

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Pinocchio

by
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Book Information

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The old wood carver Geppetto decides to make a wonderful puppet that can dance. But when he chooses a special piece of wood, he gets much more than he could have ever imagined.

Award: State Award

Topics: Classics, Classics (All); Fairy Tales, Fairy Tales (All); Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other

Main Characters

blue-haired fairy the kindly fairy who helps Pinocchio become a good boy

cat a wicked feline who cons Pinocchio out of his money

fox the cat's companion, who helps her take Pinocchio's money

Geppetto the carpenter who carves Pinocchio and acts as his father

Pinocchio the strong-willed puppet whose love for Geppetto and the blue-haired fairy conflict with his desire to have fun

Romeo (Lampwick) a foolish boy who leads Pinocchio astray

talking cricket an insect who keeps reappearing to give Pinocchio advice

Vocabulary

blunder a mistake

embedded to be stuck in something

flattery insincere praise

muzzle the long nose of an animal

primer a book used to teach beginning readers how to read

proverb a wise saying

Synopsis

Pinocchio tells the story of a mischievous puppet. He runs off as soon as his maker, Geppetto, finishes his feet, only to return home after Geppetto is arrested because a crowd of people are worried that Geppetto plans to hurt Pinocchio.

At home Pinocchio is greeted by a talking cricket who tells him that he should not revolt against his parents. Pinocchio silences the cricket after stating that he intends to live a life of idleness. He then begs for food unsuccessfully and comes back only to fall asleep with his feet in a brazier. When Geppetto comes home, Pinocchio cannot answer the door because his feet have burned off. Geppetto forgets his anger when he sees the puppet's feet. He forgives him and gives him his own breakfast.

Upset by his difficult night alone, Pinocchio promises to be a good boy, and Geppetto sells his only coat so that Pinocchio may have a primer to attend school. On his way to school Pinocchio sells his primer to get a ticket to a puppet show. Pinocchio quickly disrupts the show and enrages the show's owner, the Showman, who decides to use Pinocchio as firewood to finish cooking his mutton. Pinocchio begs for his life, and the Showman gives in when he begins to feel sorry for Pinocchio's father. The Showman gives Pinocchio five gold coins for poor Geppetto.

After leaving the Showman, Pinocchio starts to go home, but his journey is interrupted when two tricksters, a cat and a fox, learn of his gold coins and convince him that the coins will grow into money trees if he buries them in a field. On his way to bury the coins, two masked assassins attack him. He disables one by biting off its paw, but they capture him when a strange blue-haired child refuses to let him enter her house. The assassins hang him from a tree and leave him there, planning to return to get his money after he has died.

In the meantime, the blue-haired child is revealed to be a fairy who brings Pinocchio to her home, but Pinocchio has to come close to death before he will

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agree to take medicine to cure his fever. The fairy offers him a home and her love, and Pinocchio promises to come back and be the fairy's little brother after he goes to get Geppetto.

On the way home, Pinocchio meets the fox and the cat, who is suspiciously missing one paw. They persuade him to bury his coins. Then Pinocchio leaves to let the coins grow, and when he returns, a parrot tells him that the cat and the fox took his coins while he was gone. Pinocchio goes to the nearby town of Fools' Trap to report the robbery to a judge, who punishes him for his foolishness by having him thrown into prison. He is released after four months.

As he is making his way back to the fairy's house, he is first temporarily delayed by a giant serpent, and then gets caught in a polecat trap while trying to steal some grapes. A peasant releases him from the trap only to make him take the place of his watchdog. The peasant lets him go when he catches the polecats that have been stealing the peasant's chickens. Pinocchio rushes to the fairy's house only to find a gravestone claiming that the blue-haired child had died of grief waiting for him.

While Pinocchio is weeping, a pigeon alights and takes pity on him. The pigeon offers to take him to Geppetto, who is about to embark on a sea voyage in an effort to find Pinocchio. Pinocchio gets to the sea just in time to see Geppetto's tiny ship swallowed up by violent waves. He jumps into the water to save him but cannot find him. He swims all night, finally comes to an island, and makes his way to a town.

In the town, Pinocchio finds that no one will give him food unless he agrees to work. His laziness finally succumbs to hunger, and he carries a pail of water for a woman in exchange for a meal. While he is eating he realizes that the woman is actually the blue-haired fairy all grown up. She offers to be his mother and tells him that he must earn the right to be a real boy by being good. He agrees and becomes a model student except for his tendency to play with bad boys.

One day Pinocchio is lured away from his studies by a group of boys who tell him a giant shark has been seen off shore. Pinocchio breaks his promise of obedience to go see the shark he believes has swallowed Geppetto. When he gets to the shore, the boys attack him for making them look bad to the schoolmaster. This causes a fight in which one of the boys is injured, and Pinocchio is falsely blamed. He escapes the police by diving into the sea, but he takes pity on the police dog that follows him into the water and starts to drown. After Pinocchio saves the dog, he is caught by a gruesome fisherman. The dog remembers Pinocchio's kindness and saves him from being eaten by the fisherman.

Upon returning home, Pinocchio promises once again to be a good boy. He works hard, and at the end of the year, the fairy feels he has earned the right to be transformed into a real boy. She allows him to go out to invite his friends to a party, but she warns him to be back before dark. Pinocchio remembers this command until he meets up with Lampwick, a mischievous boy who persuades him to join him in a journey to a place called Playland. Pinocchio is reluctant at first, but eventually Lampwick overcomes his objections, and Pinocchio goes along.

After months of cavorting without work or studies, both Lampwick and Pinocchio get donkey fever. This disease, caused by laziness, turns them into donkeys. They are then sold at the market by the evil man who originally enticed them to take up a life of idleness. Pinocchio is sold to a circus, but he lames himself jumping through a hoop. He is sold again, this time to a man who plans to skin him to make a drum. The man attempts to kill Pinocchio by drowning him, but instead, the blue-haired fairy sends fish to eat away the donkey flesh and restore Pinocchio to his puppet form. He escapes and swims out to sea where he is swallowed by the giant shark.

In the shark's body Pinocchio discovers Geppetto, old and broken down, sitting at a table. Pinocchio leads him out of the shark, which has fallen asleep

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with its mouth open. A tunny fish helps them get to shore.

The next day Pinocchio gets a job from a gardener who has worked his friend Lampwick to death. Pinocchio is willing to do anything to help his ailing father, and he not only toils for the gardener, but also attends school and weaves baskets to help supplement their income. When he finds out that the blue-haired fairy is sick in a hospital, he gives up the opportunity to purchase a new suit of clothes to buy the fairy some bread. His kindness is rewarded when he wakes up to discover he is finally a real boy. He finds himself in a new house with money in his drawer and Geppetto fully restored to health. The story ends with Pinocchio and Geppetto rejoicing at Pinocchio's altered state.

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 blue-haired fairy continue to allow Pinocchio to go out by himself when he consistently gets into trouble if he is without adult supervision?

The blue-haired fairy wants Pinocchio to develop into a full human being, and she knows that this cannot happen until Pinocchio learns to act responsibly. If she does not leave Pinocchio to face temptations on his own, he will never be able to resist evil by himself or learn that his disobedience has terrible consequences for both himself and the people he loves.

Literary Analysis

What purpose does the talking cricket have in this story?

The talking cricket acts as Pinocchio's conscience before Pinocchio actually develops this human attribute. He tells Pinocchio the difference between right and wrong and tries to warn Pinocchio of the consequences of bad actions not only for himself, but also for the people he loves.

Inferential Comprehension

How does Geppetto change throughout the story?
What causes these changes?

At the beginning of the story, Geppetto is a hot-tempered man with very little patience. Dealing with Pinocchio teaches him patience and love. At first he threatens to hurt Pinocchio for running away, but then he sells his coat to buy Pinocchio a schoolbook. When Pinocchio does not return from school, Geppetto is so worried that he sets out to save him. When Pinocchio finds him in the belly of a shark, Geppetto is sick and disabled from the trials that Pinocchio has inflicted upon him, but he is still full of love for Pinocchio. At the end of the story with his health completely restored, Geppetto is full of pride at Pinocchio's final transformation.

Constructing Meaning

Pinocchio learns that his misbehavior causes great heartache for his parents. How has this book changed your understanding of how your behavior affects your parents?

Students may say they are now more aware of the far-reaching effects of both good and bad behavior. They may also have developed a better understanding of their parents' point of view. On the other hand, some students may feel that a fairy tale has little or no connection with reality and may state that the book has had little influence on them.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Characterization Have the students create puppets based on the characters in this story. Encourage them to think about what they know about the characters as they decide what their puppets will look like. When they are done, allow them some time to perform a scene with their puppets.

Identifying Persuasive Language Pinocchio is frequently persuaded to do things that he knows are wrong. Have the students give some examples of situations in which Pinocchio is talked into being bad. Then ask them to write an

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explanation of why Pinocchio is swayed by these arguments.

Understanding Sequence Have the students create a timeline for this story with a special emphasis on significant events. They can use their timeline to show how Pinocchio's personality develops and changes as the story progresses and why the order in which certain events occur is significant to the development of the characters in general.

Extending Meaning Have the students pretend they have hired the blue-haired fairy as a social worker and Pinocchio is her first assignment. Ask the students to consider the book to be a report of the blue-haired fairy's work. Then have the students write a job evaluation determining what she has done well, what she has done poorly, and what their overall assessment of her work is.