

Resource 11

The Story of Ferdinand

Reading Guide

This story is about a bull (a male cow) named Ferdinand. Ferdinand lives in Spain and he is different from all of the other bulls. Most bulls like to “butt heads” and play fight, but Ferdinand likes to spend his time lying under his favorite cork tree, smelling the flowers. One day some men come looking for the meanest bull they can find. Gentle Ferdinand is the one they end up choosing to fight in the bull fighting ring.



The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf

Theme Link(s):

These can best be utilized AFTER reading the story with your child.

Being True to Yourself – Discuss with your child how even though he was not a fighter, Ferdinand had a strong personality. Ask your child to identify how Ferdinand was strong. Help her/him realize that Ferdinand didn’t do what everyone expected him to do. Even as a little bull, he never felt pressured by all of the other bulls to fight. Instead, he was happy to sit under his favorite tree and smell the flowers. And when he was put into the ring with thousands of people watching, cheering for him to get angry and be a fighter, what did he do? He sat down and quietly sniffed the smells of the flowers coming from all of the lovely ladies’ hats.

Purposes

- Listens to stories read aloud.
- Demonstrates increasing levels of engagement.
- Shows steady increase in number of words in listening vocabulary.
- Develops understanding of main events.
- Develops awareness of character traits from story, such as inner strength.

Read the Story

Help children to identify setting and characters, as well as to track story events.

Suggested Vocabulary

Use these words during story time and throughout the day:

- **Spain**
a country in Europe where bull fighting is popular
- **bull**
a male cow, often very large and strong
- **lonesome**
feeling sad because you are alone and you would rather be with a friend
- **pasture**
grassy land where animals like cows eat or “graze”
- **butt**
to hit with the head or horns; male cows do this to play, and to determine who is boss
- **bull fights**
a tradition in Spain. Men dress up in fancy clothes and try to make a bull angry so that he will fight. The fight is to see who is stronger, the ‘matador’ or the bull. Spanish people go to bull fights like Americans go to football or baseball games.

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- **fierce**
angry, dangerous and aggressive behavior, wanting to fight
- **snort**
a fast puff of air let out through the nose that shows anger or surprise
- **proudest**
feeling very happy with yourself for something you did or have
- **bowed**
bent forward at the waist
- **scared stiff**
to be so afraid you cannot move
- **ring**
a big round space, like a stadium. Circuses have three rings where performers do things and the audience watches. The bull-fighting ring is another sort of ring where people come to watch.

Extending the Book

- For children who are ready for the challenge, have them help you read the title of the book, *The Story of Ferdinand*. Use your finger to underline the title, letter by letter and sound it out if necessary.
- Repeat multi-syllabic words (Ferdinand, quietly, understanding) slowly and carefully, helping children to learn to say them.

Connections

- Help your child make connections to the text. What do they already know about bulls or bull fighting? (text → self) What other books does this book remind them of? (text → text) And finally, how does the story remind them of something else? Maybe the idea of the gentle cow relates to another animal your child knows of who is also gentle. (text → world)

A Model for Reading

Use the following to help you plan your book reading:

- “*The title of this book is The Story of Ferdinand. The author of this book is Munro Leaf.*”
- “*What’s this on the front cover of the book?*” (Point to the bull – child responds)

(Read page three)

- Examine the castle and the landscape. “*Does this neighborhood look like the one you live in? How is it different?*” (farmland – cows – castle high on the hill) “*How is it the same?*” If possible, identify Spain on a globe, and show it in relation to your country/state/city.

(Read page four and five)

- “*What is Ferdinand doing?*” (responses will vary)

(Read page six and seven)

- Explain that some animals in nature, like bighorn sheep and bulls, will “butt heads.” It’s their way of playing, and also deciding who is the toughest in the group.

(Read page ten and eleven)

- Perhaps the child will make a text → self connection about flowers and how they smell.

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(Read page twelve and thirteen)

- After reading, explain that cork trees are a type of oak tree that grow in Spain, Portugal and Italy – countries in Europe. If there is a corkboard nearby, you can point out that this cork comes from a tree like the one Ferdinand sits under.

(Read page fourteen and fifteen)

- *“It looks like Ferdinand is very happy when he is by himself smelling flowers. Is there something you enjoy doing by yourself, or a special place you like to go that makes **you** very happy?”* (responds)

(Read page sixteen and seventeen)

- *“Can you see Ferdinand’s mother? Can you find Ferdinand?”* (child will point) *“Do mothers worry about their children sometimes?”* *“Does someone in your family ever worry about you?”* (any answer is appropriate)

(Read page eighteen and nineteen)

(Read page twenty and twenty-one)

(Read page twenty-two and twenty-three)

- *“Wow. See the marks on the tree? You can see how Ferdinand got bigger each year... let’s read what his mom wrote.”*

(Read page twenty-four and twenty-five)

- Find out what the child knows about bull fights. Examine the sign on page 25 and see what conversation unfolds. Fill in details as appropriate, without being too graphic.

(Read page twenty-six and twenty-seven)

- *“If you were a bull, do you think you’d want to be in a bull fight, or would you be more like Ferdinand?”*

(Read page twenty-eight and twenty-nine)

- *“Who do you think the men will choose as the biggest and roughest bull!?”*

(Read page thirty and thirty-one)

- Check for understanding by asking *“What are the bulls doing?”* Help guide the child toward an answer such as “showing off.” Ask *“Why are they showing off for the men?”*

(Read page thirty-two and thirty-three)

(Read page thirty-four and thirty-five)

- Do not read the last word on the page... let the child predict what will happen next. Read up to: *“he sat on a...”* and then see if the child can tell from the picture what is about to happen.

(Read page thirty-six and thirty-seven)

- Read this in an animated fashion and look directly at the child to ask the question *“What would YOU do?”* Perhaps the child will answer *“I would sting him!”*

(Read page thirty-eight and thirty-nine)

- Again, read this page with feeling and energy. Ask the child if they have ever been stung by a bee, and if not, explain that it really hurts, and that the pain keeps going. Discuss how they might act the same way Ferdinand is acting if they got stung.

(Read page forty and forty-one)

- *“Is Ferdinand really the most fierce and angry bull in the pasture? Should the men be taking him to be in the bull fight? Why do the men think he is such a good fighter?”*

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(Read page forty-two and forty-three)

- Ask the child how they think Ferdinand might be feeling. If they say “sad,” ask why. Possible answers: he misses his mom; he can’t smell the flowers; he can’t sit under his tree anymore; he doesn’t like to fight.

(Read page forty-four and forty-five)

- Ask the child to locate the flags and the bands in the picture.

(Read page forty-six and forty-seven)

- Find the ladies. They are a little hard to spot in the picture. Explain to the child that the music, flags, fancy clothes and the parade are all ways of celebrating the tradition of the bullfight. It’s almost like a holiday celebration.

(Read page forty-eight and forty-nine)

- What do you think they are announcing with the parade? (The bullfight is starting. Everyone is going into the stadium to watch the action in the ring.)

(Read page fifty and fifty-one)

- Explain that bulls have very thick skin, and these pins don’t hurt the bull *that* badly. Notice the very fancy uniforms of the Banderilleros.

(Read page fifty-two and fifty-three)

- The Picadores also have very fancy outfits that make the bullfight pretty to watch.

(Read page fifty-four and fifty-five)

- The young boy is carrying the sword of the Matador.

(Read page fifty-six and fifty-seven)

- Read until the last word, and allow the child to fill in the blank with “Ferdinand.” Ask how he/she thinks Ferdinand is feeling right now? Has he ever seen a bullfight before? (no/ yes) Does she know what is going to happen? (no/ maybe) How would she/he be feeling in Ferdinand’s place?

(Read page fifty-eight and fifty-nine)

- “*Why is everyone so afraid of Ferdinand when he is so gentle!?*” Explain that it’s because of the day he sat on the bee, and how the men who watched Ferdinand jumping and bucking and pawing at the ground and snorting believed that he was a mean bull.

(Read page sixty and sixty-one)

- Ask for a prediction: “*Will Ferdinand become fierce and angry and fight? What do you think he will do?*”

(Read page sixty-two and sixty-three)

- When it says he “sat down quietly and smelled,” take a moment and inhale with a smile on your face. Make this moment dramatic. It is the essence of Ferdinand being himself under ANY circumstance.

(Read page sixty-four and sixty-five)

(Read page sixty-six and sixty-seven)

- “*See him back in the cart? He is going home again.*”

(Read page sixty-eight and sixty-nine)

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Reinforce Reading

Ask the child to discuss with you the themes covered in the text (restated here, for your use).

Being True to Yourself – Discuss with your child how even though he was not a fighter, Ferdinand had a strong personality. Ask your child to identify how he was strong. Discuss how Ferdinand didn't do what everyone expected him to do. Even as a little bull, he never felt pressured by all of the other bulls to fight. Instead, he was happy to sit under his favorite tree and smell the flowers. And when he was put into the ring with thousands of people watching, cheering for him to get angry and be a fighter, what did he do? He sat down and quietly sniffed the smells of the flowers coming from all of the lovely ladies' hats. Ferdinand was just Ferdinand, and nobody was going to make him be anyone else but the bull that he was. He liked himself that way. *"Do you ever feel like Ferdinand?"*