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# THE LITTLE PRINCE



## Synopsis

A short version of this classic of childrens literature, this book, written a few years before the plane crash that killed saint-exupery, appeals to all ages for his tenderness and philosophical outlook. After all this years is still a perennial best-seller.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry first published *The Little Prince* in 1943, only a year before his Lockheed P-38 vanished over the Mediterranean during a reconnaissance mission. More than a half century later, this fable of love and loneliness has lost none of its power. The narrator is a downed pilot in the Sahara Desert, frantically trying to repair his wrecked plane. His efforts are interrupted one day by the apparition of a little, well, prince, who asks him to draw a sheep. "In the face of an overpowering mystery, you don't dare disobey," the narrator recalls. "Absurd as it seemed, a thousand miles from all inhabited regions and in danger of death, I took a scrap of paper and a pen out of my pocket." And so begins their dialogue, which stretches the narrator's imagination in all sorts of surprising, childlike directions. The Little Prince describes his journey from planet to planet, each tiny world populated by a single adult. It's a wonderfully inventive sequence, which evokes not only the great fairy tales but also such monuments of postmodern whimsy as Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. And despite his tone of gentle bemusement, Saint-Exupéry pulls off some fine satiric touches, too. There's the king, for example, who commands the Little Prince to function as a one-man (or one-boy) judiciary: I have good reason to believe that there is an old rat living somewhere on my planet. I hear him at night. You could judge that old rat. From time to time you

will condemn him to death. That way his life will depend on your justice. But you'll pardon him each time for economy's sake. There's only one rat. The author pokes similar fun at a businessman, a geographer, and a lamplighter, all of whom signify some futile aspect of adult existence. Yet his tale is ultimately a tender one--a heartfelt exposition of sadness and solitude, which never turns into Peter Pan-style treacle. Such delicacy of tone can present real headaches for a translator, and in her 1943 translation, Katherine Woods sometimes wandered off the mark, giving the text a slightly wooden or didactic accent. Happily, Richard Howard (who did a fine nip-and-tuck job on Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* in 1999) has streamlined and simplified to wonderful effect. The result is a new and improved version of an indestructible classic, which also restores the original artwork to full color. "Trying to be witty," we're told at one point, "leads to lying, more or less." But Saint-Exupéry's drawings offer a handy rebuttal: they're fresh, funny, and like the book itself, rigorously truthful. --James Marcus --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

YA-This new translation into "modern" English brings a classic tale into sharper focus for today's teens without sacrificing the beauty and simplicity of the author's writing, and the "restored" artwork has all the charm of the original drawings. What appears to be a simple tale of two lost souls--one, a pilot marooned in the desert next to his ditched plane; the other, a minuscule prince in self-imposed exile from an asteroid so small that he can watch the sunset 44 times a day--reveals itself as something far more complex. What appears to be a fairy tale for children opens like the petals of the Little Prince's flower into a fantasy that has lessons for all of us. Molly Connally, Kings Park Library, Fairfax County, VA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Part of reviewing on is trying to counter 's mis-posting of ratings of one edition of the same title with other editions of that title. Many times I have tried to use stars differently with different editions, and tried several times to correct the number of stars here, but still cannot handle that and gives the wrong number of stars to the wrong editions often. So let's try to counter this right off the bat and move my ratings to the top of the page:  
The ratings:  
Le Petit Prince: 5 stars  
English translations to date:  
Wakeman/Foreman: 4.5 stars  
Woods: 4.25 stars  
Howard: 1 star  
Schwarz: 1 star  
Testot-Ferry: 1 star  
In 2000, the Richard Howard translation of *The Little Prince* was released to supercede the original of Katherine Woods from 1943. When a publisher comes to one to translate such a classic how does one ever turn them down and say the last translation was good enough! I guess one doesn't. Money and ego prevail. But 'good enough' is the debating point. Is it good enough? Howard

writes in his preface "...it must be acknowledged that all translations date." Do they? Would one clean up and modernise the language of A.A. Milne in Winnie-the-Pooh? or of Kenneth Grahame in the Wind In The Willows? Of course not. Then Howard modernises Katherine Woods' rendition, "cry" with his "weep" during the departure from the fox. And he thinks this is more 'modern?' What self-contradictory nonsense translators can write to justify themselves and their publishers. I grew up on Katherine Woods' translation and prefer it over the Howard, but I must admit, when I look at my French copy, the Woods too has some elisions in translation. During the farewell from the fox, she translates: "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." Howard translates: "It's the time you spent on your rose that makes your rose so important." The French actually states: "C'est le temps que tu as perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante." Literally this translates far more meaningfully and philosophically than either of the Woods or the Howard as "It is the time which you have lost for your rose which makes your rose so important." So that leaves me thinking both translations have their flaws. I am not sure why both of them would dilute the original like they have, for it has surely been diluted from what St. Exupery wrote and intended, but the Woods translation is very close to St. Exupery's text and meaning and brings a layer to think about beyond merely "spent" time. From 2011 another translation is on the scene, by Ros and Chloe Schwarz, and it needs comment too. First of all, the illustrations: it is anything but sensitively rendered as its publicity blurb asserts. The colors have been filled in like old cellular film animation, and are just flat, losing St. Exupery's delicate drawing and watercolour washes. The hunter, as another example, has had circles drawn completely around his eyes now making him look like a goth caricature. The drawing of the fox in his lair has completely lost all the grass that was so delicately drawn by St. Exupery. The beautiful sense of all his drawings, that they flowed, without borders, right off the page, conveying their own meaningful addition to this borderless story, has been lost on many many of the drawings by the illustrator putting boxes around drawings that don't originally have any. The boa constrictor for instance. The sheep, for instance. Here the baobab trees and the weeding of Asteroid B-612 are now set against the dark background of space, not the daylight of the originals. The tiger no longer looks fearsome; it looks like a cute questioning pussycat, its line-work tampered with as it has been on most of the drawings. This illustration tampering is unforgiveable and reason alone not to buy this book. The Schwarz translation has a third perspective on the French, but still, for example, loses the quote mentioned above from the fox. "Perdu pour" is translated here as "spent on" again. St. Exupery chose "perdu pour" for a reason; he did not write "passé," or any other verb. "Perdu pour" brings many other things, more layers of meaning, to mind. Then these translators do other things. They do things so blatantly

wrong like alter his word "mouton" into "little lamb." If St. Exupery had meant little lamb he would have written "petit agneau" but he didn't. The little prince is not so dumb to not know little lambs grow up into bigger sheep. Also, in the geographer chapter, St. Exupery explains "ephemeral" as "menace de disparition prochaine," "a menace which disappears soon." The Schwarzs translate that phrase as "likely to die very soon." Clearly they completely don't get St. Exupery's thought and subtlety and at the same time possess the unbelievable arrogance to write words that St. Exupery did not. They clearly don't have the soul of poets or philosophers ideally necessary, nor even the workman-like craft to simply translate what is there. Their approach to translation, like Howard's is unforgivable, and is another reason this book too should absolutely just sit on the rubbish heap until someone re-does it properly. The book itself is charming: tiny, hardcover, with gilt page edges and a ribbon marker. Full marks for being sturdy and beautifully portable, but otherwise... do yourself a favour and stay away from it too. I recently found another translation of which I was unaware, from Alan Wakeman, 1995 (hardcover), illustrated from St. Exupery by Michael Foreman. Michael Foreman is one of my favourite illustrators and I have many of his books. Works in beautiful watercolours. I wondered. When it arrived I knew I was in for something special. Wakeman (he says in the preface), started translating in 1979, not under contract, but simply because he was not satisfied with the Katherine Woods' translation. He worked in his favourite retreat by the sea, overlooking the Golfe de Giens, which turned out, from the beginning discovery in 1993 of St. Exupery's sunken plane, to overlook the crash site in the sea where St. Exupery was lost. It took another decade or so to absolutely confirm that this is where St. Exupery went down, but Wakeman was apparently eerily in touch with something from St. Exupery through their labours of love. Wakeman's translation is pretty accurate. He still translates "perdu pour" as "spent on," but okay. He translates "ephemere" as "doomed to disappear soon." Nice, and with a layer of fate the Schwarz's miss, but which Woods captures, albeit a bit more clumsily with "in danger of speedy disappearance." Wakeman has his quirks though. He translates "blanc", the colour of the little prince's hair, as "corn." Technically correct, but an odd choice usually considered much more a secondary meaning to the more common one of "wheat." While a kernel of corn may be the colour of the little prince's hair, the kernels are not seen under the corn husks in a field of corn. The tassels, while colour correct, are overwhelmed in a corn field, especially from a fox's point of view, by all the green and are not really seen either. Wakeman seems to have never spent any time by a corn field to know that, unlike the fox who lives there, so Wakeman does not get that his quirky translation allusion is a stretch in reminding one of the little prince's hair colour. I find it rather a clash, or at the very least a break in the lovely flow St. Exupery spent so much time and talent

composing, and work editing to create in his original work. Foreman's illustrations are what is special about this Wakeman translation. All of the St. Exupéry ones used, which is most of them, have been taken and re-worked. The line work and watercolour is far more skilful than St. Exupéry, but extraordinarily faithful, and retains that childlike naivety. It really takes a second look to realize it is not actually St. Exupéry's line work with better color. All drawings have been given color, which brings a satisfaction absent from some, even in the original publication, where for example, I have been sorely tempted to pull out my own paint box for the little prince watching the sunset. This drawing is clearly a watercolour originally, but has only ever been published in black and white. (Why?) Here all the drawings are now shown in colour. But where Foreman has really excelled is in introducing 8 beautiful full page or double page paintings of the little prince and the pilot: comforting the little prince when he was sad, walking with the little prince in his arms when exhausted to find water, sharing his drawings with the little prince, running with his revolver to kill the snake if he could... whole new enhancements to the story, bringing more forward the relationship that it was, not just story-telling about the little prince. For it is not just the story of a special individual, but also one of a special relationship, and the special place in our lives of special relationships and what makes them special. The Woods translation is still head and shoulders above the new ones, except for the Wakeman. Both are far more evocative of what was intended. The Foreman illustrations with the Wakeman translation I think makes it even better. The Woods translation hardcover is now a collectors item and can often be very expensive and harder to find in the U.S. Easier in Britain (and isn't that a whole other very interesting essay on the lovely differences it indicates). The Woods edition appears to be available economically as a paperback (white cover, usually pre-2000 publishing date), but with no color illustrations. The Howard translation, both hardcover and softcover (blue cover), both with color illustrations (and some black and white), is easily available at a quite reasonable price. The Schwarz translation is available in England and Canada easily, but hard to locate and has very poor notes on .com. The Wakeman/Foreman collaboration (hardcover) can still be found used, in good shape, economical, for now, but also as a very expensive collectors item. (There are, I think, copyright issues until 2044; another interesting essay). I cannot vouch for the paperback version, publications of which often get cheap and sometimes are done with black and white illustrations only, like the Katherine Woods paperback and the Testot-Ferry translation (see below and see my review of Michael Foreman's Arthur High King Of Britain for more.). My recommendation is buy the best available, the Wakeman/Foreman hardcover edition, or the Woods hardcover, (or both; each have their merits and shortcomings), and if your French is alright, get a French version too. It is worth working through *Le Petit Prince*. You will learn more about life and

language and different cultures in doing so than in many larger weightier, more adult tomes and our children will too from this timeless story with so many layers and such depth in its simplicity. The ratings: Le Petit Prince: 5 stars English translations to date: Wakeman/Foreman: 4.5 stars Woods: 4.25 stars Howard: 1 star Schwarz: 1 star Testot-Ferry: 1 star P.S. I have also discovered there is enough of the Irene Testot-Ferry translation (Wordsworth) on the "read inside" feature to render an opinion on it too. Cumbersome. Archaic, and not in a good way like the Katherine Woods. The Testot-Ferry is awkward, incorrect: e.g. "un peu," "a little," is translated as "more or less." "I flew more or less all over the world." Seems to lack the modesty intended by St. Exupery and the pilot here in the story which "a little" conveys. So she doesn't really get it. (And by the way, Wakeman leaves out "a little" completely. Rather a short-coming). The Testot-Ferry translation is awkward. She opens a paragraph with: "As a result of which I have been in touch, throughout my life, with all kinds of serious people." for "J'ai ainsi eu, au cours de ma vie, des tas de contacts avec des tas de gens sérieux." which more correctly and simply translates as "I have had, through the course of my life, lots of contact, with lots of serious people." Also, all the drawings in this edition are the most abysmal black and white hack reproductions. So avoid this translation despite its bargain basement price. You get what you pay for. There are better (more accurate) translations and more richness and layers of meaning in the Wakeman and the Woods translations, which are missing and awkward in the Testot-Ferry, and which such a classic piece of literature deserves. P.P.S. A recent comment elsewhere prompted this post script: If you have a Cuffe translation of The Little Prince it too is very rare and likely will never be re-printed. The Wakeman edition is becoming such too, sadly. The reason for this is that the Little Prince fell out of copyright in England after fifty years, so Penguin and Pavillion, actually anticipating this, did the Cuffe version and the Wakeman version respectively. What they didn't anticipate was that later in 1995 the UK harmonized its copyright law with the EU where copyright is 70 years and St. Exupery is allowed an additional 30 years due to his premature death in exceptional service to his nation, and The Little Prince, like a handful of other titles, fell back into copyright there. Hence The Little Prince will not now fall out of copyright in Europe or England until 2045. This means, alas, likely no Folio Society edition or any other UK or European one for quite some time. In the U.S. of course, they ignore all this, and do their own thing, hence the Howard translation in 2000. Additionally, as I understand it, there are some differences among the family. St. Exupery's birth family appears to have approved of the Wakeman translation, but St. Exupery's wife Consuelo (and now her family), I believe, own the copyright, and my guess is, have a pretty strict and exclusive agreement with Harcourt Brace in North America. Why would HB not, for this incredible money-maker that most publishers

would love a piece of. Which means yes, the Katherine Woods version is still available in England where it is beyond HB's taste and control, thankfully.

Attached to this review will be a silent flip-through of the entire coloring book so you can make an informed decision as to whether or not it will work for you. This is a wonderful coloring book for fans of *The Little Prince*. The artwork is derived from the original artwork in the book but has been put together in a way to make it more fun to color. Additionally, there are also excerpts on each page from the English translation of the story. It gives you a feel for what the book is about but it is not a re-telling of the whole story. The line work on the designs is very delicate. Some designs are open and easy to color while others have many intricate and small details. I went back and re-acquainted myself with the original story (though the English translation!) What I didn't realize as a child was how adult the many themes of this book were. What I remember from reading it as a child was thinking both how wonderful and how sad it would be to be the little prince. The designs are printed on both sides of non-perforated paper. Most of the designs spread across two pages. Most of the pages in my book did not line up well, so the two-page spreads were off. Most designs merge into the binding and part of the design appear lost in it. The binding is sewn although the cover and the very edge of the bound book seem to be glued together. I think it is a matter of cutting threads to remove pages "though it appears that if you cut threads, the entire book will come apart as it is sewn from front to back with multiple threads. I could get the book to lay fairly flat by breaking the spine with a hard crease. That exposed the parts of the design that were missing at the bound edge but it will make it easier to color into the inside portions. All markers and gel pens either bleed through or leave a noticeable color shadow on the reverse side of the page. My coloring pencils (soft core and hard) worked well on the paper. For me, the book will have to be for coloring pencils only. Taking the book apart is problematic as I'll never get the images to line up and it appears that small amounts of the design are missing from where the two-page spread designs come together. While I love the illustrations, the publishing issues (two-pages spreads, missing design work, mis-aligned pages, etc.) as well as the inability to use anything other than coloring pencils cause me to detract a star from my rating. If I were reviewing only the artwork, this book would be fantastic; however, it is a book I intend to color in and the other issues present problems that may well keep others from contemplating buying this coloring book.

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