

# Flossie and the Fox

Book by Patricia McKissack

Unit study by Christa Stepien

## Social Studies

### Geography

This story takes place in Tennessee. Have your student find it on a map.

Tennessee became a state on June 1, 1796. It was the 16<sup>th</sup> state. The capital of city is Nashville, and the largest city is Memphis. The major industries in Tennessee are: mining (coal), farming (tobacco, soybeans, cotton), tourism, music, and electrical power.

If desired, research these topics and learn more about Tennessee: moon pies, Davy Crockett, Ruby Falls, Elvis Presley, the Volunteer State, Great Smokey Mountains, and country music.

### Nicknames

Flossie calls her grandmother “Big Mama.” Does your student have a grandmother? What do they call her? What are some other nicknames that people use for their grandmother? Does your student have a nickname? How does it make him feel to have a special name that is just his own?

### Relationships-Grandmother and Grandfather

Flossie and her Grandmother are the only two people in this story. It seems that her Grandmother is taking care of her during this story. Does your child have a relationship with a grandparent? Discuss it with your child. What are your child's favorite things about his grandparent? What makes a grandparent special?

The author wrote this book because of memories that she had with her grandfather. What are some special memories that your child has of a grandparent that he thinks he will remember when he is grown up? Does your family have any traditions that are memorable like the author's family had with storytelling?

Complete the Memories with My Grandma and Grandpa bound book.

### Manners

Flossie is always polite to the fox, and he is polite to her. She even curtsies when they meet, and the fox bows back to her. Discuss manners with your child. Even though

Flossie was not happy to see the fox, she was polite. If she had not been polite with the fox, he may not have been polite to her, and she would not have managed to get to the farm. By talking to the fox, instead of running or attacking him, she was able to get through the journey through the forest, even though it was difficult! Discuss this idea with your child: by being polite, they may be able to get through a situation that they don't want to be in without much difficulty! It may not be easy, but it is easier than the alternative.

### Responsibility

Big Mama gave Flossie the eggs to take to the McCutchin place. Flossie's grandmother needed to get those eggs somewhere and she could not take them herself. That is a lot of responsibility for a little girl! This was a big job for a little girl, but Big Mama knew that Flossie could do it, and Flossie took her job seriously. If Flossie did not take her responsibility seriously, would she have been able to be clever and outwit the fox? If she did not take her responsibility seriously, she probably would have left the eggs to the fox, or ran back home. Instead, she was able to take the eggs where they needed to go. Does your child have any responsibilities? Have they ever shown that they are capable of doing something difficult to help someone out? It is an honor when someone gives you responsibility; it means that they have confidence that you can do whatever you are asking them.

### Cleverness

Flossie is such a clever little girl! She is able to think “outside the box” and come up with her own solution to her problem. Can your child think of any other way that Flossie could have dealt with the fox? Would it be likely that Flossie would have gotten to the farm if she did it that way? Encourage your child to think like Flossie when they encounter a situation and have to find a solution!

### Pride

The fox was so proud; he could not keep to his task of getting the eggs. He was upset that Flossie would not believe that he was a fox. This was good for Flossie, but bad for the fox! Discuss pride with your child. Pride has a tendency to make people feel that they are too good to do something. Often, people will turn down help when they need it. Pride makes people embarrassed about things that they should not be embarrassed about (for example: being sick, or poor, or needing help). We should do our best to help people when they need it, and not to be afraid to offer or accept help when it is needed.

Complete Pride matchbook.

## Language Arts

### Vocabulary

Flossie may be a little girl, but she knows a lot of big words! Some of the new words that you will encounter in the story are:

Sly- cunning, wily, sneaky

Slickster- a crafty or deceitful person

Critter- any creature or animal

Rascal- a mischievous person or animal; a dishonest person

Particular- special or exceptional care

Recollect- to remember

Luxurious- of the finest and richest kind

Accord- to grant or give especially as appropriate

Beckoned- to summon or signal, typically with a wave or nod

Absurd- completely unreasonable or untrue

Adequate- good enough

Disremember- forget

Tarry- to be slow in coming or going

Confidence- a feeling of certainty

Confidencer- a confidence man

A confidence man or “con man” gains someone's confidence as a means to steal from or

cheat them.

### Oral Storytelling

Read the author's note at the beginning of the book with your student. The author says that she heard this story from her Grandfather when he used to tell them stories. Stories have been passed down by oral tradition for most of human history. These stories were told for entertainment, but also to pass down lessons from generation to generation. Does your student know the lesson that this book teaches?

Complete Moral of the Story simple fold and add it to your lapbook.

### Little Red Riding Hood

This story is a variation of Little Red Riding Hood. If your student is not familiar with this story, read it together. Have your student compare and contrast the stories. Which does your student like better? What is the lesson that Little Red Riding Hood teaches? (Not to talk to strangers.) Flossie and the Fox teaches a different lesson about being smart enough to get out of a bad situation when one arises. How does Little Red Riding Hood (the character) make your student feel? How does Flossie make your child feel?

Use the Comparing Stories page to record your student's insights.

### Dialect

When you read this book, talk to your student about the way that Flossie and Big Mama speak. Does it sound different than what your student is used to? Why does the author write it this way? Does your student think that it adds to the story to "hear" the way that the characters speak? It draws the reader into the story in a way that they are not accustomed.

Complete Examples of Dialect simple fold and add it to your lapbook.

## **Art**

### Realism

The art in this book is very realistic. The things in the book look like they would in real life. This is especially important given the subject of the story. The fox describes himself as best he can, and Flossie compares him to other animals. Because of this, the animals need to be drawn as accurately as possible. When fox says he has a bushy tail, and Flossie says that squirrels have bushy tails, both animals must have a bushy tail!

Have your student make a list of features that an animal has. Then read the list to them while they are drawing a picture of the animal that they have chosen, and have them include all of the details that they listed in their drawing to make it as realistic as possible.

### Sunset

In the last picture, the sky is glowing orange. Does your child know why this is? The sun is setting in the sky in that picture. Good thing Flossie got there before the sun went down!

To understand why the sky changes color, you first have to introduce your child to the idea of colored light. When you combine all the colors of light, you get white light. This is probably contrary to what your child would expect from having mixed paints! The sky changes color at sunset (and sunrise) because the sun is low on the horizon, and the sunlight has to travel through more air than when it is higher in the sky. The molecules in the air scatter the light, which makes the blue and violet light less visible to your eyes. The other colors continue, and this is why sunsets are often yellow, orange, and red. Red has the longest wavelength of light, and that is why the sun is usually red when it is on the horizon.

Let your child experiment with drawing a sunset.

## **Math**

### A Dozen

Because this story is about eggs, it may be a good time to discuss the concept of “a dozen” to your student. Show them an egg carton if you can, and explain how 12 of anything is called a dozen. Then show them 12 of other things (anything...ideas are crayons, markers, marbles, books) and talk about how there are a dozen. If your child seems to respond to the concept well, you may wish to expand and talk about “half a dozen” (6) and a “baker's dozen” (13).

### Estimation

Estimation is an approximate calculation of the number of something. It is your best guess given the information that you have on hand.

There are lots of things to estimate in this story.

1. In the illustrations, you can see the basket of eggs. Count the eggs that you can see. Is that as many eggs are in the basket? No, because there are eggs underneath that you cannot see. Have your child estimate how many eggs there are.
2. Have your child estimate how old Flossie is. Why do they think this?
3. Estimate how far it is from where Big Mama is to the McCutchin Place. How far did Flossie have to walk?

## Science

### Temperature

In the book, it says, "It was hot, hotter than a usual Tennessee August day." In Tennessee in August, the average temperature is 77 degrees. Use this opportunity to discuss what temperature it is today where you live, and if your child is interested, look up what the average temperature in August is where you live. Talk about whether today's weather is "hotter than usual" or not!

### Protection from the Sun

If it was a sunny, hot, summer day, Flossie should have been concerned about a few things. Discuss being out in the sun on a hot day, and what precautions your child should take. You may want to discuss things such as sunburn, sunscreen/reapplying, wearing protective clothing, hats, dehydration and getting plenty of fluids, concern about overheating. The sun can be very dangerous, even though it is beneficial at the same time.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a vitamin that our bodies do not naturally produce. Our bodies absorb vitamin D from the sun. Vitamin D is necessary for bone health. In the past, low vitamin D was a cause of rickets (softening of the bones) in children.

### Eggs

Flossie is bringing a basket of fresh eggs with her. If your child does not know that eggs come from chickens, discuss this with them. You may also want to discuss chicks with your child. The eggs that we eat do not have chicks in them, but some do! The ones that have chicks in them take 21 days to hatch. Inside the egg, there is a yolk, which is the chick's food source. There is a sack (membrane) that the chick grows in. The sack is smaller than the shell, so there is an air pocket. When the chick starts pecking its way

out of the shell (after 21 days), it pecks its way into the air pocket. The extra air that it finds there makes it able to keep pecking through the shell.

### Classification

Flossie and the fox are discussing what makes a fox a fox. This is called classification. Classification relies on the specific combination of traits that make an animal unique. Have your child experiment with classification. Have them tell you something that makes them who they are (a boy, a girl, a child, a human). Based on that one trait, tell them what else they could be (if they say they have hair, you could tell them they could also be a monkey!) Then take your turn and list specific traits and have your child tell you what animal you could be! This is a fun game because, like the fox did, when you list one trait at a time, it doesn't make you who you are. It is the combination of these specific traits that make us unique.

Complete Creature Characteristics flap book.

### Wolf vs. Fox

Little Red Riding Hood encounters a wolf, while Flossie encounters a fox. These animals are like “cousins” with each other, but they have many differences.

Wolves are larger and live in packs of 6 or more. Wolves are known for their howl. They are fierce carnivores. Humans are generally frightened of them, and because of this they are often hunted. They generally need to find areas to live that are not populated by humans.

The fox is medium sized (about the size of a dog or smaller) with a narrow snout and a fluffy tail. They live in small groups of 2-3 foxes. Due to their size, they don't have large prey. They eat small rodents, rabbits, birds, eggs, and sometimes berries and fruit. Their size and what they eat has made it so that they can live alongside humans without being hunted as profusely. This is not to say that they are not a pest to humans...they often break into garbage cans to forage, and attack animals on a farm. If they get into a henhouse they often slaughter every chicken that is inside. Still, because they are not nearly as feared they have survived better when living in the same area that humans are.

Complete Venn diagram and add it to your lapbook.

### Shade

Shade is the shadow from something else. When you stand in the shade of a building, the sun is not touching you because the sun is hitting the building, and the sun cannot

reach the ground, so a shadow remains. Flossie chooses to walk through the forest rather than along the road. The author says, “The way through the woods was shorter and cooler than the road route under the open sun.” The way through the woods is cooler because the trees are casting their shadows and making shade on the path where Flossie is walking. Had she chosen the open road, there would have been no trees or buildings to cast shade for her. Even if the open road had buildings alongside it, they would not have cast shade at mid-day because their shadows would have been so small. (Explain shadows to your child if necessary. You can recreate this easily with a flashlight and any object that you have nearby, by shining the light on the object and moving it like the sun.) The trees in the forest tend to create a canopy overhead, so they create shade even when the sun is overhead.

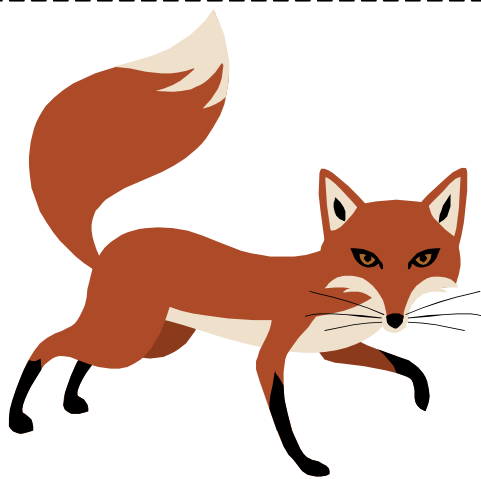
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**Directions:** Cut on solid black lines. Fold on dotted, like a matchbook. Paste or write verse (next page) inside the book.

Pride



When pride comes,  
then comes disgrace,  
but with humility  
comes wisdom.  
Proverbs 11:2

### Map of United States

Color Tennessee on the map  
below and paste the map into  
your lapbook.



**Directions (book on next page):** Cut on solid black lines. Remove rectangle from top piece. Cut on green lines to make two slits. Roll up bottom piece and cut out long rectangle. Cut out bottom portion as one piece. Roll up bottom portion and stick through the rectangle on the top portion.

# Memories with My Grandma and Grandpa



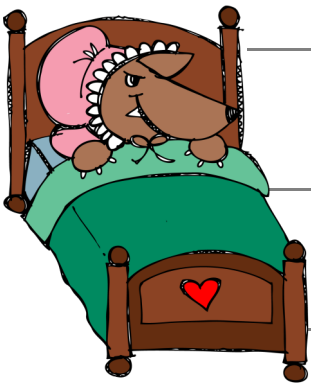


Moral of  
the Story

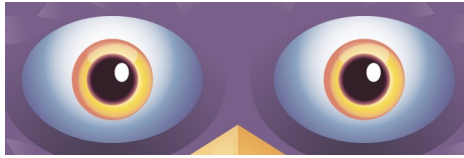


Examples  
of Dialect

# Comparing Stories



**I have two eyes.  
What could I be?**



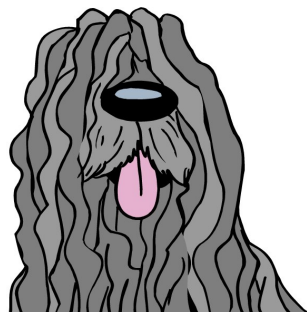
**I have lots of teeth.  
What could I be?**



**I have two legs.  
What could I be?**



**I have hair.  
What could I be?**



Cut on solid lines. Fold on dotted.

Think of animals with the characteristics and write their names under the flaps.

What creature has all four traits?

Cut out book as one piece. Fold in half on the black line. Cut on the dotted lines to form three flaps.

