



CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

CARL SOMMER

KING OF THE POND

About the Book

Tombo the tadpole thinks he is the king of the pond. He brags that he is the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole, and teases and chases all the other tadpoles. However, while Tombo is showing off doing a triple flip, a boy catches him. The boy puts him into a fish tank and gives him fish flakes to eat, a food Tombo despises.

When Tombo turns into a frog, the boy releases him back into his pond. Then Tombo discovers that he is no longer the biggest and fastest, but he does learn the value of friendship.

In this superbly illustrated book, Carl Sommer reveals the importance of respect for others, forgiveness, and sportsmanship.



Main Virtues

**Respect for Others/Forgiveness/
Sportsmanship**

Other Virtues

Appreciation, Assertiveness, Caring, Cheerfulness, Citizenship, Civic Virtue, Compassion, Cooperation, Courtesy, Fairness, Friendship, Generosity, Humility, Justice, Kindness, and Tolerance



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Pride and Arrogance

Tombo always won the races. After every race he would boast, “Seeeeeee! Didn’t I tell you I’m the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole in the pond? I’m King of the Pond!”

Tombo was proud and arrogant.

Respect for Others

Tombo did not respect others; he was selfish. Whenever the tadpoles found food, Tombo would chase everyone away. He always demanded, “*I’m* the biggest, so *I’m* eating first!”

Tombo never shared his food with others. Only when *he* had enough to eat did he let the others eat. We need to respect others and share.

Sportsmanship

Tombo became a big bully. As long as *he* had fun, he did not care about anyone else. We should think of others and be kind to them. Sportsmanship is being considerate of others. Good sportsmen are kind and gracious whether they win or lose.

Characteristics of Good and Bad Sportsmen

Bad Sportsmen

They:

- Think only of themselves when playing
- Are not team players
- Never compliment others
- Cheat whenever they can
- Are sore losers
- Are disrespectful of others
- Listen only when they want to
- Break rules when convenient
- Look for excuses when a game is lost
- Never compliment the winners

Good Sportsmen

They:

- Think of others when playing
- Are team players
- Compliment others
- Play fair and hard
- Don’t give up when losing
- Lose gracefully
- Respect others
- Play according to the rules
- Listen to the leader
- Compliment the winners

Ask students to list other characteristics of bad and good sportsmen. In classroom settings, have students role play bad and good sportsmen.

What Goes Around Comes Around

Tilly said to Freddy, “Don’t worry about Tombo. What goes around comes around. Bullies and boasters will get what they deserve.”

There is a law of sowing and reaping. We reap what we sow.

Boasting vs. Humility

Tombo went around boasting that he was the only one that could do flips. Tombo was eager to show off. We shouldn’t go around boasting about things that we can do. Be humble—let others praise you instead of praising yourself.

Appreciating Our Amazing World

After Mom explained to Alex about the tadpoles, Alex said, “That’s amazing.” Then Mom said, “We live in a wonderful and amazing world.”

We should appreciate our wonderful and amazing world.

Amazing Things of Our World

Birds

Fish

Animals

Mountains

Sun, Moon, and Stars

Earth

Plants

Microscopic Life

Have students tell about various amazing facts that they have discovered. Encourage them to see the amazing world right around them. After discussing this, make an assignment for them to look in a field, garden, lawn, or wherever and report what they have found. It is truly an amazing world.

An assignment can also be given for students to write factual information about any subject that interests them.

Forgiveness

After Tombo realized that he was now the smallest, the slowest, and the weakest frog in the pond, he said, “I’m sorry for the things I did to you.”

The other frogs said, “We forgive you.”

When Tombo jumped into the water to swim away, Tilly yelled, “Come back! We want you to play with us.”

We should be willing to forgive others.

Questions

1. What did Tombo make himself because he was the largest tadpole in the pond?

Tombo made himself King of the Pond because he was the largest tadpole in the pond.

2. Tombo would often tease the other tadpoles by chasing them all around the pond. Then what would Tombo do as they swam away?

When the tadpoles swam away Tombo laughed at them.

3. Why is teasing wrong?

Teasing is wrong because in teasing one wants the other person to become irritated or mad.

Good people try to help others; they do not try to get others irritated or mad.

4. What would Tombo boast after every race?

Tombo would boast after every race, "Seeeee! Didn't I tell you I'm the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole in the pond? I'm King of the Pond!"

5. Why do people boast?

People often boast because they are proud and want to show off how good they are.

6. What would Tombo always demand whenever the tadpoles found food?

When the other tadpoles found food Tombo would always demand, "I'm the biggest, so I'm eating first!"

Tombo was selfish. Tombo never shared his food with others. Only when he had enough to eat did he let the others eat.

7. One day when a big fish appeared, all the tadpoles swam away. But what did Tombo do?

When the big fish appeared, Tombo swam in front of the big fish, stuck out his tongue and sneered saying, "You can't catch me!"

8. When the fish made a dash to catch Tombo, what did Tombo do?

Tombo dove under a log when the fish dashed to catch him.

9. When the fish finally left, what did Tombo boast?

When the fish left, Tombo boasted, "I'm not afraid of anything. I'm the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole. I'm King of the Pond!"

10. Not only was Tombo the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole, but he could also do fancy tricks. What fancy trick did Tombo do?

Tombo could do a fancy trick by flipping in the air.

11. What did Tilly tell Tombo after he did a flip?

After Tombo did a flip, Tilly would tell him, "You better be careful. When you jump out of the water, a fish might have you for dinner or a bird might swoop down and swallow you up."

12. What did Tombo say after Tilly warned him?

When Tilly warned Tombo, he laughed and said, "They'll never catch me! I'm the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole. I'm King of the Pond! I'm not afraid of anything!"

13. When Tombo became older, what would he do when the tadpoles yelled, "Ouch!" as he nipped their tails?

When Tombo got older and nipped the tadpoles' tails, he laughed at them when they yelled, "Ouch!"

He thought it was lots of fun when all the tadpoles dashed away from him because he pinched them. Tombo became a big bully. As long as he had fun, he did not care about anyone else.

We should think and care about others, not only about our own happiness.

14. What did Tilly tell Freddy when he said, "It's just not fair for Tombo to treat us so badly. He's a big bully"?

When Freddy said it was not fair what Tombo was doing, Tilly said to him, "Don't worry about Tombo. What goes around comes around. Bullies and boosters will get what they deserve."

15. What did Alex do when he happened to see Tombo do a double flip?

Alex tiptoed to where Tombo had jumped when he saw him do a double flip.

16. Meanwhile under the water, what did Tombo tell his friends after doing the double flip?

After doing the double flip, Tombo bragged, "Seeeeeee! Didn't I tell you that I'm the only one who can do flips? I'm the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole. I'm King of the Pond! Do you want to see me do a triple flip?"

Tombo went around boasting that he was the only one that could do flips. Tombo was eager to show off.

17. What happened to Tombo when he did a triple flip?

When Tombo did a triple flip he flipped into the net of Alex.

18. What did Tombo say when Alex's dad said, "That's just a little tadpole"?

When Tombo heard he was a little tadpole, he became furious and yelled, "I'm not little. I'm the biggest, the fastest, and the strongest tadpole. I'm King of the Pond!"

19. What did Tombo say when they fed him dried fish food?

When Tombo was fed dried fish food, he said, "I demand my regular food. I'm not eating this!"

20. Tombo hated the dried fish food, but he finally got so hungry that he ate it. How much fish food did Tombo eat?

Tombo hated the fish food so much that he ate as little as possible.

21. Alex would tap on the glass and say, “Let’s see you swim, little tadpole.” What would Tombo do?

Tombo would get so scared that he would dash across the tank when Alex tapped on the glass.

22. When Tombo bumped his nose, what did:

A. Alex think?

Alex thought it was so funny to see Tombo dash across the tank.

B. Alex do?

Alex would laugh and laugh at Tombo.

23. What strange thing did Alex see that was happening to Tombo?

Alex saw legs growing on Tombo.

24. What did Alex say after his mom explained the life of a frog?

When Alex’s mom explained the life of a frog, Alex said, “Wow! That’s amazing.”

We should appreciate our wonderful and amazing world.

25. Why should we learn to appreciate our wonderful and amazing world?

We should learn to appreciate our wonderful and amazing world so we can better understand and take care of our world and its environment.

People who do not appreciate our world often do things that harm the environment.

26. What did Alex’s mom say about when they should put the tadpole into the pond?

Alex’s mom said, “When your tadpole turns into a little frog, we’ll return him to his pond.”

27. What did Tombo say when he heard that he was called a little frog?

When Tombo heard he was called a little frog, he said, “I’m not turning into a little frog. I’m going to be the biggest, the fastest, and strongest frog. I’m King of the Pond!”

28. What happened to Tombo because he ate little?

Because Tombo ate little he grew little.

29. Tombo came back into the pond and boasted, “I’m the biggest, the fastest, and strongest frog! I’m King of the Pond!” What did the frogs in the pond do when Tombo boasted?

When Tombo boasted all the frogs laughed at him.

30. What did Tombo say when he realized that he was now the smallest, the

slowest, and the weakest frog in the pond?

When Tombo realized he was the smallest, the slowest, and the weakest frog in the pond, he lowered his head and said, "I'm sorry for the things I did to you."

31. What did all the frogs say to Tombo when he said, "I'm sorry for the things I did to you"?

When all the frogs heard that Tombo had said he was sorry, they all said, "We forgive you."

We should be willing to forgive others when they say they are sorry.

32. What did Tilly yell to Tombo when he dove into the water to swim away?

When Tombo dove into the water to swim away, Tilly yelled, "Come back! We want you to play with us."

33. What did Tombo say to Tilly about friends after they were finished playing?

Tombo said to Tilly, "Now I know that having friends and treating them right is much more fun than being King of the Pond."

Try it, and you will find it's true.