

1 Overview

For those who have ever had a true friend, this story will warm your heart. A mouse and a whale seem like the most unlikely animals to be friends; but when one saves the other from certain death, gratitude and friendship follow. How will the pair react when they realize they must part? Will they ever meet again? This story reminds us that true friendship never dies, no matter how many miles separate you.

2 Author & Illustrator

William Steig (November 14, 1907 - October 3, 2003) was born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who had immigrated from Poland. He began drawing as a teenager and worked as a cartoonist for his high school newspaper. After attending college to study art, he had intended to go to sea, but his family needed money. It was during the Great Depression, so instead of heading to the ocean, Steig helped to support his family during this difficult time by drawing cartoons for the *New Yorker* magazine. Steig ended up spending seven decades (that 's seventy years) drawing for the *New Yorker*, producing 1,600 drawings and 117 covers.

Steig was in his sixties when he began writing children's books, winning the Caldecott Medal in 1970 for his third children's book, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. His book *Shrek!* was adapted into a movie that won the Academy Award in 2001 for best animated feature film. Some say his books were popular due to the clever yet complicated language he used, believing children love the sound of the more complicated words.

It has been said the character Amos in *Amos & Boris* realizes Steig's dream of going to sea. Ever the cartoonist, his illustrative media for this Read-Aloud is pen and ink.

3 Before You Read

- Look at the book cover. Do you think Amos and Boris are friends? How do you think the mouse and the whale met? What do you think they have in common? Can people who are very different be friends? Can you be friends with someone who doesn't like all the same things you like? What makes someone a good friend? Can you recall another Read-Aloud book about an unusual friendship? (*The Ant and the Elephant*) Can you think of any people from the Bible that were unlikely friends?

4 Vocabulary

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| <input type="checkbox"/> breakers — waves that break into foam | <input type="checkbox"/> luminous — glowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> backwash — the motion of a wave going back from the shore | <input type="checkbox"/> vast — very great in size |
| <input type="checkbox"/> navigation — how to get from place to place | <input type="checkbox"/> akin — similar, like part of the same family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sextant — an instrument used to find latitude and longitude at sea | <input type="checkbox"/> overwhelmed — overpowered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> iodine — medicine used to kill germs | <input type="checkbox"/> desperately — with little or no hope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high tide — when the ocean is at its highest level on the shore | <input type="checkbox"/> evaded — avoided, escaped from |
| <input type="checkbox"/> savage — wild or fierce | <input type="checkbox"/> bowling along — moving along quickly and without problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> well-suited — agreeable, made for | <input type="checkbox"/> treading water — like swimming but instead of trying to get somewhere, you are just trying to keep your head above the water while staying in the same place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> miserable — very unhappy and uncomfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> horse mackerel — a large tuna |
| <input type="checkbox"/> immensely — greatly, to an exceedingly great extent or degree | <input type="checkbox"/> dreadful — terrible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> full of enterprise — full of adventurous spirit and readiness | <input type="checkbox"/> surface of the water — the top of the water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> phosphorescent — giving off light without heat | <input type="checkbox"/> loomed — seemed threateningly close |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marveled — wondered | |

- “Holy clam and cuttlefish”** — a saying Boris uses when he is surprised
- Ivory Coast of Africa** — country in Africa on the coast that belongs to France
- consider it a privilege** — think it a special action or deed
- relief** — removal of pain and distress
- secure** — free from danger and worry
- worn to a frazzle** — very, very, very tired
- spluttering** — gasping and spitting out liquid while trying to breathe
- sounded** — dove underwater swiftly and deeply
- rage** — uncontrolled anger
- in advance** — before
- leisurely** — unhurried, slowly
- exchanging ideas** — sharing ideas
- admiration** — feeling of approval and affection
- delicacy** — fineness of quality
- quivering daintiness** — trembling delicate beauty
- gemlike radiance** — cheerful brightness that is like a gem
- bulk** — big size
- grandeur** — awesomeness
- purpose** — determination
- abounding friendliness** — great amount of friendliness
- ambitions** — goals for the future
- fascinated** — kept interested
- accounts** — descriptions
- plankton** — tiny animals that live on the surface layer of the water
- spout** — to shoot water out of his blowhole
- conference** — assembly or meeting to talk about important matters
- incidents** — events
- occurred** — happened
- century** — period of 100 years
- tidal wave** — an enormous and destructive ocean wave produced by strong winds
- stranded** — left without a way back
- moisture** — wetness
- desperately** — urgently
- mote of a mouse** — a small speck, like a speck of dust
- agony of pity** — extreme sadness for the situation
- breaded** — covered
- rumble** — a deep heavy sound like thunder

5 Picture Review & Comprehension

- Where is the setting for this story? (the coast, ocean)
- Who are the main characters in the story? (Amos and Boris)
- Describe Amos.* (He was a mouse, lived by the sea, and loved the smell and sounds of the sea.)
- Why did Amos build a boat? (He had wondered about faraway places on the other side of the water.)
- How did he prepare for the journey?
(worked on the boat, studied navigation, loaded the boat with items he thought he would need for the journey)
- How will Amos navigate while out in the ocean? (use the stars–constellations–as guides)
- What famous explorer have we studied that used the stars to navigate while on the ocean? (Christopher Columbus)
- Of the items Amos loaded onto his boat, which are used to help with navigation? (compass, sextant)
- Why would he take iodine? (in case he got a cut or scrape)
- Look at the four stages of the boat. Describe the additions you see in each picture.*
(from first to second: sides, compartment built with doorway and windows cut, mast; from second to third: paint, windows, and doors complete, sail ready; from third to fourth: sail is attached with ropes, pulley added to help load items for the trip)
- Why do you think Amos named his ship the Rodent?*(because mice are a special group of mammals called rodents)
- How did the trip begin? (Everything seemed to go smoothly; Amos had one day of seasickness.)
- What makes us think Amos is enjoying his voyage?*(The story says he was enjoying his trip immensely, he was full of wonder, full of enterprise, and full of love for life)
- How did Amos feel this night? (tiny in a big universe, like he was part of a big family, overwhelmed by all the beauty and mystery of the sea)
- What happened as he was thinking about everything?*(He fell off the boat.)
- Recount what happened next. (He tried to grab the boat but couldn't, decided it was too far to swim, so he was going to tread water until something could save him.)

- What was he afraid of? (shark, big fish, or horse mackerel)
- How did Amos feel? (unprotected)
- Do you think he was scared?
- What can we do when we are scared?*(talk to mom or dad or a trusted grown-up, and most importantly, pray)
- How did things go from bad to worse for Amos? (It began to rain.)
- Did the rain last all day? (No, just until noon.)
- What did Amos worry about? (dying, how long it would take, what it would feel like, would his soul go to heaven, are other mice in heaven)
- Do you think these are pleasant thoughts to have?
- What animal did Amos meet? (a whale)
- What did they have in common?*(They were both mammals.)
- What were their differences?*(One lived on land, one in the sea, one was big, and the other small.)
- We have learned the five main oceans of the world. Name them. (Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic, Antarctic)
- What could the author mean by the seven seas?
(After listening to ideas, explain that the seven seas are: North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian, Arctic, Antarctic.)
- Was it on his way for Boris to take Amos home? (No)
- Why did Boris go out of his way for Amos? (That is what friends do.)
- Should we only help others when it is convenient for us? Why not?*(No, the Bible teaches to love your neighbor as yourself. And Christ, our example, said we should be a servant to others.)
- How did Amos feel after meeting Boris? (safe and secure)
- What happened next? (Boris forgot Amos was on his back and sounded, dove underwater, hurting Amos.)
- How did Amos react to the surprise? (He was very angry, and screamed and punched Boris.)
- Why do you think he was so angry? (He probably was startled and scared.)
- Have you ever been angry at a friend?
- What did Amos do after remembering he owed his life to Boris? (quit being angry)
- The story did not say, but do you think he apologized to Boris for yelling and hitting him?
- What should we do when we yell or hurt a friend? (apologize)
- What did Amos agree to do when Boris needed to sound? (He would go for a swim.)
- What did Boris agree to do when he needed to sound?*(He would warn Amos first.)
- What did Amos admire about Boris? (his bulk, grandeur, power, purpose, rich voice, friendliness)
- What did Boris admire about Amos? (his delicacy, quivering daintiness, light touch, small voice, gemlike radiance)
- How did Amos get exercise?*(ran up and down on the whale's back)
- What did Amos promise? (If Boris ever needed help, he would be glad to give it.)
- Did Boris believe Amos would one day be able to help him? (No)
- Do you think it was sad for them to say goodbye?
- Have you ever had to go far away from a friend and know you would probably never see them again?*
- What happened years after the friends said goodbye?*(Hurricane Yetta came and flung Boris ashore by a tidal wave.)
- Do you think Boris was scared?
- What happens to a whale if he is on land too long? (He will die.)
- Why could Boris only look at Amos? (He was too dry and couldn't move.)
- Where do you think Amos went?*
- How did the story end? (Amos got two elephants to roll Boris back into the ocean. Then the friends cried and said goodbye.)
- Did Amos and Boris remain friends even though they never saw each other?*

WEEK 7: PART 2

HISTORY AND CULTURE

- Recall the items Amos packed in preparation for his trip. Imagine you are taking an extended trip to a faraway land. Prepare a packing list of items that you might take. Separate the list into two columns—items that are necessary to health and survival, and items that contribute to comfort and convenience. Compare your list to Amos'. Are there any similar items?

SCIENCE

- Amos, a mouse, and Boris, a whale, are both mammals. Talk about traits that are common to all mammals. (hair, born instead of hatched, warm-blooded, drink milk from their mothers, vertebrates)
- Review the characteristics of reptiles. (scales, hatched from eggs, cold-blooded, vertebrates)
- Compare mammals and reptiles.
- List all the mammals you can think of based on the characteristics you discuss.

ART “Jonah Swallowed up by the Whale” by Giotto di Bondone (Pre Renaissance), Fresco, Scrovegni Chapel – Padua, Italy

Giotto di Bondone (1266 - January 8, 1337) was born in Florence, Italy. As a boy he was a shepherd who was known for drawing in a book while watching sheep.

There is debate as to whether Giotto was apprenticed as a painter or not. But either way, his skill caught the eye of religious leaders and he was commissioned to paint frescos.

As with most painters of this time period, Giotto's works were all religious in nature and most decorated chapel walls. He was commissioned to do several chapels, but the decoration of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, which depicts The Life of the Virgin Mary and The Life of Christ, is considered one of the most important masterpieces of the early Renaissance.

Giotto is known as a great artist from the Middle Ages for the Italian Renaissance.

Jonah and the Whale and other Old Testament scenes were painted between scenes from The Life of Christ.

MUSIC

“The Air on the G String” from *Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major* by Johann Sebastian Bach

For a biography on **Bach**, see Week 4.

“The Air on the G String” was one of the first works by Bach to be recorded, and was composed for his patron Prince Leopold. It is a favorite wedding song.

POETRY

“Narwhal” by X. J. Kennedy (*Animals, Animals*, p. 65)

X. J. Kennedy (August 21, 1929 -) was born in Dover, New Jersey, as Joseph Kennedy, but he added an X to distinguish himself from JFK's father. He attended Seton Hall, Columbia University, and became a journalist with the U.S. Navy. After earning his graduate degree, he taught English at several universities across the country before dedicating himself to writing full-time.

He has won too many awards to list, many for his works of children's poetry. *Knock on a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry* and *The Phantom Ice Cream Man: More Nonsense Verse* are other poetry compilations of his. X. J. is known for his humorous poetry.

- Look up pictures of narwhals. They live in Arctic waters around Greenland, Canada, and Russia.
- Talk about jousting. (when knights compete with each other on horseback with one long sword)
- Knowing this about narwhals, why would Eskimos know about narwhals? (They also live in cold regions.)
- Why would he describe the narwhal as a unicorn? (It has one large horn, like a unicorn.)
- Does a knight jousting describe what a narwhal looks like?
- Locate the rhyming words from the poem. (glee / see, tales / whales, advance / lance)

