

# Little Bear's Friend

Written by Else Holmelund Minarik  
Illustrated by Maurice Sendak



## Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Jennifer Lee Richards

A Perma-Bound Production

### Synopsis

Little Bear has made a new summertime friend named Emily. Together they enjoy cookies, Owl's party and each other's company. But when summer ends it is tough to say goodbye, so the two friends decide to become pen pals.

### About the Author

Else Holmelund Minarik was born September 13, 1920, in Denmark. She emigrated to the United States at age four. Minarik attended Queens College (now of the City University of New York) and Paltz College of the State University of New York. She married Walter Minarik, who died in 1963. She later married Homer Bigart in 1970. She had a daughter, Brooke, by her first husband.

Minarik worked as a newspaper reporter and as a teacher. She is the author of many books, several of which are more tales about Little Bear with illustrations by Maurice Sendak.

Minarik became interested in writing for children as a result of her teaching experiences. When she couldn't find enough books for her students she began writing them herself.

### About the Illustrator

Maurice (Bernard) Sendak was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 10, 1928. He attended the Art Students' League for two years. He has homes in both New York City and Ridgefield, Conn.

Sendak describes his childhood as "one long series of illnesses." Some of his happiest memories are of his father who "invented beautiful imaginative tales."

Sendak worked for a comic book syndicate, All-American Comics, part-time during high school. He was a display artist for the F.A.O. Schwartz toy store for three years.

Sendak is an author and illustrator of children's books. He was also the writer, director, and lyricist of the animated television special, "Really Rosie," which is about some of his book characters. He has also been involved with set and costume designing for operas.

### Critic's Corner

Other Little Bear books that Minarik wrote are: *Little Bear and Little Bear's Visit*, which was the runner-up for the Caldecott Medal in 1962. Also, *Father Bear Comes Home* and *A Kiss for Little Bear* which were listed among the New York Times Choice of Best

Illustrated Children's Books of the Year in 1959 and 1968, respectively. All five books were illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

Sendak received the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1970 for the entire body of his work. He received the "New York Times" Best Illustrated Children's Book Award in 1977 for *Fly By Night*. He also received the Caldecott Medal in 1964 for *Where the Wild Things Are*.

### Objectives

1. To discuss the concept of friendship
2. To discuss pretend play
3. To learn about letter writing

### Comprehension/Discussion Questions

1. After reading the dedication, discuss whose mother and father the book is dedicated to. Have the students dedicate their books, too.
2. Discuss the fact that the adult bears shown in the story are dressed and that all the animals can talk and act like humans. Is this book fiction or nonfiction? What time period do the clothes the characters are dressed in represent?
3. Read the Table of Contents and predict what the chapters will be about.
4. Share stories about tree climbing adventures the students have had and where their favorite place is to be up high.
5. Discuss what Little Bear could see "all about him" (before turning to pages 10 and 11). Were the students right?
6. How are the students' home environments similar or different from Little Bear's? Do the students live by a body of water? In the mountains? Where it is always warm or cold? Discuss where the students think Little Bear lives. (For example, what state in the United States?)
7. During what season do the students think the story takes place? Why?
8. What is Mother Bear doing on page 11? (*Laundry?*)
9. What do the squirrels want to play with Little Bear? (*Page 13*)
10. What will Little Bear have for lunch? What is each student's favorite lunch?

11. What do real bears eat? Do they think Little Bear will eat like a real bear, or like a make-believe bear?
12. What does Little Bear mean when he says he can fly, too? (*Page 15 — then the students can too!*) Where would the students like to go if they really could fly — all around?
13. What would the worm and Little Bear talk about if Little Bear had the time to chat? (*Page 16*)
14. After reading page 17 ask the students what they think the little girl's name is. How did they know? (*Maybe they read it in Little Bear's letter on the title page or remembered it from the Contents page.*)
15. Share experiences the students have had of being lost.
16. Look back on pages 10-11. Do the students see the river?
17. Do the students have names for any of their toys? Share how the toys were named.
18. Discuss what Emily and Little Bear probably talked about as they walked back to the river and ate cookies. (*Page 21*)
19. When the students read that Emily sees her family's tent, have the students discuss whether they think Emily lives there, or is just visiting.
20. Share stories about camping.
21. What will Emily have for lunch? Fish? (*Notice what her father is doing — fishing. [Page 22]*)
22. Share fishing stories.
23. Notice the spelling of "good-by." (*Pages 22-23*)
24. What is Emily's mother doing? (*Page 23*) Discuss the fact that both mothers appear to be doing the laundry. Who does the laundry in the students' families? How have times changed in terms of roles different parents can play now?
25. Before reading the next chapter, notice Lucy's eyes on page 22 and go back through the other 21 pages to see if the students think they "move" (*I do!*) Why would Sendak do this?
26. Do the students ever play guessing games with their parents? Did they when they were younger? Why is it fun to play them? (*Pages 24-25*)
27. Who do the students think is Little Bear's "new friend?" (*Page 25*)
28. Do the students think Mother Bear was kidding when she said, "The little green worm?" (*Page 26*)
29. Why does Little Bear have his hands on his head? (*Page 26*)
30. Notice how Lucy "walks" on page 27.
31. Why does Little Bear say, "Just call them?" (*Page 30*)
32. Notice that on pages 28-29 there are five ducks, but on pages 30-31 there are only three seen and Duck says he has only lost one. (*Confusing.*)
33. Why would the duck want to be alone? Do the students ever like to be left alone? Why? (*Page 32*)
34. Do the students have younger siblings they have to "babysit?" Do they like the job, or are they happy to be "free" like Duck? (*Page 33*)
35. Who usually are babysitters? How old do the students think Duck is supposed to be? (*A teenager?*)
36. After reading page 33, predict what kind of party Owl could be having.
37. Have students share what their favorite animals are and why. (*Page 34*)
38. Can Lucy really talk? What do the students think she will say? Have the students ever pretended that their toys could talk? (*Page 37*)
39. What will they all eat at the party? (*Page 38*) What do the students like about parties?
40. Notice that the hats seen on page 40 seem smaller than those on pages 41-47, especially Emily's. Have students realize that artists sometimes do make allowances for size in order to use different-sized characters and settings.
41. Share stories about broken toys.
42. Predict how Lucy will be fixed.
43. What did they do at the party after Lucy was fixed? (*Page 46-47*)
44. What does Mother Bear mean, "Let us eat up all the cake. If we do, then it will not rain tomorrow?" (*Page 49*) Is this a superstition the students know? What other superstitions do the students know? Do they believe in them and follow them? (For example, "Don't walk under a ladder.")
45. Share stories about summertime friends the students have made at places like camps, or at lessons or on teams. Was it hard to say goodbye? Did they stay in touch some way?
46. What did Father, Mother, Little Bear and Emily all talk about? (*Page 50*)
47. Notice Lucy's size on page 53. Does she look bigger than on page 35?
48. Why would Emily want to give Lucy to Little Bear? Why couldn't she really? Notice her face on page 55. Could the students give up their favorite toy or possession? (*Pages 54-55*)
49. Where did Emily get and put back her pocketbook? (*Pages 56-57*)
50. Do the students think Emily and Little Bear planned to give each other gifts? Why did they? Have the students ever given gifts to their friends? Why? What would the students give a special friend?
51. Share experiences the students have had with crying. Why have they?
52. Have students share about what features a "special friend" like Emily should have. Who are the students' special friends?
53. Have students share about who they correspond with and how they met them. Do the students like getting and sending letters?
54. What do the students think Little Bear and Emily will do next summer?

## Student Activities

1. Read the book aloud to or with your students.
2. Read other books written by Else Holmelund Minarik.
3. Read other books written and/or illustrated by Maurice Sendak.
4. Research about the Caldecott Medal Award.
5. Experiment with the illustration technique Sendak uses for this book. (*Pen and ink with marker or paint?*)
6. Read other fictional bear books, such as *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey.
7. Sing bear songs, such as "The Bear Went Over the Mountain" and the camp echo song, "The Other Day I Met a Bear."
8. Go outside and go bare (bear) foot.
9. Eat "Gummi Bears."
10. Research about bears and identify what type of bear the characters in the book represent.
11. Have students make handprints and footprints with paint on paper anonymously. See if the students can identify each others' "paw prints."
12. Have students role play and/or improvise different scenes in the story. For example, on pages 46 and 50 where the "whole story" has not been told.
13. Go up in a tree fort, or have students bring in pictures of their favorite high-up places. Write fiction and nonfiction stories about treehouses.
14. Have students pick a high-up place to draw a wide panoramic illustration of. Maybe have students try to guess where the special place is before the artist reveals it.
15. Make a wall mural, map, or a 3-D model of Little Bear's "world." (*Pages 10-11*)
16. Research about different bodies of water and how they are interconnected. (For example, the river runs to the sea.)
17. Go outside and have students use their senses to hear and feel the wind. (*Pages 12-13*) Can the students "smell" or "see" the wind, too? (*Grass cuttings; leaves shaking.*)
18. Research to learn what other animals have fur.
19. Research about squirrels, worms, ducks, hens, and owls.
20. Research about baby animals' names and how their names sometimes differ from their adult counterparts. (For example, a baby bear is a cub and a baby owl is an owlet.)
21. Have students write about where they would fly to if they were able. If they could fly indoors where would they fly?
22. Research to find out what bears eat. Eat some of the foods bears eat. Go to the zoo to see some live bears.
23. Research about china dolls and the time period when little girls played with them. If relatives of the children have china dolls have them bring them in to the class and share about them. Research about Emily's clothing and dress up in clothing of the time period she lived in.
24. Have students vote on their favorite types of cookies and chart the results. Make the winner and enjoy!
25. Research about laundry/inventions that have modernized clothes washing. Have students experience handwashing clothing.
26. Have students go outside and skip. (*Skip with them!*) Have skipping relay races.
27. Research about parasols and their use. Make some colorful ones and have a "Parasol Parade" outside.
28. Research about ponds. Make a wall mural of the plant and animal life forms in a pond.
29. Feed, call, or pet some ducklings.
30. Give names to the siblings of "Little Peep."
31. Try on a variety of party hats and play "musical hats." (*Played just like musical chairs.*) Or make party hats, wear them, and have a party!
32. Have students vote on their favorite type of cake. Graph the results - in a circle cake (pie) graph, of course. Bake and eat the winner. Make lemonade from scratch and enjoy it with the cake.
33. Have the students play/write with a variety of pens.
34. Make toy boats and sail them.
35. Make stationery.
36. Have students share letters they have received that they treasure, or share about unique places they have received letters from.
37. Review the "basics" for proper letter writing. (For example, commas in the greeting and closing).
38. After reading Little Bear's letter on page 62, have students take on the role of Emily and write Little Bear back.
39. Have students take on the roles of Little Bear and Emily and be pen pals to each other.
40. Have students send letters to their special friends along with a "paw print" and their love.
41. Get out of state pen pals for your class, or have students in another class and/or grade pair up with your students as pen pals.
42. Make scrapbooks or photo albums with "photos" (student-drawn illustrations) showing the fun Little Bear and Emily had together during the summer, including events not named in the story.
43. Write poems about what "friendship" is.
44. Have students write book reviews of *Little Bear's Friend*, recommending it to other classes. (Perhaps write these on bear-shaped paper?)

## **Bibliography**

*Something About the Author 15*, Gale, 1979.

*Something About the Author 27*, Gale, 1982.

### **Books by Else Holmelund Minarik**

*Father Bear Comes Home*

*Kiss For Little Bear*

*Little Bear*

*Little Bear's Friend*

*Little Bear's Visit*

*No Fighting, No Biting!*

*Percy and the Five Houses*

### **Books by Maurice Sendak**

*Alligators All Around — An Alphabet*

*Caldecott & Co.*

*Chicken Soup With Rice*

*Hector Protector, And As I Went Over The Water*

*Higlety Piglety Pop (There Must Be More To Life)*

*In the Night Kitchen*

*Kenny's Window*

*Maurice Sendak's Really Rosie: Starring The Nutshell Kids*

*One Was Johnny*

*Outside Over There*

*Seven Little Monsters*

*Some Swell Pup*

*Where The Wild Things Are*

## **GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT THINKING SKILLS**

To ensure that students are using various levels of thinking skills use the following guidelines: (adapted from Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive thinking skills).

### **Comprehension and Recall:**

Exercises which ask students to: match, discover, identify, listen, research, locate, or observe. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #5, 7, and 14.

Student Activities #10, 16, and 23.

### **Application:**

Exercises which ask students to: list, construct, paint, sketch, manipulate, interview, or experiment. Such as:

Student Activities #14, 15, and 28.

### **Analysis:**

Exercises which ask students to: classify, categorize, compare, contrast, survey, or advertise. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #6, 24, and 35.

Student Activities #24, 32, and 42.

### **Synthesis:**

Exercises which ask students to: invent, compose, predict, role-play, imagine, create, produce, estimate, combine, or infer. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #3, 43, and 54.

Student Activities #12, 30, and 39.

### **Evaluation:**

Exercises which ask students to: evaluate, judge, debate, discuss, recommend, choose, or decide. Such as:

Comprehension/Discussion Questions #33, 40, and 48.

Student Activities #43 and 44.

## TESTS

### Vocabulary Test

A synonym is a word that means about the same thing as another word. Match the underlined words in the following sentences with the lettered synonyms from the story shown on the right.

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| _____ 1. Emily thought the ducks were really <u>cute</u> .                    | A. pocketbook |
| _____ 2. The <u>baby owls</u> were waiting for Owl to come feed them.         | B. darling    |
| _____ 3. Emily opened up her <u>purse</u> and pulled out a pen.               | C. reeds      |
| _____ 4. Little Bear sat in the treetop looking down at the <u>big</u> world. | D. owlets     |
| _____ 5. Little Peep was swimming in the tall <u>grasses</u> in the pond.     | E. wide       |

### Comprehension Test

Who-who will Owl invite to his next party? Match the lettered guests with the numbered information about them.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. Has a doll named Lucy.                      | A. Little Bear           |
| _____ 2. Wanted to talk to Little Bear.              | B. Duck                  |
| _____ 3. Babysat Little Peep.                        | C. The little green worm |
| _____ 4. Broke her arm after falling from a tree.    | D. Emily                 |
| _____ 5. Wrote Emily and told her he loves the snow. | E. Lucy the doll         |

## ANSWER KEY

### Vocabulary Test

1. B      2. D      3. A      4. E      5. C

### Comprehension Test

1. D      2. C      3. B      4. E      5. A



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