The Stone

**Literary Focus: Moral Lessons**

Most stories have a message. Fairy tales have *morals*, which are messages or lessons about the right way to behave. “The Stone” was written by a modern writer. However, it has the feel, and the moral, of an old fairy tale.

**Reading Skill: Making Predictions**

When you read a book or watch a movie, do you ever guess what will happen next? If so, you know what it means to make a prediction. Making predictions helps keep your mind awake as you read. To make predictions as you read “The Stone,” follow these steps:

1. **Into the Story**

Have you ever wished you could be older, right now? In “The Stone,” the adult character has the opposite wish: he wants to *stop* growing older. Read to find out what happens when his wish comes true.
The Stone

Based on the story by
Lloyd Alexander
One day a man named Maibon was driving down the road on his horse and cart when he saw a sickly old man. Maibon shook his head at such a sad sight and went on his way home. When he got home, he said to his wife, Modrona:

“Ah, ah, what a sorry thing it is to grow old. When I think that this might happen to me, too!”

“Stop looking for trouble,” answered Modrona. “Take care of your field, or we’ll have no food.”

Maibon sighed and did as his wife asked. Although it was a lovely day, Maibon took no pleasure in it. None of his tools seemed to cut the way they used to. The sun didn’t seem to shine as bright.

“As for me,” went on Maibon, “I’m in even worse shape. When I go to bed, my eyes are so heavy I can’t hold them open. As I grow older, things will only get worse!”

As he was complaining, Maibon noticed something in a corner of the field. He dropped his ax and opened his mouth in surprise.

There he saw a redheaded dwarf who was struggling to get his leg from under a log. When the dwarf saw Maibon, he shouted, “Well, come on! Don’t stand there like an idiot. Help me get loose!”

Maibon scratched his head: “Well, now, just a moment, friend. The way you look—I’m thinking you might be one of the Fair Folk.”

“Oh, smart!” Doli, the dwarf, snapped back. “Of course I am! Enough talking. Get a move on. My leg’s going to sleep.”

Maibon got excited. “If a man does the Fair Folk a good turn, ” he cried, “they say he must return the favor.”

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Doli agreed to grant Maibon a wish if Maibon would help free him. Maibon pulled and chopped away at the log as fast as he could. He freed the dwarf.

Doli let out a sigh of relief and said:
"All right. You’ve done your work; you’ll have your reward. What do you want?"

“I’ve heard that you Fair Folk have magic stones that can keep a man young forever. That’s what I want.”

Doli snorted. “I might have known you’d pick something like that. You humans have it all wrong. There’s nothing we can do to make a man young again. Those stones only keep you from getting older.”

“Just as good!” Maibon exclaimed. “That’s what I want!”

Doli hesitated and frowned. “Those stones—we’d sooner not give them away. There’s a difficulty—"

Maibon broke in. “I told you what I want, and that’s what I’ll have.”

Doli shrugged and handed Maibon a large stone. Then, he jumped up and ran away.

Laughing, Maibon hurried back to his house. There he told his wife what had happened and showed her the stone. His wife was not happy and called him a fool for asking the dwarf for a stone.

Disappointed, Maibon began thinking his wife was right. He threw the stone into the fireplace.

But, when Maibon woke up the next morning, he patted his cheeks in amazement. “My beard!” he cried to his wife. “It hasn’t grown!”

“Don’t talk to me about beards,” his wife replied. “There’s trouble enough in the chicken roost. Those eggs should have been hatched by now.”

1. hesitated (HEHZ uh tayt chd): to wait a moment, because of feeling unsure.
Maibon went to the fireplace to pick out the stone. “Let the chickens worry about that,” answered Maibon. “Wife, don’t you see what great thing has happened to me? I’m not a minute older than I was yesterday.”

“And the cow!” Modrona cried. “She’s long past due and still hasn’t given birth to a calf!”

“Don’t bother me with cows and chickens,” replied Maibon. “They’ll be all right, in time. As for time, I’ve got all the time in the world!”

When Maibon went out to his field, he was surprised to see that not one of the seeds he had planted there had sprouted.

Some days went by and still the eggs had not hatched. The cow had not calved. The wheat had not sprouted. And now Maibon saw that his apple tree showed no sign of even the smallest, greenest fruit.

His wife blamed the stone. She told Maibon to get rid of it. Maibon replied, “The season’s slow, that’s all.” His wife kept at him. Finally, Maibon threw the stone out the window.

The next morning, though, he found the stone sitting on the window sill.

Now Maibon’s baby was having trouble. He was cranky from teething, but no tooth was to be seen! Maibon’s wife begged her husband to get rid of the stone. This time, Maibon dug a shallow hole and put the stone into it. But the next day the stone sat glittering above the ground.

Time went by with nothing growing or changing. Maibon grew upset. “Nothing’s moving along as it should,” he groaned. “There’s nothing to look forward to, nothing to show for my work.”

Maibon tried to destroy the stone, but no matter what he did, the stone kept coming back. At last, he decided to bury

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2. glittering (GLIHT chr ihng): sparkling.
the stone again, this time deeper than before. He picked up his shovel and hurried to the field. As he was running to the field, he saw the dwarf sitting on a stump.

“You should have warned me about the stone!” Maibon shouted at the dwarf.


“What do you think I’ve been trying to do?” blurted Maibon. “It keeps coming back to me whatever I do!”

“That’s because you really didn’t want to give it up.”

“No, no!” cried Maibon. “I want no more of it. Whatever may happen, let it happen. That’s better than nothing happening at all.”

“If you mean that,” answered Doli, “toss the stone onto the ground right there at the stump. Then go home.”

Maibon threw down the stone and ran home as fast as he could. He was so happy to see that his field was covered with green blades of wheat and that the apple tree was heavy with fruit. He ran into the house. His wife told him the good news—the hen hatched her chicks; the cow bore her calf. And Maibon laughed with delight when he saw the first tooth in the baby’s mouth.

Maibon and his children and grandchildren lived for many years. Maibon was as proud of his long white beard as he had been of his strong body.

“Stones are all right in their way,” said Maibon. “But the trouble with them is, they don’t grow.”
Making Predictions

As you read “The Stone,” you learned how to use clues to make predictions about what might happen next. Now let’s review those predictions.

Read each scene from the story in the left-hand column below. These passages were the topics of the Here’s How and Your Turns on making predictions (pages 10, 11, and 13). In the middle column, write what actually happened next in the story. Were the predictions you made correct? If so, how did you guess? In the right-hand column, identify the text clue (or real-world knowledge) you used to make the prediction. If the prediction was incorrect, in the same column identify a text clue that pointed to what really happened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage from the Story</th>
<th>What Happened Next</th>
<th>Clue (or Real-World Knowledge) That Predicted What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Maibon meets a dwarf in the field. He helps free the dwarf (who is actually one of the “Fair Folk”) from beneath a fallen log. (lines 16–32)</td>
<td>The dwarf, Doli, does have magic powers: He grants Maibon a wish.</td>
<td>“Fair Folk” sounded like “fairy”; I knew that fairies had magical powers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The next morning, Maibon finds his beard hasn’t grown and the chickens’ eggs haven’t hatched. (lines 55–60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Maibon tells Doli he longs to be rid of the stone. (lines 96–105)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary

A. Match words and definitions. Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each word. The first one has been done for you.

   ___ 1. sickly  
   ___ 2. hesitated  
   ___ 3. calved  
   ___ 4. glittering  
   ___ 5. bore

   a. sparkling  
   b. gave birth to  
   c. not in good health  
   d. gave birth to a calf  
   e. waited a moment, due to feeling unsure

B. Choose two words from the list above. Use each word in a sentence.

1. ____________________________
   ____________________________

2. ____________________________
   ____________________________
**Just Once**  Page 1

**Page 3**

Retelling
Underlined event: “But it wasn’t the Moose’s name that everybody was shouting.”

Conflict
Sample response: The quarterback, players in the backfield, and other members of the team are all in conflict with the Moose.

**Page 4**

Retelling
Sample answer: I think Coach is getting fed up; He’s getting a bit angry at the Moose.

Conflict
Sample response: When the crowd tells the coach to let the Moose carry the ball, the coach looks angry. That means that the Moose is facing a conflict with the coach again. The Moose might even be sorry that he asked to carry the ball. He could be in conflict with himself, too.

**Page 5**

Retelling
Sample answer: Before he had faced one tackler at a time, maybe two. He’s not used to seeing five or six tacklers coming straight at him.

Conflict
Sample response: The Moose is finding out that carrying the ball isn’t as easy as it looks. I think he’s starting to wonder whether he should be carrying the ball at all.

**Page 6**

Retelling
I think it’s been worse than he expected. He did get the crowd cheering him when he scored, but he didn’t like that the Tigers were heading toward him and closing in on him. At the end, he tells the coach that he’ll never carry the ball again.

Conflict
Sample response: I agree with the ending. The Moose finally realizes that he is part of a team.

**Page 7**

Graphic Organizer: Retelling Guide
Sample responses are provided.
1. “Just Once,” based on the story by Thomas J. Dygard; high school football games.
2. The Moose; to carry the ball; Coach, Jerry, Dan.
3. The coach and other players don’t think it’s a good idea. The other characters block him by not letting him play another position.
4. The Moose convinces the fans that he should carry the ball and so puts pressure on Coach.
5. The Moose scores a touchdown, but he gets pounded and tackled. Carrying the ball is not as fun as he had expected.
6. At the end, the Moose decides he never again wants to carry the ball.
7. Answers will vary.

**The Stone**  Page 8

**Page 11**

Making Predictions
Underlined things: “My beard . . . hasn’t grown!”; “. . . in the chicken roost. Those eggs should have hatched by now.”
Sample responses: Maybe his hair won’t grow; maybe what he plants won’t grow.

**Page 12**

Vocabulary
Sample response: It means a cow has not given birth to a calf.

Moral Lesson
Sample response: Be careful of what you wish for—it might come true!

**Page 13**

Making Predictions
Sample responses: I think so because now he really wants everything to go back to normal; I don’t think so because he’s not ready to give up his wish.

Vocabulary
Sample answer: The word bore means “gave birth to.”

**Page 14**

Graphic Organizer: Making Predictions
Sample responses are provided.
1. Answers provided.
2. What Happened Next: Nothing grows (even his baby’s teeth), and nothing moves along as it should.
   Clue: If the hen isn’t laying eggs, I figured that other things in Maibon’s life wouldn’t move along either.
3. What Happened Next: This time he’s able to get rid of the stone.
   Clue: Doli said that Maibon has to really want to get rid of his wish. Before, Maibon was amazed by what was happening, but by the end, he is getting frustrated that things weren’t moving along normally.

**The Bridegroom**  Page 16

**Page 18**

Cause and Effect
Sample Effect: She ran home, very upset.
Sample Effect: She was too upset to answer their questions.