

THE STORY ABOUT PING

The Story About Ping

By Helena L Barnum & Kurt Wiese (Viking)

Themes: Chinese Culture/ Individuality, Abandonment

Grade Level: Pre-K-2

Running Time: 10 Minutes, iconographic

SUMMARY

The setting for THE STORY ABOUT PING is the Yangtze river in China. A little duck named Ping lives on a boat on the river with his many family members including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and forty-two cousins. Every morning, Ping and his family leave the boat to hunt for food, and every evening they return. The last duck onto the boat gets a spanking, so Ping always tries not to be last.

One day, Ping realizes that he will be the last one on the boat, and so, rather than getting spanked, he hides in the tall grasses by the river all night. When he tries to return to the boat in the morning, the boat is nowhere in sight. Eventually, Ping notices that a small boy has fallen off a houseboat. The boy holds onto Ping when his family pulls him back onto the boat. The boy's father traps Ping in a basket so that they can cook him for dinner later. However, before this can happen, the boy frees Ping from the basket and helps him back into the river. The end of the story finds Ping returning to his family –even though he is the last one on the boat that day and must suffer the "last one on board" spanking.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about Chinese culture.
- Children will explore individual differences.
- Children will investigate family relationships and separation from their families.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book THE STORY ABOUT PING with children. Explain to children that one of China's longest rivers, the Yangtze river, is the setting for the film they are about to see. Locate China and the Yangtze river on a map.

Talk with children about Chinese culture, including occupations, life styles, clothing, education, etc. Invite a speaker to the classroom who may be an expert, or have some valuable information to share, regarding Chinese culture.

Talk with children about what you feel is special and unique about each and every one of them. Emphasize to children that they all have different traits and characteristics, and that these differences make it very interesting and exciting to get to know one another. Then explain that Ping has his own very unique set of characteristics. Do a character study of Ping.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the different kinds of boats they saw moving up and down the Yangtze river in the film. Ask:

- Why do you suppose Ping thinks that the boats have eyes?

Supply manila construction paper, crayons, and scissors that children can use to create one of the boats from the story (houseboat, raft boat, fishing boat, etc.). Have children attach black construction paper to the fronts of their boats in order to give the boats eyes. Later, have children imagine that these boats are also capable of talking and create stories about their talking boats. Help children by offering them questions to consider such as:

- What kind of things would your boat think about?
- What kind of work would your boat do all day?

- Who are the people that would be on your boat?

Help children appreciate the individuality of their classmates. Give each child in the class an opportunity to interview one of his/her classmates and then introduce the child to the group. Have children describe their classmates' physical characteristics, their personalities, the ways they like to spend their free time, etc. Help children learn even more about their classmates by allowing time for them to ask questions of the children after the introductions have been made.

Discuss the idea of being separated from loved ones.

- Has any one of the children ever gotten lost – on the beach, at the shopping mall?
- How did he/she feel?
- How does Ping Feel?

Discuss with the children the feeling of hopelessness when they get lost, and how good it feels to be reunited. Talk about common sense rules when one gets lost.

Other videos and films about Chinese culture available from Weston Woods include:

THE FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS written by Claire Huchet Bishop & illustrated by Kurt Wiese

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