



Synopsis

Leo, a small tiger, is not as advanced as the other children in the animal kingdom. He cannot write, read, speak, etc. His father is very worried about Leo's progress. Leo's mother says that Leo will bloom when he is ready. After one year, Leo suddenly blooms. He learns how to write, read, eat neatly, and speak.

Author Sketch

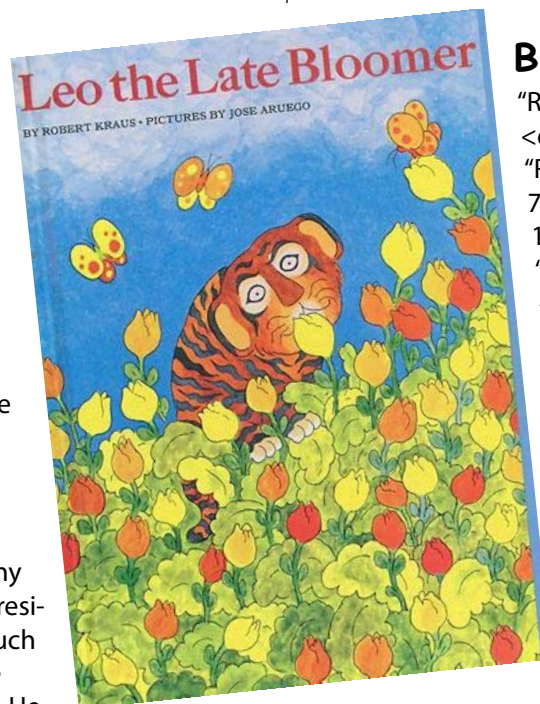
An author, illustrator, cartoonist, and publisher, Robert Kraus was born in Milwaukee in 1925. He attended the Art Students League in New York City in 1945; from there, he became a cartoonist for the *New Yorker*, drawing more than 450 and twenty-one covers for the magazine. His career as an author began in 1955 with *Junior, the Spoiled Cat*, and he went on to write more than 100 books for children, including *Whose Mouse Are You?*, *Boris Bad Enough*, *Milton the Early Riser*, and *Fables Aesop Never Wrote*. He founded the publishing company Windmill Books in 1965, and was president for many years. Kraus lived much of his adult life in New York City; he and his wife, Pamela, had two sons. He died in 2001 at age 76.

Timeline

Beginning	Leo, a young tiger cub, is not as advanced as other kids his age. His lack of age-appropriate skills worries his father, but his mother is unworried; she knows Leo will "bloom" in his own time.
Middle	Leo's father watches Leo for signs of "blooming," but finds none. Finally, he takes the mother's advice and watches something else (television)
Later	The seasons pass, but Leo remains the same; he has not yet "bloomed."
Finally	In his own time, Leo "blooms," showing himself to be perfectly normal. His parents are pleased, and he is happy.

Critic's Corner

Leo the Late Bloomer was named a California Young Reader Medal book and a Reading Rainbow Book. It was read by the First Lady Barbara Bush on national television as part of her campaign for literacy. Other notable books by Kraus include *Whose Mouse Are You?*, *Herman the Helper*, *Milton the Early Riser*, and *Owliver*.



Bibliography

- "Robert Kraus biography," <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Kraus>
- "Robert Kraus, Author and Cartoonist, 76," obituary, *New York Times*, August 16, 2001 (accessed online)
- "Author Robert Kraus," <<http://www.librarything.com/author/krausrobert>>
- "Leo the Late Bloomer lesson plan," <<http://www.learningtogive.org/lessons/unit156/lesson1.html>>

Selected Other Books by Robert Kraus

- Whose Mouse Are You?*
- How Spider Saved Halloween*
- Herman the Helper*
- How Spider Saved Valentine's Day*
- Milton the Early Riser*
- Spider's First Day at School*
- How Spider Saved Thanksgiving*
- How Spider Stopped the Litterbugs*
- How Spider Saved Easter*
- Mouse in Love*
- All My Chickens*
- Little Louie the Baby Bloomer*
- Where Are You Going, Little Mouse?*
- Phil the Ventriloquist*
- How Spider Saved the Flea Circus*
- Bunny's Nutshell Library*
- How Spider Saved the Baseball Game*
- How Spider Saved Santa Bug*
- Another Mouse to Feed*
- How Spider Saved Christmas*

Come Out and Play, Little Mouse
Owliver
The Littlest Rabbit
Mort the Sport
Near Myths: Dug Up & Dusted Off
Fables Aesop Never Wrote
The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snitcher
Bunya the Witch
Dr. Mouse, Bungle Jungle Doctor
The Making of Monkey King
Screamy Mimi
Spider's Baby-Sitting Job
Big Squeak, Little Squeak
Three Friends
Springfellow's Parade
The Tree that Stayed Up Until Next Christmas
Pinchpenny Mouse
Good Night Little ABC
Good Night, Richard Rabbit
Jack O'Lantern's Scary Halloween
Wise Old Owl's Christmas Adventure
Bumpy the Car
Wise Old Owl's Canoe Trip Adventure
Wise Old Owl's Halloween Adventure
The Adventures of Wise Old Owl
Bunya the Witch
I, Mouse
The Mixed-Up Mice Clean House
The Good Mousekeeper
Good Morning, Miss Gator
Whitney Darrow Jr.'s Unidentified Flying Elephant
Dance Spider Dance (Road to Reading)
The Boogie Woogie Bears Go Back to Nature
Mouse at Sea
The Gondolier of Venice
Herman the Helper Cleans Up
Good Night, Little One (Night-Lite Library)
Milton the Early Riser Takes a Trip
Evolution of the Mind
Spider's Hometown
Springfellow
Private Eyes Don't Blink
The Little Giant (A Windmill Paperback)
The Night-Lite Storybook
The Mixed-Up Mice in the Big Birthday Mix-Up
The First Robin
Boris Bad Enough
The Making of Monkey King
Strudwick: A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing
Hoodwinking of Mrs. Elmo
Daddy Long Ears' Halloween

Related Reading

Adoff, Arnold, *Hard to Be Six*
Aliki, *Manners*
Ashley, Bernard, *Cleversticks*
Berenstain, Stan and Jan, *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*
Gomi, Taro, *My Friends*
Jordan, Helene J., *How A Seed Grows*
Kettelman, Helen, *Not Yet, Yvette*
Krauss, Ruth, *The Carrot Seed*
Kuhn, Dwight, *My First Book of Nature: How Living Things Grow*
Martin, Bill, *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?*
Mayes, Susan, *What Makes A Flower Grow?*
McMillan, Bruce, *Counting Wildflowers*
Mitchell, Rita Phillips, *Hue Boy*
Piper, Watty, *Little Engine that Could*
Potash, Dorothy, *Tale of Ned and His Nose*
Provinsen, Alice and Martin, *Book of Seasons*
Zolotow, Charlotte, *I Like to Be Little*

Themes and Motifs

- change
- growth
- self-esteem
- patience

Goals and Objectives

- Identifying contractions
- Possessing basic sight vocabulary
- Predicting the story

Meaning Study

INITIATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

Building the background

1. Initiate a class discussion about tigers and other wild animals. Provide pictures and/or a video showing animals in their natural habitat and how they grow from babies to mature adults.
2. Encourage the students to notice differences in appearance and behavior between babies and adults in the animal world.
3. Show a video about flowers blooming. If possible, the video should use time-delayed filming to show flowers blooming quickly. Discuss why it is important for flowers to bloom.

Introducing the book

1. Display the cover of the book for the students. Have them locate the title, author, and illustrator. Show

them the title page. Explain what information is on the title page, including the title, author, illustrator, publisher, etc. Discuss the difference between an author and an illustrator.

2. Have the students predict why Leo is a late bloomer and what that might mean. Record their predictions.

ENJOYING THE READING

Prereading: Setting the purpose for reading

1. Have the children read to confirm their predictions and gain the meaning of the story.

Post Reading: Confirming, analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating the reading.

1. Encourage the children to share their feelings about the story.
2. Allow the students to confirm any predictions they might have made prior to reading the story.
3. Initiate small group or whole class discussion of the story. Some of the following questions may help to start and/or guide this process:
 - Who were the characters in this book?
 - Why do you think the author chose a tiger for the main character?
 - How did Leo feel in the beginning of the book? At the end?
 - What were the things Leo learned to do?
 - What does it mean when it says, "Leo bloomed"?
 - How do the illustrations help us to understand the story?
 - When have you felt sad because you couldn't do something?
 - What would you have said at the end of the story if you were Leo?
 - Why did the illustrator use flowers throughout this book?

Teaching Skills and Strategies in Context

1. Identifying contractions—Initiate a discussion about contractions. Explain that an apostrophe takes the place of missing letters and that it can also represent possession, explain what this means. Write examples of several different types of contractions and possessives on the board. Examples:

didn't *what's* *Leo's* *tiger's*

After reviewing contractions and possessives, have the students find all the contractions in the book. They can record their contractions in a chart similar to the following:

Contraction/ Possessive	What it Stands For	Is it a Possessive?
<i>didn't</i>	did not	no
<i>what's</i>	what is	no
<i>Leo's</i>		yes

After locating the contractions and possessives in the story, the students can create their own and chart them. This may be completed in a group situation or individually.

2. Possessing basic sight vocabulary—Introduce words that look similar and discuss how students can remember words. Discuss with the students some of the characteristics of particular words, including the number of letters in a word, where it is used in the sentence, and what letter is at the beginning/end of a word. Select sight words from the text based on the students' needs. Write these words on 3 inch-by-5 inch index cards. Students can take turns matching these words to the appropriate words in the text.
3. Predicting the story—Before reading the story, the students should predict what the story will be about based on the cover and the title. These predictions should be recorded. After the story has been read, have the students return to their predictions to confirm or correct them.

Across the Curriculum

Writing

1. Ask the students to write short descriptions of something they can do now that they could not do before starting school and illustrate these. These can be copied and made into a class book entitled "I CAN."
2. Have the students work as a class to write a sequel to this story describing what will happen to Leo next.
3. Have the students write a poem using their name as the title and descriptions of themselves as the body of the poem. Following is an example of, and directions for, a *cinquain* poem:

Leo the Late Bloomer Robert Kraus

Michelle (first line: two syllables)
Friendly, happy (second line: four syllables)
Likes swimming and reading (third line: six syllables)
Sometimes silly. But that's okay. (fourth line: eight syllables)
Good friend. (fifth line: two syllables)

- Using butcher paper or large sheets of other paper, make a graffiti board on which the students can write their first words. Leave colored markers and/or crayons near the graffiti board for the students to use in their free time. They can also write other information about themselves, their favorite phrases to say, and their names.
- Briefly discuss cursive writing. Show the students the cursive alphabet and how the letters connect together. You may wish to show the students how to turn manuscript letters into cursive letters by connecting them. Assist the students in writing their names in cursive and being able to recognize their names written this way.

Math

- Have the students bring in baby pictures of themselves and their height and weight at birth. Take pictures of the students now or use current school pictures. Have the students compare how they have changed in appearance since birth. Weigh and measure the students. Have them calculate how much they have grown in height and weight since birth.
- Measure the students' height. Make a class chart of their heights.
- Discuss words which represent size difference: tall, taller, tallest; big, bigger, biggest; small, smaller, smallest. List these words on the board or a large chart. For each set of words, have three students stand in front of the class in the proper order. Repeat this for other similar sets of words.
- Have the students count things in the story: flowers, books, butterflies, etc. List these on the board and make a bar chart of the students' results.

Social Studies

- Initiate a class discussion to answer the following questions: What is a late bloomer? What are some signs of blooming? How did Leo bloom? How are we sometimes like Leo? How do we grow and change?
- In small groups, have the students discuss what feelings the characters in the book might have. Have them describe how they might feel if they were a late bloomer. List the words that describe those

feelings on the board. At this time, you may also wish to read *When Will I Read?* by Miriam Cohen to the students.

- Chart the following poem on the board or large chart and read it to the students to introduce the subject of manners:

My Little Sister

*My little sister
Likes to eat.
But when she does
She's not too neat.
The trouble is
She doesn't know
Exactly where
The food should go!*
-- by William Wise

(from *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, Jack Prelutsky and Arnold Lobel, 1983.)

- Ask the students to list table manners and other manners which are acceptable. These can be recorded on a large chart and posted in the classroom for student reference. You may also make a handout to send home to students. The students can practice these manners and/or demonstrate them for the rest of the class. This activity may be extended by discussing how animals behave and eat compared to how humans behave and eat, and if the animals in the book behave more like animals or people.
- Initiate a class discussion about family caring. Talk about how parents show they care in different ways. Refer back to the text. Have the students locate places in the book that illustrate this. Discuss the ways Leo's parents show they care. Give each student an opportunity to share an example of something his/her family does which demonstrates how much they care for each other.
- Initiate a discussion about how we hold things that we use with our hands. Include how we should hold a pencil, paint brush, crayon, fork, and other utensils. Discuss why these ways of holding things are appropriate.
- Divide the class into small groups of four to six. Have the groups discuss patience and when it is appropriate. They should also list ways that we can be patient with one another and give examples of when it is easy/hard to be patient. Next, have the groups turn their chairs to face the center of the room, but stay in their groups. Allow a representa-

tive from each group to act out a situation when it is hard to be patient. Give the other groups an opportunity to suggest how to deal with the situation and be patient.

Science

1. Display photographs or illustrations of flowers, in different stages of growth. Discuss how a flower begins as a seed and grows into a flower. Demonstrate how to plant a seed and list on the board rules for caring for a growing seed. Have the students copy the rules. Provide the students with small plastic containers, soil, water and seeds. Have them plant and care for their seeds. They can also chart the growth of their flowers.
2. Initiate a discussion about seasons. Have the students make a seasons wheel. Provide paper plates (two per student), scissors, rulers, markers, crayons, and paper fasteners. Have each student use a pencil and ruler to divide both paper plates into four sections. On one paper plate, the student should label and illustrate one season per section. The student should then cut out one triangular section of the other paper plate, write a title ("The Four Seasons" or "The Current Season Is," etc.) on it, and decorate. The student can then fasten the two plates together.
3. In small groups of four to six, have the students list all the animals in the story and the sounds that the animals make. The groups can then share their lists with the rest of the class, both verbally and in written form.
4. Provide some resource materials about animals. Have the students choose one animal in the story to illustrate and describe in a few sentences. The description should tell something about the animal's lifestyle, physical characteristics, or habitat. You may wish to assist the students as they use the resource materials and write their animal descriptions.
5. Show the students pictures of trees that bear fruit. Have the students list as many trees as possible which bear fruit. Discuss edible and non-edible fruits, how to identify poisonous trees and fruits, and how and when to safely pick fruits from trees.
6. Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Initiate a discussion about butterflies and how they grow from a caterpillar into a butterfly. Order some cocoons through a science journal or take a field trip to find some. Place the cocoons in large glass jars with holes in the lids. Give the students an opportunity to observe the cocoons and record

any changes. When the butterfly emerges from the cocoon, have the students write a short description of the event.

7. Have the students return to the page in the story where it states that Leo's father is watching him at night. Discuss what else one might watch at night. Display pictures of the stars and talk about astronomy. Show illustrations of some of the major constellations (the Big Dipper, etc.). Encourage the students to try to locate the constellations at night when they get home.
8. Discuss footprints and fingerprints. On an overhead projector, show the students an animal's footprints and have the students try to name the animal. (Pictures of footprints may be obtained from an encyclopedia or from the State Game and Fish Department.) Repeat this activity several times until the students readily recognize the footprints.

Drama

Divide the class into groups of eight. Have each group dramatize the story using the masks made in Art Activity 1. The groups may also wish to dramatize the story with an alternative ending or the sequel to the story written in Writing Activity 2.

Art

1. Provide the students with large paper bags, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, and any other art media appropriate for making masks. Have the students divide into groups of eight. Each member of the group should make a mask of one character in the story. These can be used later in the drama activity.
2. Assist the students in drawing their profiles. Provide large sheets of butcher paper, pencils, crayons, markers and tape. Tape a sheet of butcher paper to the wall. Have one student sit or stand in front of the paper, a few feet away from it. Turn on an overhead projector and project the light at the wall. This will create a shadow of the student on the paper. Have another student trace around the student's profile on the paper. Repeat this with each student. Afterwards, the students can color in their profiles and display them in the classroom.
3. Provide the students with poster board, markers and crayons. Cut each poster board into three sections lengthwise to make three long pieces of poster board. Give each student one piece. Have the students draw their names on the poster board and then make designs or animals from their names. These can be taped on the front of their desks.

4. Provide sheets of construction paper, crayons, markers, and scissors. Have each student draw and cut out one flower and two leaves. On the flower, the student should write his/her name. On the leaves, the student should list two things he/she can do by himself/herself. These can be taped or glued to a large sheet of butcher paper, in the form of a vine, and displayed in the classroom or in the hallway.
5. Give the students an opportunity to make butterflies. Provide colored construction paper, crayons, markers, scissors and glue. Have the students trace around their feet on a sheet of construction paper and cut out to form the wings. They can tear the colored paper into small pieces and glue these in designs to decorate the butterflies' wings. The students can cut the body and antennae from black paper. These butterflies can be glued or taped with the vine in the previous activity.
6. Have the students make miniature snowmen, or snow figures of the animals in the story (or other animals). Provide cotton balls, toothpicks, glue, sticks, raisins, and any other appropriate art media. The students can glue the snow figures to a piece of cardboard or stiff paper.
7. Provide the students with brightly colored construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue or tape. Have them cut the construction paper into 211 x 611 strips. On the strips they can draw flowers. Next, they can glue or tape the strips into interlocking circles, to make a chain. The last ring should be glued/taped to the first to make a wreath of flowers like the animals made in the story.

Music

1. Play a variety of types of music for the students. After each song has been played, ask the students to comment on how the music made them feel and why.
2. Write the words to a familiar song on the board or a large chart ("Row, Row, Row Your Boat," or "Did You Ever See A Lassie," etc.) Sing the song a few times to familiarize the students with the melody. Next, have the students write new words for the song. The new lyrics should be related to the story.

Health/Safety

1. Initiate a class discussion about how bodies grow and change. You may wish to show a video on growth or display some pictures of the human body at different stages of life. Help the children to understand what changes their bodies will experience in the near future, such as losing teeth and grow-

ing permanent teeth, etc.

2. Discuss what each animal in the book might eat instead of grapes. Draw a diagram in the shape of a web or a circle on the board or a large chart. Have the students assist you in charting the food chain. Discuss the food chain and why/how it works. You may also wish to discuss how the food chain is sometimes interrupted (extinction of a species, elimination of forests, etc.) and how this affects the animals in the food chain.
3. Have the students return to the page in the book where Leo's mother is licking him. Discuss how animals groom themselves and each other. Ask the students to compare how animals and humans groom themselves.

EVALUATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

- Keep a teacher's journal of those strategies that best helped the students understand the story.
- Record the children's behaviors and learning by jotting these on "Post-its." These comments can later be transferred to a journal containing daily comments on the students.
- Prepare a chart to record the completion of the projects for each of the students.
- Record the students' responses as they briefly retell the story or specific chapters.
- Collect a piece of each child's writing to evaluate.
- Develop criteria for evaluating student work or refer to established forms of evaluation to assess the projects and activities completed.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

- Provide grapes in different forms for the students to enjoy: fresh, frozen, and juice.
- Chart the following poem on the board for the students to read:

Taste of Purple

*Grapes hang purple
In their bunches,
Ready for
September lunches.
Gather them, no
Minutes wasting.
Purple is .
Delicious tasting.*

--by Leland B. Jacobs

(from *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, Jack Prelutsky and Arnold Lobel, 1983)

- Have the students dramatize the story using the masks they made in the art activity.
- Display art work and other projects for another class to view.
- Allow the students to wear their flower wreaths for one day.
- Give the students an opportunity to share something they have learned to do since the beginning of the school year.

Vocabulary Test

Place the correct word listed below within the sentence it belongs.

Anything couldn't sloppy matter budded blooming

1. "What's the _____ with Leo?" asked Leo's father.
2. The trees _____.
3. He was a _____ eater.
4. Leo couldn't do _____ right.
5. Every day Leo's father watched him for signs of _____.
6. He _____ read.

Comprehension Test

Write the letter of the description next to the matching character or object it describes.

- ____ 1. "I made it!"
- ____ 2. signs of blooming
- ____ 3. Leo
- ____ 4. Leo's father
- ____ 5. Leo's mother

- a. blooms in his own good time
- b. watches television instead of Leo
- c. says, "A watched bloomer doesn't bloom"
- d. what Leo's father watched for
- e. what Leo said

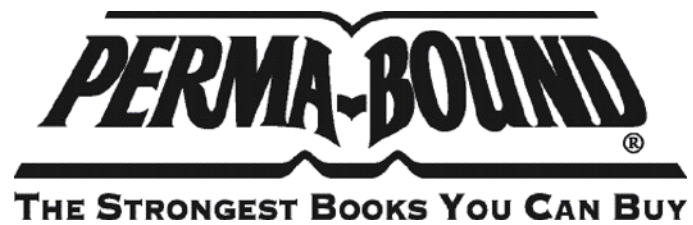
Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

1. matter
2. budded
3. sloppy
4. anything
5. blooming
6. couldn't

COMPREHENSION TEST

1. e
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. c



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