

the whipping BOY study guide

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For the novel by Sid Fleischman



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Synopsis

When the prince is a brat and you aren't supposed to punish him, what is a king to do?

Call the whipping boy! He takes the whippings the prince's guardians aren't allowed to give to "Prince Brat"!

This high-paced story begins with the prince making trouble—again. Jemmy, the whipping boy, is called for and receives the prince's punishment—again. This becomes the pattern: The prince refuses to learn his school lessons and Jemmy gets punished. The prince pulls a prank, and Jemmy gets punished. But Jemmy figures as long as he is there, he might as well learn proper manners and how to read and write, even if the prince won't.

Then, one fateful day, the prince decides to run away and needs someone to carry his basket. Jemmy is drafted and their adventures begin. They are captured by thieves who plan to ransom the prince. Grasping the chance to escape, Jemmy runs, the Prince follows, and a grand chase is begun.

A chase that will change both of them, forever.

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Questions:

1. At the end of Chapter 13, why does the prince forgive Jemmy? How does Jemmy respond? Why?
2. When Jemmy mentions that the king must be worried, the prince answers resentfully. Look up and define *resentfully*. Why does Prince Brat feel resentful?
3. Why does Jemmy have the potato man stop to pick up the prince?
4. When Cutwater and Hold-Your-Nose Billy catch them, they whip the prince because they think he is the whipping boy. What does the prince do as he is whipped? What is Jemmy's reaction to the whipping?

Thinking About the Story:

5. At the end of Chapter 14, the prince tells Jemmy, "Maybe I'll never go back. This is the best time I ever had!" Why do you think the prince enjoyed their experiences so far? (Remember the reason the prince ran away in the first place.)

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6. Do you think Jemmy and the prince are becoming friends? List examples to support your answer.

7. Define *friendship* in your own words.

Dig Deeper:

8. Read Proverbs 17:17, 18:24, 27:6, 27:9, and Ecclesiastes 4:10. These verses describe what a true friend is like. Paraphrase these verses (write them in your own words). What are the most important qualities of a friend?

9. Why wouldn't the prince yell when he was whipped? Would yelling really have mattered?

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7. The phrase “rest your bones” indicates that Jemmy’s father is dead. It means something like “rest in peace.”

8. The phrase “like an evil eye” sets a mood of mystery or danger and suggests that something bad might happen to Jemmy and the prince.

Dig Deeper:

9. Answers will vary. He probably does not want to look weak. Many children, even adults, don’t want to admit they are afraid sometimes.

10. Answers may vary but should mention trust (in God), sound judgement, confidence.

11. Answers will vary. Neither boy seems very happy, but Jemmy seems happier than the prince. Jemmy likes friends, learning, freedom. The prince likes playing pranks on people and making others do what he wants. Those things don’t seem to make him actually happy, though. Personal answers will vary.

12. These verses tell us that a good relationship with God is the key to happiness—obeying him, reading his word, and trusting God for our needs.

13. These verses tell us we are supposed to treat others as we want them to treat us. It does not matter if they are nice to us or not, we are to treat them well. The prince doesn’t treat anyone as he expects them to treat him. He expects total obedience and honor, but he treats everyone else as if they are there just to serve him. He doesn’t listen to or honor anyone.

Chapters 5–8

Vocabulary:

1. d, 2. f, 3. a, 4. e, 5. h, 6. g, 7. b, 8. c.

Questions:

1. Answers will vary, but may mention that he is inexperienced, he has been protected from consequences all his life and therefore sees no need to consider his actions, he is proud and cannot imagine people not doing what he says.

2. “Scribblement” is handwriting, and the prince ends up in trouble and unable to prove who he is because he can’t read or write, though Jemmy can.

3. Possible answers include: Billy—big, evil-smelling, garlicky, raw-faced, red-eyebrowed, yellow-toothed. Cutwater—rattle-boned, bone thin, flea-ridden, bony, hollow-cheeked, big nosed. Accept other reasonable answers.

4. Answers may vary, but it seems to be pride in sounding dangerous.

Thinking About the Story:

5. At first, the outlaws only wanted to take the boys’ horse and food, and they were going to let the boys go. Once the outlaws realize they have the prince, they won’t let him go.

6. Students’ speculation will vary. It should contain the idea that Jemmy will take the prince’s place to protect the prince or give a chance to escape.

7. Answers will vary. Note that there is a difference between saying someone *is* a fool and saying someone has *acted* foolishly. The prince has acted foolishly.

8. That which follows something on which it depends; a result; an effect; the outcome or fruit of ones’ actions. Something that happens because of something else.