

Title: The Story About Ping  
Author: Marjorie Flack  
Illustrator: Kurt Wiese  
Copyright: 1933  
Category: Classic  
Summary: A duck learns there are worse things than taking the consequences for one's mistakes.

## **Social Studies: Relationships - Discernment**

Ping learns on pp.16-18 that everything that looks good (like the rice cake trap) isn't necessarily good. Discernment is an important life skill that comes with maturity. You can discuss with your student examples of things which may look better than they really are. Discussions might include offers of candy from strangers, smoking cigarettes, or diving into unfamiliar ponds or streams.

Ping runs away because he doesn't want to take his punishment. He discovers that the loneliness, fear and danger he encounters are far worse than any punishment he might receive. In the end, Ping learns that family relationships and a sense of community are a vital part of life. Everyone is tempted to avoid the consequences of his mistakes. Consider sharing an example from your own life of trying to run away from consequences or punishment.

## **Social Studies: Geography - China**

*The Story About Ping* takes place along the banks of China's Yangtze river. (YANG-see) Longer than any other river in the world except the Nile and the Amazon, the Yangtze is nearly four thousand miles long. Discuss with your student how long four thousand miles is by comparing it with a familiar distance. You might say, "Grandpa's house is four hundred miles away and so the Yangtze is like driving to grandfather's house ten times." You can also compare it with how far your student went on vacation last summer, etc.

The Yangtze is so wide in places that you can stand on one bank and not see the other shore. Ask if the student has ever been to one of the Great Lakes or to the ocean.

From these places you can't see the other side either. Imagine together what it might be like to live on such a long and, in some places wide, river.

Nearly one third of China's population, 350 million people live on or near the Yangtze river. In fact one of every fifteen people in the world live along the Yangtze. That's half again as many people as live in all of the United States combined. Help your student visualize how alone and frightened little Ping must have felt on such a huge, busy river. Be sure to place your geography story disk where Ping lived—in China, and on the Yangtze River!

## **Social Studies: Geography - Culture**

As you read about Ping, point out the traditional clothes, hats, hair styles, houses and boats (one type of boat is called a "junk") of Chinese culture. Wonder with your child about life on a boat! Discuss the differences and similarities between our culture and the Chinese. In America, for instance, there is a long history of people living on house boats sometimes called "shantyboats" along the Mississippi River and throughout the bayou country (a small stream that wanders through lowlands or marshes) of southern Louisiana.

You may also want to discuss the eating of duck as a delicacy in traditional Chinese cooking. Little Ping nearly becomes someone's special dinner when he leaves the safety of family and friends. Ask if your student has ever eaten at a Chinese restaurant. What sort of foods did people eat there? Did they use chopsticks? Has the student ever eaten duck? Do you think people along the Yangtze ever eat pizza or hamburgers? Have a rice lunch! If you have an older student listening in, he could research the foods of China and help prepare a special Chinese meal, which you might eat sitting on the floor around a low table.

## **Literature: What is a Classic Story?**

This book is a classic. A "classic" is a book that generations of children have enjoyed. Ping was written in 1933. Even though the lifestyle, clothes and boats of the people in China may not be the same today as when Ping was first written (the Chinese do sometimes eat hamburgers!), the story of Ping is still as fresh today as it was in 1933.

When you begin any new book with a student, help him calculate how many years have elapsed since the story was written. You might try to identify an individual whose life dates from the early 1930s, in order to help your student comprehend how many years Ping has been in print. For example, you might say, "When Ping was written, your grandmother was about your age." Because Marjorie Flack wrote this story about Ping that you, your parents and grandparents could all enjoy when you were children, someday, perhaps your student's children and grandchildren will enjoy Ping, too. That's what makes Ping a "classic."

## **Literature: Fiction**

Explain that fictional stories originate in the author's imagination and therefore are not necessarily true. Explain that often a fictional story begins, "Once upon a time...."

You'll find other stories included in FIAR which also begin "Once upon a time..." and you'll want to call the student's attention to this fictional device each time. You can even allow your student to make up their own fictional story which begins "Once upon a time..."  
**Note:** There are occasional non-fiction stories that have the "once upon a time.." beginning but they are the exception. This is most usually a fictional story starter.

## Literature - Literary Device: Repetition

The story of Ping both begins and ends with a list of Ping's family members. Throughout the book, the author makes repeated references to Ping's family. The use of repetition as a literary device helps bring the reader "full circle" and provides both a continuity and a sense of completion when the book is finished. Younger children particularly love the use of repetition. Many stories are built on repetition and children often memorize the familiar phrases and passages. Your student might enjoy creating his own story using repetition.

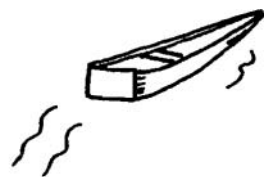
## Art: Medium

See if your student can recognize what medium Kurt Wiese used in illustrating Ping. Most of the illustrations look like colored pencil or crayon. Encourage the student to try using colored pencils to do an illustration of their own. Notice how Wiese combines colors to create new tones in the sky on p. 9. At first glance, the sky appears gray, but have your student look closer and discover the variety of colors the artist has used to create the appearance of an evening sky. Similarly, notice the many colors Wiese used for the background on p. 32. Try using multiple colored pencils to create various effects.

## Art: Drawing Water

Illustrator Kurt Wiese has drawn water throughout *The Story About Ping*. Discuss with your student the use of broken reflections to give the impression of water. For example, on p. 4, Wiese shows the sun's reflection in the Yangtze's surface. Cover up the reflection with your hand and see how the illusion of water is lost. Give your student a chance to try drawing his own sun and reflection to give the impression of water.

You'll also want to note the use of small, irregular blue circles to show puddles on p. 22 beneath the boy. Let your student try drawing a simple figure like the ice cube below and adding "puddles" beneath it. Note the use of ripples on p. 15 to illustrate action. Allow your student to try drawing broken, irregular circles around any object and see how it suddenly appears as if the object is surrounded by water. On pp. 10 and 14 Wiese has used trailing wavy lines to show motion. This pattern is repeated behind boats, ducks, etc., to create the illusion of movement. Let the student add trailing wavy lines to a simple boat drawing and discover how the boat suddenly appears to be moving. If your student can't draw a boat, draw one for him, or use a magazine photograph and let him draw the background motion lines. Or try a line of ducks, each with their own wavy lines behind them!



## Art: Viewpoint

The cover illustration shows Ping from a traditional viewpoint. Ping's profile, the outline of his wing, tail and bill all help to identify Ping as a duck. But, discuss with your student Wiese's use of a head-on point of view on the title page. Without the profile, bill, etc., Ping looks quite different.

Notice how the illustrator has drawn Ping from many different points of view such as "bottom up" on p. 6, "head beneath wing" on p. 9, and "swimming away" on p. 12. Have your student try drawing an egg or a football in profile. Now have him draw it again looking end-on. Point out how our **viewpoint** changes the way we see the world around us. Discuss how picking a different viewpoint adds variety and can make everyday subjects more interesting. Encourage your student to try drawing like Kurt Wiese, by exploring common subjects from uncommon points of view. In an excellent story called Daniel's Duck by Clyde Robert Bulla, a young artist tries an uncommon viewpoint for his hand-carved wooden duck. (**Note:** You will see Daniel's Duck mentioned again as a featured story in FIAR, Vol. 3. Now, see if you can find it for a single reading relating to this lesson in viewpoint and compare the illustrations of Weise and Bulla.)

## Art: Unity of Theme Through Subject

The illustrator has used the Yangtze river as the recurring theme which creates a sense of unity by tying the entire book together. Count the pages on which the river appears. You'll discover only three illustrations which do not include the Yangtze. Kurt Wiese has provided both unity and context through the repetitive theme of the water. We come away with a sense that for those **350** million people who live along the Yangtze's shores, the river is a part of everything they do. **As** a teacher, watch for the use of recurring themes, built around a particular subject to create unity in other books you may read with your student.

## Art: Composition

Every good drawing has good composition. Turn with your student to p. 9. Discuss how Kurt Wiese has created a diagonal from upper left to lower right with the foliage. This diagonal line divides the illustration into two halves. Each half includes a yellow highlight; the sun in the upper right, and Ping in the lower left. Notice how the grass fronds in the upper left create opposite diagonal lines.

Have your older student sketch some balanced compositions. Have him try pictures which are balanced diagonally, horizontally and vertically. Your student can even cut magazine pictures and place them in pleasing balanced compositions if he does not yet enjoy a lot of drawing. Encourage your student to look beyond content and think about composition whenever looking at an illustration. While good content makes an interesting picture, good composition makes for a pleasing picture.

The Story About Ping covers the concepts Family and Problem Solving. This classic children's book was first published in 1933 and is still as delightful and relevant as ever. Ping's owner takes him and his siblings to the river for dinner. When it's time to go, Ping is the last duck in the water and, as such, will receive a spanking. To avoid punishment, he hides only to be captured the next morning by a young boy for his family's dinner. Finally Ping is set free, and when he sees his master's boat, the last thing he fears is a spanking—he's just thankful to be home! About The Story About Ping. ... The Story about Ping. Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better. The story begins when Ping, the duck, is taken by his owner to feed on the riverbank. Later, when it is evening, Ping is the last duck to return, so he hides to avoid being spanked. The following day Ping observes some fishing birds and then a boy captures him for his family's dinner, but the boy releases Ping that evening. The next day, he sees his master's boat. He hurries to return to his family knowing he will be the last duck again. But this time he accepts the punishment.[1]. Ping in film. The Story About Ping was adapted for film by Weston Woods Studios in 1955 [3]. Ping on te

Our first "Row" was "The Story About Ping" by Marjorie Flack. It was an endearing tale about a young duck named Ping, who decided to run away because he did not want to receive his punishment for being the last one on the boat. However, it turns out that running away only presented more dangers! Have you ever tried to run away from taking your punishment? Well, I won't bore you with examples from my life, but learning discernment and that our actions have consequences are great lessons for littles to learn. The Story of Ping Five in a Row Unit Study. Our mornings began The Story About Ping. This post contains affiliate links that help support Mama's Learning Corner. Visit Mama's Disclosure Policy for more information. This past week, my girls and I read The Story About Ping by Marjorie Wiese. My girls are 6 1/2, 4 1/2, and 3 and to say they adored this book is an understatement. Once they figured out that we were using the book all week, they squealed in delight! Each day, the big question at breakfast was, "When are we reading Ping?" We completed several of the suggestions listed in Five in a Row and also added in a few of our own. One the first questions f