

Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Leon and the Spitting Image* by Allen Kurzweil.

1. Where does Leon sleep the night before the first day of school? Why does he sleep there?
2. Why does Leon keep a map of the world in his room? What does he use it for?
3. Why is Miss Hagemeyer teaching her class sewing? How does Leon feel about it?
4. The motto of the Classical School is “nimble fingers make for nimble minds.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
5. Describe Leon and Lumpkin’s relationship. How do they treat each other? Why does Leon destroy Lumpkin’s unicorn?
6. Imagine you were Leon. How would you handle Lumpkin? Would you have destroyed his unicorn? Why? Why not?
7. List all the ways that the Classical School is like your school. List all the ways it is different. Which school would you rather go to, and why?
8. On page 109, Leon describes the Ice Queen: “She wasn’t at all like the one in the fairy tale, he decided. She wasn’t an evil witch. She was just a weird, cranky, out-of-date curiosity in need of special handling.” What does this mean about the Ice Queen? Could it be an insight into any other characters in the story? How?
9. What role does luck play in Leon’s life? What kind of “lucky” things happen to him during the course of the book? How do they change his experience of fourth grade?
10. What does the title of the book have to do with the story? Explain.
11. What kind of “master piece” would you have created? Would you have been able to give it to the SOV project? Why? Why not?
12. How would Leon’s life have been different if his father had been alive? How would his father’s presence have changed the story?
13. Evaluate Miss Hagemeyer’s sewing curriculum. Was it a good use of the children’s time? Was it educational? Were the projects worth the time?
14. What is Leon planning to make over the summer? What do you think of his plan?

Explain.

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities

1. During the course of the school year, Leon has to cope with a difficult teacher and a class bully. In a group, discuss troubles you have had with people who have picked on you or others. What are some effective ways of dealing with bullies? How can you help other kids who are dealing with them?
2. Can you create a spitting image of yourself? You can draw and paint it or make it a sculpture like Leon's. Don't forget to include all the important details--like panty hose and eyeballs!
3. Learn the Seven Stitches of Virtue—boys and girls alike, just as in Miss Hagemeyer's class. You may want to invite in a teacher with some knowledge of sewing! Can you achieve five S.P.I.? Can you make a dinosaur or even a "masterpiece"?