

Episode 1.11 The Little Prince and Me

Angourie (host)

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which this work was developed and is presented. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

[ukulele theme music]

Angourie (host)

Hello there, and welcome to The Community Library. I'm your host, Angourie Rice.

This week, you might notice that I don't have a guest with me. Usually for these main episodes where I discuss a book, I bring in a guest. Unfortunately the guest that I had for this book couldn't do it. We tried planning, we tried rescheduling but it just ended up being too hard. This friend is at university at the moment, and it's a really stressful time, I know they're coming up to exams. So, unfortunately, it's just me today, talking about *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry all by myself.

But, the good and exciting thing about it just being me is that I can connect with the audience more! So I asked you to write in suggestions of what to talk about and questions about *The Little Prince*, and you guys came through with some really interesting stuff, so I'm excited to address some of that in my discussion.

The first segment in this episode is called Sparknotes Says, and this is where I read the blurb and give you a general overview of the story. So, I have the Egmont edition of *The Little Prince*, and this edition is translated by Katherine Woods, but I know that there are multiple translations out there, but one would hope that the general meaning stays the same across all of the different translations, maybe just the wording's a bit different. So, for now, I'm just gonna read the blurb on my copy: "A pilot forced to land in the Sahara meets a little prince. The wise and enchanting stories the prince tells of his own planet with its three volcanoes and a haughty flower are unforgettable. A strange and wonderful parable for all ages, with superb illustrations by the author."

So this doesn't give us much about the story, and I think that that's kind of appropriate for the format in which this story is told. I would say that this story is actually more of a fable. It's not really about plot. I would argue that the characters are actually representations of lessons and every situation that happens in the plot, there is something to be learned from that. So I would say that this story is actually kind of a fable, or a fairy tale, rather than an actual adventure story. So, I think I understand why the blurb is so short and not very descriptive, but it does give us the setup for the story. So, a pilot is in the desert and their plane is broken, and a little prince comes along and tells the pilot stories about his life and how he has journeyed from his own planet to earth. Along the way, the prince teaches the narrator lessons, and teaches the narrator how to love, essentially. Now, many people, when I asked for questions and suggestions, asked me if I had seen the film. There was a Netflix film version that came out in 2015, but I haven't watched the film. I might watch it later, and I think that would make for an interesting episode; comparing the film and the book. So no, I haven't seen the film, so I can't bring that into the discussion, unfortunately.

Let's move on to the next segment: Judging a Book by its Cover. So, in this segment I talk about the materiality of the book, and what it looks like, how it feels, and what the experience is like to read it, and how that affects the story. One thing I wanna bring up about the cover and the way that the book looks in general, is the illustrations. So, the illustrations are done by the author, and they're in this really unique style where they're very simple. The people, especially, are very, very simply drawn. On my cover, which I think is the most common cover that I've seen; it's the little prince standing on his planet with his two volcanoes and a few flowers, and he's looking out into space and you can see other planets and stars in space. Something I wanna bring up, though, is that the space is actually white. Like, it's very blank, because all of the illustrations, even though the prince is on his planet in space and it should be black and dark and starry, it's actually this clean, white space around him with yellow stars. Even when the characters are not in space, and the illustrations show something that's, ah, on land, or on the ground, the sky isn't painted blue or orange for a sunset. Everything is floating in this blank, empty space. I wonder if that was a conscious choice, or if that was just a by-product of needing for the page to be white so that you have black text on it. So I'm not sure, but I think that for the purpose of someone reading the book and looking at it, it makes it seem very empty. I think it also allows the reader to fill in the blank themselves, which I really like.

I also think it makes it look really sad, because if you take the illustrations that are in black and white – 'cause some are in black and white, some are in colour – if you take the ones that are in black and white, it suddenly looks like this white abyss that just stretches out into nowhere, and it's really blank and empty and kind of sad. I think it makes me feel sad. There's an illustration right at the very, very end of just the plains in the desert and one single star in the sky. It's in black and white. Because it's in black and white, all you can see on the page is two grey lines, and one star in the sky. For me, it's fascinating that two grey lines and one star shape can paint a whole landscape; you know where you are, you know what you're looking at. But because of this absence of colour, and the absence of detail, and the absence of the black sky and the milky way, it makes it really sad and empty.

I think this is such an interesting contrast with the story, which encourages childlike wonder and amusement, and is quite whimsical, but these black and white illustrations just make you feel sad – or at least they make me feel sad. So what I wonder is if it's showing two sides to life. It's showing that you can be whimsical and happy and you can make friends and feel love, but at the same time, you're gonna feel sadness, and you're gonna feel upset. Maybe it's creating a contrast between the two.

Another thing about the illustrations is that they're done by the author. I think this is really important, because the illustrations are actually part of the story-telling. Sometimes when you have a picture book, and you have a separate author and illustrator, you can kind of tell that they're more separate, and the pictures just accompany the words for the purpose of making it a picture book. Whereas in *The Little Prince*, I feel that the illustrations and the text are so interlinked, because the author references the pictures. The book is told from the perspective of the pilot, but it is told in a way that frames the story around the present day. So, the narrator is saying: "I remember when I first met the little prince," and then you kind of go back in time. You learn about the story of the prince. So it's framed in this way that you know it's in the past, and you know that the pilot is writing this story down currently – as you're reading it, that's the way that it feels. And the author knows that you're reading it, as well, and the author references you, the reader. I really like that, and it also means that the author references the text. In the story, the little prince tells the narrator about baobabs, and how baobabs are huge trees that will take over one's planet if

they grow to a big enough size. There's a full-page illustration of the baobabs taking over this little planet, and it's a beautiful, full-page, colour illustration. Then, in the text, the author writes, quote: "Perhaps you will ask me: why are there no other drawings in this book as magnificent and impressive as this drawing of the baobabs?" Context aside – it doesn't really matter that he's talking about the baobabs right here – I think what matters, ah, in the point that I'm trying to make, is that the author is referencing his own illustrations. The author / narrator is so aware that there is a reader reading this book. I think that for a kids' book, this is really great, because it means that the kid can be more connected with it, and can feel like the author is talking to them. And I referenced this as well in the *Neverending Story* episode; the way that Michael Ende just envelopes the reader in the world, because you feel like you are a part of the story. And I think Antoine de Saint-Exupéry does this as well, he envelopes the reader, and the reader is actually integral to how the story is told. I think that is really fascinating – not only for a child, 'cause it makes them feel included, but also for adults. That, when you're reading it, you are forced to become the child that he is telling the story to.

I also really love how the illustrations illustrate not only real things that the narrator is talking about, but also imaginary things. So there's a point in the book, again, where they're talking about the baobabs, and there's this quote here, quote: "I pointed out to the little prince that baobabs were not little bushes, but, on the contrary, trees as big as castles, and that even if you took a whole herd of elephants away with him, the herd would not eat up one single baobab." End quote. So at the very bottom corner of the page there is a very cute drawing of a tiny planet with ten or so elephants stacked on top of it. So, what I think is significant about this illustration is that it's actually not something that's happening in the text, but it's still visualised for you. And, I think this corresponds to what the whole book is about, which is seeing beyond what is real, and seeing beyond what you can touch and what is tangible, and what is considered a physical solid object in the world. It's about learning to see with your heart, and learning to imagine. So, what I love about these illustrations is that they blur the line between what's real and what's not. You can see in the illustration of the elephants here that this is actually not something that has happened in the text, nor will it ever happen in the text, but the author is still visualising them for you, because it's a funny picture to draw. In that way, it's demonstrating that what people talk about in the text, and what people imagine in the text, can be just as real as what they actually do in the story, which I think really complements the moral of the whole story.

My next segment is called *Where in the World*, and in this segment I will talk about everything to do with where the story is set, and how that influences the story-telling. This story kind of has multiple settings, but it's all to do with planets and space, and I love that. I used to be obsessed with astronomy, and I wanted to be an astronaut, and I wanted to go to space, so I still love that whole space vibe, which the book definitely has. So, what I think is really fascinating about this story is that we go into a story, and into a story, and into a story, and then we come all the way back out again. So, we start off with the narrator speaking and telling us the story of the little prince. Then, we go into the story of how the narrator met the little prince, and this is set in the Sahara desert. And I want to talk about this setting because I think it's really important. When we think about our world, the planet, we think of it as very inhabited, right? We have seven billion people on this earth. We think of cities, we think of areas where there are lots and lots of people, and interesting terrain, and we have mountains, and we have valleys, and we have big tall skyscrapers. What I think is really interesting about the setting of the Sahara desert is that it takes all that away. In terms of setting, it seems like a clean slate, because there are no people, it's all

very flat, so there are no mountains, there are no tall buildings. If you stand in one spot, you can look all the way to the end of the horizon. Now, I don't know if this is true, I have never been to the Sahara desert, however, that is the way that it's presented to us in the book, and we can tell that from the drawings, as well. I think that the setting of the Sahara desert is really important because it makes it very similar to the planets that the little prince visits. So, the little prince's planet is so small that he can walk around it in five minutes. And every planet that he goes to before he lands on earth is very, very tiny – so tiny, that one of the planets has a sunset every single minute. Also, all of these planets that we see are pretty much smooth. That's why I think that the Sahara desert is a really important parallel to these little planets, because it makes it comparable to the rest of the planets, and it means that we're still following the same pattern – or the prince is still following the same pattern of visiting a planet, there's not much on it, there's just one person and the prince has to interact with this person, and that's the prince's experience of the planet. By setting it in the Sahara desert in this landscape, it makes planet earth the seventh planet in the pattern that the prince is following.

So, we have the setting of the Sahara desert, which is kind of, like, the second layer of story, I would say. Then, after the Sahara desert, we go into the little prince's story. This story has multiple settings, but they're all set on planets. I want to talk about the six planets that the prince visits before he comes to earth, but I will do that a little bit later in our characters section.

I think my main point about setting is that I love how insular Antoine de Saint-Exupéry makes the story, because I think it allows you to focus on the morals and the lessons to be learned in the story. It can easily feel really overwhelming, that the prince ventures to seven planets, and one of them is planet earth, and planet earth is huge, and there's so much stuff on it. But, in the context of the story, the way he frames it, it's very simple. And I think that that's actually really important for telling this story, because when you're put in an environment where it's almost like a clean slate, you have to force yourself to imagine, and to see beyond what's right in front of you, and that's why I think that the setting of a desert really lends itself to what the book is trying to say.

Let's move on to the characters. We have a few main characters in this story, and a few very important characters, but before I get into that, I actually want to mention perspective, because I think it's really important in this book, and I think it's so fascinating, perspective. This book is told from first person perspective. We don't know who this first person is. We don't know their gender, we don't know their age, we don't know where they're from. We don't know who they are; we don't even know their name, we just know that they're a pilot. I think a lot of people assume that the narrator is a man, and that the narrator is actually Antoine de Saint-Exupéry himself. But, I also like to think that the narrator can stand in for anyone, and it can stand in for whoever you want it to be. We don't know who they are, and we can assume that it's anyone, and it's anyone who we want it to be.

So, it's told from first person perspective, and throughout most of the book the narrator is talking to us, the reader, and the narrator is explaining: "This is when I met the prince," and "I'm gonna draw a picture for you, now, of the prince, here's what he looked like." But there's actually a point where this changes. So, it's on page 23 of my copy. So, in this little section, they are talking about sunsets, and the prince is saying: "I love the sunset. On my planet, I can just move my chair and watch the sunset over and over again." The narrator says: "Oh, we have to wait for our sunset, because our planet is so big that we have to wait for it to turn." Then, the narrator is talking to us, the reader, we assume. Anyway, it's not in quotation marks, so this is the narrator, quote: "Everybody knows that when it is noon in the United States, the sun is setting over France. If you could fly to France in one minute, you could go straight into the sunset, right from noon."

Unfortunately, France is too far away for that. But your tiny planet, my little prince, all you need to do is move your chair a few steps. You can see the day end and the twilight falling whenever you like. 'One day,' you said to me, 'I saw the sunset forty-four times.' A little later you added: 'You know – one loves the sunset, when one is so sad ..'"

Woah, okay, so this is – ah ... oh my god – why is it so sad? Why does this make me so sad? Ah! Anyway ... So, what I want to note here is not the change in perspective, but the change in who the narrator is talking to. The narrator switches to actually talking to the prince. The narrator is actually saying: "You did this, and you said this, do you remember?" At this point in the book, we don't know what happens to the prince. All we know is that the narrator is telling us the story of when they once knew the little prince. So we can gain an idea that the prince is gone now. We don't know where, we don't know how. And what I love about this little switch in the way that the narrator is telling the story, is that it almost seems for a moment that the narrator is actually not telling the story for us at all, the narrator is telling this story for the prince. It's kind of a love letter to the prince, and maybe even a call to say: "Hey, I miss you, remember all these great times we had together, remember what you taught me?"

I think we can look at this story in two ways. We can look at it as the narrator passing on the prince's wisdom, and the narrator saying: "Here, look, this is what the prince taught me, I want you to learn about this, too." Or, we can look at this story as a thank you letter to the prince, and we can look at it as the narrator saying: "Hey, thank you for everything you taught me, I'm writing it down now because I want to remember it, and I'm so appreciative for that."

In reality, I think that this story is a bit of both. I think maybe the author, like the actual author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, was writing this to possibly to teach children, and to teach adults, even, but I think if we take the character of the narrator, and we look at that role as a character, I think I would argue that that character is writing this book for the prince. And that just seems so beautiful to me! I just love it! I don't know, it just makes me so emotional, jeez! This is why I need someone else here – it's to make sure I don't cry all the time.

Let's move on to the characters. So, I've separated the characters into four sections. The first one is the prince, of course. The prince is naïve, and beautiful, and young, and innocent, and he's not very good at communicating, and I think that this is a really fascinating part of his character. We see this in the story that he tells, we see this in the things that he does; the way that he leaves his flower, the way that he doesn't know how to love her, he doesn't know how to tell her things. But we also see this in the way that he tells the story. There's a quote, the narrator says, quote: "As each day passed I would learn, in our talk, something about the little prince's planet, his departure from it, his journey. The information would come very slowly, as it might chance to fall from his thoughts." End quote. This also shows that the prince is not good at communicating, and I really do think that this is something he learns. So, as much as the prince is teaching us things, he's also learning himself, and we see that through his journey, we see that through the story that he tells himself. What I love about this story is that there's no one character who is the almighty god that must teach everyone, and has all the answers. And there's no one character who's completely innocent and doesn't know anything, and has to learn everything. Everybody learns, and everybody teaches, and I think the prince is one of those characters who has such a profound balance of both, because in his journey of learning – of learning how to love – he teaches us how to love, and he teaches the narrator how to love, and I think that is so, so beautiful. We also don't know how old the prince is, exactly, but, again, if we take it back to the idea that this is a fable, I would argue that he is a representation of childlike innocence.

If we move on to the narrator, which I think I've talked about a lot, but I think that the narrator represents the audience. They don't really have a story themselves, you know? We don't know pretty much anything about them. And the one personal detail that we know about the narrator is from the story that they tell at the beginning about drawing an animal and a snake. I think that this is an important personal story in the way that it's actually very impersonal, because I think everybody can relate to that. The narrator says they were discouraged from drawing, and I think a lot of people can relate to that as well. I think the narrator's story isn't so much about the narrator as it is a reflection of the prince's story, and a vessel and a way to tell and explain the prince's story.

So, it's at this point in the podcast where I bring up the first audience suggestion / question, which is really exciting! So, this is from @tarrekdz on Instagram, and they said: "Who is your favourite character? For me, it's the fox." I think for me, it's actually the flower, and I grouped the flower and the fox together, and I'm gonna talk about them in comparison, 'cause I think that they're both very interesting and I think that they represent very similar things.

So, I would argue that the flower and the fox both represent different stages in the prince's journey to learning how to be in a relationship, or a friendship, and how to cultivate a friendship. So if we take his relationship with the flower, it's raw and pure emotion, and it shows how naïve he is in his relationships, and how he doesn't know how to express himself, or to convey that he loves something. The flower, in return, is also naïve in friendships, and doesn't know how to tell the prince that she loves him. I would say that that's the foundation, that's the first stage of the prince learning how to love. Then if we take the prince's friendship with the fox, this is when the fox is actually more mature than the prince, and the fox knows how to be in a friendship and how to cultivate a friendship. What's really interesting is that this friendship is kind of based on, not necessarily rules, but routine and expectation, whereas the prince's relationship with the flower was just so wild, and they didn't know what to do with their feelings. The fox is all about saying: "Hey, this is how a friendship works, these are the expectations, this is the routine." I think that this is a really productive way for the prince to learn how to be in a friendship, because he has all these feelings, he has so many emotions, and he doesn't know how to express them, and when the fox teaches him how to compartmentalise those feelings, and organise those feelings, and work through them, and express them, that's how he can be in a proper friendship. I think that both the fox and the flower represent very similar things. They're representations for friendship and love. That is something that you can't touch, that you can't see, but it's something that the prince learns to appreciate, and learns how to express.

One thing I also wanna bring up is the stereotypes that we think about when we think about foxes and flowers. The flower in the story is vain, and cruel, and she's kind of mean, not gonna lie, she's a bit mean. But when we think about the fox in the book, the fox is actually quite tender, and kind, and willing to teach the prince, and willing to forge a friendship. If we think about how foxes are represented in culture today, foxes are sly, they're cunning, they're twisted, and flowers are beautiful, and pretty, and nice, and something you give to people when you like them. I really think it's fascinating how these roles are swapped in the story. I think possibly it means that you shouldn't buy into the stereotypes that you've been taught. Perhaps, what this book is saying, is that: "Hey, you should look beyond what someone else tells you about something, and you'll find what that individual is like."

Now, I'm gonna move on to talking about the six planets. So, someone on Instagram @abhi_satija says: "The innocence of the prince and the characters he meets on the journey to the earth." So journeying from his own planet, the prince lands on six others. The first one he comes to is

occupied by a king, the second one is occupied by a conceited man, the third is occupied by someone who drinks alcohol all the time, the fourth is occupied by a businessman who is counting the stars in order to own them, the fifth is occupied by a lamplighter, and the sixth is occupied by a geographer.

The scene with the king is really interesting because the king wants to be simultaneously liked and obeyed. And it's this strange balance of likeability and control, and the king wants to have both. So, he wants to exercise power over people, but he also wants them to like him. And it's this very odd paradox, and the prince really doesn't like it and finds it a bit weird. And so then we come to the alcoholic who just drinks to forget and doesn't want to talk to the prince and just wants to forget everything. And the businessman is counting the stars so that he can own them. So he is so obsessed with counting that he has no time to talk to the prince, he's just saying: "I have to count the stars because I have to own them, and then once I own all the stars I will be the richest person in the universe." Also we have the conceited man, the man who just thinks about himself all the time, and he orders the prince to clap for him because he's so conceited.

I think what's really interesting about these four characters is that they all exhibit different forms of selfishness, and the prince notices this as well, because the prince notices this when he comes to the fifth planet, which is occupied by a lamplighter. The prince remarks that this is the only person doing something worthwhile, because he's not thinking about himself. But at the same time, he is also lighting a lamp every minute and un-lighting it every other minute because his planet turns around so quickly that it's night time for only thirty seconds or something. And he's only doing this out of custom, nobody's telling him to do it, he just knows that he has to. So the prince likes that he's not doing something for himself, but again, he thinks it's absurd that he's following this custom that nobody is implementing.

So I think all of these planets have some sort of odd paradox in them, and they're also about characters following tradition, or characters following an idea for almost no reason whatsoever, it's just the way that things are done. I think that the prince is the person to question that and to say: "Hang on, but why do we do these things?" you know; "Why do we want to own things and be rich, if owning the stars will get us absolutely nothing." I think each of the planets has this lesson that they teach the prince.

The sixth planet is also really interesting because it's occupied by a geographer, who I would argue is – is also not doing something for themselves, you know, he is documenting the universe, and mountains, and – and planets, and rivers, and valleys. But he's also deciding what's important and what isn't. So when the prince says: "I have a flower on my planet, is the flower on your map," the geographer says: "No, because I only record things that are gonna be there for hundreds of years, and your flower is going to die." So, I think it's also really interesting that this geographer is following custom. This geographer is determining what is important and what isn't. What's important to the prince is his flower, because he loves – he loves his flower! And the prince doesn't care about the mountains that are gonna be there for hundreds of years, he just cares about his flower. But, because of custom, because of the way things are done, the geographer doesn't care about his flower, and I think that that's – that's one of the first steps for the prince in recognising what is actually important in this world. I think the geographer helps him determine that love and friendship is the most important thing.

So now we're gonna move on to our first theme, which is Adults vs. Children. This came up a lot, because I think in the world of *The Little Prince*, there is a dichotomy. We have grown-ups, and we have children, and there is nobody in-between, and there is also this idea that adults are close-minded, they think in a very rigid way, and they are obsessed with logic, and numbers, and what

you can touch and hold, and what is right in front of you and material. On the opposite end, we have children, who are open-minded, and like imagination, and can see beyond what is right in front of them. I think that this is a really interesting way of viewing the world, because it essentially works in absolutes. You just have grown-ups, who are close-minded, and you have children, who are open-minded. And in the world of *The Little Prince*, there's nothing in-between. First of all, I don't think this is actually a representation of the world. I think it's possibly a view on the world that has been taken to the extreme for the purpose of teaching a lesson, and that's actually kind of what fables do. They take an attitude or an idea, and they blow it up into a life-and-death scenario, and that's how they teach.

What the prince essentially argues for is seeing with one's heart, and he argues for the importance of relationships, and friendships, and love. I think the narrator believes that adults don't feel this. We see this when the narrator says, quote: "It is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them", meaning adults, end quote. So I think that this really shows how, you know, children are seen as wise, and all-knowing, and open-minded, and imaginative, and free, but because of custom, they're not the ones who have the power in the world. I think this book can teach both children and adults something. It might teach children that being open-minded and imaginative is awesome, and you should keep doing that, and it might teach adults to be a little more open-minded and imaginative.

@ydoeslifeexist on Twitter says: "Do you feel like you see less beauty in the world as you age, or more of it?" I put this in this section because I think the general idea that *The Little Prince* argues for is that when you're a child, you see everything, and as you get older, your vision narrows, and narrows, and narrows until you are only focussed on one thing, and that is not necessarily the most important thing. So what I think the book is saying, is that yes, when you're an adult you see less beauty in the world. I think for me personally, it's a bit of both, which is, like, such an annoying answer. But, when I was younger I think I noticed some things that I don't notice now, but now that I'm older, there are other things that I notice that I didn't when I was younger, if that makes sense. So I think it's a bit of both – I think it balances out eventually.

Something, again to do with this idea of – of adults vs. children, is that adults are represented by figures and by numbers and maths, whereas children are represented by illustrations and imagination and description. The book tells us this very explicitly in this passage here, quote: "Grown-ups love figures. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you: 'What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?' Instead, they demand: 'How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?' Only from these figures do they think they have learnt anything about them." These opposite and these absolutes are so interesting, and I do think that they serve the story because it's not about blurred lines. It's not about a little bit of this, a little bit of that, somewhere in the middle, in a grey area. It's about love and indifference, or ignorance. I think that teaching a story, or teaching a lesson with absolutes is possibly a more effective way to do it, at least if you're appealing to an audience of children.

@bebetto_23 on Twitter asks: "What are the most memorable quotes in your opinion?" I put this in this section because one of the things that really stood out to me was "matters of importance" – this quote, this phrase, "matters of importance", and it comes up a lot. It comes up when adults are talking about "matters of importance". What is important is – is a theme throughout the book that is featured in both the children and the adults. When you're looking at these two groups, the book tells us about how they value what is important and what isn't, and it comes back to this idea of

numbers vs. description. For adults, the book tells us that numbers are important. For children, the book tells us that imagination and love are important.

Another quote that I love is: "It is such a secret place, the land of tears." That one was really beautiful.

I had two people who kind of asked very similar questions. One person was @liv_hodgkins on Instagram, and one person was @antipodean.books on Instagram. Liv asks: "Why does this novella resonate with such a wide audience range?" And antipodean.books asks: "Why do you think certain books which are ostensibly for children, nonetheless continue to resonate with adults?" I think there is so much to learn in this book, and I think that adults keep coming back to it because on the surface it teaches children a certain lesson, and when you come back to it as an adult, it might teach you different things. And I think that that's why people love re-reading childhood books, because they get something different out of it every time. And I think *The Little Prince* especially has so many layers to it that with every read and with every age, you can get something different out of it.

So I think the biggest theme in this book that I noticed was the theme of seeing with your heart, and looking beyond what's right in front of you, and learning to act on love and feelings, and learning to love. I think the thing that the book really argues for is that love and feelings are matters of importance. And this phrase, "matters of importance" comes up a lot. But it's often used by the grown-up characters to first of all diminish what the prince is feeling, and undermine what he's feeling, but also to reinstate their importance in obsessing over numbers and maths and formulas, and not caring about descriptions or art or any of that. I think the thing that the prince learns, is to find wealth in love, and that wealth in love is actually really important, and that makes you rich even though you don't have any money.

There's a really interesting quote that I wanna read out from the prince. It's when he's arrived on earth; the prince sees a whole bush of roses, and he says: "Hey, they're like my flower." And then he realises that they're common, and they are so many of them, and nobody pays attention, and he thought he had something special. So he says, quote: "I thought that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in all the world, and all I had was a common rose. A common rose and three volcanoes that come up to my knees, and one of them perhaps extinct forever. That doesn't make me a very great prince." End quote. So I think this is so interesting because suddenly he sees that what he has is not special. He believes that he's not rich, and I think this idea of being rich also comes up in conjunction with "matters of importance." If we look at these matters of importance, they're often associated with wealth and money, because numbers often come along with money. You can't put a price on feelings or love, you can't measure it in a quantitative way. You can only measure it by how you feel, and that's deemed not important, but I think what the prince is trying to say to us, is that it actually is important, and it means that you're rich, and that you're wealthy, and you'll live a happy life, just in a different way. You know, you're rich in a different way.

I'm gonna read out this quote that correlates directly to what I'm talking about – "seeing with the heart." It's when the prince says, quote: "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." End quote. This last part of the sentence: "what is essential is invisible to the eye". I think that's so fascinating, because it's so easy to get caught up with what we can actually see, and believe that that is the most important thing. Things we can touch, things we can count, but the prince is saying that the most important things are the things you can't see, and it's about learning how to see those things. That's something that the prince learns, and, in turn, he teaches us.

I think another flipside to learning how to love is also learning about the pain that comes with that. When the prince tames the fox, or the prince and the fox become friends, and then the prince has to leave – or the fox has to leave, I can't remember which – the prince is really sad, and he says this, quote: "One runs the risk of weeping a little, if one lets himself be tamed." End quote. I think this also highlights a side to loving and expressing your feelings, and having a friendship, because you do run the risk of getting hurt, and I like that that is actually displayed in the book, that it's not all about: "Oh, look, if you make friends with everyone you'll be happy forever." I like that it includes this element of pain, and saying: "Yes," you know, "you do have to be vulnerable and that could mean that you get hurt in the end, but overall it's what you remember from the friendship that counts." And we see this in the very end of the book.

@singularact on Twitter asks: "What does the ending mean to you?" So I do want to talk about the ending, and I want to talk about this particular quote at the very end of the book. The quote at the end of the book is one of my favourites. This is when the prince says to the narrator: "I have to go, I have to leave, I have to go back to my planet and care for my flower." And the narrator's like: "No, don't go, I'm gonna miss you so much." The prince gives a gift to the narrator, and he says it like this – by the way, I've cut out bits of this quote to make it more succinct. He says, quote: "All men have stars, but they are not the same things for different people. You – you alone – will have the stars as no one else has them. In one of the stars, I shall be living. In one of them, I shall be laughing. And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing, when you look at the sky at night ... You – only you – will have stars that can laugh!" This to me is the most beautiful point of the book, because it's making us hurt, right? It's making us feel pain because we know that the prince is gonna leave us, but he's also giving us a gift, and I think that that is an amazing moral to put into the story. That friendship itself is a gift, and it's about remembering and reminiscing on the times you had together, and that is the most important thing in the whole entire world; feeling that special connection. And that is important, and this importance is highlighted at the very, very end of the book. These are the last few sentences of the narrator, and I'm just gonna read them out here, quote: "For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has – yes or no? – eaten a rose... Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: Is it yes or no? Has the sheep eaten the flower? And you will see how everything changes ... And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance!" End quote.

So I think that there's a lot to unpack here! I think first of all, it's – it's kind of explaining how much fiction touches us, and how much fiction has an influence on our lives. If we think about that idea of possibility, the little prince teaches us that what you can imagine is actually important, and that's what the narrator's saying, too, saying: "Think about this situation. Even though you can't see it, it's still important to think about these things." One thing that also really struck me is when the narrator says: "And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance." And I think this is so interesting when we relate it back to adults vs. children. These two, kind of, clashing ideals. I think the book is actually suggesting that grown-ups have lost this forever, and might never be able to get it back. I actually don't think I agree with that part of the book. I think that the brilliant thing about this book is that it can remind adults to imagine, and to create, and to look into their hearts, if you will, however cheesy that sounds. I think I reject this idea that no grown-up will ever understand the importance of imagination, because I think that, sure, we might forget it from time to time, we might get wrapped up in other things, material things ... But I think at the end, something like this, something like *The Little Prince* can bring you back to what you

originally cared about when you were a kid. Yeah, so I – I don't think I agree with that, which is interesting, I guess. Let me know if you agree with that.

So finally we come to the epilogue. I feel like I've been talking for an eternity, so let's get this wrapped up. In the epilogue, I give you my final rating and my final thoughts. So, my final rating is 3 stars. Solid 3. Interpret that how you will. And my final thoughts. In conclusion, I think that *The Little Prince* is telling us that love is important, and I think it's a fable, and I think there's a lesson to be learned in every situation. And I might not have learnt all of those lessons, I might have skipped over some, I have missed some entirely. But what I got from it, is that it's about finding your inner child again, and I think that that's really beautiful. I like that message a lot, actually, I really enjoy it. And I like how it's whimsical, and fun, and amusing. It's told in a way where you feel like you also knew the little prince, and now you can also look up at the stars and think about the life that he's living now.

[ukulele theme music]

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[ukulele theme music]

Ay, helicopter. Oh my god, three helicopters! Jeez!

Oh my god I can't believe I've been talking for half an hour. This is so much easier when I have another person here to do half the talking for me! Oh, I'm tired already. Okay. Let's do this.

There's a quote ... ugh, I didn't write down the page number, so that's helpful, isn't it?