

Classroom Discussion Plan part 1

Fables evoke big questions, and the story of King Ire's Last War is no exception. Rich with ideas and symbolic imagery, the book elicits meaningful conversations about the nature of aggression and compassion. When planning a discussion about the story and its morals, feel free to use the ideas below. If you would like to share questions or comments that come up during the discussions, please submit them at <http://www.kingireslastwar.com/>

- Before reading the book, explain the concept of fable, metaphor, and etymology of the word "Ire" to your students.
- Walk them through the following visualization exercises (a minute each):
Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine a time when they were feeling happy (eg. vacation or a birthday party). Note their facial expressions.
Next, ask them to keep the eyes closed and imagine a fight or a conflict they were involved in. Observe their facial expressions.
- After they open their eyes, share your observations about the smiles and scowls on their faces. Ask how they felt the emotions in their bodies, and which kind of experience was desirable. Emphasize the role of peace in creating happiness.

Classroom Discussion Plan: Part 2

1. What would have happened if Queen Peace had used traditional weapons to fight the war?
2. How did Queen Peace win the war even though King Ire was physically much stronger? (Discuss successful non-violent movements.)
3. Why did King Ire surrender to Queen Peace?
4. Why did Queen Peace forgive King Ire when she was back on the throne? Should she have punished him?
5. What would you do if you come across someone like King Ire?
6. Discuss the paradox of peace: Peace is essential yet fragile. How to nurture the better – albeit delicate – angels of our nature to make the world a better place to live?
7. Seek one idea per student toward the goal of protecting and promoting peace? (Create a class poster with the list of all ideas.)

Questions related to symbolism in the story.

1. What is the symbolism behind King Ire's and Queen Peace's appearance?
Suggested answer: King Ire's warm colors and fire symbolize anger and inflammation. His large, imposing body exudes external strength. His reptile form represents the reptilian brain. (Explain the reptilian, emotional, and neo-frontal cortex parts of our brain and how they affect our behavior.)
Queen Peace is physically delicate, but her words and actions speak for her inner strength. The blue and yellow colors of her outfit denote calmness and optimism. Her golden pendant is a symbol of peace. Gold is precious because it reflects light. It is soft and supple, and it represents

purity because it maintains its luster in any environment. The circle signifies unity while the spiral suggests infinite possibilities. Thus, this symbol of peace stands for light, purity, inclusiveness, and continual progress.

2. How do pages 7, 8, 9 denote King Ire's initial struggles before his transformation? (Mountains represent obstacles. Climbing up a mountain indicates spiritual growth.)
3. Pages 8, 9: What does the thick canopy (trees) around the mountain represent? (Trees represent rebirth and growth.)
4. Page 19: What does the turning river symbolize? (Imminent change. A turning point in the story. Water is equated with life.)
5. Page 30: What does Queen Peace's flight suggest? (Her ascension into the sky suggests rising above the fray.)
6. Pages 32, 33, 44, 46: What do the doves represent? (Doves represent peaceful people.)
7. Page 34: What does the freeze and darkness mean? (Life withers when peace is gone.)
8. Pages 38, 39, 40, 41: What does King Ire's shrinking appearance signify? (His diminishment shows self-destructive nature of hostility and aggression.)
9. Page 41: What is King Ire's reflection suggest? (Self-reflection precedes epiphany.)
10. Page 42: What does Queen Peace's unchanged appearance represent? (Her eternal noble spirit)
11. Page 45: What does light denote? (Life and optimism)
12. Pages 50, 51, 52, 53: What does King Ire's changed appearance and final ascension signify? (Transformation from a reptile into an angelic spirit. Deep blue sky denotes transcendence and tranquility.)

Apart from visual symbolism, here are some sentences could elicit more conversation for their deeper meaning.

1. Page 22: "There is no need to kick the doors. They are always open." (This sentence shows Queen Peace's open and welcoming spirit.)
2. Page 24: "I am Queen Peace. I was expecting you after I heard the roar." (This sentence shows that although Queen Peace is aware of King Ire's danger, she is not hostile to him.)
3. Page 39: "The harder King Ire tried to crush Queen Peace's kingdom, the more he hurt himself." (This sentence shows self-destructive nature of anger and hostility.)
4. Page 43: "Queen Peace, listen wherever you are. I cannot conquer your kingdom. It's different than any other. You belong here, and there is nothing for me to do but surrender." (This sentence shows that aggression cannot conquer peace.)
5. Page 48: "You've suffered enough already, and the people have suffered too." (This sentence shows Queen Peace's compassionate and noble spirit.)
6. Page 50: "Watching the joy on peoples' faces brought a smile to King Ire's face, and for the first time in his life, he felt happy." (This sentence shows the power of peace to bring about happiness.)