

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Prince and the Pauper (Abridged) by Mark Twain

Book Information

Mark Twain, The Prince and the Pauper (Abridged)

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267 Pages

Book Level: 9.3

Interest Level: MG

A prince and pauper, who are identical in appearance, trade places in life.

Topics: Adventure, Life Changes; Classics, Classics (All); Countries/Regions, England; History, Middle Ages/Medieval; Series, Puffin Classics

Main Characters

Bet and Nan Tom Canty's sisters

Blake Andrews old servant with Miles's family

Duke of Norfolk sentenced to be beheaded by Henry VIII

Edward Tudor the prince, who accidentally changes places with a peasant boy

Father Andrew priest who has given Tom books and instructed him in Latin

Gammer Canty Tom's grandmother who, along with his father, beats him nightly

Henry VIII Edward's father

Hugh Hendon Miles's brother

Humphrey Marlow whipping-boy for the prince

John Canty Tom's father who is a thief

Lady Edith Miles's cousin

Lady Elizabeth Edward's sister

Lady Jane Grey Edward's cousin

Lord Hertford Edward's uncle and advisor to Tom

Lord St John a courtier

Margery a peasant girl

Miles Hendon Edward's befriender

Prissy a peasant girl

Tom Canty the peasant boy born at the same time as the prince

Tom's mother a poor, abused woman who loves and tries to protect Tom

Vocabulary

cudgel a short, thick stick of wood, such as may be used as a weapon

gibbet a gallows

halberd an ancient military weapon, consisting of a wooden pole with a steel point and a crosspiece of steel

panoply complete armor of a medieval knight

Synopsis

Two boys, Tom Canty and Edward Tudor, are born in London on the same day. Tom is born to a poor family while Edward is born to royalty.

As Tom grows, he reads the books Father Andrew gives him about kings and princes. He even organizes his own court and pretends that he is a prince himself. His one dream is to actually see a real prince.

His dream becomes a reality when he wanders to Westminster. As Tom tries to get a closer look at the prince, a soldier treats him rudely. Prince Edward, seeing this, orders that Tom be allowed into the gates. As the two visit in the prince's cabinet, the prince and Tom exchange clothing. While they are comparing how similar they look, the prince notices a bruise on Tom's hand and goes to deal with the soldier who bruised him. The soldier, thinking the prince is Tom, lets him out of the gates, but scoffs at him when he says he is the prince. This leaves the prince to lead the life of a pauper while Tom is mistaken for the prince.

The prince identifies himself to several people, but they think he is merely mad. Meanwhile, Tom tries to tell people at the palace that he is not the prince. This results in all thinking that the prince has gone mad, and strict orders are given not to let word about the prince past the palace gates.

With the help of Lord St John, Lord Hertford, Lady Elizabeth, and Lady Jane Grey, Tom learns to behave in a princely manner. Little by little, those around him believe he is getting better, and he

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begins to enjoy his new role.

While Tom is in the palace, the prince is learning how the peasants live. He sees the challenges and injustices that are a daily part of their lives. He is befriended by Miles Hendon, who watches out for him and humors him by treating him like a prince.

The Prince is saddened to hear that his father has died. Since he is the heir to the throne, he feels even more urgent about returning to the palace. After a variety of adventures, the new king arrives in time for the coronation ceremony. Tom is relieved to see him return and helps to prove the king's identity. The king rewards Tom and Miles for their efforts and becomes renowned for his humanity as a ruler.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

When Miles returned to Hendon Hall, both Edith and Blake Andrews refused to acknowledge Miles for who he was. Why did they pretend he was an imposter?

Both wanted to protect Miles from Hugh. Each knew how unscrupulous Hugh was and feared that Hugh would try to get Miles out of his way. Hugh also forced Edith not to admit that it was actually Miles.

Literary Analysis

Why were the people of the time so ready to believe the accusations in the cases of the death of the man who was poisoned and of the woman calling up the storm?

The people during this time period were very superstitious. Scientific knowledge during that age was very limited in comparison to present day knowledge. Therefore, anything out of the ordinary was blamed on actions that appeared unusual.

Inferential Comprehension

Why did Tom help Edward remember where he had left the Great Seal instead of telling him where it was?

By this time Tom was relieved to see Edward return and no longer wanted to be in the position. He probably feared that the Lord Chancellor would say that he was the rightful king if Edward didn't remember the location on his own.

Constructing Meaning

How are Edward and Miles alike?

Each one faces problems with identity. Rather than the happy welcome Miles expects, those who recognize him tell him it is dangerous for him to be positively identified. Therefore, he cannot claim what is rightfully his. Ironically, Miles thinks the pauper is mad and merely humors him. In order to protect Edward, Miles tells him to keep quiet about his identity.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The people living during the period in which this book is set were very superstitious. One man was nearly convicted of poisoning another because he matched the description of the stranger the witch foretold would poison the man. A woman and her little girl were accused of selling their souls to the devil. The evidence presented against them was that they invoked a storm that laid waste to the surrounding region. Have students find more examples of superstitions prevalent at the time. What superstitions still exist in our world today?

Understanding Characterization Three characters in the book face the frustration of mistaken identity at different times in the book. When Tom claims that he is not the prince, those around him don't believe him and think he is mad. Edward, when he claims to be the prince, cannot get anyone to take him seriously because of his appearance. Lastly, Edith and Blake Andrews pretend they do not recognize Miles to protect him from his malicious brother. For each one this

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is a frustrating situation. Have the students share times when they could not convince others of the truth. What were their feelings at the time? Were they able to resolve the problem? If yes, how did they achieve resolution?

Recognizing Feelings From the books Father Andrew gave him, Tom read about kings and princes. His response to these accounts was to set up his own court within Offal Court, and his one desire was to see a prince up close. When he himself was mistaken for the prince, the position made him feel as if he were in captivity. Have the students think of something they really wanted. When they got what they wanted, was it as good as they expected? Explore what circumstances set people up for disappointment.

Responding to Literature After Edward is king, he tells Tom that his father would hang if Tom desired it and the law agreed. John Canty is never heard from again. Pretend that he was found. Have the students write a scene in which Edward and Tom decide John Canty's fate. Will they sentence him to death? Will Tom speak up for him as his father? What other twists might there be to the story?