

The Story About Ping

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ABOUT THE STORY

Ping, a young duckling, does not want to be spanked for being the last in his family to return home to their boat on the Yangtze River. Instead, he remains on the water for the evening. When the boat sails downstream, Ping is forced to fend for himself, and narrowly escapes becoming a duck dinner – a fate he gladly exchanges for a spanking.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjorie Flack has always enjoyed making up stories. *The Story About Ping* developed when she became interested in ducks while writing another picture book, *Angus and the Ducks*. She is also the author of *The Boats on the River*, a Caldecott Honor Book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kurt Wiese has long been noted as an author and illustrator of children's books. His book *You Can Write Chinese* was a Caldecott Honor Book.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children to think of a time when they were lost for something. Did they get into trouble? Then explain that the book they will read is about a little duck who is in very big trouble for being last.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why doesn't Ping want to be last to board the boat?"
- "What does Ping do when he is last?"
- "What do the ringed birds do?"
- "Why does the boy capture Ping?"
- "Why do you think the boy lets Ping go?" (*Draw conclusions*)
- "Why does Ping decide to board his own boat, even though he is last?" (*Draw conclusions*)
- "How do you think that Ping feels when he is back with his family?" (*Make inferences*)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the story on the chalkboard. Ask volunteers to give a definition for each word, or help children find definitions in a dictionary. Then ask children to use each word in a sentence.

wise pale swooped
tender snatched pleasant

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: The Yangtze River

Explain to children that the Yangtze River is in China. Help them locate the river on a map. Then have children work in small groups to create their own maps of China, with the Yangtze River and major cities labeled.

Math: Numbers of Ducks

On the first page of the story, the author tells how many brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins Ping has. Have children add the number of these relatives, plus Ping and his mother and father, to find out how many ducks in all live on the wise-eyed boat.

Science: Fishing Birds

The fishing birds that Ping sees are probably cormorants. Have children find out more about cormorants by looking in books about birds or in an encyclopedia. Ask each child to write down two facts about cormorants to share with the rest of the class.

Health: Chinese Dishes

Ping eats the crumbs of rice cakes, and the Boy's family plans to make him into a duck dinner with rice. Both of these are common Chinese dishes. Ask children to look in Chinese cookbooks for recipes that sound interesting. They can copy a recipe they think they might like. Explain any unfamiliar ingredients and cooking techniques to them. Then you can collect recipes in a class Chinese cookbook.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Kinds of Ducks

Ping is a domestic duck, but there are many kinds of interesting wild ducks. Have children search the Internet using the keyword *ducks* to find examples of wild ducks. They can write down a description of one duck they find interesting and, if possible, print out a picture of the duck to show to the class.