

Prime Time Family Reading Time Favorites 2020 Series

Week 1 – Introduction – the oral tradition

A demonstration and background of the oral tradition as it leads to the written word and reading – week one establishes both the tone, and also the reading and discussion format of the six-week program. Examples of appropriate texts to demonstrate the oral tradition include Mother Goose rhymes, jump rope rhymes, poems, and narratives. *Fish is Fish* or *The Big Orange Splot* supply examples of storytelling and can be utilized as tools to discuss the oral tradition.

Week 2 – Judgement and Truth

- *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall, 2015
- *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* by John Scieszka. 1989

Week 3 – Empathy and Community

- *Going Home* by Eve Bunting, 1996
- *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt De La Peña, 2015
- *Snapsy the Alligator (Did Not Ask to Be in This Book)* by Julie Falatko, 2016 (alternate text)

Week 4 – Friends and Family

- *Flop to the Top!* by Eleanor Davis, 2015
- *Julius the Baby of the World* by Keven Henkes, 1990

Week 5 – Courage and Bravery

- *Abiyoyo* text by Pete Seeger, 1963
- *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad, 2019

Week 6 – Cleverness and Imagination

- *Chato's Kitchen* by Gary Soto, 1995
- *Doctor De Soto* by William Steig, 1982

*Formatted for double-sided printing
to yield one double-sided page
discussion facilitators can use as prompts
during each week of the program.*

Week 2

Judgement and Truth

2:1 *Red: A Crayon's Story*

The book opens, "He was red. But he wasn't very good at it." This leads readers to discussions about expectations and value.

- **What was Red good at?**
- How can we tell if he was good at it or not?
- Can you be good or bad at being yourself?

Others have lots to say about how Red might be better at being red, but what does this mean:

- **Have you ever been given a label that didn't feel right? How did you deal with that?**
- Have you ever tried to do something, or be something you just couldn't do or be? Why?
- Do you think labels can be harmful? Why or why not?

Red says "I'm Blue!"

- **What makes you you?**
- Who decides what labels you? Do we have control of what others see?
- How are you different than how others see you? How can you know?

Red isn't like the other crayons.

- **How is Red the same *and* different from the other crayons?**
- How is Red the same *and* different at the same time? How can that be?
- Is it okay to be different?
- Do you think there might be other mislabeled crayons? Why?

Week 2

Judgement and Truth

2:2 *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!*

Alexander T. Pig says that “if cheeseburgers were cute, folks would probably think **you** were Big and Bad, too.” The wolf blames the fact that he’s being jailed for two reasons: the fact that nature arranged it so that wolves eat animals most people think are cute: bunnies and such; *and* that people (and pigs) think wolves are mean and vicious.

- **Why do wolves get a bad reputation?**
- **Who decides to label them bad?**

Imagine you are a wolf. You eat bunnies for breakfast and chipmunks for lunch:

- **Would you have found the wolf in this story guilty? Why or why not?**
- **Is it fair to have the wolf tried by a jury of pigs? Of people? Why or why not?**
- **Is something *always* true? Can the truth change?**
- How can you tell if he’s being a good wolf or a bad wolf?
- Are the pigs being fair to the wolf? If the wolf being fair to the pigs? How so?

The wolf claims he was framed.

- How would you decide if he’s telling the truth?
- How do you decide what to believe?
- What questions would you ask the wolf?

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- Are the Wolf and Red the same or different? How so?
 - What if someone labeled you something you are not. What would you do?
 - What is justice?

Week 3
Empathy and Community

3:1 *Last Stop on Market Street*

CJ unwillingly accompanies his grandmother on a bus through streets that he perceives to be dirty and unpleasant. He is unhappy that he does not have the possessions that his friends have. His grandmother quells his complaints by pointing out positive things like the trees and the music made by a bus passenger playing the guitar. When CJ and his Nana arrive at their destination, we find out that they have journeyed to a soup kitchen where they will serve others who are less fortunate than they are. Nan is teaching CJ (and the reader) valuable lessons on the ability we all have to help others (even when we may not have much ourselves) and the happiness that service can bring.

- When CJ's Nana tells him that the big tree is drinking rainwater through a straw, is she lying to him? If not, what does she mean? Why do you think Nana looks at the situations in this way?
- CJ wishes they had a car. But riding the bus gives CJ lots of interesting experiences. Name one experience CJ has on the bus and explain what is important about it.
- When they get off the bus, CJ asks Nana why the neighborhood is so dirty. What did you think of her response?
- Why do you think CJ feels so negatively about everything in the story? Should CJ make a better effort to be positive? Is there anything else he can do about the things he doesn't like?
- CJ and Nana work at a soup kitchen. Why do they do that? Is it something that all of us should do? Why or why not?
- Why do you think CJ says he's glad they came even though earlier he was upset that he couldn't be playing like the other kids? How would you feel if you were working instead of playing?
- CJ and his Nana do not seem to be wealthy, but they are helping people who are poorer than they are. In what ways can we help people that do not cost any money?

CJ wonders why he and his Nana don't have a car, but Nana points out that they have a bus that breathes fire with a driver, Mr. Dennis, who always has a trick for CJ. When CJ wishes for an iPod, his Nana points out that he has the real thing right in front of him, a man playing guitar.

- Can you look at different situations in different ways? What are some examples?
- How would you help someone else see things differently? How would you change someone else's mind?

Nana says that "some people watch the world with their ears." The blind man responds "That's a fact. Their noses too."

- What are some other ways you could "watch" the world? What might you notice if you couldn't see? What about if you couldn't hear?
- What is your favorite way to "watch" the world?

Look at the picture on the last page. Nana and CJ take the bus in order to serve food.

- Is it okay to change your mind? Why or why not?
- Is it more important to help yourself, help your family, help your society, or help the world? Why?

Week 3

Empathy and Community

3:2 *Going Home*

Carlos's parents have lived in the US for years, yet when they say "home" they mean their village in Mexico. And it's clear that one day they will move back to that village to live.

- **Do you think that Carlos will go with them when they do? Why or why not? What in the book make you think that?**

Carlos's mother says, "Home is here, but it is there, too."

- **What do you think she means?**
- What about for Carlos, where would he say his home is?
- Can home be more than one place? Why?

In the village, Carlos and Dolores watch their parents dance; there is no music, but the parents dance in the dark, empty street. Carlos notices their mother "has forgotten about her sore shoulders," and Dolores notices their father "has forgotten about his bad knees." This seems like a new way for Carlos and Dolores to see their parents.

- **What do you think Carlos and Dolores learn when they see their parents dance? Why?**
- **Have you ever seen things differently after a new experience?** If so, what do you think changed?

In the village relatives say that it was wise for the parents to go to the US for the opportunities. Carlos writes that he's "beginning to understand something."

- What do you think Carlos is beginning to understand?
- Have you ever thought of things differently after learning something new?

Carlos's parents say that they stay in the US "for the opportunities." Yet, Dolores doesn't see the parents "getting many of these wonderful opportunities."

- What do you think the opportunities are?
- Who do you think will take advantage of those opportunities? Why do you think that?
- How do you think Carlos thinks about his future now that he knows his parents traveled to the US for the opportunities for their children?

Week 3

Empathy and Community

3:3 *Snapsy the Alligator (Did Not Ask to Be in This Book)*

Snapsy, an alligator, is having a normal day when, for some reason, a narrator (a chicken!) decides to make the story more interesting. How does Snapsy react to having his day described by a pesky chicken?

THEMES (for reference only):

- Conflict resolution
- Independence
- Individuality
- Friendship
- Ontological gap between fiction and reality

QUESTIONS

The chicken is determined to describe Snapsy's activities, narrating his every move.

- Why do you think the chicken decided to narrate Snapsy's story?
- If you could narrate someone's story, whose story would you tell? Why?
- If someone were to narrate your day, what would that person say?

Snapsy the alligator shops at a grocery store and arranges a party for his friends.

- Do you think this is how most alligators act? Who decides?
- Have you ever met someone new who seemed strange to you? What happened?
- How are you different than others?

Snapsy eventually invites the pesky chicken to the party.

- Do you think Snapsy and the chicken will now be friends? Why or why not?
- How do you make new friends?

Week 4

Friends and Family

4:1 *Julius the Baby of the World*

Sometimes what makes a book interesting is that we can see ourselves in one of the characters. Or we see people we know in one of the characters:

- **Does anyone in *Julius the Baby of the World* remind you of yourself or of someone you know? Who and why?**
- A brother or sister maybe?
- Or one of your children?

Before Julius is born, Lilly thinks he is “one of us” and treats him well. Then she decides he is not “one of us” (see picture Lilly paints of “My Entire Complete Family” for example) and she treats him badly. Then suddenly, Lilly thinks Julius is “one of us” again (that is, part of the family) and the way she treats him changes:

- **Before Julius is born, Lilly loves him. What changed?**
- What do you think “one of us” means?
- Do you treat people differently whether they are “one of us” or not?
- Do other people do that? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
- Is it always a good thing or a bad thing? Sometimes? Why?

After Lilly heard Cousin Garland say the same terrible things she said about Julius, Lilly changed her opinion of her little brother:

- **Can opinions change? Why?**
- Did baby Julius change, or did Lilly change? How can you tell?

Week 4

Friends and Family

4:2 *Flop to the Top*

[Try asking adult participants and/or other team members to assist in reading this text aloud.]

How is this story like *Julius the Baby of the World*?

The crowds don't seem to know Wilbur's name. They call him "Floppy Dog."

- **Remember Red, the crayon who is really blue? What do you think is important about being called your name?**
- Do you and your family share a name? Is sharing a name what makes you a family?
- Do you treat people outside your family differently than you treat people in your family? Why?

Wanda says "It's not fun if I'm not the star" and "Wilbur, you are not cool...You are not funny...I don't like your face...You are a BAD DOG."

- **Why does Wanda say these things? Does she mean what she says? Why or why not?**
- **Have you ever done that? Why?**

After Wilbur eats the contract and goes home, Wanda says "Wilbur, I miss you."

- **What do you think changes for her? Why is her opinion of Wilbur different?**
- How is Wanda different after Wilbur goes home?

Wanda says "I was BORN to be a star." Later, the crowd screams to Wilbur "Floppy Dog, you were born to be a star!"

- **Would you want to be famous? Why or why not?**
- **What changes when people become famous?**
- Do you think people (or dogs) are born with particular talents? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to be a star?
- What does Wilbur have that Wanda lacks?

Why do you think the book's title is *Flop to the Top!* when the story is mostly about Wanda?

[PROMPT: Could this story be about how Wilbur finally gets Wanda's attention, and is then at the top of her "list?"]

- **What's important in being a friend?**

Week 5

Courage and Bravery

5:1 *The Proudest Blue*

Remember when Asiya remembers her Mama saying: *“Don’t carry around the hurtful words that others say. Drop them. They are not yours to keep. They belong only to those who said them.”*

- **What does Asiya’s mother mean?**

On Asiya’s first day of hijab, her younger sister Faizah looks forward to *her* first day of hijab – a significant day for both. But, on this important day, other kids whisper, laugh, and yell. Asiya remembers her mother’s words, not to “carry around the hurtful words that others say. Drop them. They are not yours to keep,” while Faizah focuses on what Asiya’s hijab means to her, “the ocean waving to the sky... always there, strong and friendly.” These are different ways of dealing with bullying.

- **What does it mean to be brave?**
- **How was Asiya brave?**
- **How was Faizah brave?**

Have you ever heard the expression ***own your words***? It seems like Asiya’s mother is saying ***not to own other’s words***.

- **Do you think that is good advice? Why or why not?**

Week 5

Courage and Bravery

5:2 *Abiyoyo*

Do you think the townspeople were right to run off the boy and his father? (PROMPT: Well, would YOU want someone annoying around all the time, playing tricks on you?)

- **Why are there so many stories about overcoming large monsters?**
- **What do they teach us about bravery?**

Think back to the end of the story. The man and the boy were welcomed back; everyone loves them for making the monster disappear:

- **Do you think the man will now stop playing his silly tricks on his neighbors? If he doesn't, do you think in a week, a month, a year, the townspeople will still be glad to have him around? Why or why not?**

There are lots of stories about people being brave when they face monsters or giants or criminals or wild animals or enemy soldiers or evil gods and dragons. The people are brave in the face of deadly danger.

- **Are there other kinds of bravery?**
- Can you think of any examples?
- Is a soldier's bravery different from Asiyah's in *The Proudest Blue*? How so?

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- Of the people in the two stories read today, who do you think showed the most courage? Why?
 - Are there things you'd like to do but are afraid to try?
 - What does it mean to be brave?
 - Can you both be brave and scared at the same time? Why or why not?
 - What do you *need* to be brave?
 - Who's the bravest person – real person – you know? Why do you think that? Who's the bravest person you ever heard of? Why do you think that?

Week 6

Cleverness and Imagination

6:1 *Chato's Kitchen*

The mice risked their safety going to Chato the cat's house for dinner, but they also said that they thought Chato seemed *muy simpatico* (very nice):

- **Would you have gone over to Chato's for dinner? Why or why not?**

Chato and Novio Boy had plans to eat the mice. But because Chorizo the dog joined them for dinner, the cats changed their minds. Try to imagine the next day.

- **What do you think happened after dinner?**

If a dog can be friends with a family of mice, can two cats be friends with a dog? How do you decide who to be friends with? Would it be better to have friends who are different from each other or all the same? Why?

- **Who is clever, and why?**
- **Do you have to use your imagination to be clever? Why?**
- Are cleverness and smarts the same thing?

Pretend you could choose to be one of the characters in this story.

- Which character would you choose to be? Why?
- Is one character better than the others? How so?

Week 6

Cleverness and Imagination

6:2 *Doctor De Soto*

Doctor De Soto gets in trouble when he tries to do a good deed, risking his own safety to help the fox in pain.

- **Is it important to face challenges? Why or why not?**
- Should he have done that? Why or why not?
- Would you have helped the fox? Why or why not?
- The fox notices that it's not very nice to eat a creature that relieved him of pain, but he still tempted to eat the mice because they will taste good. If the fox asked you for advice about what he should do, what would you say?

By the end of his first time in the dentist's chair, Doctor De Soto and his wife are pretty sure the fox will try to eat them.

- Why then do they let him back?
- Is Doctor De Soto's reason for letting him come back a good one? Why or why not?

In both of these stories we've seen mice outsmart much larger, dangerous animals.

- Why do you think stories about little people (or mice!) overcoming stronger ones by out-thinking them are so popular? Why do people like them so much?
- Did the De Soto's or the family of mice gain anything by outsmarting the bigger animals? If so, what?
- If you had to choose, would you rather be physically weak but very smart or very powerful but not too bright? Why?