daniel's Duck* mentioned again as a featured story in *FIAR*, Vol. 3. Now, see if you can find it for a single reading relating to this lesson in viewpoint and compare the illustrations of Wiese and Bulla.)

## Art: Unity of Theme Through Subject

The illustrator has used the Yangtze River as the recurring theme which creates a sense of unity by tying the entire book together. Count the pages on which the river appears. You'll discover only three illustrations which do *not* include the Yangtze. Kurt Wiese has provided both unity and context through the repetitive theme of the water. We come away with a sense that for those 350 million people who live along the Yangtze's shores, the river is a part of everything they do. As a teacher, watch for the use of recurring themes, built around a particular subject to create unity in other books you may read with your student.

## Art: Composition

Every good drawing has good composition. Turn with your student top. 9. Discuss how Kurt Wiese has created a diagonal from upper left to lower right with the foliage. This diagonal line divides the illustration into two halves. Each half includes a yellow highlight; the sun in the upper right, and Ping in the lower left. Notice how the grass fronds in the upper left create opposite diagonal lines.

Have your older student sketch some balanced compositions. Have him try pictures which are balanced diagonally, horizontally and vertically. Your student can even cut magazine pictures and place them in pleasing balanced compositions if he does not yet enjoy a lot of drawing. Encourage your student to look beyond content and think about composition whenever looking at an illustration. While good content makes an interesting picture, good composition makes for a pleasing picture .

## **Math: Counting Skills**

Have your student count Ping's family including: mother, father, two sisters, three brothers, eleven aunts, seven uncles and forty-two cousins. Don't forget to include Ping! To make the counting more fun, have the student draw a picture illustrating all of Ping's family surrounding Ping. Some students might prefer tracing a duck "template" on yellow construction paper and cutting out Ping's family and gluing them on a hand-painted Yangtze River. For your very young student, you might use blocks, coins or clothes pins to account for each member of Ping's family. Arrange and rearrange the items as you count them together. Some children might enjoy counting *all* of the ducks or all of the boats in the book as well.

## **Science: Animal Kingdom**

In *The Story About Ping* your student will be introduced to the animal kingdom by learning about ducks. What is Ping trying to catch when he misses the call on p. 6? Ducks search beneath the water's surface for insects, plants, small fish and snails. They look funny with their tails up. Many ducks also enjoy eating bread crumbs. Discuss how Ping's love of rice cake crumbs on p. 15 nearly gets him in trouble.

Ask your student if he or she has ever fed the ducks. Consider going to a nearby lake or park to feed the ducks bread crumbs and watch them dabble (poke about in the water) as they forage for food. The more time you spend observing, the more you'll learn about ducks! For more information about ducks, get *The Little Duck*, by Judy Dunn.

## **Science: Buoyancy**

The illustrations on pp. 16 and 17 show a boy swimming with a barrel attached to his back. Ask your student why the boy is wearing a barrel.

Both the wood and the air inside the barrel help the boy float, much like a life-preserver helps a water skier. The barrel works on the same principle of buoyancy as a fishing bobber, inflatable pool toys, etc., since both air and wood are lighter and less dense than water.

Try finding which things float in a pan of water: a cork, penny, fishing bobber, pencil, tennis ball, golf ball, etc.

## **Science: Health and Safety**

The boy and his barrel can also provide a good opportunity to discuss water safety. Discuss the role of lifeguards, life preservers and the dangers of swimming alone in unfamiliar water, etc. Even the best of swimmers can get caught in currents and life preservers provide an added measure of safety, like wearing seat belts in the family car.

## Science: Reflection of Light

See if your student can figure out why you see reflections on water. Look at the illustrations which show reflections. Discuss the fact that shiny surfaces "bounce" light, reflecting it in new directions. Take a small mirror and do some simple experiments. Try reflecting sunlight onto the ceiling or opposite wall. Now take the mirror and lay it flat on a table. Place various objects on the mirror and look at their "reflections" off the shiny glass surface. If you live near a pond or lake, go there and look at how the shiny surface acts as a mirror, reflecting the image of shoreline trees, boats, the sun, etc.

A.A. Milne wrote a poem entitled, "The Mirror". It can be found in the book of poems called *When We Were Very Young*, or in the combined volume called *The World of Christopher Robin*. One line says,

"And there I saw a white swan make  
another white swan in the lake."

Milne's poem paints a verbal picture (imagery) of the reflection off the water's surface. Obviously, the second swan was simply the reflection of the first swan on the lake's glassy surface. Perhaps you'd like to find *The World of Christopher Robin*\* and read it while looking at the lovely illustration which accompanies it.

\* **Teacher's Note** to avoid confusion: A. A. Milne wrote two volumes of stories about Winnie-the-Pooh titled, *Winnie-The -Pooh*, and *The House at Pooh Corner*. These story books can be found in bookstores and at libraries under these titles. Dutton Publishers have presented a book with both of these volumes combined. This double volume is titled, *The World of Pooh*.

A. A. Milne has also written two volumes of poetry, titled, *When We Were Very Young*, and *Now We Are Six*. These two volumes can be found in bookstores and at libraries with these titles. Again, Dutton Publishers have also combined the poetry volumes into a single book and called it *The World of Christopher Robin*. Regardless of the format, these books are treasures to be shared and enjoyed over and over! The stories and the poetry have been loved for several generations. They have brought to their readers many moments of shared intimacy, humor, and poignancy. If you haven't had the pleasure of the literary world of Christopher Robin and his friends, explore some of it today!

\*\* **Teacher's Note:** Re: Lesson Drawing Water, p. 14. *The World of Art - Water - Through the Eyes of Artists* by Wendy and Jack Richardson is a book which showcases twenty artists and their treatment of water. It is copyrighted 1991 by Children's Press, Chicago, ISBN 0-516-09286-3. If you can find it in your library, use it by mentioning the names of the artists and just looking at their interpretations of water. You may find the information about the artists interesting for yourself, but your children will enjoy just looking at the pictures. Drawing or painting water is

a fascinating subject!