

The Story of Ferdinand

Ferdinand is a bull unlike any other. Instead of spending his time honing his fighting skills by rough-housing with his brothers, Ferdinand sits under his favorite cork tree and smells the flowers. When by fluke he is chosen to fight in the most famous bull ring in Spain, Ferdinand stays true to his character. This book has always served as an allegory for the virtues of non-macho behavior, and it continues to do so today.

Author Bio: Munro Leaf (1905-1976) was an American author of children's books. *Ferdinand* was his most famous. He was an English teacher.

Questions:

- Why do you think Ferdinand felt the way he did? What do you think the other bulls thought of him?
- What is the author's point of view about Ferdinand's actions? Do you agree with him?
- Does this book, written in 1936, have any meaning for us today?
- What was it that attracted Ferdinand to sitting under the cork tree?
- Why did Ferdinand's mother want him to play with the other bulls?
- Why do you think the men selected Ferdinand for the bullfight?
- Do you think Ferdinand would have fought in the bullring if he had not been distracted by the flowers the women wore? Why?
- Why do you think the illustrator drew all the pictures in pen and ink?
- How did the illustrator show you that Ferdinand's mother cared about him? How did the author do the same thing?
- How do you think Ferdinand's mother changed in this story? What do you think caused the changes?
- What might have happened if Ferdinand had not sat down in the ring to smell the flowers? What if Ferdinand had fought the matador? Come up with alternative endings. How would a change to the ending alter the story? Could it have ended sadly?
- This is a story about being non-violent in the face of provocation. Has someone ever made you angry? How did you react to them? Do you wish you had reacted differently? (Relate to how Big Anthony acted when he got angry with the townspeople in *Strega Nona* – sought revenge).

BIG IDEAS

- Be true to yourself. Happiness does not come from meeting others' expectations so much as from being true to your own personality and talents. Discovering the things you enjoy doing most of all is a very important part of growing up.
- Our community (classroom, city, country) is richer for all its wonderfully diverse individuals, talented in many ways, much like Ferdinand's field of flowers.
- Fighting is not the only way to create a public, colorful, passion-filled, entertaining spectacle. Dance works just as well.
- Non-violent, strong and persistent response defuses bullies and enriches the community.

ACTIVITY

Activity: Build a cork boat!

Posted by Tracy Q. (NY)

I gave the kids two corks, three toothpicks, and a square piece of paper; then they all built this very simple boat: They stuck the toothpicks in one cork, then attached the other cork by sticking the other ends of the toothpicks in the other cork. Then they stuck one toothpick from the top of one of the corks, then attached the square piece of paper to make the sail. They floated it in the water, and used the wind (them blowing) to make the boat move.

CRAFT

Tissue Paper Flowers

Instructions:

Cut three 4 - 5 inch circles out of tissue paper. Cut a green pipe cleaner in half. Roll one end of your pipe cleaner half into a small circle; poke the other end of the pipe cleaner through the center of one of the tissue paper circles. Pull the circle up to fit snugly below the circle you made in the pipe cleaner. Crumple the circle a little bit so it looks "fluffy". Repeat with the other circles. Make 3 or 4 flowers and twist the ends together.

Coffee Filter Flowers

What You Need

- Markers
- Newspapers or protective cover for work area
- Coffee filters
- Bumpy chenille stem (or regular chenille stem)

How To Make It

1. Cover work area with newspapers or other protective covering.
2. Let children draw or color on 5-7 coffee filters with the markers. Random markings are just fine as detailed drawings won't show up in this project.
3. Place one coffee filter decorative side down on the table. Stack other coffee filters decorative side up on top.
4. Fold coffee filters in half. Scrunch middle of the coffee filters (starting at the bottom coffee filter).
5. Wrap chenille stem tightly around scrunched area to hold in place. Straighten chenille stem to use as flower stem.

