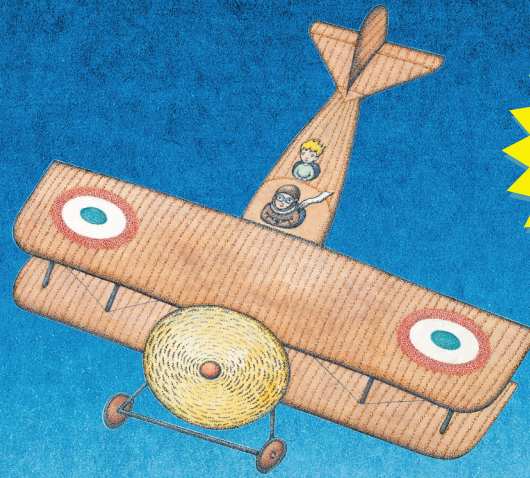


A Teacher's Guide to the Books of *Peter Sis*



FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

An internationally acclaimed illustrator, author, and filmmaker, **PETER SÍS** was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, and grew up in Prague. Peter describes his childhood in Prague as “a little bit scary, with all its shadowy, gloomy cobblestone streets and dark cold cellars.” As a child, Peter loved to draw, and his mother constantly encouraged his drawing.

In 1984, Peter was granted asylum to the United States, where most everything he saw inspired his writing and drawing. Peter’s children were also the source of many of his ideas.

Peter attended the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and the Royal College of Art in London, is a seven-time winner of *The New York Times Book Review* Best Illustrated Book of the Year, a two-time *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award Honoree, and a two-time winner of the Society of Illustrators Gold Medal. Peter’s books *Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei*; *Tibet through the Red Box*; and *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* were all named Caldecott Honor books by the American Library Association. *The Wall* was also awarded the Robert F. Sibert Medal.

PETER SÍS lives in the New York City area with his wife and children.



To attain specific Common Core grade level standard for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes’ needs. You know your kids best!

Art © Peter Sis

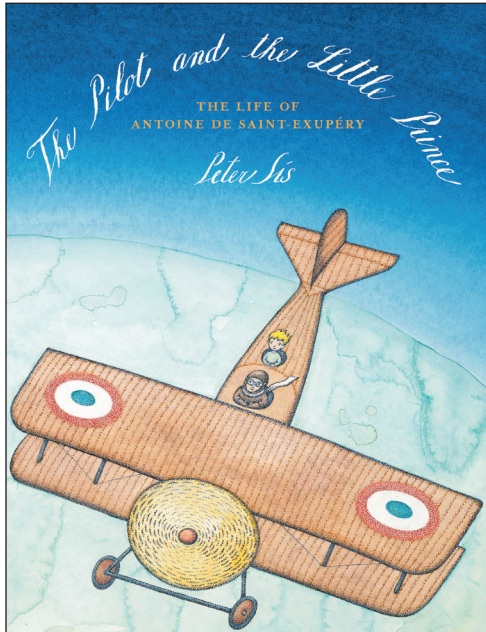


SQUARE
FISH

mackids.com



petersis.com



ISBN: 9780374380694 / \$18.99

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS
Farrar Straus Giroux

The Pilot and the Little Prince

The Life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

ABOUT THE BOOK

Born in France in 1900, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry always wanted to fly. His dream came true during his military service in 1921 where he started to take flying lessons. After his service ended, he obtained his commercial license and flew passengers over Paris for scenic tours. Antoine then became a mail pilot and began flying longer and longer trips, bundling up against the cold. With fellow pilots, he created new mail routes in South America, flew over all types of terrain, and attempted to establish new flying records. Although Antoine crashed several planes on his adventures, he always managed to survive. In 1939 he became a war pilot for France and photographed the Germans' positions. After France fell to Germany, Antoine took up residence in New York, where he wrote the children's classic *The Little Prince*. But Antoine missed his own country, so in 1943 he rejoined his old squadron in North Africa and flew missions over southern France. He disappeared on his final mission on July 31, 1944.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who or what influenced the life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry?
2. How did Antoine de Saint-Exupéry work to achieve his goal? What sacrifices did he make?
3. What are some of the major accomplishments of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry?
4. What did Antoine de Saint-Exupéry contribute to aeronautic history?
5. In what ways did his writing career help him in other aspects of his life?

CCSS: RI.4.1. 5.1; SL.4.1, 5.1

CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

Social Studies / History

Antoine knew planes from the ground up because he worked as an airplane mechanic before he became a pilot. Ask students to research the types of planes Antoine piloted; students should select one and create a fact sheet with illustration(s) for the selected aircraft. The fact sheet should include, where possible: name of aircraft, country of origin, manufacturer, years produced, number built, primary purpose or role, unit cost, and other interesting information. Arrange and display projects in the classroom.

Ask students to pair up and write about the time in which Antoine lived (1900–1944), describing noteworthy world events during his lifetime. Students should select from among the following: political climate, transportation advancements, medical breakthroughs, social customs, sports, natural disasters, important people, and other significant developments. Have students present their information in newspaper article format and, when appropriate, use illustrations. Compile all the student selections into a classroom newspaper from the period.

CCSS: RI.3.1, 4.1; W.3.4, 3.7, 4.4, 4.7



mackids.com



petersis.com

2

TEACHER'S GUIDE
Peter Sis: A Body of Work

Language Arts

Using facts and details from the book, ask students to create a timeline of Antoine's writing career, and based on the facts, write a short biography suitable for a book cover of *The Little Prince* or another of the author's works. Display book covers with the author's biographies around the room.

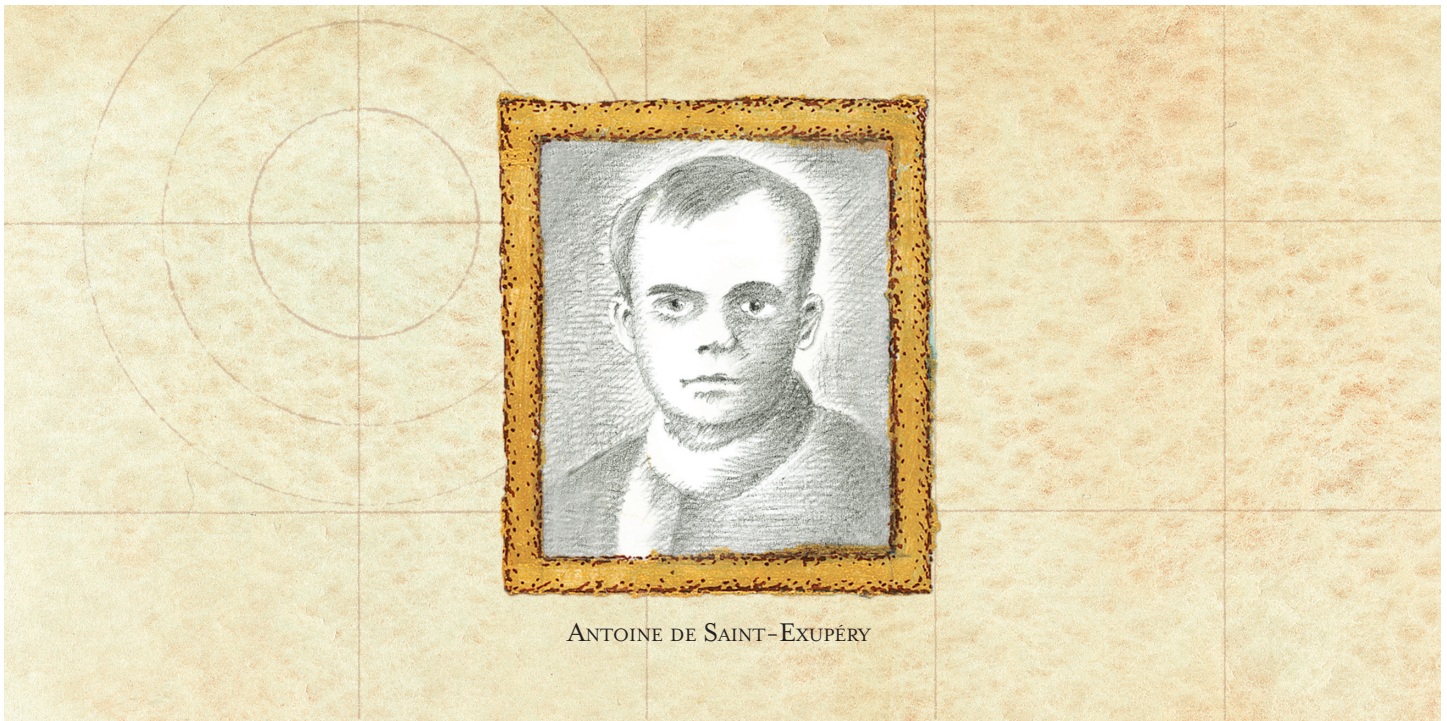
Ask students to investigate one of the adventures or plane crashes in which Antoine was involved, making note about the historical events. Then, using their notes, students should write a first person narrative about the incident they selected and include sensory details and the character's thoughts. Have students share their narratives in small groups. Optionally, students may include costumes or props for their small group-share sessions.

CCSS: W.3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7

Science

Early pilots used the stars as navigational guides at night. Ask students to research stars and constellations that the pilots would have used on their mail routes in the 1930s. Have students pair up to find a map of the constellations and mark a flight pattern of one of the mail route created in South America. They should write a journal using the pilot's voice to describe a night flight. Post the flight patterns and journals in the classroom.

CCSS: W.3.2, 3.7, 4.2, 4.7



SQUARE
FISH

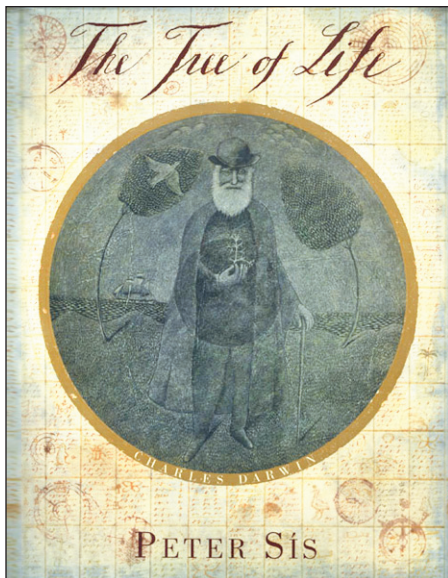
mackids.com

macmillan
children's publishing group

petersis.com

3

TEACHER'S GUIDE
Peter Sis: A Body of Work



ISBN: 9780374456283 / \$19.99

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS
Farrar Straus Giroux

The Tree of Life

ABOUT THE BOOK

Charles Darwin was born in 1809. His father was a doctor who wanted Charles to study the classics and follow in his footsteps. But Charles had other ideas: he wanted to study nature and science. After impressing his botany professor, Charles was invited to join a voyage to South America as a naturalist. He wrote extensive notes about his observations, and quietly analyzed what he had seen. On his return home Darwin married, had children, and continued to work on his theory of evolution. At the time, Darwin shared his idea with few scientists in his field because it was highly controversial. When he published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, great debate broke out. Darwin died in 1882.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who or what influenced the life of Charles Darwin?
2. What did Darwin study on his five-year voyage with Robert Fitzroy?
3. Why did Darwin keep his theory about natural selection a secret? In whom did he confide?

CCSS: RI.4.1, 5.1; SL.4.1, 5.1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Science

In small groups, ask students to investigate what naturalists do: their beliefs, their methods, their equipment, and their mission. Then ask each group to write and illustrate a brochure that informs others about naturalists. Students can contact area nature centers or nature preserves as a possible “audience” for their brochures.

CCSS: W.5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7

Social Studies

Ask students to research the debate between creationism and evolution and show how the debate has changed since 1859. Each student should choose a side and write a position paper, supporting their argument with research. Post the position papers around the room.

CCSS: W.5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7

Language Arts

Darwin kept meticulous journals about his thoughts and observations as he traveled and studied. Ask students to keep a journal for fourteen days and write every day about their observations of an event, a person, or something from nature. Students should date every entry and draw pictures where needed. Have students share their favorite journal entries with the class.

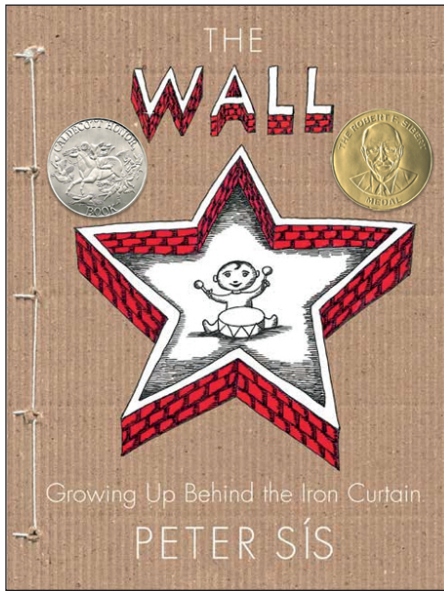
CCSS: W.5.4, 6.4



mackids.com



petersis.com



ISBN: 9780374347017 / \$18.99

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS
Farrar Straus Giroux

The Wall

Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain

ABOUT THE BOOK

Peter Sís tells the story of his childhood against the backdrop of World War II and the Cold War. Experiencing life behind the Iron Curtain, Peter had no freedom to express his passion for drawing and music, but he dreamed of being able to do so one day. As news from the West slowly filtered through the Iron Curtain, Peter and his teenage friends learned about blue jeans, Coca-Cola, and rock music. Their world began to open up—it was the Prague Spring of 1968. But it ended abruptly in August, when Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Russians. All the freedoms that had been gained were taken away, and fear and suspicion returned. But Peter continued to write and draw—and to dream of freedom. Eventually, he found that in America.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Peter Sís says of himself, “He joined a rock group and painted music. What does Peter mean by this statement?”
2. What countries controlled Czechoslovakia? How did the Iron Curtain separate Czechoslovakia symbolically, physically, and ideologically?
3. What is the difference between socialism and communism?

CCSS: RI.5.1.6.1; L.5.1, 6.1; SL.5.1, 6.1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts

As students read about the Iron Curtain, ask them to make a list of political terms and places that are used in the text. Then ask students, working in groups of two or three, to select words from their lists and to write them with definitions on a 3 x 5 index card. Have students create a political map of Europe during the Cold War, adding their words and definitions to the map. Have students share their maps and post them around the room.

CCSS: RI.5.1, 6.1; SL.5.1, 6.1

History

In small groups, ask students to research the history of the Iron Curtain: why was the Iron Curtain established, how did it impact the peoples on either side, what contributed to its fall, how has life changed as a result of its fall, and who were the major players? Students can compile their information and produce a media presentation to share with other classes.

CCSS: W.5.2, 5.7, 6.2, 6.7

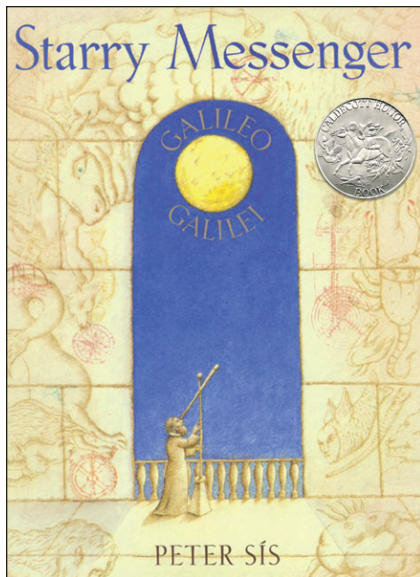


SQUARE
FISH

mackids.com



petersis.com



Starry Messenger

ABOUT THE BOOK

Galileo Galilei was a man before his time; courageous and brilliant, he changed the way people viewed our galaxy. As an extremely curious child, Galileo was fixed on the stars; later he attended the University of Pisa and studied mathematics and physics. At the age of only twenty-five, Galileo became a professor; people considered him a genius. After hearing about a new instrument with magnifying lenses—a telescope—Galileo created his own and pointed it skyward. Galileo made many startling discoveries and proved that the planets revolved around the sun. As his popularity grew, however, the church became alarmed and tried him for contradicting its teachings. He was convicted of heresy and spent the rest of his life under house arrest.

ISBN: 9780374371913 / \$18.99

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS
Farrar Straus Giroux

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Galileo show his courage and genius to the world?
2. In what way did Galileo turn the world upside down?
3. Why were people so drawn to Galileo? How did his popularity contribute to his imprisonment?

CCSS: RI.4.1. 5.1; SL.4.1, 5.1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

History

Galileo was born in 1564, in a time when many outstanding artists, writers, and scholars flourished. Have students work in small groups, with each group selecting one of the men mentioned in the book or someone else from that period and, using a variety of sources, to research the man's life and contribution to the world. After all group members have become familiar with their individual's contributions, have students select one person to represent that individual while the other group members act as reporters interviewing him. Each group should present their interview scenario to the class. Props and costumes can be added to the presentations.

CCSS: W.5.2, 5.7, 6.2, 6.7

Science

Because of his observations, Galileo changed the course of science and the belief system of the modern world. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the laws of science Galileo discovered: the law of the Pendulum, the Law of Falling Objects, or the Law of Floating Objects. Ask each group to write an explanation of the law, how it works, and how it has affected the way modern scientists think. Have students present their explanations along with a demonstration or illustration to the class.

CCSS: W.5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7



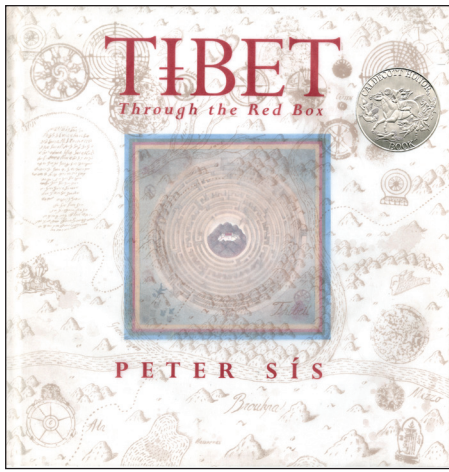
mackids.com



petersis.com

6

TEACHER'S GUIDE
Peter Sis: A Body of Work



ISBN: 9780374375522 / \$27.50

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS
Farrar Straus Giroux

Tibet

Through the Red Box

ABOUT THE BOOK

When Peter Sís was a small child in Czechoslovakia, his father was called away to film a documentary about the Lhasa Highway that was being built between China and Tibet. While working there, he kept a diary, and when he returned he stored it in a lacquered red box on a shelf in his office. Peter was not allowed to touch it. But when Peter was a young man, his father called him home and allowed him to open it. As Peter read the diary, he remembers and imagines his father's experiences during his time in Tibet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between Peter and his father? How does it change as Peter grows up and his father ages?
2. Who and what did Peter's father rely on to keep him safe and alive during his time in Tibet? What dangers did he face?
3. Why did Peter's father forbid him from opening the Red Box when he was young?

CCSS: RI.5.1.6.1; L.5.1, 6.1; SL.5.1, 6.1,

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

History

Ask students to work with a partner to research the Lhasa Highway and to determine when and how it was built, the route it takes, and the cities it connects. Have students draw a map of the highway showing the borders it crosses today and those it crossed in the past. Then ask them to research the impact of this highway, both past and present, on the countries where the road is located. Have students write a brief account from the point of view of one of the inhabitants of the cities of countries on the map. Students can then share and post their interviews and maps.

Language Arts

Peter's father tells him stories of a jingle boy, gentle giants, fish with human faces, and a Potala where the Boy-God-King lives. Ask students to select one of the stories and, after reading and investigating it, to write an argument for or against the truth or legend that supports the story. Have students include illustrations of their stories and display them in the classroom.

Tibet through the Red Box is a narrative memoir, a specific memory in Peter Sís's life that he brings alive for readers. Ask students to think about their own family stories of a special time or event. Then ask them to create a storyboard as a prewriting tool that chronologically includes the major details of the event and a statement of why the story is important to them personally. After writing about their special memory, students should share their stories in small groups.

CCSS: W.5.3, 6.3

Science

The yak was essential to the people in Tibet, supplying clothes, milk, meat, and transportation. What special knowledge and tools were required by the Tibetan people in order to harvest all they needed from the yak? Ask students to work in small groups to investigate the yak and Tibet in the mid-1950s and to create a visual presentation of their findings. Have each group share their findings with another group and post visuals in the classroom.

CCSS: L.5.1, 6.1; RI.5.1.6.1; W.5.2, 5.4, 5.7, 6.2, 6.4, 6.7



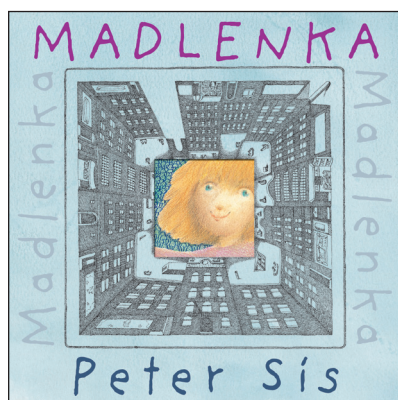
SQUARE
FISH

mackids.com



petersis.com

The Madlenka Books



HC ISBN: 9780374399696 / \$17.99
PB ISBN: 9780312659127 / \$7.99



ISBN: 9780374346997 / \$18.99



ISBN: 9780374347024 / \$16.99

FRANCES FOSTER BOOKS / Farrar Straus Giroux • Square Fish

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Madlenka lives in New York City on a block as big as the world. Her neighbors represent four continents and several countries, and they operate a variety of businesses. Madlenka shares the special events in her life by telling all of her friends the news of her lost tooth. Her neighbors pretend Madlenka's imaginary dog is real, and the animals on her street play soccer with Madlenka and her friend, Cleopatra. Madlenka's joy and her love for life brighten up the lives of her friends.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role do Madlenka's parents play in her life? Based on Madlenka's character, what do you know about her parents' beliefs and values?
2. What words would you use to describe Madlenka? How do you know she is a good friend?
3. How does Madlenka use her imagination?
4. What does Madlenka learn from her neighbors about their cultures?

CCSS: RL.1.1, 2.1; SL.1.2, 2.1

CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

Social Studies

With students working in pairs, have them select one of Madlenka's neighbors and write a list of everything Madlenka learns about the culture of that person's country. Then, have students create a flip book, illustrating each of the items on the list and writing a brief paragraph for each illustration. The flip books can be displayed in the classroom.

CCSS: W.1.1, 1.7, 2.2, 2.7

Language Arts

Read all three books to or with the class. Then divide students into groups of three or four and assign each group one of the three Madlenka books to discuss. Ask students to discuss the book and, using a plot diagram, have them illustrate the story's events. Then ask them to describe and add to their plot diagram an explanation of how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes it. Have groups share with the other groups who read the same book and also with groups who read the other two selections. Post plot diagrams around the room.

CCSS: RL.1.5, 2.5



SQUARE
FISH

mackids.com

macmillan
children's publishing group

petersis.com