

# THE HAPPY LION

## THE HAPPY LION

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Themes: Friendship/French Culture/Zoos

Grade Level: PreK – 2

Running time: 8 minutes

## SUMMARY

The setting for THE HAPPY LION is a small town in France where a lion lives happily in the town zoo. Each day passersby say "bonjour," "good day" to the lion, and each evening, "au revoir," "goodbye." The town band plays in the zoo every Sunday and the lion is very happy and content in his familiar surroundings. One morning, the zoo keeper forgets to close the door to the lion's house. The lion leaves the zoo and walks toward the center of town.

The people who cheerfully waved to the lion when he was safely behind the zoo walls are now terrified to see him loose and roaming the streets. When the lion comes upon a marching band playing through the town's main streets, the band disperses in chaos, people running here, there, and everywhere. This is all very puzzling to the lion! Finally, Francois, the Zoo Keeper's son, approaches the lion and offers to walk him back to the zoo. The lion and his new best friend, Francois, happily walk through the streets of the town until they reach the zoo, safe and sound.

## OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about French culture
- Children will explore how information can reduce fears
- Children will investigate the idea that "the grass is always greener."

## BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book THE HAPPY LION with children. Locate France on a map. Then locate where the children live.

Talk with children about visits they may have taken to zoos. Ask:

- What kinds of animals did you see there?
- Which were your favorites? Why?
- How were the animals cared for in the zoo?

Provide children with long lengths of string, construction paper, crayons and scissors. Have children draw and cut out zoo animals. Label the drawings. Then attach lengths of string to each animal cut-out, and tie them to coat hangers to make zoo mobiles. Hang the mobiles from the classroom ceiling.

Show children photographs and/or illustrations of France. As children study the pictures, discuss the similarities and differences between the homes, shops, streets, and landscapes of the country as compared to our own. Introduce some French words to children, including "bonjour" and "au revoir."

## AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the way the lion felt when the people reacted to him fearfully. Ask:

- Why do you think the townspeople were so afraid when they saw the lion walking the streets?
- How would you feel if you saw a lion walking toward you in your neighborhood?
- Why wasn't Francois afraid of the lion?
- If Francois didn't know that this was the lion from the zoo, do you think he would have been afraid too?
- How does having information about something help you not to feel afraid?
- What things are you afraid of?
- What might help you feel better about these things?

As you talk, emphasize to children that asking questions, looking for information in books and talking to adults are all important ways of finding things out.

Have children recall how the lion felt at the beginning of the story, when he was walking through the town, and when he was back home again. Help children grapple with the idea that "the grass is always greener: by participating in a performance involving a king, his subjects, and the townspeople. Encourage the "townspeople" to make demands of the "king" and the "king" in turn, to make demands of his "staff." When the play is over, ask children:

- How would you feel about being a king after being involved in this play?
  - What would be the most fun about being the king?
  - What would be difficult?
  - What would you miss about being an ordinary person?
- As children discuss these questions, help them to see that what appears to be better than what is right at hand may, in reality, not be the case.

Talk with children about the things they enjoy about their own homes, school, friends, family, etc. As children describe these things, help them to take note of all those aspects of their lives that make them feel happy. Explain that sometimes we are so busy thinking about things we don't like, or about what is not going as we think it should, that we forget to think about the wonderful things in our lives. Later, have children write about those things in their lives that make them happy.

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