

The History of Love – Group Work #1 through page 65

1. Who is Alma (the little girl) named after? How do we learn this? How is this connected to the job that her mother gets (the \$100,000) one? Why did she initially learn Spanish, and how is that connected what she is now translating? Be specific and if you undig other connections here while your finding these – write those down as well.

2. What is the title of section 18 (page 45) of Alma’s journal? How is this strangely connected to Leo Gorsky? It says on 46 that this choice led Alma’s mother to “sacrifice the world.” Again, how does this specifically fit in with Leo? Give me a quote to substantiate your answer.

3. Look at the line on 45 about “sometimes just to paint a head you have to give up the whole figure.” The journalist, William Ruehlmann once wrote that “[i]f you want to tell the story of an entire army...tell the story of a single soldier”. How are these two quotes connected? Be specific.

4. Why does your group think that Alma wore her father’s sweater for 42 days straight? What does it have to do with her obsession (see question 4 and the last part of question 1 for good measure)? How is the “sweater” her own “grains of sand” that she is dragging behind her?

5. What kind of bird is Alma’s mother? (yes, there is a specific species) – Explain how that metaphor works for her (Alma’s mother) – there is a very important quote about Alma’s mother (hint – it comes before the description of her “bird”). How is Alma’s mother, in this way, connected to her son? For anyone who read Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” – the metaphor goes even further. The bird in that story becomes something that “can’t be gotten rid of”. A burden – brought upon by the Mariner who thoughtlessly shot it.

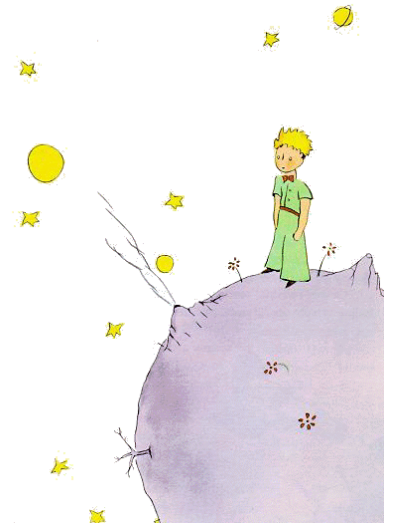
6a. Who does Alma go to see at the museum about another possible date – till she finds out he is so old? Why him (why his job, why this person) – there are at least two specific answers here – find both and give quotes to back them up? Thinking about that trail of sand. Find the description that Alma’s mother gives about what a “paleontologist does”. Ready for a cool deep question: How does that also describe what survivors (Alma’s mother, Leo, Alma, bird, etc.) try to do in making sense of their lives after a loved one perishes.

6b. A great student came to me today (the year I wrote this) and pointed out what it says about the museum person that Alma goes to see – his study of tectonics (find the text where it talks about tectonic plates) and the characters we are reading about. Make as specific and cool and connection between the two as your group possibly can. Use quotes.

7. What are the things that Alma says that she will not do when she gets older? Why these things? (by the way there is a correct answer here¹ – if your group or yourself if you are doing this solo) use your heads to put things together. In our discussion we talked about the sand in Alma’s mother’s pockets. Before it starts leaking – what must all that sand do? Connect.

8. If anyone in your group is familiar with Antoine Saint-Exupery fill the rest of them in – otherwise look at the back of this sheet). What was the central idea of his most famous book *The Little Prince*? If you haven’t read it (hmm it wouldn’t take that long) it has to do with love and how it makes us unique (on the back of this sheet I’ve put some quotes from that book – go look it up tonight – or take an hour and read the whole thing). Now, oh yes there is a question somewhere here: What does this author or his most famous book have to do with the history of love or *The History of Love* (brain hurt yet – good).

8b. How does Alma’s love of “Saint-Ex” and her aviator cap birthday gift connect her to her mother and to her brother.... See your answer to number 5 above. Ahhh...



¹ I know, I know...I always say any answer is correct that is backed up by the text – however, in this case there is a specific answer that places—your different answer might have done that too – but I cannot read your minds and write the rest of this group work based on

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (29 June 1900—31 July 1944) was a French writer and aviator. He is best remembered for his novella *The Little Prince* (*Le Petit Prince*), and for his books about aviation adventures, including *Night Flight* and *Wind, Sand and Stars*.

He was a successful commercial pilot before World War II, joining the *Armée de l'Air* (French Air Force) on the outbreak of war, flying reconnaissance missions until the armistice with Germany. Following a spell of writing in the United States, he joined the Free French Forces. He disappeared on a reconnaissance flight over the Mediterranean in July 1944.

Wind, Sand and Stars (French title: *Terre des hommes* (Land of Men)) is a memoir by Antoine de Saint Exupéry published in 1939. It was translated from the French by Lewis Galantiere.

The pilot and philosopher recounts several episodes from his years flying treacherous mail routes across the Sahara and the Andes. The central incident details the 1935 plane crash he survived in the Libyan Sahara Desert, between Benghazi and Cairo. Saint Exupéry, and his navigator André Prévot, are left almost without water and food, as chances of finding an oasis or help from the air gradually decrease. The book illustrates the author's view of the world and his opinions of what makes life worth living.

The Little Prince

Though ostensibly a children's book, (with most editions including illustrations drawn by Exupéry himself) *The Little Prince* makes several profound and idealistic observations about life and human nature. For example, Saint-Exupéry tells of a fox meeting the young prince as he exits the Sahara desert. The story's essence is contained in the lines uttered by the fox to the little prince: "On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux." ("One sees clearly only with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eyes.") Other key thematic messages are articulated by the fox, such as: "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed" and "C'est le temps que tu as perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante." ("It is the time you have lost for your rose that makes your rose so important.")

The Visit to Earth

Chapter 16 begins: "So then the seventh planet was the Earth." On the Earth, he starts out in the desert and meets a snake that claims to have the power to return him to his home planet (A clever way to say that he can kill people, thus whomever he touches, he can "send back to the land from whence he came.") The prince meets a desert-flower, who, having seen a caravan pass by, tells him that there are only a handful of men on Earth and that they have no roots, which lets the wind blow them around making life hard on them. The little prince climbs the highest mountain he has ever seen. From the top of the mountain, he hopes he will see the whole planet and find people, but he sees only a desolate, craggy landscape. When the prince calls out, his echo answers him, and he mistakes it for the voices of humans. He thinks Earth is unnecessarily sharp and hard, and he finds it odd that the people of Earth only repeat what he says to them.

Eventually, the prince comes upon a whole row of rosebushes, and is downcast because he thought that his rose was the only one in the whole universe. He begins to feel that he is not a great prince at all, as his planet contains only three tiny volcanoes and a flower he now thinks of as common. He lies down in the grass and weeps.

Chapter 21: is the author's statement about human love in that the prince then meets and tames a [fox](#), who explains to the prince that his rose *is* unique and special, because she is the one whom he loves. He also explains that in a way he has tamed the flower, as she has tamed him, and that this is why he now feels responsible for her.

Chapter 22–23: The prince then meets a railway switchman and a merchant who provide further comments on the ridiculousness and absurdity of much of the human condition. The switchman tells the prince how passengers constantly rush from one place to another aboard trains, never satisfied with where they are and not knowing what they are after, only the children amongst them bothering to look out of the windows. The merchant tells the prince about his product, a pill which eliminates thirst and is therefore very popular, saving people fifty-three minutes a week; the prince replies that he would use the time to walk and find fresh water.

Chapter 24: the narrator's point of view changes again from third person to first person. The narrator is dying of thirst, but then he and the prince find a well. After some thought, the prince bids an emotional farewell to the narrator, explaining to him that while it will look as though he has died, he has not, but rather that his body is too heavy to take with him to his planet. He tells the narrator that it was wrong of the narrator to come and watch, as it will make him sad. The narrator, at this point, is so devastated with grief, as he realizes what will inevitably happen, that he can barely speak. He tries to commit to not leaving the prince's side. The prince allows the snake to bite him and the next morning, when the narrator looks for the prince, he finds the boy's body has disappeared. The story ends with a portrait of the landscape where the meeting of the prince and the narrator took place and where the snake took the prince's life. The picture is deliberately vague but the narrator also makes a plea that anyone encountering a strange child in that area who refuses to answer questions should contact the narrator immediately.

The little prince is represented as having been on Earth for one year, and the narrator ends the story six years after he is rescued from the desert.

From *The Little Prince*

"And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."