

The Whipping Boy Study Guide

The Whipping Boy by Sid Fleischman

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Contents

The Whipping Boy Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Overview.....	4
About the Author.....	5
Plot Summary.....	7
Chapter 1.....	9
Chapter 2.....	10
Chapter 3.....	11
Chapter 4.....	12
Chapter 5.....	13
Chapter 6.....	14
Chapter 7.....	15
Chapter 8.....	16
Chapter 9.....	17
Chapter 10.....	18
Chapter 11.....	19
Chapter 12.....	20
Chapter 13.....	21
Chapter 14.....	22
Chapter 15.....	23
Chapter 16.....	24
Chapter 17.....	25
Chapter 18.....	26
Chapter 19.....	28
Chapter 20.....	29



[Characters..... 30](#)

[Objects/Places..... 34](#)

[Setting..... 36](#)

[Social Sensitivity..... 37](#)

[Literary Qualities..... 38](#)

[Themes..... 39](#)

[Themes/Characters..... 41](#)

[Style..... 43](#)

[Quotes..... 45](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 46](#)

[Essay Topics..... 47](#)

[Ideas for Reports and Papers..... 48](#)

[Further Study..... 49](#)

[Related Titles..... 50](#)

[Copyright Information..... 51](#)



Overview

The Whipping Boy is a well-written adventure story that on its surface is as funny as anything Fleischman has written. Beneath this humorous surface, however, is a dark story suffused with an intense indignation at the plight of an innocent child snatched from the streets and made a victim of an unjust social convention. Although the convention of the royal whipping boy no longer exists, modern children are still being victimized, and tough, quick-witted street kids soon learn to be as resourceful as Jemmy in facing seemingly hopeless situations. Fleischman intricately blends witty situations into his expert plotting to make serious social points without falling into moralizing. A great strength of *The Whipping Boy* is the way it simultaneously entertains and instructs.

About the Author

Born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 16, 1920, Albert Sidney Fleischman grew up in San Diego, California. He describes his father as a natural storyteller who told his children stories filled with dramatic effects. His mother, Sadie Solomon Fleischman, read her son such books as Aesop's Fables and Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The book that most influenced Fleischman was Robin Hood, which he termed his first great reading experience. He would later write folktales modeled on the American "tall tale" tradition.

Fleischman served in the naval reserve during World War II aboard a destroyer escort in the Philippines, Borneo, and China. In 1942 he married Betty Taylor, and the couple had three children. After the war Fleischman began writing short stories and returned to San Diego State College to complete his degree. He graduated in 1949 and went to work as a reporter for a San Diego newspaper.

When the newspaper went out of business he began his current vocation as a freelance writer.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Fleischman wrote detective and mystery stories for a number of paperback publishers. His first piece of sustained humorous writing for young adults, *Mr. Mysterious and Company*, was published in 1962. Since then he has continued writing for young people.

Since the publication of *Mr. Mysterious and Company*, Fleischman has written over thirty books and is considered one of America's most notable writers of humorous young adult books. A master of the tall tale, he has written a series of books featuring an Iowa farmer, McBroom, who both narrates the stories and is the central character. Josh McBroom first appeared in *McBroom Tells the Truth*, and he, his wife, their eleven children, and their amazing one-acre farm have become Fleischman's bestknown creations. He has written nine other McBroom books.

Fleischman's Bloodhound Gang series consists of mystery stories, simplified for easy reading and based on his scripts for the television science show "3-2-1 Contact." Though criticized by some for a lack of both plausibility and humor, the stories are tailored for children who are reluctant to read or who may find reading difficult.

Fleischman's humorous stories have won critical acclaim from the beginning.

He brings to them an ingenious wit and a sophisticated writing style, well suited to his chosen audience. *Mr. Mysterious and Company* won the New York Herald Tribune Spring Book Festival Award in 1962. By the Great Horn Spoon, Fleischman's second humorous book, won the Western Writers of America's Spur Award in 1963, the Southern California Council on Literature for Children and Young People Award in 1964, and the Boys' Clubs of America Award the same year. *Chancy and the Grand Rascal* won the Commonwealth Club of California's Juvenile Book Award in 1966.

McBroom Tells the Truth won the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1969. Jingo Django won the Book World Spring Festival Award in 1971, and McBroom the Rainmaker won the Society of Children's Book Writers' Golden Kite Award in 1974. Humbug Mountain was a National Book Award finalist in 1979 and also won the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award.

The Whipping Boy, a book Fleischman worked on at intervals for nearly ten years, was the Newbery Medal winner in 1987.



Plot Summary

The king's son, Prince Horace, is a spoiled-rotten brat. He is known everywhere as Prince Brat. He is always up to no good and is deserving of whippings. However, as is the royal custom, princes are not to be harmed in any way, which means he will never be truly punished, whipped, beaten, or slapped. Instead, the castle employs a common boy to be the whipping boy. Each time the prince does something wrong, the servants fetch the whipping boy.

The son of a rat catcher, Jemmy tolerates the constant whippings without making a sound, which he is determined not to do. When he finds out that the prince really wants him to, he is resolved to keep his silence. The prince tells Jemmy that if he does not start to yelp or squawk at the next beating then he will tell his papa to remove him from the castle and return him to the streets. Jemmy holds on to that hope but then realizes, after a year, that the prince is not one who honors his word.

One night the prince sneaks into Jemmy's quarters and demands him to runaway with him. Jemmy protests thinking of the consequences he will surely face when they are caught, yet he has no choice but to accompany the prince. Just before dawn the morning fog is so thick that they do not see the two highwaymen approach them. The two outlaws capture them and hold them hostage once they realize that one of them is indeed the prince.

The two outlaws, Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater, take the two boys to their hut nestled deep in the woods. The two outlaws decide that a ransom note is needed but then quickly realize neither of them can write or read. They turn to the prince, who of course, does not know how to write either. Immediately they think the two boys are trying to fool them by switching identities. They know how absurd it is for a whipping boy to know how to read and write but not a prince. From this moment forward, the roles are reversed for the prince and the whipping boy.

During many attempts to escape from the outlaws, the two boys encounter different people who help them. The first person they encounter is Betsy, known for her famous dancing bear. She provides the direction to the river but then also gives the same information to the cutthroats. The second person to help them is the Hot-Potato-Man, who provides transportation for them. The two boys' escape is not an easy one, as it seems marked by difficulties at every corner. Not only are they held prisoner by the outlaws, but also the difficulties between the prince and Jemmy prevent the two of them from working together to escape. As their journey continues, the two boys learn to overcome their differences and even begin to develop an understanding of one another as well as a friendship.

Throughout the story, the author reminds the reader of important lessons in life. The qualities of fairness, respect, power, consideration, trust, overcoming fears, generosity, and kindness are all featured in this story. Each character plays an important role in

creating the lesson for the reader. At the end, the prince, the king, and the whipping boy all have learned valuable lessons.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The story begins during the king's grand feast. During the feast, the prince, known widely as Prince Brat, sneaks around each chair of the lords and ties their powdered wigs to the backs of the chairs. When they stand up, their wigs fall off and the men gasp as they realize what has happened. Although he tries to cover up his laughter and delight, the king hears him. The king's temper flares and he demands the whipping boy, Jemmy. The whipping boy is a common boy that takes the punishment for the royal prince since whipping, spanking, and smacking are not allowed. Before he became the whipping boy, Jemmy was an orphan living in rags in the sewers.

The guards fetch the whipping boy, who is happily dreaming of his previous life, and bring him to the king. The king demands twenty whacks and the whipping boy suffers through them without making a sound. Afterwards, the prince asks him why he doesn't he make any noise. It is clear that the prince wants him to squeal and bawl and even tells him that if next time he doesn't make a lot of noise, then he will tell his father to return him to the streets. Jemmy makes a decision to never shed a tear for the prince's delight and is happy thinking of the chance to return to his old life.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The story starts with the prince playing a prank on the king's guests. We soon learn that Prince Brat does not suffer the consequences of his actions; the whipping boy, whose only purpose at the castle is to suffer the consequences for the prince, is punished. This illustrates the theme of power and position. The prince has everything and when he does something wrong, he does not have to pay for it. But Jemmy, the whipping boy-orphan who comes from nothing, pays the price. Prince Brat and his father have total control over Jemmy. Jemmy is a servant and is ordered to appear when the king calls for him.

Another important occurrence in this first chapter is the dream that Jemmy is having when he is awakened for the third beating of the day. He is dreaming of his previous life, before he was the whipping boy. He was happily dreaming of his hard but carefree life when he lived on the streets and in the sewers of town. When he realizes how important it is to remain silent when taking the beatings for Prince Brat, he vows not to shed one single tear or cry out loud for him, in the hopes that he will so greatly disappoint the prince that he will be released from services and returned to the streets and gain his freedom.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Every morning the prince is not ready for his lessons, and every morning Jemmy knows there will be a beating by Master Peckwith, the prince's tutor. This particular morning, Jemmy is happy thinking of his freedom. He thinks he is just one lashing away from the prince finding a new whipping boy. However, after the prince decides that he does not need to know how to read or write his name, Master Peckwith's temper flares and demands the prince to prepare for punishment. Prince Brat suggests ten whacks and Jemmy obliges, thinking sweetly of his freedom that is now very close. During the punishment, Jemmy does not yelp, scream, or bawl, which makes the prince very angry. Prince Brat knows that Jemmy is silent on purpose, and tells the whipping boy that he cannot cross him and get away with it. Jemmy feels crushed when he realizes that the prince is going back on his word. This repetitive pattern goes on for one year where the prince learns nothing but the whipping boy learns to read, write, and do math.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Foreshadowing is used at the end of this chapter with Prince Brat not learning a thing while the whipping boy learns how to read, write, and do math. With knowledge comes power. In Chapter 1, the prince has all the power over Jemmy, but now Jemmy is learning. Someday this knowledge will benefit Jemmy and Prince Brat will be at a disadvantage.

Irony is also very clear in this chapter. Jemmy sits in on the daily lessons because Prince Brat refuses to learn and Jemmy needs to be close by to receive his punishment. Simply by sitting in on the lessons, Jemmy takes advantage of the lessons and learns what the prince should be learning. Prince Brat does not realize the mistake he is making by allowing Jemmy to sit in on the lessons.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

None of the prince's pranks entertains him or gives him joy. The prince appears in the middle of the night in Jemmy's sleeping quarters and awakens him. Prince Brat wants Jemmy to help him run away. Jemmy tries to reason with him, even reminding him that it is dark outside and that surely the prince's fear of darkness will end his desire to run away. Jemmy tells the prince that when they are caught he will get off "light as a feather" but he will be whipped severely, if not hanged. Prince Brat hands him the basket, commanding Jemmy to follow him into the night.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter, we see again how powerless Jemmy is when it comes to the situation before him. The young prince is bored with his life. Even his pranks are no longer giving him the enjoyment he needs. The punishment that lies ahead of him, which Jemmy will take, motivates him to run away. Prince Brat wants to get the king madder than ever so that the punishment will be the most severe. Prince Brat wants a severe punishment that will perhaps get Jemmy howling and bawling. Poor Jemmy has no other choice than to follow the prince into the darkness, even participating in the act that will bring his own harsh punishment.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

During their escape, the moon lights their way so that Prince Brat and Jemmy can easily see where they are going. However, the morning brings thick fog. Prince Brat orders Jemmy down off the horse they are sharing to lead it. While Jemmy is thinking about the prince's command, he is also thinking that this might just be the perfect chance to run for it. Once the fog lifts, he can make a run to the river and hide under the city in the sewers. The prince brings him back to reality with his impatience. Jemmy gets down, begins to lead the horse until he sees a sudden yellow glow of a lantern, and hears the prince yelling and making a fuss. Then, another hand strikes out and grabs Jemmy.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The capture of Prince Brat and Jemmy presents the prince with his first feeling of being powerless. As a prince, he has power over elders, servants, peasants, and of course, Jemmy. However, once captured, he is no longer in the position of power. His captors have power over him now.

During the night escape, Jemmy rides along following the prince's orders. When the morning dawn sets in with a thick fog, he begins to think that the fog could be his way of escaping from the beatings and cruel life at the castle. In the literal sense that the fog makes it impossible for Jemmy and the prince to see, the fog allows Jemmy to see in quite another sense. He sees a chance for freedom.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The two "cutthroats" as Jemmy calls them are none other than Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater, well-known murderers. The two no-gooders are hoping to find some gold in the boys' pockets but because a prince has no need to carry money and all of Jemmy's accounts are handled in paper there is no gold between the two of them. Immediately, Prince Brat tries to tell them that he is the prince and they should bow to him, but Jemmy quickly dismisses the bold boasts and says that his father is just a rat catcher, nothing more. Cutwater and Hold-Your-Nose Billy do take the basket that Prince Brat has as well as the horse.

Just as Hold-Your-Nose Billy is prepared to give directions to the river and release the two boys, Cutwater notices the king's crest on the horse's saddle and calls out for Billy. Quickly, Jemmy desperately claims that they stole the horse, saddle and all. Then Prince Brat arrogantly demands them to bow to him and leave. The two men do neither; instead think aloud how much the prince might be worth in gold.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Prince Brat tries to announce his position and status as a prince to Billy and Cutwater but they do not believe him. Jemmy outsmarts the prince by lying about the prince's identity. Jemmy knows that it is better to be commoners, as they would have a greater chance of being set free if their identity is hidden. Just as Billy prepares to release them, Cutwater discovers the king's crest on the saddle and they realize that the boy truly is Prince Horace. Now that they believe he is worth a lot in gold, they want to keep him.

When the boys were seen as nobodies, they were on their way to freedom. Once the prince's identity was revealed in proof, the cutthroats once again exhibited their power over the two by not releasing them. Anyone other than a criminal would definitely bow to the prince as is customary, but the discovery of his position only weakens the prince's power as it increases the criminals' power over them.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater take the two boys to their castle, a rickety old hut. Inside, the two men offer the boys bread and herring, and Jemmy is reminded of how this was a treat in his other life. Of course, Prince Brat complains royally and reaches for the food he brought in his basket. The two criminals decide that now is a good time to search through the basket. In it they find meat pies, pheasant, and fruit tarts. The prince even brought a china plate and a silver spoon and knife. Billy continues feeling around in the basket and pulls out the prince's gold crown. Prince Brat calls out to claim it as his and the outlaw remarks that it was his but is no longer, as Hold-Your-Nose Billy places the crown on his own head. Then Billy picks up the prince to see how much he weighs and estimates how much gold coin the trade will be worth.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Symbolism appears strongly in this chapter. The act of placing a royal crown on one's head elevates that person's stature just by the nature of the crown. When Hold-Your-Nose Billy puts the prince's crown on his own head, he is showing the prince who has the power and that it is no longer the prince who has any. Prince Brat keeps telling the two outlaws that the things they take from the basket are his but the outlaws remove his ownership of them by telling the prince that the items were his but now they belong to Cutwater and himself.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The two outlaws decide that they should write a note to the king for ransom money. They find some paper, a feather, and use some juice from a beetroot and give it to Prince Brat to write since neither outlaw is literate. At first, the prince refuses to write because he is hungry. Then he admits that he cannot write. The outlaws know that kings and princes learn how to read and write at an early age, so they do not believe him.

Jemmy now hatches up a plan and tries to get the prince to play along. He announces that he can write and Prince Brat acknowledges it is true. The two outlaws cannot believe for a minute that the whipping boy is educated and the prince is ignorant. They believe that the two boys have falsely identified themselves. When they start referring to Jemmy as the real prince and Prince Brat as the servant, Prince Brat gets furious and starts to yell and complain, but the outlaws silence him. Still, Prince Brat does not understand the benefit of playing along with the mistaken identity. Jemmy then prepares to write to the king.

With their switched places, the prince is now the whipping boy but does not realize how this may affect him as time goes on.

Chapter 7 Analysis

As the plot thickens, the reader becomes more aware of the irony between the royal prince and the whipping boy. The whipping boy is street smart, educated, and witty, whereas the prince is thick and stubborn. The only thing he has to lean on is that he is the king's son. Prince Brat has no education because he does not want to learn and is used to getting his own way all the time and having people do things for him. Up until this point, his power has been slightly decreasing. Going forward, Jemmy starts to gain some power through mistaken identity.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As Jemmy begins to write the ransom note, both Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater hover over him, asking questions. The two outlaws want to make sure they are described as meaner than mean, not-to-be-messed-with outlaws. Fearing the king's army, Jemmy writes that if as much as one soldier is seen, the outlaws will break the prince's neck. When the outlaws remind him to write about the reward Jemmy begins to think that the ransom is not high enough considering he is a royal prince. He gives the idea of a wagonful of gold and jewels to the outlaws who get excited at the notion of all those riches. Prince Brat sits and stares coldly at Jemmy, who has declared his royal title. He is dumbstruck by Jemmy's cunning mischief and says nothing.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Prince Brat's refusal to learn his daily lessons prevents him from being able to write the ransom letter to his father. Again, we see his power diminish even more. On the other hand, Jemmy rises above all of them because he has the ability to read and write. No one will know what exactly he is writing in the ransom note to the king.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

As the two outlaws munch on the left over pheasant for breakfast, they serve the two boys bread and herring. After careful examination, Jemmy advises Prince Brat to eat the bread. It is then that Cutwater realizes that the letter could contain information that they did not discuss and that perhaps is a trap. Instantly Jemmy thinks like a prince, calls them names, and threatens whippings. Cutwater gets angry and yells back at Jemmy. Knowing the law that states it is illegal to harm a prince, and not wanting to break any more of the king's laws than they have to, Hold-Your-Nose Billy reminds Cutwater that if a flogging is to happen they can use the whipping boy, which scares Prince Brat tremendously.

The outlaws demand that Jemmy read it to them backwards. If he stumbles and struggles with it backwards, they will know that he is lying. Jemmy reads the letter to their satisfaction. Then the two outlaws wonder how to deliver the ransom note to the king without being caught. Jemmy has already thought of a plan and offers to use Prince Brat, the new whipping boy, as the mail runner.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The irony of the mistaken identity brings many twists to the plot. Now that Jemmy is safe as Prince Horace, he uses his new position with Prince Brat to his advantage. Prince Brat has experienced first hand the fear of being whipped as discussions between the two outlaws point out that it is illegal to harm a prince and for any punishments, they can turn to the whipping boy. Jemmy has a clever plan to rid himself of Prince Brat and the two villains, and so far his plan is right on track.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The two outlaws reject the notion of sending the whipping boy, thinking that he will tell everyone he sees and the plan will fail. Jemmy smugly offers other options reminding Hold-Your-Nose Billy how difficult it will be to go to the castle to deliver it and return safely. Billy then demands Cutwater to go because he is thinner and is less noticeable than he is. Cutwater refuses and the outlaws decide that sending the whipping boy is the best option.

Jemmy tells the rest of them that the whipping boy must deliver the crown to prove that he came from the true villains. During the discussion of the crown, Jemmy starts to call the Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater names to get them excited. At the same time, Prince Brat fears being whipped, but not enough to refuse to deliver the note and return to the castle.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Prince Brat is angry about being unprined; he cannot see that Jemmy has given him his freedom. True to his nickname, he acts like a brat. Jemmy has masterminded the plot for his freedom and Prince Brat foils it. Jemmy has so much power over the group that he is manipulating the outlaws and leveraging the switched identities. Jemmy is as witty as Prince Brat is dense.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Prince Brat continues to refuse to deliver the note. Cutwater threatens a beating to which the Prince threatens to tear up the note and keep the crown for himself. The two outlaws go outside to discuss this notion of sharing the reward with the whipping boy. While they are outside, Jemmy and Prince Brat exchange words. The prince demands he will not return to the castle until he is ready and at a time that he chooses. Jemmy is trying to figure out why Prince Brat will not leave. The outlaws return to offer the whipping boy a bucketful of the jewels but again he refuses. Just as Hold-Your-Nose Billy takes off his leather belt, Jemmy offers a new plan to deliver the note to the castle.

Insisting that horses know their way home, he persuades the villains to use this horse to deliver the message. The best part of this plan is that no one will be there so no one will be asked any questions. The villains agree to the new plan.

Chapter 11 Analysis

In this chapter, it becomes apparent that Prince Brat might care for someone other than himself. His refusal to leave could be out of fear for what could happen to Jemmy after he leaves if the villains find out that Jemmy is really the whipping boy. On the other hand, Prince Brat possibly knows that with his release Jemmy will also find his freedom and so by staying, he prevents that from happening.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Hold-Your-Nose Billy prepares to ride the horse close enough to let him return to the castle itself. As he departs, he gives reminders to Cutwater about the prisoners. While the two villains are outside, Jemmy and Prince Brat get a chance to talk. Jemmy is eyeing the place over to see how he can plan his escape. Prince Brat accuses him of being stupid by recommending a wagonload of gold and jewels. Prince Brat thinks that his father will have to pay for it but Jemmy knows that the note will not be taken seriously. What he does know is that he will be in serious trouble for running away and writing the note himself for all will think that Jemmy is the source of the ransom. Prince Brat, with a sudden switch of personality, offers his protection but Jemmy refuses, only trusting himself for his own protection.

Jemmy decides the best place to hide is under the straw where the moonshine is kept. He asks Prince Brat to tell them that he snuck out but just as he says that Cutwater returns inside. As soon as Cutwater sees just the one boy, he asks for the prince's location. Without hesitation, Prince Brat reveals his hiding place.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Jemmy realizes that he needs to escape before he has to suffer the consequences of running away and treason. He knows that he has limited opportunities. As he conjures up his plan and reveals it to Prince Brat, Prince Brat defiantly agrees to participate and betrays Jemmy by exposing his hiding place.

The two boys are in a constant power struggle and conflict. When Jemmy comes up with plans to free the prince, the prince refuses to leave. When Jemmy comes up with a plan for their escape together, the prince gives him up. The power continually shifts from one to the other.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

As soon as he hears the prince's betrayal, Jemmy pounces out of the straw and runs outside into the forest. He runs every direction he can to confuse Cutwater. As he steps into a clearing, a bear startles him but it runs away, so Jemmy quickly hides in the hollowed out section of a nearby tree. Cutwater goes into the forest. As Jemmy gets out of the hiding spot, he sees Prince Brat, who is red from running.

Immediately, Prince Brat calls him an unfaithful servant. Until this point, Jemmy has not been angry, but he gives in now and unleashes his anger at the prince. Jemmy confronts Prince Brat for the betrayal and how it foiled their plan to escape at their pace instead of having to run so hard for it. The prince tells Jemmy that he forgives him for leaving him there alone with the cutthroats but Jemmy is still mad and tells the prince to find another whipping boy. Upon Prince Brat stating that he has not dismissed him, Jemmy fires back that he quits, telling the prince that the two of them will go their separate ways. Not liking this idea, Prince Brat quickly says that he will go with Jemmy. Jemmy tries to get away from him as quickly as possible and turns back into the forest.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Jemmy finally confronts Prince Brat about his behavior and tells him how it has interfered with their escape. Clearly, Jemmy is the thinker and strategist in this story. Prince Brat acts upon emotion and position only, not utilizing his brain at all. Jemmy is very calculating and is always trying to get one-step ahead of someone else. The chapter ends with Jemmy's refusal to serve the prince any longer and with that, Prince Brat is again, powerless. He has no smarts to get him out of this situation.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

As Jemmy takes each step he is aware of Prince Brat following him. Jemmy begins to tell him to go his own way, but the prince shushes them both up so they can listen better. They hear a voice in the woods. It happens to be the owner looking for her missing bear. Jemmy asks for the direction to the river; she gives it to them, and the boys are off.

Just as they reach the river, the boys see soldiers nearby. Jemmy warns Prince Brat to go with them and return to his privileged life. The prince refuses, acknowledging that the king has not missed him enough and that this adventure has been the most fun of his life.

Chapter 14 Analysis

It is in this chapter that we discover the real reason for the prince's poor behavior. He sorely wants the attention of his father. When given the chance to return to the castle safely with the soldiers at the river, he allows them to pass. He chooses to let the adventure that he is enjoying continue. To Jemmy, this is not a game and he is aggravated. Due to the extreme differences in these boys' upbringing, each one processes the experience differently. Jemmy is accustomed to starving, living on his own, and getting by without much of anything. Prince Brat eats with a silver spoon on fine china, lives in a castle filled with servants, and eats the finest meals. To him, this is the most fun he has ever experienced, and he is not ready for it to end.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

As soon as the soldiers have gone, the two boys discuss their plans. Jemmy reveals to the prince that as soon as he can he will leave the prince and the two of them will on their own. Jemmy inquires as to whether or not the prince can take care of himself. With attitude in his voice, the prince replies that of course he can and that he does not need the servants to fetch for him.

Since the two boys are on their own now, they need to find ways to help themselves find food. Jemmy starts to pick up things that could be of value to others that he can sell. Soon, Prince Brat starts doing the same, and Jemmy begins to educate him on the ways of living on their own. Jemmy finds something very valuable, an old birdcage that he could use for his rat catching. As soon as he finds the birdcage, he hears the crack of a whip. An old coach hauling potatoes is stuck in a mudbog. Jemmy calls an offer to the driver to help in exchange for a ride into the city. The driver takes him up on the offer and he climbs in leaving Prince Brat in the middle of the road in dismay.

Although he is free of the prince, Jemmy cannot help but look back at him. His conscience gets the best of him and he tells the driver that they have forgotten his friend. The driver stops the coach and Jemmy motions for the prince to join them. Jemmy thinks he sees a smile on the prince's face at that moment but it is gone when he arrives at the coach. The two ride in silence until they hear a familiar voice. The voice of Hold-Your-Nose Billy commands the driver to stop and hand over his goods, accompanied by Cutwater.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The power struggle ends when the two boys come to an agreement on their individual plans and become more of equals instead of one serving the other. As equals, they both need to find ways to survive. Jemmy cannot help but point out important things to the prince like picking up useful items that are worth money to some. Jemmy worries that the prince is not capable of taking care of himself on his own. It is interesting to note that Jemmy refers to Prince Brat as his friend to the driver of the coach.

Irony comes into the story again here as the two boys regain their freedom by escaping from Cutwater at the hut but are again in danger of the two villains as they hold up the potato coach.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

As soon as Jemmy recognizes Hold-Your-Nose Billy's voice, he starts to hide himself under the potatoes putting the kettle over his head for cover. He gives instructions to Prince Brat about what to do but Jemmy is prepared for another betrayal. When they discover the whipping boy inside they demanded to know where the prince is hiding. Prince Brat tells them that he swam the river. The outlaws do not believe him so they open the other door to the coach and remove the kettle exposing Jemmy's head. Immediately they are grabbed by the big outlaw, who demands the whip from the driver, and send him on his way.

Outside they prepare to whip Prince Brat and succeed in doing so. At each whipping, Prince Brat prepares himself and like the real whipping boy does not make a sound. The whipping continues until the girl with the bear appears and demands they stop beating the boy. They ignore her so she releases the bear, commanding her to "sic'em" (p. 58).

Chapter 16 Analysis

Jemmy had long dreamed for the prince to receive a whipping to know what it felt like. He longed for him to feel the physical pain but also the humiliation and the feeling of being powerless. When the moment comes, Jemmy does not want the prince to take a beating. He knows all too well the feeling and even tries to prevent the two outlaws from striking Prince Brat. Just like Jemmy, Prince Brat sets his jaws and does not make a sound during the beating. Does he do it out of bravery? Perhaps Jemmy has become his role model so the prince responds the way Jemmy does during all of his whippings.

The importance of Betsy begins to show through at this point, as she enters the story again during the beating of Prince Brat. She sends her bear to attack the two outlaws since they will not stop. This is the second time she has saved the two boys. In this chapter, the power source is Betsy.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

The bear rears up and goes after Hold-Your-Nose Billy. He takes off running and goes straight into the river. Cutwater drops the prince and vanishes. Betsy calls off Petunia as soon as the two outlaws are gone and turns her attention to the prince to tend to his wounds. Prince Brat realizes that had been brave during the whipping and when replied to Jemmy that he was doing just as Jemmy had done. They hurry on their way and decide to travel together with the safety that Betsy and Petunia provide. Right away, they see the coach on its side. With the help of Petunia, they right the coach and all get in and head for the city. The only trouble that comes is when the soldiers greet them at the city limit, but when Petunia sticks her head out the coach window, the soldiers let them pass.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Jemmy realizes the prince's newfound bravery while Prince Brat admits that he did not want to humble himself any more by yelling, squawking, or bawling out during the whipping. With this discovery, Jemmy starts to see Prince Brat in a completely different way, and not as his usual bratty self.

In this chapter, the two boys again are working together and not overpowering each other. Betsy, Petunia, the driver, and the two boys are all equals in pursuit of a common goal: getting safely to the city.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

As Betsy, Petunia, the driver, Prince Brat, and Jemmy enter the city, they take in the sights of the fair. Jemmy starts to feel at ease and starts looking around and thinking about all the different places he can hide in the city. Before he has a chance to take off, the driver offers to boil them potatoes. Prince Brat offers to fetch the water since he has never carried anything before.

The two boys go get some water but run into Smudge, an old friend of Jemmy's from the rat-catching days. Unsure of how to introduce the prince to Smudge, Prince Brat offers his name as "Friend O'Jemmy's" and then they shake hands despite Jemmy's offerings that "Friend O'Jemmy's" does not like to shake hands. Smudge inquires as to Jemmy's line of work at the castle and not wanting to admit that he is the whipping boy, he offers up that he has learned to read, write, and do sums. Then Jemmy starts to think about how he will miss the shelves of books; in the sewer he did not care that he was ignorant.

With the money the driver gives them, the boys buy some milk. The woman with the cows talks to the boys about the missing prince and what a horrible person he was. She questions why the king would even miss him. She even refers to the prince as "Prince Brat." Of course, Prince Brat hears all of these things and is in disbelief. He does not like how people think of him. He asks Jemmy if what she is saying is true and is sullen when Jemmy nods in agreement.

When the potatoes are ready, Prince Brat is slow to accept any because they are root vegetables, which are the kind reserved for peasants. As they are finishing their meal, a messenger walks by and yells that the prince has been sold to gypsies and the whipping boy masterminded the crime. Jemmy does not even say a word but grabs his birdcage and is off.

Chapter 18 Analysis

In this chapter, there are many things happening. The prince experiences many firsts. The first new experience occurs when he offers to fetch the water. These are the type of things that servants do, not princes. Jemmy thinks it is strange that carrying water would be a privilege but that is how Prince Brat considers it because he never gets to do anything like that. A very unusual event occurs in this chapter: Prince Brat laughed! This is the first time Jemmy has heard the prince laugh. The prince is finding joy in the notion that no one would consider him a prince fetching and carrying water.

The third new experience is when Prince Brat meets Smudge. Smudge immediately offers his hand and Prince Brat shakes it. Although it is a crime to shake the hand of a prince, Prince Brat loves the gesture and even thinks of how when he is king he will



change this law. The third and probably most difficult first experience occurs when the driver offers the prince a potato. Prince Brat is uneasy about eating the potato because it is a root vegetable, which is typically considered peasant food. He starts nibbling it and then shrugs off his royal pride and starts eating it in big mouthfuls.

With the running away- adventure experience, Prince Brat is learning many lessons, which he is unable to learn in the royal castle where there are no direct consequences. Away from the castle, especially when everyone thinks he is the whipping boy, he experiences what it is like to be low class. He experiences how people on the street live and treat one other. Most importantly, he learns what other people think of him and he does not like what he hears.

In this chapter, Jemmy realizes he has lost the taste of ignorance. He does not see that he has a choice other than returning to the sewer and rat catching, but he would sorely miss the books that he has grown accustomed to reading. When Jemmy hears the messenger announce the news about the prince's disappearance and foretells of hanging if they catch the whipping boy, he freezes. Jemmy fears for his life and so he backs away from the group and vanishes.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Running for his life, Jemmy goes to the only place he feels comfortable. As he runs, he is aware of the prince following right behind him. He stops and tells the prince that he has done enough with the price on his head and all but the prince refuses to leave him. In fact, he tells him he will not return to the castle without Jemmy. Out of nowhere, they see Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater, but do not get away before the two outlaws see them and the chase is on. Jemmy and Prince Brat run into the sewer and soon meet up with Ol' Johnny Tosher, where they are caught by the two outlaws once again.

The two outlaws overhear the conversation with Jemmy and Ol'Johnny Tosher and realize they mixed the two boys up and whipped the prince. In the darkness, the outlaws grab each other and the two boys manage to get away again. With the help of Ol'Johnny Tosher, who gives the two outlaws the wrong directions and heads them straight into the sewer below the brewery where the big, mean rats live. Soon, the outlaws appear across the sewer from them, covered in rats, which gives the prince and the whipping boy a chance to get back into the streets.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Many themes are apparent in this chapter. Prince Brat admits to fear and exhibits bravery. When Jemmy pulls him into the black sewer, the prince admits his fear of the dark. Jemmy gently encourages him and he is able to move through the sewer. During this scene, it is obvious that Prince Brat trusts Jemmy. The prince's opinion of Jemmy changes so much that he starts calling Jemmy by his name only, not "Jemmy-From-The-Streets," or "boy." It is in this scene that Prince Brat admits his admiration for Jemmy. Jemmy is perplexed because he is a whipping boy, orphan, and a peasant. Jemmy insults the prince by replying that he is not sure if he trusts him or not, but then realizes he has wronged the prince and tells him so.

During the dark tunnel scene, Prince Brat takes Jemmy's hand and holds it. Jemmy at first thinks of the crime but then remembers how the prince described the handshake with Smudge. It did feel friendly and trusting. It appears that the two boys have overcome their power struggle and in doing so, have found respect for one another. This is the foundation for friendship.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

As soon as Prince Brat and Jemmy steps into the sunshine and the clean air, the prince announces that they were both heading back to the castle. Jemmy tries to refuse, but realizes that by giving away his only true hiding place, he has no other choice. The prince reminds Jemmy that he has admitted to trusting the prince. Before they arrive at the castle gates, the prince leads them back into the fair to find Betsy and the Hot-Potato-Man. The prince demands that they turn Jemmy in to the king for the reward. They both refuse at first, and Jemmy feels betrayed by the prince, that is, until he catches a twinkling in his eye and a wink. Jemmy realizes the prince has his own mischievous plan.

At the castle, the king and prince share a private conversation. Soon, the soldiers bring the others in to meet with the king. The Hot-Potato-Man and Betsy receive the reward and the king decides to keep the bear at the castle for entertainment purposes. Then, the king dismisses the Hot-Potato-Man and Betsy so he can talk with Jemmy. After a painfully long stare by the king, the king announces they are to keep Jemmy at the castle under the protection of the prince under one condition. The prince promises to do his daily lessons, blow out his candle at night, and "otherwise behave himself" (p.88). Jemmy thinks to himself that Prince Horace must really want a friend desperately to promise all of these things to the king. Jemmy is delighted that the prince wants to be his friend because he feels the same way.

Chapter 20 Analysis

As the chapter begins, the prince exhibits his position again. He commands Jemmy to return with him and demands that the Hot-Potato-Man and Betsy turn Jemmy in for the reward. Unbeknownst to all of them, Prince Brat has a plan that will turn out far differently than the others predict. His intention is not to betray Jemmy but to provide for him and the others. The Hot-Potato-Man and Betsy are rewarded for their efforts in saving the prince and Jemmy. The prince rewards Jemmy by his change of heart and realizes that he is better off with a friend than a whipping boy.



Characters

Jemmy, the Whipping Boy

Born the son of a rat catcher, Jemmy grew up in extreme poverty. He was accustomed to hunger, working in the sewer, and did not know he was ignorant. When his father died, he learned to fend for himself. Then, the king's soldiers stole him from the streets and he became the royal whipping boy for the prince. That is when his life changed for Jemmy, for the worse.

Whenever the prince misbehaved, which was often, the servants fetched Jemmy and he was beaten. Each time he was whipped, he set his jaw, determined not to make a single sound despite the pain that he suffered. One day the prince questioned him as to why he did not make a noise. When Jemmy discovered how badly the prince wanted him to squeal like a pig he was even more determined not to make a sound during any of his whippings. The prince was so mad that he threatened to return Jemmy to the streets if he did not start yelping during the whippings. That was music to Jemmy's ears; he desperately wanted to leave the castle and return to the sewers.

It did not take long for Jemmy to realize that the prince was not going to honor his promise to have him dismissed as whipping boy and replaced. However, during the year that went by Jemmy did learn to read, write, and do sums, while the prince refused to learn. Jemmy enjoys learning and reading but does not realize it until later when he considers life in the sewers without access to books.

When Prince Brat comes for Jemmy in the dark of night to runaway, Jemmy thinks that this marks his death, for surely the king will hang him when they are caught. With no other choice, he goes out with the prince into the night. During the prince's escapade, Jemmy considers many times how he can get away from the outlaws and the prince, forever.

With all the twists in the escapade, Jemmy learns to trust the once-evil prince and softens enough to refer to the prince as his friend. Eventually, a true friendship develops. As the story concludes, Jemmy finds that what he thought was a turning point in his life really was, but it did not have the result he imagined.

Prince Brat/ Prince Horace

Prince Brat is the son of the king. He is completely selfish, ignorant, defiant, and nothing more than a bully. He plays pranks on people to laugh at them and knows that because he is the prince he will receive no punishment, for it is illegal to harm a prince.

As is customary in royal families, the servants dote on him and he is required NOT to do any physical work. In fact, he receives daily lessons to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic but he states that because he will be king someday he does not need to know



how to do these things. Surely he will command someone read and write for him, and do his sums.

The only delight in life he seems to find is when he plays pranks on others. Then, he awaits the pleasure of seeing his whipping boy whipped. However, that does not bring him the joy he seeks because the whipping boy refuses to cry out. This refusal only causes him to cause more mischief to see if he can get the whipping boy to yelp.

While the prince has many privileges, honors, and abundance of food, it is clear that this he is missing many things in life. He yearns for the attention of his father, the king. He does not have a friend, so he has no one to play with or experience the joys of friendship. He has low self-confidence and is afraid of many things, including the dark.

During the runaway adventure, the prince leans more and more on Jemmy, the whipping boy. He learns lessons in life in twenty-four hours that he has not been able to learn growing up at the castle under the royal conditions and treatment. During this escapade, he experiences friendship, admiration, braveness, loyalty, determination, and the importance of considering others.

Hold-Your-Nose Billy

Billy is a big man with raw skin who gets his name from the stench he puts off. He eats garlic to ward off the plague. His teeth are yellow and his massive red hair is unkempt. He is a man that is smelled before seen. Billy is a known plunderer and murderer, and is a wanted man.

Billy and his partner encounter the prince and the whipping boy at daybreak the morning after the prince decides to runaway. Once the prince's identity is revealed, Hold-Your-Nose Billy and his partner in crime hatch a plan to get some gold in ransom. All who encounter him fear Hold-Your-Nose Billy and so he is able to get around despite his wanted status.

Cutwater

Described as a scrawny man, nothing but skin and bones with a long nose, Cutwater is the dim-witted partner to Hold-Your-Nose Billy. Cutwater is the follower whereas Hold-Your-Nose Billy is the leader of this duo. Cutwater does whatever Billy tells him to do. When the bear is after them, he runs away illustrating that he is a coward.

Betsy

Betsy is a wild girl of fourteen or fifteen-years-old, and appears in the story at pivotal times. Her first appearance is when she is searching for her dancing bear and finds the two boys lost just after their first escape from the two outlaws. Her direction guides them



to the river. The second time she appears, she stops the outlaws from whipping the prince. Her good deeds prove to be rewarding in the end.

Petunia

Petunia is a talented bear that is famous for dancing, but the prince and Jemmy think she is famous for saving them from Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater. The bear, despite being quite tame, can intimidate and chase on command. It created enough fear that Billy jumped into the river and Cutwater disappeared into the forest to get away from her. At the end of the story, the bear is also rewarded for her part in saving the prince.

The Hot-Potato-Man

The Hot-Potato-Man, who has failing eyes, appears throughout the storyline of prince and Jemmy's attempts to escape the cutthroats. The old man drives a coach filled with potatoes and takes them to fairs to sell them to fairgoers. He is constantly getting himself into problems with his coach because he cannot see the hazards that lie ahead in the road. Jemmy trades helping the coach out of a mudbog for a ride into town, which turns into another one of his captures. They meet again when the old man turns the coach on its side shortly after Betsy and Petunia rescue the boys from the villains. The two boys and Betsy help the old man and in return for their help, he provides them a ride into the city and a meal of hot potatoes.

The King

The king speaks very little in this story and provides the prince's motivation to run away from the castle. The king does not give much attention to the prince, unless he has done something wrong. At the end of the story, the king shows his warm and loving personality, which has not been seen prior to this.

Smudge

Smudge, the boy in the city that Prince Brat and Jemmy run into, provides one of the awakening experiences for Prince Brat. The handshake exchanged between he and the prince provides the first feeling of friendliness and trust for the prince. While Smudge's presence is extremely brief in this story, the importance of the handshake is a pivotal moment in Prince Brat's turnaround.

Ol'Johnny Tosher

This old rat catcher from Jemmy's former sewer days with this father is hard of hearing. It is thanks to his deafness that Cutwater and Hold-Your-Nose Billy catch up to the boys

in the sewer. With quick thinking he redeems himself later when he sends the two villains down the wrong sewer tunnel, which allows the two boys to escape from the outlaws for good.



Objects/Places

The Castle

The castle is the prince's home and the whipping boy's prison. It is where Jemmy learns to read, write, and do math. This place is the source of anger and resentment for both Prince Brat and the whipping boy.

The Whip/ Switch

The whip is the instrument with which the whipping boy is beaten. It symbolizes power and lack of power, depending on which end of the whip you find yourself on. It appears early in the story and later in the story after the boys' identities are switched.

Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater's Hut

The hut is located deep in the forest, protected by dense foliage that keeps the outlaws hidden. In contrast to the immaculately kept castle, this rickety hut is made of timber and has none of the comforts the castle provides.

The Prince's Crown

The crown, a symbol of royalty, is important when it is discovered in the basket the prince packed. It becomes contemptuous when Hold-Your-Nose Billy places it onto his own head and wears it around the hut in front of the prince.

The Coach

The coach is the means by which the two boys escape twice.

The Ransom Note

The note written by Jemmy alerts the king that outlaws have kidnapped the prince. It is pivotal in that the king and everyone at the castle believe that Jemmy masterminded the plot.

The Birdcage

Jemmy finds the birdcage when he and the prince are mudlarking shortly after their first escape. In his mind, this cage will be perfect when he returns to rat catching. During



their flight through the sewers, Prince Brat throws it down a tunnel to mislead the villains.

The Saddle

The king's crest on the saddle prevents the two villains from releasing them, which allows the plot to escalate.

The Potato

The Hot-Potato-Man offers everyone a feast of hot boiled potatoes, a known peasant food. At first, the prince refuses it, but then he throws his royal pride aside and begins to gobble it down.

The Basket

The basket is important because Prince Brat packed it prior to his runaway. It holds his china, his silver, and food for their travels, but more importantly, it holds his crown.

The Coin

As a token of kindness, the Hot-Potato-Man gives Jemmy a coin for he and Prince Brat to get a mug of milk.

The Food in the Basket

Packed for the prince and Jemmy, the food in the basket becomes the property of Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater.

The Velvet Clothes

When the boys leave the castle, they are both wearing fine velvet clothing. After their capture, many escapes, and the whipping, their fine clothes do not look so fine.

Setting

The exact time and place are not specified in *The Whipping Boy*. The story takes place during an era of powdered wigs and highwaymen, by inference the latter half of the eighteenth century. The action moves from the royal castle to the countryside. Two boys, Jemmy and Prince Horace (known throughout the kingdom as Prince Brat), are taken captive by highwaymen and brought to a squalid hut in a forest. After escaping they return to the city along with a potato man who hopes to sell his wares at a fair. From there, with the two cutthroats in close pursuit, they take refuge in the city sewers. The story ends as they return to the royal castle to face the king.



Social Sensitivity

When he read about whipping boys in the course of his research, Fleischman felt an indignation that kept him working at a difficult project. He felt he had to tell the story of a whipping boy and his prince because he believed that both were victims of institutionalized injustice. The prince was a victim of excess privilege, the whipping boy had no privilege at all.

Throughout history children have been victimized. A child like Jemmy is particularly helpless because of his poverty. But Fleischman's sympathy extends to children of all classes who are powerless to defend themselves.

Through his position as whipping boy, Jemmy comes to understand why Prince Horace is so bored. Neither the energy nor the imagination of a growing boy are given adequate scope under his princely restrictions.

Fleischman drew some of his material from Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*. While this book focuses on the situation in midVictorian England, it vividly details two hundred years of poverty in London, and reveals that poverty imposes similarly deadening lifestyles whatever the era.

Literary Qualities

Fleischman first came upon the idea for *The Whipping Boy* while doing historical research. Fleischman is a tireless researcher, and the backgrounds of his stories are always authentic. He prefers to set his stories in the past. His tall tales are faithful to the customs and speech patterns of the western frontier; McBroom and his family are pioneers from Connecticut who settle in Iowa. For *The Whipping Boy* Fleischman did a great deal of background reading, including Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-1862).

Fleischman says he made his sentences as simple as possible. The prose is economically structured, and the imagery is fresh. For example, on the night the boys run away "the moon gazed down like an evil eye," giving a sense of foreboding of the dangerous times ahead. The plotting is ingenious. As Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater close in on the two hiding boys, the prince hurls a birdcage into the sewer tunnel leading to the granary—the home of voracious rats. The highwaymen rush into the tunnel only to rush back out screaming, with scores of rats clinging to their bodies. When the need arises, the prince shows himself to be as resourceful as Jemmy.

The Whipping Boy incorporates techniques found in fairy tales. In fairy tales, the good characters triumph over the evil ones, who are suitably punished.

The Whipping Boy ends with Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater on their way to a convict island. Ironically, they had jumped on the convict ship in an attempt to escape the royal wrath. A common fairy tale character is the prince or king who mingles with his subjects. In *The Arabian Nights* Haroun Al Rashid appears among the citizens of Baghdad in various disguises; and in one of the tales of Robin Hood, Richard the Lionhearted visits Sherwood Forest dressed as a monk.

While similar to Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, Fleischman's book has merits that Twain's book lacks.

The Whipping Boy is humorous and contains lively dialogue, a rapidly paced narrative, and a subtle presentation of serious social issues. Even the chapter titles, the only device Fleischman uses to give his work a flavor of the past, are amusing. Like Twain, he is angry at a social system that victimizes children, but he avoids Twain's despairing pessimism about the nature of the world.

Furthermore, Fleischman does not subordinate character to plot but allows his two boys to grow in self-awareness and to come to terms with their new selfknowledge.



Themes

Power and Social Position

As the story begins, the prince's prank introduces the reader to the whipping boy and the theme of power begins. Neither boy has chosen his situation in life. Prince Brat is brought up in the customs of the royal court. He is doted on, spoiled, and bowed to because he is the prince, the future king. On the other hand, Jemmy is born into poverty and when his father dies, the royal court snatches him up to be the whipping boy for the constantly misbehaving little prince.

From the first day, Jemmy is determined not to let out one little peep during his whippings in an attempt to save himself some humility. While powerless, he exudes power over the prince by remaining silent during his beatings. In return, Prince Brat exudes power over the whipping boy by misbehaving. The pattern repeats itself until the two villains capture Jemmy and Prince Brat and mistake one for the other. At this point, Jemmy has the power that Prince Brat has always held and Prince Brat feels what it is like to be powerless.

When the mistaken identity incident occurs, it is a direct result of Prince Brat not knowing how to read or write. When it is known that Jemmy is the one that can read and write, the two outlaws find it ridiculous to think that the prince does not know these things so they believe Jemmy is the true prince. It is this knowledge in the face of ignorance that gives Jemmy the power of the prince in this situation. Prince Brat knows he cannot do anything at this point because he does not have the capability to do so.

The use of power is also evident with the capture of Jemmy and Prince Brat. The outlaws have power over them when they pull Prince Brat off the horse and grab Jemmy away from the front of the horse. The two outlaws keep power over the two boys until Jemmy runs away. The power struggle between the four of them goes back and forth through the story as the boys escape from the two cutthroats and then are recaptured, only to escape again. During the ordeal, the prince and Jemmy start to balance out their strengths and stop using power over one another as they begin to understand one another.

Selfishness

The prince has always had everything he has wanted. He has never gone without anything, except for the attention of his father. For many years, the prince does not even consider anyone else's needs but his own. He plays pranks and tricks on anyone who looks to be an easy target, regardless of the outcome or potential danger. Until he experiences the dangers and what it is like to live away from his luxuries, he continues his selfish ways.



When Jemmy thinks of an escape plan in the hut, and tells the prince about it, the prince acts like a brat, and reveals Jemmy's hiding place to Cutwater. Prince Brat does this out of his own selfishness; he is not ready to return to the castle because he wants his father to really miss him and worry about him. He does not think about the consequences that may result from his selfishness.

Finally, nearing the end of their journey, Prince Brat realizes the importance in thinking of others. He redeems himself when he masterminds their safe return to the castle and provides for those who have helped him along the way.

Friendship

The prince desperately needs attention and companionship. He acts out constantly in efforts to get attention, but even that becomes unfulfilling. When he runs away and takes Jemmy with him, he begins to soften. His selfish ways diminish over the course of their journey and slowly he and Jemmy become friends.

The first sign of a friendship beginning occurs when the two have escaped from the outlaws and come upon the Hot-Potato-Man. In exchange for getting unstuck, Jemmy gets a ride into the city. He leaves Prince Brat staring blankly ahead as they drive away. It bothers Jemmy and he cannot leave him, so he asks the driver to stop because he left his friend behind. This is the first time that the word friend appears in the book. It also confuses Jemmy when he realizes he said it, and he questions himself for referring to the prince as a friend.

The second time the two show signs of a friendship occur when they are running from the villains in the sewers. Prince Brat is extremely afraid of the dark and is almost paralyzed. Jemmy gently talks him through the experience and at one point, when they are chased by the outlaws; Prince Brat grabs Jemmy's hand and holds it. Jemmy thinks at first that it is an illegal act to shake hands with the prince, and is mortified at first. Then he remembers how Prince Brat describes the handshake he experienced with Smudge. Jemmy agrees that it did feel warm and trusting, so they hold hands through the tunnel.

Finally, at the end of the story there is no room to doubt that Prince Horace wants nothing more than Jemmy to be his friend. He even promises the king that he will learn his daily lessons, turn out his night candle, and try to behave properly. This is proof enough to Jemmy that indeed the prince does want to be his friend. Jemmy is glad and is excited to be friends.



Themes/Characters

Fleischman's ability to create memorable characters is frequently compared to that of the English novelist Charles Dickens. Although short, *The Whipping Boy* brings a number of such characters to life. Perhaps the most colorful characters are the book's two villains, Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater.

Hold-Your-Nose Billy is as "big and raw as a skinned ox" and is constantly chewing garlic cloves. His partner is small and bony with a nose "like a meat cleaver." They are genuine villains, but their ineptness gives them a comic dimension. They are immensely proud of the unsavory reputations the city's ballad singers have created for them.

They are so dense, however, that it is scarcely a challenge for the quick-witted Jemmy to outsmart them. Other comic characters are Prince Horace's tutor, the round-faced Master Peckwit, who balances a pair of small spectacles on his nose; Betsy and her huge dancing bear, Petunia; and Captain Nips, the hotpotato man.

Jemmy and Prince Horace begin as comic characters also, but grow more mature as the story unfolds. Living in the streets and sewers, where he and his father capture rats to sell to owners of rat-fighting dogs, Jemmy is older than his years and has a keen sense of selfreliance. After he is snatched off the streets and forced into service as the young prince's whipping boy, Jemmy is given fine clothes and attends the prince's tutoring sessions, which, unlike the prince, he enjoys. His function as whipping boy is to take the beatings that "Prince Brat" deserves. Jemmy dreams of escaping the castle and resuming his life as a rat catcher. When his dreams come true, and he and the prince have fled the castle, he discovers that he misses the books and learning that are now again out of his reach. Street life has lost its appeal for Jemmy.

Prince Horace feels that he, too, is the victim of convention. His life is luxurious, but custom forbids him from doing anything that a servant can do for him. His father, preoccupied with ruling the country, pays little attention to him.

Prince Horace rebels and spends much of his time devising pranks that infuriate his father and the royal court. While Horace gets the attention he craves, poor Jemmy suffers the punishments. It is little wonder that Horace has become spoiled, arrogant, and cruel. He can get away with anything and is not obliged to do anything—not even learn to read and write. He decides to take Jemmy with him when he runs away from the castle, because to him being without a servant is unthinkable.

Horace's capture by the highwaymen is the beginning of his real education.

Horace cannot prove that he is a prince, and Jemmy assumes his identity and writes the ransom note, while the illiterate prince assumes the role of whipping boy. Horace, who now depends upon Jemmy for his survival, begins to respect him for his resourcefulness, which seems equal to any situation.



When Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater catch up with them, Horace emulates Jemmy by taking his whipping without crying out. After this, Jemmy realizes that Horace is not the same spoiled brat who left the castle. The prince, who learns that people dread the time when he might become king, decides that he must earn his royal privileges which he had assumed as a birthright.

Friendship is an important theme in *The Whipping Boy*. Through their shared experiences Jemmy and Prince Horace become close friends. The prince, who had been unable to make friends at the castle, learns that loyalty is a quality expected as much from a prince as from his subjects. Loyalty becomes as important to him as his princely prerogatives.

Both Jemmy and Prince Horace learn the importance of education. The prince decides to apply himself to his lessons in the future, and Jemmy learns that books are as important to him as the free life on the streets. Both return to the castle with a changed perspective.



Style

Points of View

A narrator tells the novel in third-person point of view for most of the story. Sometimes, the narrator describes the character's thoughts and feelings. For example, in the second chapter, the narrator describes what Jemmy thinks, as he gets dressed for the daily lesson. This style provides the reader with additional background information to process the reactions of the characters and their motivation. Without it, the reader cannot read between the lines and the events that unfold will not make as much sense since the reader does not have the necessary information to process them.

By telling the story in the third person, the reader starts out laughing at the prince's first joke with the wigs. However, the reader quickly learns that he is more than a brat, but downright mean. This style allows the reader to remain somewhat neutral to the two boys. Of course, in the early part of the story, the reader is disgusted with Prince Brat but with the third-person point of view, the reader is also able to view what transpires objectively and without discrimination, which allows the reader to see the small positive changes in the prince and accept him in his redeeming ways.

Setting

The novel is set in the time of castles and royal courts, somewhere in the 1700s or 1800s. The story starts and ends in the castle, but the majority of the events of the story occur outside of the castle during the runaway journey and resulting capture.

The runaways leave by horse in the middle of the night and set off far from the castle until dawn brings in a thick fog that prevents them from knowing where they are going. While attempting to find their way, they are captured and taken to the cutthroat's nearby home, which is nothing more than a rickety old timberlog hut. In this hut, it is cold and the floor is nothing but hard-packed earth. The roof is moldy. This hut is a huge contrast to what the prince is accustomed to at home.

During their escape, the setting changes from the forest where they run for their lives, to the river where they meet the Hot-Potato-Man who tries to take them to the city but are recaptured along the way. Then Betsy and her bear Petunia save them in the meadow. They all meet up again with the Hot-Potato-Man who drives them all to the city. When they are in the city, the villains find them and chase them through the sewers. Finally, Prince Brat masterminds a final scheme to get them to the castle safely.

Language and Meaning

With the story set in the 1700-1800s, the language is oftentimes unfamiliar. As the years have changed and language has become more contemporary, the words that were



commonplace in that period have become obsolete now. Words like cutthroat, scrag, and flummox appear throughout the story.

The language is very formal and proper, as is in line with the formality of the period for those who are of the educated population. Examples of this include the formal wording in the chapter titles. One example that stands out is the title of Chapter 2, which is titled "Wherein the prince cannot write his name." In contemporary rhetoric, the title would simply be called "The prince cannot write his name." The only time language is not formal is when the peasants and ignorant people are speaking. The grammar is incorrect and slang words are used.

The language used in this period gives the story validity and also provides entertainment for the reader. For one, most readers will need to review words in the dictionary to obtain precise definition, since there are few contextual clues due to the short chapters. Secondly, the use of the obsolete words provides an opportunity for the reader to question which words are used today that may become obsolete in a few hundred years.

Structure

The novel is comprised of seventeen short chapters, each titled with a summary of that chapter, and three longer chapters at the end of the book. The formal titles provide clues as to what may happen in the chapter, but each always ends with a dramatic hook. In order to find out what happens, the reader must read on as the answer to the previous chapter is only revealed in the beginning of the next chapter.

The boys' capture and repeated escapes from Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater provide the main story line. Each capture and each escape is written in detail and the reader begins to question how these boys are going to rid themselves of the villains for the last time.

The first two chapters take place over the course of a year but the rest of the book happens all in one night and the following day. The pace of the story is quick and the short chapters set the pace and prepare the reader for the climax that does not happen until the very end.



Quotes

"Ain't I already been whipped twice today? Gaw! What's the prince done now?" Chapter 1, p. 2.

"Yelp and bellow next time. Hear? Or I'll tell Papa to give you back your rags and kick you back into the streets." Chapter 1, p. 4.

"You contrary rascal! ... I'm on to you, Jemmy-From-The-Streets. It's pure spite that you won't howl! Think you can cross me and get away with it? Ha! Never and nohow!" Chapter 2, p. 6.

"I'm running away." Chapter 3, p. 7.

"Who's there? Let go! Take your hands off me, you insolent rascal!" Chapter 4, p. 11.

"Not much of a catch - two sparrows. But ain't they trimmed up in fancy rags, Cutwater?" Chapter 5, p. 12.

"'And feast you will' said Hold-Your-Nose Billy. 'Cutwater, serve 'em up our finest bread and herring.'" Chapter 6, p. 18.

"Nothing like garlic to clear the head and fend off the plague. Cutwater, give the lads a ration of breakfast." Chapter 9, p. 26.

"'And humble myself?' muttered the prince. '*You* never did.'" Chapter 17, p. 61.

"It felt friendly ... trusting. I may introduce the prance at court when I become king." Chapter 18, p. 67.

"Is that what they call me - Prince Brat?" Chapter 18, p. 69.

"'I wish I were like you,' muttered the prince. Jemmy was amazed. '*Like me!*'" Chapter 9, p. 76



Topics for Discussion

1. The Whipping Boy is set in some indefinite period before industrialization. How has life on the street changed since then? Would Jemmy feel at home in a modern American city?
2. The boys often speak or think about their fathers. Why are Jemmy's mother and the queen never mentioned?
3. Humor is not easy to define. What, in your opinion, is the funniest episode in this book? Why would you say it is funny?
4. In the opening chapter, how does Fleischman demonstrate the absurdity of the whipping boy convention?
5. To what extent is this book a defense of democracy? Class systems arise in any society, but what is the author's attitude toward them?
6. Is Jemmy the leading character in this story, or does he share the lead with the prince?
7. How does Fleischman give his narrative the rapid pace that young readers demand?
8. Fleischman is adept in creating imagery to make his stories more vivid.
Find examples of this in The Whipping Boy. Does he use cliches?
9. Characterize the two highwaymen, Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater.
How has Fleischman made them both comic and threatening at the same time?
10. As the story ends are there any indications that Prince Horace will be a good king when he succeeds his father?
What do you think will become of Jemmy?



Essay Topics

Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the prince and the whipping boy.

Neither Prince Horace nor Jemmy has a mother. Describe the feeling of what it might be like for them to grow up without their mothers. How does this similarity affect them?

Discuss the journey to friendship that the two boys go through in their escape.

Discuss power and its impact on people in their relationships. Who has power over you?

Why do you think the prince was always getting into trouble?

Discuss how selfishness plays a major role in this story.

Find four uncommon words used in the story and define them.

Discuss the change in Jemmy when he realizes the importance of his newfound education. Describe how education, and the importance of it, has changed his life.

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Read Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. In Twain's book Prince Edward goes out alone into the streets of London and must deal with situations that nothing in his experience has prepared him for. Do Twain's purposes differ from those of Fleischman? How?

2. In the thirty books he has written for young readers, Fleischman has made a reputation as an outstanding humorist. He is especially good in a traditionally American type of narrative, the tall tale. Read some of his stories about Jos h McBroom. Are there any similarities with *The Whipping Boy*?

How do these stories compare with nineteenth-century tall tales such as Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865)?

3. Urban street life has always fascinated readers, many of whom find criminals especially interesting. Research the lives of real-life highwaymen, rat-catchers, and street vendors in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. You might consult Henry Mayhew, Charles Dickens, Daniel Defoe, and social and economic histories. How accurate is Fleischman's portrayal of London street life?

4. Some critics have pointed out that *The Whipping Boy* is very much like a fairy tale in the way it is plotted. Does it seem that way to you? Compare the endings of stories by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen with the conclusion of *The Whipping Boy*. Are other parts of the story similar to a fairy tale?

5. Is the comparison of Fleischman to Charles Dickens justified? Do HoldYour-Nose Billy, Cutwater, the prince's tutor, Betsy and Petunia, and Captain Nips have anything in common with characters in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) or *Hard Times* (1854)?



Further Study

Bradburn, Frances. "Review." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 61 (April 1987): 48.

This review of *The Whipping Boy* praises Fleischman's skill in presenting his serious objectives without moralizing.

Court, W. H. B. *A Concise Economic History of England: From 1750 to Recent Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. This history discusses the continuing poverty in England during the rise of the Industrial Revolution. Henry Mayhew knew the situation well, but many preferred to believe that poverty no longer existed.

Fleischman, Albert Sidney. "Laughter and Children's Literature." *Horn Book* 52 (October 1976): 465-470. Fleischman feels that good humorous children's literature is rare and that humorous stories should be rated as highly as more serious fiction.

"Newbery Medal Acceptance."

Horn Book 63 (July-August 1987): 423-478. The author describes his career and the origin and development of *The Whipping Boy*.

Fleischman, Paul. "Sid Fleischman."

Horn Book 63 (July-August 1987): 429-432. Paul Fleischman, himself a writer for young adults, describes his father both as a parent and as an author.

Heins, Ethel L. "Review." *Horn Book* 52 (May-June 1986). For Heins, Fleischman's story is an improvisation on Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, and "beneath the surface entertainment the story also speaks of courage, friendship and trust."

Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*. 4 vols. 1851-1862.

Reprint. New York: Dover, 1968.

Mayhew presents an indictment of midnineteenth-century economic barbarism. Rat-catchers had greatly decreased in number by this time, but some still plied their trade. Street vendors describe their trades in their own words.

Saxton, Martha. "Review." *New York Times Book Review* (February 22, 1987): 23. Saxton is especially impressed with the characterizations in *The Whipping Boy*.

Related Titles

The Whipping Boy is unique among Fleischman's books, but all of his stories display an ingenious wit and a fine ear for dialogue. The American tall tale was not devised exclusively for young adults, and Fleischman's stories should amuse readers of all ages. Josh McBroom and his neighbor, Heck Jones, are marvelously comic creations. Tall, lean, and gleeful over his own cleverness, Jones is a rural con man who originally sold McBroom an acre of worthless swamp land that McBroom has turned into an incredibly fertile farm. All of Jones's schemes are now devoted to getting that land back. McBroom always reports the most outrageous exaggerations in a serious manner.

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