

# Little Bear

Written by Else Holmelund Minarik

Illustrated by Maurice Sendak

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Wanda Miller

A Perma-Bound Production

This guide is not intended to be followed exactly. Feel free to pick and choose among the suggested activities based on the needs and interests of your students.

## Synopsis

*Little Bear* is a collection of four stories about Little Bear. Throughout, Mother Bear supports the pretend play of Little Bear and his friends. Mother Bear is always there whenever Little Bear needs her. In "What Will Little Bear Wear?" she finds just the right thing to keep him warm in the snow. In "Birthday Soup," Little Bear thinks his mother has forgotten the day. He makes soup and invites his friends to share it, then Mother Bear appears with a cake! When "Little Bear Goes to the Moon," Mother Bear has a good lunch waiting for his return. In "Little Bear's Wish," Mother Bear tells Little Bear a story of his past adventures.

## Biographical Sketch

Else Holmelund Minarik was born on September 13, 1920 in Denmark. She emigrated to the United States at the age of four. She married Walter Minarik, who died in 1963. She has one child, Brooke. Her degree in psychology is from Queens College and her degree in education from Paltz College of the State University of New York. Else Minarik was married to Homer Bigart in 1970.

Else Minarik has worked as a reporter for a local newspaper and as a teacher during World War II in a rural school in Commack, Long Island.

When her daughter became interested in reading at an early age, she wrote books for her. She also discovered the special needs of her first grade students. They would learn the basics of reading, and after the following summer vacation, would return to school with no memory of this. Inspired by her daughter and students, she submitted her books to Harper and Row, who began the I Can Read series with her first book, *Little Bear* in 1957. Since then she has written several other books for children, four of them being about Little Bear.

## Critic's Corner

*Little Bear* was the first and is said to be among the best of all the I Can Read books.

The Little Bear series has won many awards and is regarded as a classic. Else Minarik, a former first grade teacher, uses a limited vocabulary at no sacrifice to the story. *Little Bear* was included in the American Library Association's Notable Children's Books 1940-1970. *Little Bear's Visit*, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak,

was a runner-up for the Caldecott Medal in 1962. *Father Bear Comes Home*, and *A Kiss For Little Bear* were listed among the *New York Times* Choice of best illustrated books of the year in 1959 and 1968, respectively.

Maurice Sendak's illustrations in *Little Bear*, as well as the other books in the series reveal the inner warmth and love of family relations.

Commenting on *Little Bear*, a *New York Times* critic wrote, "It is difficult to be practical about something charming - one wants only to be charmed. Yet this is a book that must be considered on two counts: its joyousness and its usefulness. It passes on both counts. One look at the illustrations and children will grab it. A second look at the short, easy sentences, the repetition of words and the beautiful type spacing, and children will know they can read it themselves."

## Objectives

1. The students will be able to understand what antonyms are, and will be able to give antonyms for vocabulary words from *Little Bear*.
2. The students will be able to retell the four stories in *Little Bear*.
3. The students will be able to recall the sequence of events in the stories in *Little Bear*.

## Vocabulary Study

The word "antonym" means opposite. Give antonyms for the following words:

- |                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. cold ( <i>hot</i> )          | 9. open ( <i>close, shut</i> ) |
| 2. little ( <i>big, large</i> ) | 10. forget ( <i>remember</i> ) |
| 3. play ( <i>work</i> )         | 11. yes ( <i>no</i> )          |
| 4. begin ( <i>end, finish</i> ) | 12. up ( <i>down</i> )         |
| 5. happy ( <i>sad</i> )         | 13. fast ( <i>slow</i> )       |
| 6. good ( <i>bad</i> )          | 14. top ( <i>bottom</i> )      |
| 7. empty ( <i>full</i> )        | 15. asleep ( <i>awake</i> )    |
| 8. first ( <i>last</i> )        |                                |

## Comprehension Study

1. What did Mother Bear make for Little Bear to wear in "What Will Little Bear Wear?"  
(A hat, then a coat, and last - snow pants)
2. What did Mother do when Little Bear was still cold with the hat, coat and snow pants on?  
(She asked him if he wanted a fur coat. He said yes, so she took off his hat, coat and snow pants and showed him he already had a fur coat.)
3. Where do you think Mother Bear was while Little Bear was busy making Birthday Soup for his friends?  
(Accept reasonable answers.)
4. What did Little Bear make the soup in?  
(A big black pot)
5. Who came to Little Bear's birthday party?  
(Hen, Duck and Cat)
6. Do you think Mother Bear will ever forget Little Bear's birthday?  
(No, Mother Bear said, "I never did forget your birthday, and I never will.")
7. Did Little Bear really go to the moon?  
(No, he climbed to the top of a little tree, jumped off with his eyes closed and pretended that he landed on the moon.)
8. What did Little Bear say about how things looked on the moon?  
(*"The moon looks just like the earth. The trees here look just like our trees. The birds look just like our birds."*)
9. What were some of the things Little Bear wished for in "Little Bear's Wish"?  
(He wished he could sit on a cloud and fly all around, ride in a Viking boat, and crawl through a tunnel all the way to China. He also wished he had a big red car, and he could drive it to a big castle where a princess would invite him to have some cake with her. Finally he wished Mother Bear would tell him a story.)
10. If you were Little Bear, what would be your wish?  
(Accept reasonable answers.)
11. What was the story about that Mother Bear told Little Bear?  
(It was about when he played in the snow and wanted something to put on. Once he had put on a space helmet and played going to the moon. Once he thought he had no birthday cake, so he made birthday soup. She told him of all the things that had happened thus far in the book.)
3. Your students could illustrate their favorite scene from the book to be hung in your classroom.
4. Using one or more of the stories from Little Bear, you could make up cloze activities for your students.
5. This would be an opportune time to instruct your class on synonyms and antonyms using vocabulary from the book as well as from other language arts materials.
6. Have your students bring in their favorite teddy bear or other stuffed animal for show and tell.
7. On your own or in art class, your students could make potato bear prints for a project. Cut a potato in half, then cut out the outline of a bear on each half. Dip these into paint and use to make bear prints on construction paper.
8. With the help of your school librarian, your students could do a short research report on bears. This could include eating habits of bears, where bears are found in the United States, hibernation, etc.
9. Visit a nearby zoo that has bears or have a member of the zoological society come to your class to talk about bears.
10. Have a storyteller visit your class to share some bear stories.
11. With the help of parent volunteers, try making birthday soup in your class using water, carrots, potatoes, peas, and tomatoes as Little Bear did.
12. Your students could write, illustrate, and publish their own bear stories.

## Bibliography of Related Books

Asch, Frank. *Bear's Bargain*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1989.

*Bear Shadow*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988.

*Goodbye House*. Prentice-Hall, 1986.

*Happy Birthday, Moon*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988.

*Popcorn*. Crown Publishers, Inc., 1987.

*Sand Cake*. Parents Magazine Press, 1979.

*Skyfire*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988.

Bailey, Bernadine. *Wonders of the World of Bears*. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1975.

Berenstain, Stan and Jan. *Berenstain Bear* series.

Bond, Michael. *A Bear Called Paddington*. Houghton Mifflin, 1958.

Buxton, Jane Heath. *Baby Bears and How They Grow*. National Geographic Society, 1986.

## Student Involvement Activities

1. Read the other Little Bear books by Else Minarik to or with your class. They are listed in the related book list.
2. Have books from the related book list as well as other "bear" books available for your students to read during silent reading time.

Dillon, Barbara. *The Teddy Bear Tree*. William Morrow & Co., 1982.

Goldstein, Bobbye S. *Bear in Mind*. Viking Kestrel, 1989.

Hague, Kathleen. *Bear Hugs*. Holt, 1989.

Minarik, Else Holmelund. *A Kiss For Little Bear*. Harper & Row, 1968.

*Father Bear Comes Home*. Harper & Row, 1959.

*Little Bear's Friend*. Harper & Row, 1960.

*Little Bear's Visit*. Harper & Row, 1961.

*No Fighting, No Biting!* Harper & Row, 1958.

*Cat and Dog*. Harper & Row, 1960.

*The Little Giant Girl and The Elf Boy*. Harper & Row, 1963.

*The Winds That Came From Far Away, and Other Poems*. Harper & Row, 1964.

Naden, Corrine J. *Let's Find Out About Bears*. Franklin Watts, Inc., 1971.

Walsh, Ellen Stoll. *Brunus And The New Bear*. Doubleday & Co., 1979.

Ziefert, Harriet. *Bear Gets Dressed*. Harper & Row, 1986.

## LITTLE BEAR TEST

### Part I: Fill in the Blank (10 points)

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with the words in the box.

soup

something

play

Viking

surprise

1. Little Bear went out to \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. "I am cold," said Little Bear. "I want \_\_\_\_\_ to put on."
3. Little Bear made birthday \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Mother Bear made a \_\_\_\_\_ birthday cake for Little Bear.
5. Little Bear wished he could ride in a \_\_\_\_\_ boat.

**Part II: Sequence (30 points)**

Number each of the following groups of sentences (1 through 5) in the order they occurred in the book.

- A.** \_\_\_\_\_ Mother Bear made a coat for Little Bear to wear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Little Bear was cold and wanted something to put on, so Mother Bear made a hat for Little Bear to wear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ With his fur coat, Little Bear was not cold anymore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Little Bear was still cold and wanted a fur coat. So Mother Bear told him to take off the coat, hat and snow pants and showed him he already had a fur coat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mother Bear made snow pants for Little Bear to wear.
- B.** \_\_\_\_\_ Mother Bear comes in and surprises Little Bear with a birthday cake.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Next, Duck comes in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Since Mother Bear is not home, Little Bear decides to make birthday soup for his friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ First, Hen comes in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Next, Cat comes in.

**Part III: Antonyms (30 points)**

Write an antonym in the blank next to each of the following words.

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. cold - _____   | 9. open - _____    |
| 2. little - _____ | 10. forget - _____ |
| 3. play - _____   | 11. yes - _____    |
| 4. begin - _____  | 12. up - _____     |
| 5. happy - _____  | 13. fast - _____   |
| 6. good - _____   | 14. top - _____    |
| 7. empty - _____  | 15. asleep - _____ |
| 8. first - _____  |                    |

**Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)**

Answer each of the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Name some of Little Bear's wishes.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Tell about Little Bear's trip to the moon.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Imagine that Little Bear came to spend a day at your house. Write a diary entry about your activities.

## ANSWER KEY

### Part I: Fill in the Blank (10 points)

1. play
2. something
3. soup
4. surprise
5. Viking

### Part II: Sequence (30 points)

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| A. 2 | B. 5 |
| 1    | 3    |
| 5    | 1    |
| 4    | 2    |
| 3    | 4    |

### Part III: Antonyms (30 points)

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. hot         | 9. close, shut |
| 2. big, large  | 10. remember   |
| 3. work        | 11. no         |
| 4. end, finish | 12. down       |
| 5. sad         | 13. slow       |
| 6. bad         | 14. bottom     |
| 7. full        | 15. awake      |
| 8. last        |                |

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Accept reasonable answers.



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