

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Jungle Book (Books I & II) by Rudyard Kipling

Book Information

Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Book (Books I & II)

Quiz Number: 20237

HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 1994

ISBN 0-06-106286-3; LCCN

380 Pages

Book Level: 7.4

Interest Level: MG

A baby boy is abandoned deep in the jungle and is taken in by a she-wolf to be raised as one of her own.

Topics: Animals, Wolves; Classics, Classics (All); Family Life, Babies; Natural Environments, Jungles

Main Characters

Akela the great gray Lone Wolf, Leader of the Pack and a true friend to Mowgli

Bagheera a black panther who is cunning, bold, reckless and respected

Baloo a sleepy brown bear who takes responsibility for raising Mowgli, the man-cub

Buldeo the old hunter of the Man-village who fears Mowgli

Kaa another of Mowgli's teachers; a Rock python who helps save Mowgli from the Bandar-Log

Kotick a pure white seal who wants to find a better life for his fellow seals

Kotuko an Inuit boy who saves his village from famine

Little Toomai the ambitious, rambunctious son of Big Toomai, famed elephant handler

Messua a kind village woman who lost a baby son to a tiger

Mowgli a boy raised by a bear and a panther who, after following the Law of the Jungle, has a difficult time relating to man

Mugger of Mugger Ghaut an old and much-feared crocodile whom the locals call a "godling"

Purun Bhagat a holy man, formerly Sir Purun Dass, and important government man

Rikki-tikki-tavi a mongoose who endears himself to a family

Shere Khan a tiger who vows to someday kill the man-cub he considers his rightful prey

Vocabulary

Aleut a member of a group of native people who live in northern North America

caste a social class system used in India

Inuit a group of people who live in northern North America and Greenland; also called Eskimos

shoal a sandbar creating a shallow place in the water

sorcerer one who uses magic

verandah a long, covered porch

Synopsis

Through a series of stories, the tale of Mowgli, the man-cub, is told. Beginning with his arrival in the jungle, he is taken into the Wolf-Pack after being sponsored by Bagheera, the panther, and Baloo, the brown bear. Mowgli has many teachers in the jungle including a python, monkeys, a Bengal tiger and an elephant. Through his experiences, he comes to learn the Law of the Jungle. His brief interludes in the Man-village leave him disgusted, yet intrigued by these strange creatures.

Interspersed between Mowgli's story are other stories featuring animals with distinctive personalities. There is a white seal who dreams of a safe haven for his brethren, a mongoose who saves a family from a menacing pair of cobras, and an old crocodile with a last wish. In other stories, the son of an elephant handler wishes to see an elephant-dance, an Inuit boy leaves his village to save his people from certain death, and a much-decorated government official gives up his city life to become a holy man.

The book ends as Mowgli becomes a man and makes the difficult, yet inevitable decision to return to the Man-Pack.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Jungle Book (Books I & II) by Rudyard Kipling

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

What did Akela mean when he said that Mowgli should drive Mowgli back to the Man-Pack?

One day Mowgli would realize that he needed to be among his own kind. At the end of the story, he feels a strong pull toward the Man-Pack, but does not understand why.

Literary Analysis

In what ways were the animals of the jungle like the Man-Pack? In what ways were they different?

The animals obeyed the Law of the Jungle. They had a definite hierarchy. Their class system was based on hunting skill and strength. Some were friendly and likeable; others were cruel, weak or simple.

Inferential Comprehension

Why did Mowgli leave the jungle when it was clearly so difficult for him to do so?

He feels physically drawn to the Man-Pack, yet he must remember how he was treated by most of them. He had reached the age of seventeen, and seemed mesmerized by the girl who came down the path. He had become a man, and he needed to return to his own kind.

Constructing Meaning

What did Mowgli learn from each of his teachers that might help him when he returned to the Man-Pack?

From Baloo he learned kindness and patience, from Bagheera stealth and wariness. From Kaa he learned to trust with hesitation, and from the Bandar-Log he learned about foolishness and sloth.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Mowgli's stories take place in the jungles of India. The stories that do not include Mowgli take place in a variety of places including an Aleutian village, a mountain village in India, and the Arctic Sea. Mowgli occasionally returns to a village at the edge of the jungle. In the jungle setting, the Law of the Jungle is a strictly-followed, many-faceted way of life. The animal hierarchy is clearly illustrated through actions, legends and fables. The jungle setting is contrasted with the man village when Mowgli makes one of his infrequent trips to satisfy his curiosity. Also discussed briefly is the caste system of India. Students might compare the jungle hierarchy with the Indian caste system. Students can discuss the comparison between human laws and the Law of the Jungle, and some of the differences between the village and the jungle.

Understanding Literary Features The central theme of the *The Jungle Book* is that a harmonious existence occurs when the jungle inhabitants abide by the laws of the jungle. The ancient laws have been in effect longer than anyone can remember. The laws are simple and efficient, and are amended when necessary. An underlying theme in the story deals with the "birds of a feather concept," as Mowgli discovers that although he was raised in the jungle, he really belongs with the humans in the man village. The conflict is illustrated when Mowgli makes his brief forays into the village and finds the humans ignorant and foolish, save for the kind and motherly Messua. A discussion or writing topic could compare the jungle laws to the local political structure. Another idea would be to consider the order or ranks that might occur among farm animals, forest animals or domestic pets.

Understanding Characterization Each jungle animal has human characteristics, from the protective Mother Wolf, to the teachers, Baloo and Kaa, to the moronic Bandar-Log. Every

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Jungle Book (Books I & II) by Rudyard Kipling

animal has a status as well as a purpose in the jungle. Mowgli's arrival briefly throws off the balance and jungle law, but he is raised by the Wolf Pack and strictly adheres to the ancient ways. Conflict occurs when Mowgli realizes he is a human, and attempts to live as one. Most of the humans are portrayed as ignorant fools, save for Messua, a kind motherly woman. Discussion topics can include a comparison of jungle laws with the local political structure. As a writing activity, students could figure out a probable hierarchy of domestic pets, or describe what Mowgli might have been like had he been adopted by the Monkey People instead of the Wolf Pack.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors The author took a group of animals and made them into a society with rules, laws and a social structure. Choose a group of inanimate objects and create a society. It could be a group of fruits and vegetables, toys in a toybox, books on a shelf, or a basket of dirty laundry. Write a dialogue in which the objects explain some laws and where things rank in the social structure.