Lesson Plan

Learning Goal
Identify and compare the actions of the characters to determine the theme of this folk tale.

Duration
Part 1: Approximately 40-45 minutes
Part 2: Approximately 15-20 minutes
Part 3: Approximately 15-20 minutes

Necessary Materials

Provided:
1. Detailed lesson plan
2. Graphic organizer for guided practice
3. Independent student worksheet

Not Provided:
The Empty Pot

1. This lesson is a close reading of the entire text. So it’s important to engage students often, to enhance their learning. Here are two tips:
   - When you ask the more complex questions from the lesson, ask students to "turn-and-talk" or "buddy-talk" before answering.
   - Once you are deep into the lesson, instead of asking students every question provided, ask them to share with you what questions they should be asking themselves at that point in the text. This is also a great opportunity to use "turn-and-talk."

2. Suggested teacher language is included in the lesson.

3. We recommend you read the book once to your students, either the day or morning before teaching the lesson.

4. This research-based, read-aloud lesson may seem long. Why do students need the lesson to be this way?

Part 1: Teacher Modeling & Questioning

Write the following student-friendly learning goal on the board, then read the learning goal out loud with the class:

*We will determine the message of the story by comparing how different characters acted.*

Prepare Students for the Lesson

Show students where China is on a map.

Transition Students into the Text

Teacher says: An emperor is like a king, who rules the land. Eventually someone has to take the emperor’s place to be the new leader. Let’s see what one emperor did to find his replacement.

Read page 1 out loud, then stop. Page 1 ends with, "...as if by magic!”. Show illustration.

1. Teacher says: The author just gave us important information about the setting and a character in this story:
   - The story takes place a long time ago.
   - The story takes place in China.
   - There is a boy named Ping.

2. Teacher asks: What does the author tell us about Ping?
Students answer:
- Ping loves flowers.
- Ping is extremely good at growing flowers.
- Everything Ping plants bursts into bloom.

Read pages 2-5, then stop. Page 5 ends with, "...successor to the throne." Show illustrations.

3. Teacher says: We just read that the Emperor needs to choose a successor to the throne. A successor is a person who replaces or takes over for someone else. In *The Empty Pot*, the "successor" is the person who will become the next Emperor.

4. Teacher asks: Let's look at the illustration. How can we tell that the Emperor loves flowers?

   Students answer: We can tell that the Emperor loves flowers because he is watering flowers and smiling.

Read pages 6 and 7 out loud, then stop. Page 7 ends with, "...succeed me to the throne." Show illustrations.

5. Teacher says: A proclamation is an important announcement.

6. Teacher asks: What three things does the Emperor say in his proclamation?

   Students answer:
   - He says that all the children in the land should come to the palace.
   - There they will receive special flower seeds from the Emperor.
   - Whichever child shows his or her best to the Emperor in a year’s time will succeed him to the throne. (Some students will understand that this means there is a competition and the winner will become the next Emperor.)

7. Teacher asks: The Emperor states, "Whoever can show me their best in a year’s time will succeed me to the throne." What does the Emperor mean?

   Students answer: There is a competition, and whoever wins will become the next Emperor by showing their best.

Read pages 8 and 9 out loud, then stop. Page 9 ends with, "...all the children hoped they would be chosen too!" Show illustrations.

8. Teacher asks: How do the children feel about the Emperor’s proclamation?

   Students answer: The children are excited and hopeful that they will be chosen as the next Emperor.

Read page 10 out loud, then stop. Page 10 ends with, "...the most beautiful flower." Show illustration.

9. Teacher asks: How does Ping feel when he receives his seed from the Emperor?

   Students answer: Ping is the happiest child of all.

10. Teacher asks: Why is Ping so happy?

    Students answer: He was sure he could grow the most beautiful flower.

11. Teacher asks: Based on what we’ve read so far, does Ping have a good reason for thinking he could grow the most beautiful flower?

    Students answer: Yes, because the book says that Ping loved flowers and that anything he planted burst into bloom. (page 1)

*Be certain that all students are able to answer this question. If there is any doubt, please just go back and reread page 1. Then come back to this page, ask this question again, and continue the lesson.*

Read pages 11 and 12 out loud, then stop. Page 12 ends with, "...blossom into a beautiful flower!" Show illustrations.
Teacher asks: What does Ping do with the seed?

Students answer:
- He plants it very carefully in a flowerpot filled with rich soil.
- He waters it every day.

Read pages 13-15 out loud, then stop. Page 15 ends with, "...into the rich black soil." Show illustrations.

Teacher asks: How does Ping feel?

Students answer: Ping is worried.

Teacher asks: Why is Ping worried?

Students answer: Ping is worried because his seed won't grow.

Teacher asks: What does Ping do when the seed does not grow?

Students answer:
- Ping puts new soil into a bigger pot.
- Ping transfers (puts) the seed into the new rich soil in the bigger pot.

Teacher asks: Is Ping trying his best to make his seed grow? What evidence shows whether Ping is or is not trying his best in the contest?

Students answer: Ping seems to be trying his best. Ping’s careful planting, watering, and replanting show that he is trying hard to grow his seed and win the contest.

Read pages 16-19 out loud, then stop. Page 19 ends with, "...eagerly hoping to be chosen." Show illustrations.

Teacher asks: What are the other children doing with their flowers?

Students answer: The other children are rushing to the palace with their flowers.

Teacher asks: Why are they rushing?

Students answer: They are eager and hopeful. They want to be chosen as the next Emperor.

Read page 20 out loud, then stop. Page 20 ends with, "...get a flower to grow." Show illustration.

Teacher asks: How is Ping feeling while the other children are rushing to the palace?

Students answer: Ping is feeling ashamed.

Teacher asks: Why is Ping feeling ashamed while the other children are rushing to the palace?

Students answer: Ping is thinking about how the other children would laugh at him for not being able to grow a flower.

Read pages 21-25 out loud, then stop. Page 25 ends with, "...did not say a word." Show illustrations.

Teacher asks: What have the other children brought to the Emperor?

Students answer: They have brought beautiful flowers.
Teacher asks: What does the Emperor do when he sees what the other children have brought?

Students answer: He frowns and does not say anything.

Read pages 26 and 27 out loud, then stop. Page 27 ends with, “...an empty pot?”. Show illustrations.

Teacher asks: What has Ping brought to the Emperor?

Students answer: Ping has brought an empty pot.

Continue reading out loud, then stop after the first paragraph on page 29. The first paragraph on page 29 ends with, “I have found the one person worthy of being Emperor!” Show illustrations.

Teacher asks: What does the Emperor do when Ping tells him why he brought an empty pot?

Students answer: The Emperor smiles and puts his arm around Ping. He shouts that he has found the one person worthy of being Emperor.

Read the rest of page 29 out loud, then stop. Page 29 ends with, “...for any of them to grow.” Show illustrations.

Teacher says: The Emperor has just revealed important information about why he chose Ping instead of any of the other children. Let’s make sure we understand it.

Teacher asks: What does the Emperor say about the seeds he gave to all of the children at the beginning of the competition?

Students answer: He says that they had all been cooked and that it was impossible for them to grow.

Teacher asks: If it was impossible for the seeds that the Emperor gave all of the children to grow, what does that tell us about the flowers the children brought?

Students answer: It tells us that the flowers did not come from the seeds the Emperor gave them.

Teacher asks: So how did Ping act differently from the other children in the contest?

Students answer:

* Ping used the seed he was given by the Emperor. The other children did not.
* Ping tried his best and worked hard.
* Ping followed the rules of the contest and did not cheat. The other children cheated and did not try their best.

Finish reading the story out loud, showing the illustrations.

Teacher asks: Why does the Emperor choose Ping to be his successor?

Students answer:

* The Emperor admires Ping’s courage to appear before him with the empty truth.
* Ping gave his best effort in the contest.
* Ping was truthful.
* Ping did not cheat.

Teacher asks: How did Ping show courage?

Students answer: Ping came to the palace with an empty flowerpot even though he was ashamed of it.
30. Teacher asks: The Emperor says, "I admire Ping's great courage to appear before me with the empty truth." What does he mean by 'the empty truth'?

Students answer: The 'empty truth' refers to Ping's honesty and his empty flowerpot. Ping used the cooked seed he was given by the Emperor, and the fact that his pot was empty showed his honesty.

31. Teacher says: Think about what Ping does in the story.

32. Teacher asks: Based on his actions throughout the story, describe what kind of person Ping seems to be.

Students answer:
* Ping is a hard worker.
* Ping tries his best to grow his seed.
* Ping is honest.
* Ping has courage or is courageous.

33. Teacher asks: What happened to Ping because of the way he acted?

Students answer: Ping won the competition and became the Emperor.

Teacher asks: How did the other children act during the contest?

Students answer:
* They cheated.
* They didn't show their best.

34. Teacher asks: What happened to the other children at the end?

Students answer:
* They lost the contest.
* The Emperor frowned at them because he was disappointed that they cheated.

35. Teacher asks: Based on the comparisons we have just made, what could be a theme or message of this story?

Students answer:
* People should try their best.
* People should work hard.
* People should be honest.
* People should play by the rules.
* People should not cheat.

Part 2: Guided Practice & Discussion

For this oral lesson, it is suggested to have the completed graphic organizer on the board with the answers concealed before this part of the lesson. After students provide a correct answer, reveal the corresponding answer on the graphic organizer.
Read-Aloud Lesson: The Empty Pot

1. Teacher asks: What does Ping do when he is given a seed?
   Students answer: He plants the seed and tries to make it grow.

2. Teacher asks: What happens when Ping tries to make the seed grow?
   Students answer: The seed does not grow.

3. Teacher asks: What does Ping do when the seed does not grow?
   Students answer: Ping tries hard to make the seed grow by watering it, moving the seed into a bigger pot with rich soil, and caring for it the best he can until the very end of the contest.

4. Teacher asks: What is the result of what Ping did?
   Students answer: The seed still does not grow.

5. Teacher asks: After one year passes, what do the other children present to the Emperor?
   Students answer: The other children present beautiful flowers to the Emperor.

6. Teacher asks: What does Ping present to the Emperor?
   Students answer: Ping presents an empty pot to the Emperor.
   Teacher asks: What happens when the other children present their flowers to the Emperor?
   Students answer: The Emperor frowns and is unhappy with them. None of them is selected to be the next Emperor.

7. Teacher asks: What happens when Ping presents his empty pot to the Emperor?
   Students answer: The Emperor smiles and selects Ping to be his successor.

After the answers for the graphic organizer have been completed and discussed with the class, ask the following two extension questions.

Teacher asks: Based on the different actions of Ping and the other children and the different results of these actions, what is a possible theme of the book, or a lesson that is taught in the book?

Students answer: A possible theme is that one should always try their best and be honest.

Teacher asks: The Emperor held a contest to find the next Emperor or leader of China. At the end of the book, he selects Ping. Based on the results of this contest, what qualities does a person need to be a good leader? Support your answer with examples from The Empty Pot.

Students answer:
* Courage: Ping decided to appear before the Emperor with an empty pot.
* Honesty: Ping told the truth to the Emperor when he explained how he tried his best but that the seed would not grow.
* Cunning/cleverness: The Emperor gave out seeds that he knew could not grow in order to determine which child was the most honest and had the most integrity.
* Determination: Ping did not give up when his seed did not grow.
* Care: Ping put a lot of effort into growing his seed.
* Wisdom: The Emperor showed wisdom in choosing Ping because of the honesty and integrity Ping displayed.
Read each question out loud to your students and have each student complete the worksheet independently.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Situation</th>
<th>Character’s Action</th>
<th>Result of Action</th>
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<td>Ping presents his empty pot to the Emperor.</td>
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1. Who will the Emperor choose to replace him and become the next Emperor?

   A the child who can get to the palace first during a race
   B the child who can grow the biggest flower
   C the child who can show the Emperor his or her best

2. What happens at the end of the story?

   A The Emperor decides who the next emperor will be.
   B The children are given special flower seeds by the Emperor.
   C Ping takes great care of his seed so that it would grow.

3. Ping is honest and has great courage. What evidence from the story supports this conclusion?

   A The children bring the beautiful flowers they have grown to the Emperor.
   B Ping brings his empty pot to the Emperor and tells him the seed didn’t grow.
   C Ping plants his seed in a new pot with new soil to try and make it grow.

4. Why is the Emperor displeased with the flowers that the children bring?

   A because he does not like the types of flowers the children bring
   B because he did not ask the children to bring him flowers
   C because the children likely did not use the seeds he gave them
5. What is the theme, or the main lesson, of *The Empty Pot*?

A Growing flowers is the most important skill for an Emperor to have.
B Cheating is okay as long as you do not get caught.
C Always try your best and be honest.

6. Read the following sentence: “I planted the seed you gave me and I watered it every day, but it didn’t **sprout**.”

In the sentence, what does the word *sprout* most nearly mean?

A grow
B die
C turn green

7. Select the word that best completes the sentence.

The Emperor gave the children seeds that could not grow __________ the children gave the Emperor pots filled with flowers.

A but
B because
C so

8. How does Ping feel about his empty pot?

__________________________________________________________________________
9. How does Ping act differently from the other children?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

10. At the beginning of the story, why does the Emperor give the children seeds that he knew could not grow? Write your answer in complete sentences.

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________________________________________________________________________
Note to Teacher: Read each question out loud to your students and have each student complete the worksheet independently.

Teacher Guide & Answers

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8. How does Ping feel about his empty pot?

**Suggested answer:** Ping feels *ashamed*.

9. How does Ping act differently from the other children?

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the book. Answers may include:
   - Ping shows the Emperor his empty pot while the other children show the Emperor their beautiful flowers [pages 25-28].
   - Ping uses the seed the Emperor gave him while the other children cheat and use different seeds.

10. At the beginning of the story, why does the Emperor give the children seeds that he knew could not grow? Write your answer in complete sentences.

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the book. Answers may include:
   - The Emperor wants to see whether any child would be brave and honest enough to present an empty pot.
   - The Emperor wants to test the children to see if they would cheat or try their best when their seed wouldn’t grow.
   - The Emperor wants to choose someone honest and brave to replace him.