

The Little Swallow

by

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When writing our fable, “The Little Swallow,” we attempted to showcase the struggle many people, especially young people, undergo in terms of the felt-need for acceptance and the rejection that may come with it. As for our inspiration, it came from a solid phrase: “Many children cultivate a strong connection with stories that reflect the world and reality as they realize it” (Burke et al. 2006). With this goal in mind, our tale describes the endeavor of a young swallow to fit in and be accepted by others (in this case, birds) around it. We hope our story can touch the hearts of children or anyone who feels they do not belong, and illustrate that as long as they embrace their true and unique self-identities, they will eventually find their place in the vastness of contemporary world.

The protagonist of our fable is a swallow, an insignificant creature of no extravagant appearance—compared to the other birds in this fable—a bird most people have seen or heard of and, therefore, can imagine themselves as being one and relate to its experiences. We chose a swallow as the central character because it is a small bird; yet, one that can fly long distances, as well as a bird that continuously travels with its flock, migrating when spring is approaching. The swallow in our story is alone, indicating that it has lost its flock, which until this point, provided it with guidance. Now, it desperately craves for acceptance from other birds, aiming to be like them, without realizing that only by making peace with itself can it find its life path, the way back to its flock.

In our story, the little bird is continually drawn to and aspires to be like birds with beautiful outer images and lush plumage, solely focusing on their beauty and subconsciously believing that this might be the key to acceptance. When deciding what birds the swallow would encounter in its journey, we tried picking birds with physical qualities usually considered unique and beautiful. The immediate dismissal our central character experiences from the peacock or the flamingo saddens it; yet, this rejection reveals how one should not attempt to mimic the behavior, mannerisms, and appearance of others. Instead, they ought to strive to find their distinct selfhood. On the other hand, the swan, not having always been beautiful,

listens to the swallow and aids our central character in discovering its uniqueness: its wings, which the swallow previously neglected in an attempt to fit in. The swan poses in the storyline as a guardian that helps the little swallow embrace its true identity. Also, the swan is familiar to most young children due to the popularity of The Ugly Duckling, a classic work of the prolific fable writer Hans Christian Andersen. The swan character in our story mirrors the guidance children receive from their elders or the authority figures in their life, albeit one that is less strict and imposing. So, the introduction of the swan promotes and delivers the message in the story: It is through the deployment of animal characters (in fables) that the didactic tone of the story is delivered in a more softened way (Burke et al. 210). The swan gently urges the swallow to understand its value. And in the end, the swallow uses its wings after discovering its self-worth and, by extension, finding where it belongs: the sky, symbolizing freedom and self-acceptance.

Lester H. Hunt claims that “Aesopian fables always contain something logical, an opinion about the world, and the endeavor to showcase the truth of that opinion” (370). Our story draws attention to the risk factors in the uniformity of contemporary societies, encourages the audience to embrace their not-being-a-peacock, a flamingo, or a swan and accept their identification with the swallow. A swallow that opens its wings and traverses the sky, witnessing wonders that none of the other birds mentioned in this fable or could ever experience as worth one’s attention.

Works Cited

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- Hunt, Lester H. “Literature as Fable, Fable as Argument” *Philosophy and Literature*, vol.33, no.2, 2009, pp. 369-85. *ProQuest*. www.proquest.com/docview/220543364/8131397EFCB243F8PQ/1?accountid=8359. Accessed 9 Oct. 2023.