Lesson 3: “The Little Smoke Thief”

This charming French folktale offers several examples of fairness, honesty, and courage. Make inferences and draw conclusions based on evidence from the text and identify a theme of the story.

Objectives
Demonstrate comprehension of text.
Make inferences and draw conclusions based on evidence from the text.
Identify the theme.

Student Pages
“The Little Smoke Thief”
Wisdom from Around the World

Materials
*Classics for Young Readers*, Vol. 4B, pages 15-18
- crayons or colored pencils
- map or globe

1. Get Ready

Vocabulary
Go over the vocabulary words with your student before he reads the story.

**prosperous**: (adj.) successful in one’s work
Last year the harvest was so good that the farmers went from being poor to being *prosperous*.

**ready**: (v.) to make ready
The sailors were sweeping the decks, raising the sails, and *readying* the ship for the voyage.

**clutch**: (v.) to hold on tightly
She *clutched* the ticket in her hand so that she would not lose it.

**aroma**: (n.) smell
When the *aroma* of Grandma’s cookies floats past my nose, I drop what I am doing and run to the kitchen.

**fragrant**: (adj.) having a noticeable scent
The meadow was so *fragrant* with clover that hundreds of bees visited it each day.

**impulse**: (n.) an inspiration or motivation that causes an action
It’s not a good idea to buy a pet on an *impulse* because pets are a responsibility and require a long-term commitment.

**defiantly**: (adv.) boldly, in a way that shows one is willing to fight or argue
“I won’t,” he shouted *defiantly*, “and you can’t make me!”

**unfolding**: (adj.) currently taking place
At first the outdoor play did not seem interesting, but soon a crowd gathered to watch the *unfolding* events.
proclamation: (n.) a formal announcement

The king made a proclamation that any of his subjects could go to the castle and receive help from him.

Think Ahead
Discuss the following with your student.

1. Read the title of the story. Predict what the story will be about. Give reasons for your prediction.
2. Today’s folktale comes from France. Find France on a map or globe.
   As necessary, help your student find France on a map or globe. You may wish to have him identify the countries that border France to better understand its location in Europe.

2. Read


3. Questions

Have your student write the answers to the questions in his Reading Notebook. If he has difficulty, have him read the relevant part of the story aloud.

1. Why does the baker give René a loaf of bread?
   The baker gives René a loaf of bread because René helps him unload heavy flour sacks from his cart.
2. What does the meat seller want René to pay for?
   The meat seller wants René to pay for the smoke he used to flavor his bread.
3. How does the baker settle the case?
   He drops the franc on the table three times and says that since Rene had stolen the smell of the smoke, René had paid with the sound of his money.
4. Was your prediction about the story correct? Why or why not?
   Answers will vary. Accept any reasonable response.

4. Discuss

Discuss today’s reading. If you wish, have your student write a paragraph in response to one of the questions.

1. Why do you think René trusted the baker to settle the case?
2. Do you think the baker settled the case fairly? Why or why not?
3. Why does the meat seller try to make René pay for the smoke? Do you think he would have tried to do the same thing with an adult? Why or why not?
   Tip: If necessary, point out the absurdity of expecting someone—adult or child—to pay for the odor of smoke.
5. Activities

The Baker’s Letter
Review making inferences and drawing conclusions with your student. As necessary, remind your student that a reader can learn about a character by paying attention to what the author says about the character, what the character says and does, and what other characters say about the character. However, sometimes readers must make inferences to understand a character’s actions. To make an inference, or infer, means to think about the evidence in the story and what the reader already knows and draw conclusions based on that evidence and experience.

Discuss the following example from the Student Guide to review making inferences and drawing conclusions and to prepare your student to write the baker’s letter.

For example, why do you think at the end of the story the baker asks René to be a helper in his shop? We know that René asks the baker if he can help unload the cart. The story tells us that after the baker agreed:

René wasted no time. He snatched up bags of flour and piled them in the baker’s shop. Soon the cart was empty.

René asks to help. He does his work quickly and well. You know that people like hard workers. Based on the evidence in the story and what you already know, you can make an inference. You can infer that one reason the baker asked René to be a helper in his shop was that René is a hard worker.

Have your student pretend he is the baker and have him write a letter to a friend explaining why he asked Rene to be a helper in his shop. Have him give at least two reasons, one of which may be the reason from the example given above, and support each reason with evidence from the text.

Wisdom from Around the World
Have your student complete Wisdom from Around the World page for “The Little Smoke Thief.”

As necessary, guide your student to write the title of the story and find information in the text that describes the setting and the names of the main characters. Review that the plot is what happens in a story. Remind him to write only the main events of the plot in his summary.

Review that a theme is the main message of a story. It is not directly stated. Explain to your student that some themes ask readers to think about “big ideas,” such as what it means to be fair, honest, or brave. During the discussion, encourage him to look carefully at the characters’ actions and choices to help him decide what he thinks is the main message of the story.

Discuss the following questions with him. Then have him write the theme on the Wisdom from Around the World page. As necessary, remind him that a piece of literature may have more than one theme, but the theme must be supported by details from the story.

- Is Rene brave to ask the baker for work? Do you think he is brave to stand up to the meat seller? Why?
- Why do you think the baker decides to help René solve the problem with the meat seller?
What do you think is the most important thing that happens in the story? Why? What do you think a reader can learn from it?

Tip: You may wish to take this opportunity to discuss with your student how to handle a bully. For example, talk about how each character handles the meat seller, how appropriate each choice is, and how your student might handle a similar situation.