

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Bambi: A Life in the Woods

by
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Book Information

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Bambi learns much about life and about people as he grows into a beautiful stag.

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Bambi's Classic Animal Tales

Main Characters

Aunt Ena the sister of Bambi's mother and the mother of Faline and Gobo; she is very proud when Gobo returns with the news that he received special treatment from "Him"

Bambi the courageous deer who becomes one of the great stags of the forest after living a long and difficult life

Faline the gay and lively doe who becomes Bambi's mate

Gobo Faline's twin brother, who is weak and sickly; he is captured by "Him" during a hunt and makes the fatal error of assuming that all humans will treat him like his captor did

Hare a friendly rabbit that often speaks to Bambi and his mother; the old stag helps free the hare from a snare

Him the general name the animals give to all humans; specifically, the animals think of the term in reference to the humans that hunt them

Karus the strong healthy buck who befriends Bambi as a fawn; as an adult Bambi defeats Karus in a mating battle

Marena the gentle doe who mates with Gobo

Mother Bambi's gentle and patient mother, who disappears during a hunt

Nettla the old doe who takes care of Bambi after his mother disappears

Ronno the young buck who has survived being shot by "Him"; he foolishly challenges Bambi during mating season and is nearly killed by Bambi

the fox a predator of the forest who is killed by a hunting dog

the old stag the wise and kind old stag who helps guide Bambi into becoming a wise old stag himself

the screech owl the vain owl who enjoys frightening Bambi; his feelings are hurt when Bambi forgets to be frightened

Vocabulary

chamber room

glade an open space in the woods

interminable seemingly endless

loathsome extremely hateful

prongs points on a deer's antlers

stag a full-grown male deer

Synopsis

One spring morning when the forest is glittering with life, a wobbly-legged fawn is born. His mother names him Bambi. Bambi, like most youngsters, is very curious about the world around him. He likes to ask his mother many questions. His mother patiently answers all of these as best she can. What puzzles Bambi the most is the word "danger." She will not tell him what danger means because she says he is still too young to understand.

As Bambi gets older, his mother leaves him alone more often. Once when he cries out to her, an old stag suddenly appears and says, "Your mother has no time for you now.... Can't you stay by yourself?" Bambi is quite embarrassed that the old stag is disappointed in him. From that point, he no longer calls for his mother and often plays with his two cousins -- Faline, a doe, and Gobo, a buck who is rather weak.

As winter approaches, Bambi begins to face hardships. He has to search for food, and it is very difficult to stay warm. He sees how other animals around him have to survive by killing one another. As frightening as all of this is, nothing is more

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dangerous than "Him," the term used to describe a hunter. One day, as many of the deer are talking, the crows begin to call out a warning cry. The magpies and jays join them. This is the signal that "He" is near. Bambi's mother tells Bambi to run and not look back. The entire herd of deer starts running in many directions. Bambi sees many pheasants fly up and fall; he also thinks he might have seen his mother drop as well. As he runs farther into the forest he finds Gobo lying in the snow. Bambi encourages him to get up, but Gobo tells Bambi he will probably die because he cannot run anymore. Bambi continues on and reaches the others, but he never sees his mother again. One of the does takes care of him and helps him get through the long, cold winter.

When spring finally arrives, Bambi notices that he has grown a set of antlers. He misses Gobo but is thankful to be alive.

In the summer, Bambi and Faline declare their love for one another. They want to be together all of the time. Bambi even has to challenge other bucks by fighting with his antlers to keep her all to himself.

Later he and Faline notice a strange-acting deer in the forest that they finally realize is Gobo. Gobo tells them how "He" picked him up on that terrible winter day and brought him to "His" home and took care of him. He tells all of the deer that "He" is really very kind, and Gobo says he loves "Him." Gobo says that there is nothing to fear and never even flinches when he walks in the meadow. One day the scent of "Him" is in the forest. The birds begin the warning calls, and all the deer except Gobo go into hiding. Gobo walks out into the meadow with no fear, but sadly, Gobo is shot.

As Bambi gets older he spends less and less time with Faline and spends more time alone because the old stag tells him that it is best to be alone.

One day Bambi himself is shot in the shoulder. He is injured so badly that he wants to lie down and rest. The old stag makes him get up and walk in a large circle to throw "Him" off track. This is very difficult for

Bambi to do, since he is in such pain. He manages to follow the stag's instructions, however, and is saved. The stag watches over him for many days to make sure that he is all right. After a few months the stag teaches him one last important lesson before he goes off to die alone. He takes Bambi to the place in the forest where they had heard three shots. At first Bambi does not want to go near, but as the stag reassures him, he goes closer. There he sees "Him" dead by a "fire" wound. The stag says that "He" is no better than the forest creatures and that there is one greater than "He" that is in control. After this the stag leaves Bambi and goes in the forest to die, leaving Bambi as the great stag of the forest.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why does the old stag take Bambi to see the dead hunter?

He wants Bambi to realize that the hunters are not all powerful and that they can die just like the other animals. He also wants Bambi to know that there is "Another," who is over both animals and people.

Literary Analysis

How does Bambi act when he is very young?

He is very curious and talkative. Because he has not yet been exposed to danger, he is innocent and trusting. He does not like being left alone, and he enjoys playing with the other animals. He is also easily frightened and very unsure about the world around him.

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Inferential Comprehension

What effect does the old stag's interest in Bambi have on Bambi's life?

The old stag saves Bambi's life several times by showing Bambi what to do in dangerous situations. For example, when Bambi is shot and wants to rest, the stag tells him to continue walking. Bambi also adopts the old stag's philosophy of life: he avoids spending time with most of the other deer. However, when he gets old, he becomes interested in a young deer to whom he can teach the old stag's wisdom.

seems to have a supernatural and merciless power over them. Have the students write a letter pretending to be Bambi trying to persuade hunters not to hunt the animals of the forest.

Constructing Meaning

What does the fox say to try to persuade the dog to spare his life?

At first he tries to appeal to the dog's compassion by saying that the fox and the dog are related. Then he tries to make the dog feel ashamed by calling him a traitor. Though the tactics delay the dog for a short time, the dog does kill the fox.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Bambi spends much of his time observing the forest around him. Give the students magazines to use for collage materials and have them create a picture of Bambi's world.

Understanding Hist/Cultural Factors Since this story focuses on Bambi's thoughts and feelings, the author avoids giving in-depth explanations of the life cycle of the deer. Instead he merely shows Bambi doing things that Bambi himself does not always understand. Have the students research the habits and life cycles of deer and then write a paper explaining some of the actions of Bambi and his fellow deer.

Comparing and Contrasting Although Bambi and Gobo are related, they live very different lives. Have the students make a chart showing the differences between Bambi and Gobo. Have the students write a brief explanation of how these differences affect the lives of the two deer.

Identifying Persuasive Language The forest animals are most afraid of "Him" because "He"