

FERRIS AND THE FROG

Ferris had a summer job working as a lifeguard at the community swimming pool. It was his dream job, and he couldn't wait to start. There was only one drawback. Sam, the school bully, had gotten a job there too. Ferris was afraid of Sam, and he worried about how he would do at his new job. He was confident in his lifesaving skills. But would he be able to be an effective lifeguard if he was always feeling intimidated?

The first few weeks of summer went by, and there were no problems for Ferris. Apparently Sam didn't want to be fired, so he didn't pick on anybody at the pool. Sometimes when Ferris was coming off his shift on the chair it was Sam coming on behind him and they would come face to face. But though Ferris' heart would pound, and he would feel his pulse race in anticipation of a problem, no problem arose. Soon Ferris started to relax and just enjoy his work.

It was then that the trouble began. Ferris was sitting in his chair when one of the swimmers in the pool screamed. Ferris blew his whistle as hard as he could. While all the swimmers were clambering out of the pool, Ferris was jumping in. Moments later, he was the only one in the pool. No one was drowning. What had happened? Who had screamed? Ferris stood up to his waist in the pool, looking back at the kids that were looking down at him from the side of the pool.

"Who screamed?" Ferris demanded. A little girl raised her hand, slowly.

"I did," she said.

"Why?"

"There was a frog in the pool," she said. "Look!" She pointed to the right of Ferris and sure enough, a small white frog was swimming through the water. It had a curious hourglass-shaped mark on its back. Ferris reached over and plucked the frog from the water.

"Come on, little buddy," he said, and got out of the pool. "You can all get back in," he said to the children. "But don't scream like that again!" he warned the little girl.

Suddenly, Sam was by Ferris' side. "I'll take that," Sam said, holding out his hand for the frog. "I'll take it home and feed it to my snake."

"No, I've got it," Ferris said. "It's your turn in the chair."

Ferris walked out of the pool enclosure and set the frog in the grass. "I'm a lifeguard, and as far as I'm concerned I'm responsible for your life too," Ferris told the frog. When

he turned back he saw that instead of paying attention to the pool, Sam was watching him. When it was Ferris's turn in the chair again, Sam walked out of the pool enclosure, straight to where Ferris had set down the frog, and began to poke around through the grass.

What a jerk, Ferris thought to himself. He can't pick on the kids while he's working here, so he's going to torture the poor frog!

The next day Ferris arrived at the pool early. He got in the water and swam around for a few minutes. Then he saw the frog on the wall of the pool. It was the same frog, with the hourglass on his back.

"Let's get you out of here," Ferris said. But it was too late. Sam had entered the pool area. Neither of them were on duty right away, and Ferris knew that if Sam saw him with the frog, he would follow him around until he managed to get the frog for himself. Ferris didn't know what to do. He knew he couldn't win a fight against Sam. But then he had an idea. Some kids had left some pool noodles in the water, and one of them floated near Ferris. He grabbed it, and with his back to Sam, he slipped the frog inside the pool noodle. Then he picked up the noodle along with the others and walked out of the pool. Sam was walking along the edge of the pool, peeking into the water.

"The kids left the pool noodles in the water," Ferris said as he passed Sam.

"Is that frog back?" Sam asked. "My snake sure is hungry."

"I haven't seen him," Ferris said, and kept walking. He took the pool noodles to the stock room. When he was out of everyone's sight, Ferris got the frog out of the noodle. He had ten minutes before his turn in the chair. This time he walked as far away from the pool as he could, through a copse of trees, down a small ravine, and stopped at the edge of a tiny creek.

"This is better water for you," Ferris said, letting the frog hop off of his hand and into the puddle. "Now don't come back!"

Ferris got back to the pool just in time for his shift.

"Where have you been?" Sam demanded.

"Sticking up for a friend," Ferris replied. And somehow, knowing that he'd outsmarted Sam, he never felt quite so intimidated by him again.

Name _____

THINKING ABOUT THEME

Unlike a fable, where the moral, or theme, is often stated explicitly, in modern stories an author will not usually state a theme outright. Readers have to think about what the characters did, and figure out what they can learn from the characters' experiences. The questions and answers below will help you to determine the theme of Ferris and the Frog.

1. How does Ferris feel about Sam in the beginning of the story?

2. What happens to give Ferris more confidence in himself?

3. Why do you think that what happened makes Ferris feel more confident?

4. What do you think the theme of this story is? What makes you think so?

ANSWERS

1. Ferris is intimidated by Sam, who is a bully.
2. Ferris is able to save the frog from Sam. He outsmarts Sam and takes the frog to safety.
3. Ferris grew more confident about being able to save himself from Sam when he realized he could save someone smaller and weaker from Sam.
4. By helping others we also help ourselves.