



The Story About Ping

Title: *The Story About Ping*
Author: Marjorie Flack
Illustrator: Kurt Wiese
Copyright: 1933
Category: Classic
Summary: A duck learns there are worse things than taking the 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 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 stu-

dent how long four thousand miles is by comparing it with a familiar distance. You might say, "Grandpa's house is four hundred miles away, 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.

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, more than 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 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 past 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 "shantyboats" 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?

If you have an older student, she could research the foods of China and help prepare a special Chinese meal. She might also look up typical mealtime customs of the Chinese and share them with the family during the meal. If you don't have an older student, you can research these things together with your student and plan a special menu featuring foods that are typically eaten in China.

Language Arts: 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 her 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 great-grandmother was about your age." Because Marjorie Flack wrote this story about Ping that many generations of your family 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."

Language Arts: Literature - Fiction

Explain that fictional stories originate in the author's imagination. Point out that a fictional story often 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 encourage your student to make up their own fictional story which begins "Once upon a time"

Note: There are occasional nonfiction stories that have the "once upon a time ..." beginning but they are the exception. This is most usually a fictional story starter.

Language Arts: 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 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 her 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 background 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 her 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 on the previous page 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 and ducks 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 her or print a picture and let her draw the background motion lines. Or try a line of ducks, each with their own wavy lines behind them!

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 and wing, 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 her 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 handcarved wooden duck. (Note: *Daniel's Duck* is a featured story in FIAR Vol. 3. For 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 to p. 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 her try pictures which are balanced diagonally, horizontally and vertically. Your student can even cut out magazine pictures or pictures found online and place them in pleasing, balanced compositions if she 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 clothespins 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 "people food." Discuss how Ping's love of rice cake crumbs on p. 15 nearly gets him in trouble.

Ask your student if she has ever "fed the ducks." Consider going to a nearby lake or park to feed the ducks corn, peas, oats, or other duck-friendly foods. 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 jacket helps a water skier. The

barrel works on the same principle of buoyancy as fishing bobbers, 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, grape, paper clip, pencil, tennis ball, leaf, golf ball, etc. Use the activity sheet at the end of this unit to document your discoveries.

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 jackets or personal floatation devices (PFDs) and the dangers of swimming alone in unfamiliar water. Even the best of swimmers can get caught in currents and life jackets 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 this poem while looking at the lovely illustration which accompanies it.

Teacher's Note: 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. There is also a book with both of these volumes combined, titled, *The World of Pooh*. Milne has also written two volumes of poetry, titled, *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six*. There is also a combined book with both volumes called, *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 enjoying the literary world of Christopher Robin and his friends, explore some of it today!

Teacher's Note: The book *Water: Through the Eyes of Artists* by Wendy and Jack Richardson showcases twenty artists and their treatment of water. It is copyrighted 1991 by Children's Press, Chicago. If you can find it in your library, use it with the "Drawing Water" lesson 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!

Teacher's Notes

The *Five in a Row* lesson options for each unit in the manual are all you need to teach your child. The additional resource area provided below is simply a place to jot down relevant info you've found that you might want to reference.

THE STORY ABOUT PING

Date: _____

Student: _____

Five in a Row Lesson Topics Chosen:

Social Studies:

Language Arts:

Art:

Math:

Science:

Relevant Library Resources: Books, DVDs, Audio Books

Websites or Video Links:

Related Field Trip Opportunities:

Favorite Quote or Memory During Study:

Name: _____

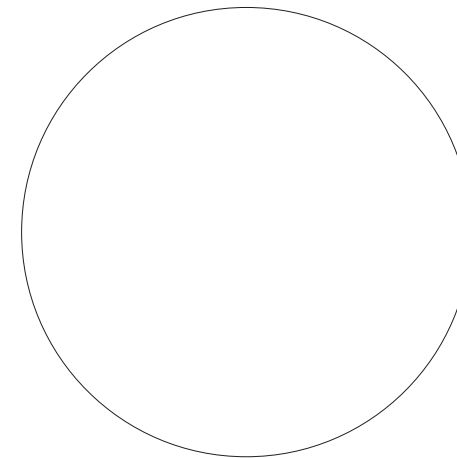
Date: _____

Science: **Buoyancy**

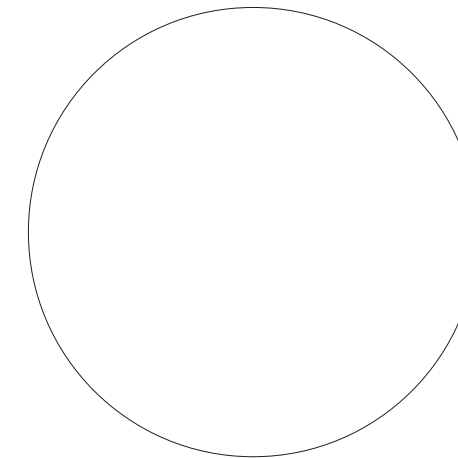
The boy swam with a barrel attached to his back. The air inside the barrel made him float since it is lighter than water.

Prediction = a statement about a future event, which is usually based on knowledge or experience.

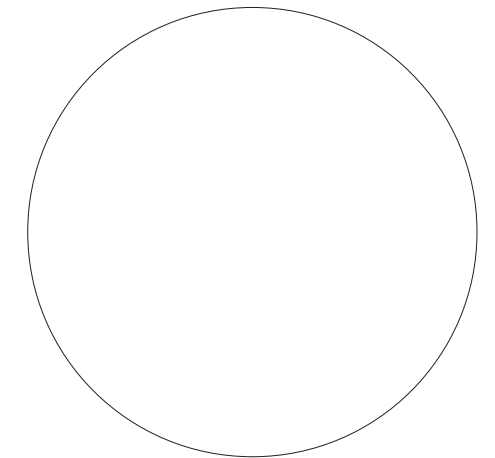
Find objects around the house or outside, make a prediction and then test it out by placing items in a bowl of water.



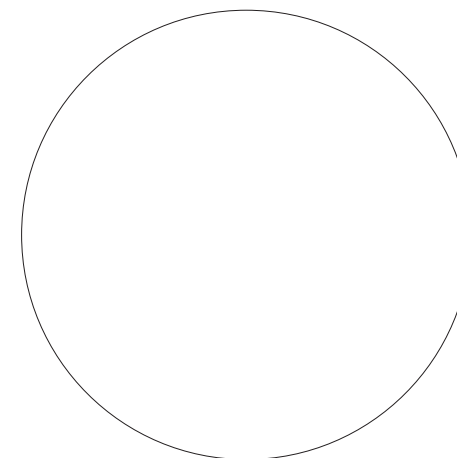
1. _____
SINK or FLOAT



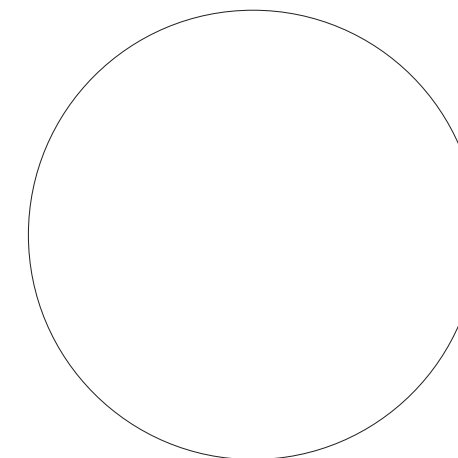
2. _____
SINK or FLOAT



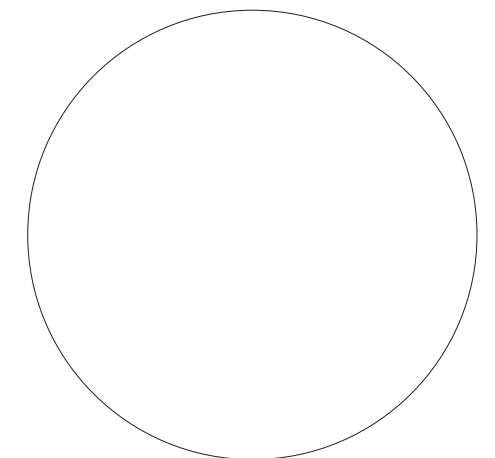
3. _____
SINK or FLOAT



4. _____
SINK or FLOAT



5. _____
SINK or FLOAT



6. _____
SINK or FLOAT

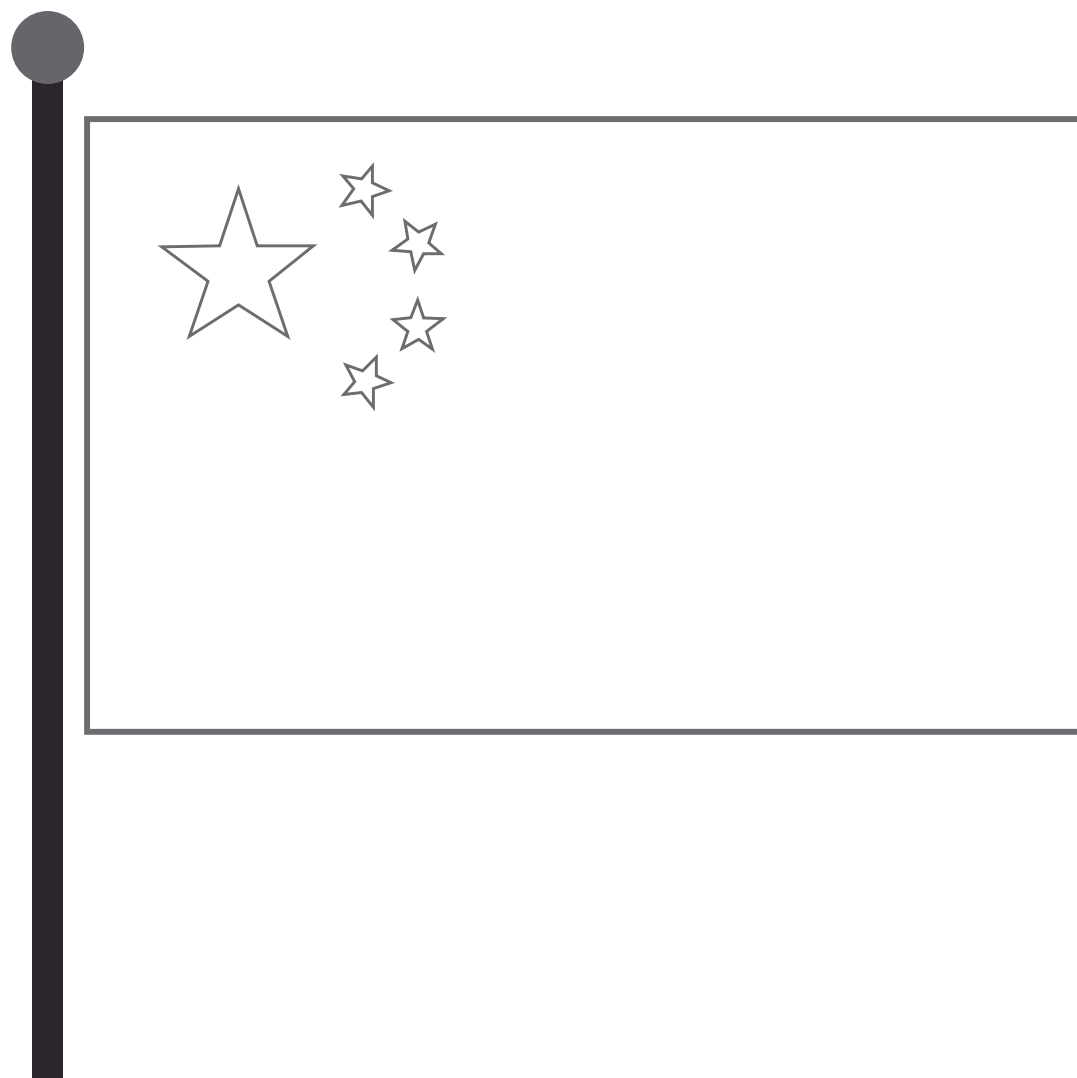
Name:

Date:

Geography: **China Flag**

The flag of China is red with five gold stars in the canton: one large star with four smaller stars in a semi-circle towards the fly. *For more information, see Parts of a Flag on page 222.*

Color in the China flag below.



Name:

Date:

Language Arts: **Fiction**

Fictional stories originate in the author's imagination. They often begin with "Once upon a time..." Allow your student to write or dictate a fictional story in the story starter provided below.



nce upon a time...
