

LESSONS FROM FICTION

USING

**AXEL MEETS
THE
BLUE MEN**

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INTRODUCTION

The people who read are not like the people who don't. This doesn't mean that the ones who read are better, but that they live in a different world from those who don't. Reading opens up intellectual worlds that can never be visited by non-readers. Those who don't read are restricted to the worlds they have an acquaintance with in their discussions with others—and many times those others are also non-readers, so their intellectual worlds can be very limited.

If you would like to give your children an expanded and rich world in which to live and think, part of this can be accomplished by their understanding, through discussions with adults, their reading experiences.

The value we receive from literature and discussions of it have to be based on our personal experience and can't be dictated by textbooks or lectures. The same is true of most things we learn. This process is controlled by our experiences discussing and internalizing what we understand and/or need to understand.

This book is not intended to give you or your children values to function with, but it will demonstrate to you the process by which your children can, with your guidance, strengthen how they feel about themselves and others. It will give them ideas about how to deal effectively with people and situations using the values their parents have given them. So, the examples given here are not meant to be guides in your selection of the values you are to give to your children. They are examples of the process of developing skills in dealing with life that can be gained from reading and discussing fiction.

Some of the ideas in this examination might seem to be contradictory. That's fine, they may be. Some might not be the ones you would wish to give to your children. That's fine, they don't have to be. They are only examples of this process.

No one piece of fiction can give to your children a complete operating system. If we were to extract only a very few ideas about how to make choices in our lives from the reading of one piece of fiction, that would be a beneficial experience. Even though you won't be able to discuss all of the ideas you might like to by using this one novel, it will introduce to you the method of using fiction to impart ideas, and your children can use that process in their subsequent readings. In training your children to use fiction—by your reading of this or any novel and by your using of this manual—you will have to decide for yourself what ideas you would like to impart to your children. You then can use this novel and manual as guides for this process, and your children may then wish to use this process with other novels and ideas.

In doing this, I suggest that you read through the novel and manual by yourself. You may even wish to discuss with other adults the ideas presented about the process of using values in making decisions. Decide with them the ideas you would like to give to your children with this novel. Plan the discussions and the processes you can use to impart those ideas. In the meantime your children can be reading the novel. When they have finished their reading, and you have decided on the ideas you wish to discuss and the parts of the novel you wish to use to give your children those ideas, you will be ready to discuss *Axel Meets the Blue Men* with your children.

This process of learning how to deal with the problems of life isn't a complicated one. Your children should recognize its logic right away: they identify with a character, watch how that character solves problems and recognize how that character deals with other characters. That's the way this manual is structured. It presents the main character, Axel, and shows you the methods the author uses to get his young readers to identify with him. The author puts this character in situations where his decisions and actions are clear. If you care to make it so, this character then can be a role model for readers, and/or this character's decisions and actions can demonstrate to readers various ways to deal with their problems.

One of your main jobs in teaching this process is deciding what actions, in the books you choose, you want your young readers to learn to appreciate. This is the most difficult part of your responsibility. The rest is just presenting to your children the problems facing the identified-with characters and helping them to recognize the values involved and how they influence the characters' decisions.

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LEARNING HOW TO USE VALUES WHEN MAKING DECISIONS

Using this manual and *Axel Meets the Blue Men* or any novel to show children how to make decisions is predicated on their parents having given them values. Values should not be imposed on or presented to any student except by that student's parents. There is much controversy on this subject, but if you are the teacher of your own children, those decisions hinge on what you as a person, parent and teacher want to pass on to your children.

The process of using literature to give young readers ideas about how to employ values works this way:

1. You chose from any well written piece of fiction that character or characters with whom you think your children might identify.
2. You have discussions about the characteristics of the chosen character and about why your children might identify with that character.
3. You encourage your children to discuss the actions of that character.
4. You have discussions about how those actions are a result of values that character has.

This looks complicated but it doesn't have to be. It can be done this way:

After you and your children have read this second book in the *Dragonslayer* series or any novel, explain the identification process and how the characteristics of the main character are designed to be attractive. You might introduce this process in ways similar to this:

Parent:

*I want you to understand a process called **identifying with a character**. It works this way. An author writes for a certain group of readers. For instance, an author of children's stories won't expect a person my age to read the stories. That author will know that the readers of the stories will most likely be children.*

All authors create characters in one of three ways:

- 1) ***They create characters who are like their expected readers.***

This means that they are about the same age, have the same interests, come from the similar places and know about and like the same things.

- 2) ***They create characters who their expected readers would like to be like.***

This means that they are just a little older than the expected readers and they have the abilities to succeed at the exciting things they do.

- 3) *They create characters who their readers get to know so well that they understand why they do the things that they do.*

This means that the readers can sympathize with the characters' problems.

When you work in fiction with your children, keep in mind that they won't have read the stories and novels in exactly the same way that you have. (They're much younger and less experienced.) Expect them to have different understandings and views from yours. This doesn't mean that they're wrong. There may be no *wrong* in this process, only differences. You could introduce this idea and this interpretive process by talking with your children in ways similar to the following:

Day One: *So that you can understand this identification process, I'd like you to examine this novel and make a list of the characteristics of the main character, Axel. You should make lists about:*

1. *How **he feels** about things and situations,*
2. *The kinds of **things he says**,*
3. *How **he acts** toward objects, people and animals, and*
4. *The things that the **author and other characters say about him**. Make a note of the page and paragraph numbers so that we can look at the book if we want to talk about any of the points. It might help us both if you were to number the items on the list.*

Day Two: *Today we'll discuss the characteristics you found that the author gave to Axel that help you identify with him. We'll start with how Axel may have been created to be like you and then talk about how he was created so that you would like to be like him.*

Day Three: *Today I would like you to make a list of the things that Axel does that you like. Again, list the page numbers.*

Day Four: *Today we'll discuss the things you found that Axel does that you like. It would help us if you were to name the actions and then turn to the pages where they occur so that we can read them if we need to.*

Day Five: *Today we'll talk about the things that you've learned about Axel and we'll see if we can decide if we like what he does, and if so, how he uses his values to make his decisions.*

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN A PARENT AND CHILD

The following conversations are idealized and yours may not go as smoothly. That's all right. It won't matter, if you keep in mind that you're not teaching your children a body of knowledge, rather a way of thinking. In this process, there are no right or wrong answers. You're not testing your children. You'll be having conversations where you'll be helping your children understand a process. When you're done with this book, it won't be important if your children have found all the examples I did or even the same ones. What is important is that your children understand that in the future, when they have to make decisions, they can use what they learned while reading.

Day One:

Child: I finished that second book with Axel in it. Now what?

Parent: Did you like it?

Child: Sure, it was okay.

Parent: What did you like about it?

Child: One thing I liked is the way Axel solves the problems with the blue men. I thought that was neat.

Parent: What was neat about it?

Child: That Axel didn't have to kill the blue men to get rid of them.

Parent: You remember when we talk about books or art or music we have to use present tense?

Child: I remember something about that.

Parent: Change that last sentence using that rule, please.

Child: . . .Axel *doesn't* have to kill.

Parent: Good. Thanks.

Child: Are you being a little fussy with us about that?

Parent: Sure I am and that's my job. I'm glad you recognize it.

Child: You said before I read the book that we'd talk about how I was going to use the book to understand about making decisions. What about that?

Parent: Good. The first thing I want you to do is to make a list of all the things that the narrative voice or anyone else, including Axel, says about this main character, Axel, that you think are similar to how you are or that you would like to be.

Child: In the whole book?

Parent: Sure, just make a list of the page numbers on a piece of paper and put after the numbers the number of the paragraph where the things are. That way, tomorrow when we talk about why you identify with Axel, you'll be able to find and direct the rest of us to those parts.

Day Two:

Parent: Did you find anything about Axel that's like you are or that you'd like to be like?

Child: Sure did. I have a list of page numbers here and the paragraph numbers.

Parent: Do you have some understanding that the author created that character with you in mind?

Child: What's that mean?

Parent: The author wanted you to identify with Axel, so he made Axel have characteristics that are like yours or ones that he thought you might like to have.

Child: I know that. That's all the things I found.

Parent: Good. I just want you to understand that the author did that on purpose so that you'd like the character.

Child: Why does he care if I like Axel or not?

Parent: If you didn't like Axel, then you wouldn't worry when Axel gets into trouble, would you?

Child: I see.

Parent: That's called empathy.

Child: What is?

Parent: Your feeling for the problems the character has. Tell me about a part of the story where Axel's in trouble.

Parent: When he's looking for Winthton and he's spotted by two blue men.

Parent: Good. Did you want him to get caught?

Child: Of course not.

Parent: Why?

Child: I like Axel.

Parent: Why?

Child: Oh, I see. I like him because he's like me or what I'd like to be like.

Parent: Good for you. The author did that on purpose. Now let's work on why you like Axel. What did you find?

In the rest of the conversation you have with your children, it would help if you comment on each of the items listed. It's important that your children understand that those characteristics were given to Axel with the purpose of identification in mind.

Day Three:

Parent: Today I want you to through the book again and pick out the things that Axel does that you like. *(It is from this listing that your children will recognize what values Axel has that guide his actions. It will help your children if you tell them that in determining what values characters hold, the characters' actions must be examined. This determination can't be made from what the characters say.)*

Child: I just did that with another list.

Parent: I know and you did a good job, too. This is going to be another list, but this time it will be about the things Axel does. Tomorrow we'll look at the list together and decide why Axel chose to do those things.

Child: How will we know?

Parent: Everything people choose to do is decided on by some value they have. Authors know this and once they've created characters their readers will like, they can have those characters do things and the readers will understand why they did them based on the kinds of people they are.

Child: That sounds complicated to me.

Parent: It's not. Tomorrow we'll go through your list and see what Axel does in this story, and then we'll talk about why he does those things.

Day Four:

Parent: Did you find some things that Axel does that you like?

Child: I sure did.

Parent: What kinds of things does Axel do? I see you have a list again. Did you put down the numbers of the paragraphs?

Child: Sure.

Parent: Good for you, Thanks. Let's start at the front of the book and work our way through. When we're done, I think you'll see that Axel does some things that we'll admire. It's those things and the reasons Axel does them that'll give us an understanding of the values that Axel holds and how he uses them to make decisions.

Child: Are you saying that you want me to have the same ones?

Parent: No. This is just practice with a process you can use the rest of your life.

Child: I'll need help deciding what to pick. I don't understand some of the things Axel does.

Parent: That's one of the reasons we're working together, so I can help you understand how this works.

Day Five:

Parent: I see your list is shorter today.

Child: I could only find a few things.

Parent: That's okay. I have this manual and some are listed here, so we can talk about lots of stuff.

Child: How do we know why Axel does the things he does?

Parent: We have to trust the author on that.

Child: What's that mean?

Parent: We have to assume that the author knew what he was doing when he wrote the book. That means that he didn't have Axel just do stuff, but that the things that Axel does are because of values the author's given him. It's when we look at what people do that we can begin to understand their values. We don't know that a

person is motivated by kindness to others if all we have to go on is that person saying something like: "I like to do kind things for others." It's when we see that person doing kind things, that we understand the values that prompt the actions.

Child: That's why we looked for what Axel does?

Parent: Sure. What he does tells us what values the author gave the character.

Child: Aren't you supposed to use present tense when you're talking about a character?

Parent: I did.

Child: Not in that last sentence, you didn't.

Parent: Tell me.

Child: You said, "What he does tells us what values the author gave the character."

Parent: I wasn't talking about the book as it is now. I was talking about what the author did when he was writing the book. When we do that we can use past tense.

Child: Okay, I understand the difference.

Parent: Let's go through the items you have on your list and we'll see if we can figure out why Axel does them, and look for a connection between the values Axel has and the decisions he makes.

If you use the above as models in your conversations with your children and use the listing below for the references in the book, you'll find that your discussions will go smoothly. Remember that this is not a testing of recall for your children. This a method for young people to learn to solve their problems using their values, and they learn this by reading about characters who deal with problems using values systems given to them by the authors.

THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION

Before children can learn usable methods of interaction with others and learn to deal with situations from reading fiction, they must identify with the characters in that fiction they might emulate. This means that they must like the characters, feel that they are like them or that they know the characters so well that they can understand why they do the things they do. The authors of fiction understand this process and make a conscious effort to create characters with whom their intended readers would find it easy to identify. This process of identification is examined in some detail in National Writing Institute's *Creating Fiction*, and the manual, *Analyzing The Novel* that accompanies the first novel in this series, *Dragonslaying Is For Dreamers*.

There are a small number of characters in *Axel Meets The Blue Men* with whom your children might identify. Though all the characters are not main ones, they each have characteristics readers might find attractive.

EXAMINING AXEL FOR THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION

The main character, Axel, is one with whom most young readers find it easy to identify. Even if they haven't read the first book of the series, they will be introduced to characteristics this character has that they: 1) might like to have themselves, and; 2) now have, or; 3) understand really well. I think you'll find that your children like many aspects of the main character in this novel, and they should identify with this young hero. In this discussion with your children, you should ask them to pick passages in the novel that demonstrate the selected character's characteristics. I have listed in this manual those passages that seem to me to demonstrate them for Axel. You and your children might find others, or you could disagree with me about what the ones I have chosen mean.

Though Axel has many fine characteristics, he isn't perfect, and young readers identify with that aspect of his character. This is because we all feel that we have faults, and it's always a relief to young people to find heroes who are less than perfect.

AXEL GETS CONFUSED WHEN HE'S PRESENTED WITH STRONG LOGIC AND HAS TO THINK REALLY HARD ABOUT IT.

Page 17. *He decided to use reason and see if that would help. (He says to his wife:) "If there was an invasion and everybody said that, then nobody would show up and the invaders would take over."*

Molly tipped one hand up and said, "If everybody else stayed home, you'd be stupid to go. You'd be the only one there."

Leaning on the table, Axel said, "But, that's not the way it is. Everyone who cares about the kingdom will go to help."

She released Axel's hand and tipped up both of her hands and said, "Let them. If they all go, then whether you go or not won't make any difference, will it?"

Axel thought about those two ideas. It was hard to argue with either one. If everybody stayed home, I should, too. But, if everybody else went, I wouldn't be needed. There wasn't any way to think about them that made any sense to him at all.

AXEL WORKS HARD ON HIS FARM AND THIS HAS MADE HIM A STRONG YOUNG MAN.

Page 1. *It was another warm and dry day and Axel thought that if the weather held, in another two weeks he could be done with this hard work. He'd plowed the field in back of the house last week, and if he could get this piece of land to the east of the lake done before it rained this week, he'd have next week to rake and get in the seed.*

Page 1. *The work was hard because the grass was thick and tough in the bottom of the valley. Both he and the horse began sweating heavily as soon as Axel had sunk the point of the plow into the sod.*

Page 2. *But, the very hard work of farming had hardened his body so that now, not only was he taller than most men, he had broad shoulders and was very strong. Of course, he had the same face, but it had the character that only experience can give.*

AXEL LOVES HIS LAND, HIS WIFE, HIS SON AND THEIR FARM. IT'S WHAT HE DREAMED IT WOULD BE AND HE'S VERY CONTENT WITH HIS LIFE.

Page 1. (The narrative voice says:) *This is what he wanted. His own place, his Molly and his real pride, eight-year-old Sid.*

Page 3. *When they were close, he could hear Sid yelling, "Papa. . .Papa. . .Papa." Axel's throat tightened at that wonderful sound, and as he drew his arm across his face again he wasn't sure it was only sweat he wiped from his eyes.*

Page 3 *He felt both saddened and proud that the hands that had been so smooth and soft when she was a girl were now rough and strong from working with him on their farm. There was still that clear and strangely radiant skin, but she was more than pretty now. A woman and the mother of the little boy who looked so much like her, except for his light green eyes. She was what he'd dreamed she'd be. He saw her as if she were part of himself, just as he belonged nowhere else and to nothing else but to her and their son.*

Page 4. *"We're doing it, aren't we. We have what we both wanted. Isn't this perfect? We got the farm. We had enough to pay for help to build the house and barn. We had more than enough left to buy the stock and tools, and now we have everything we need right here. I can't think of anything we don't have."*

Molly studied the side of Axel's face and said, "Are you really that happy, Axel?"

He turned, looked at her, smiled and said, "I am."

"You have everything you want?"

He propped up on one elbow and asked, "Yes, don't you?"

Page 5. *Axel kissed Molly briefly on the forehead then held her face with one hand softly on her cheek and said, "You and Sid are everything I always dreamed about. My life is perfect, and it's because of you." He was smiling and staring into her eyes. He felt sure that she must be able to feel the intensity of his emotions, "Thank you, Molly."*

Page 6. *"Anyway, what I say to you and Sid just comes out now. I don't have to think about it at all. I guess that's what being happy's all about. Things seem right. You think so?"*

Page 18. *"I love you, Sid and this farm. I can't let anything hurt you. If there's danger of an invasion, I have to help stop it. Don't you see that, Molly?"*

- Page 41. *Since he'd married Molly, this would be the first night he'd spend away from her, and it was hard for him. He wanted to turn around and go home.*
- Page 42. *It was strange, but he wasn't hungry. Probably too worried about Molly and Sid to think about food.*
- Page 54. *He glanced quickly to the side of the road, but there was no escape from the attack. Molly and Sid's face flashed in his mind and he thought how sad it was that he'd never see them again.*
- Page 90. *"Why ask me to do this? I'm a farmer not a soldier."
"Sometimes soldiers aren't enough, Axel."
Axel saw Molly's face and thought of her for a moment before he said, "Molly didn't want me to come."*
- Page 161. *Axel looked up at the spinning sky and the few white clouds that were whirling and shut his eyes again and thought of Molly and his son. He could see her face and hear his son laughing in his mind. He saw the farm where life was good, and where they all were happy. We have everything we want or need. I'm able to take care of the ones I love and the ones who trust me. Molly, Sid, . . . Win-thton.*
- Page 230. *Even though it had only been a bit longer than a month, Axel was getting anxious to return to Greenwater and get Molly and Sid and take them home. He missed his family and the valley where they lived.*
- Page 232. *"I don't need anything, Sidney. I have everything I need back at the valley. I have Molly and Sid and we have the farm we always wanted. I have you as a good friend. What else could a person want?" He thought for a moment and then went on, "What else could anyone need?"*
- Page 245. *"The king probably expects me to stay here in the castle with him and help him run the kingdom. I know it's a great honor, but I can't stay here. I love our valley and the farm. I have to go home."*
- Page 247. *Stunned, Axel jumped up and blurted out, "I am first a father and then a husband and then a friend and then a prince." He was surprised that he'd spoken so quickly and without thinking, and he watched the king's face closely.
The king studied Axel's expression and then said slowly, "What does that mean, Axel?"*

Axel wasn't sure why he'd said it. It just came to him. He wasn't sure how he might, or if he could explain it, but he had to try. "It means. . .Sir, that I have to make decisions in that order. I have to do what's right for what's important to me."

AXEL IS MODEST.

Page 62. *"You've taken good care of Winthton, Axel, but what's this man doing tied on his back? Did you capture him?" Sidney had to push through a group that had crowded around Winthton to see the man, for the large barbarian, painted blue and tied over the back of a donkey, wasn't something people got to see every day.*

"I guess you could say that. He tried to kill me and I had to tie him up."

Page 237. *The king spoke in a soft voice, "We have arranged a celebration of your courage and skills for tonight. There will be a feast, entertainment and we even have a surprise speech we are going to give. You will be pleased, Sir Axel."*

Axel wasn't sure what to say to his king. "But, Your Majesty. . .Sidney—"

"Speak up, Sir Axel. There is so much noise in here that you are hard to hear."

There wasn't any noise that Axel could hear, but he spoke louder. "Your Majesty, it wasn't only me that drove the barbarians away. Sidney and Grrr had a bigger role than I—"

AXEL IS KIND TO ANIMALS AND SEES THEM AS FRIENDS.

Page 7. *The large dog had come to the valley one night and Axel had found him in the barn. He'd been wounded and was bleeding. After cleaning his cut side, Axel stitched the wound closed with one of Molly's needles and some mending thread.*

Page 13. *Axel pointed to the grazing donkey and said, "There he is, my friend, Winthton."*

Page 62. *"I'm glad you came to help us," Sidney said, as he walked back to Winthton and looked at the donkey closely. "You've taken good care of Winthton."*

Page 62. *Sidney smiled and looked into his friend's eyes as he said, "She was delicious, Axel."*

"You ate Sylvia?" shouted Axel.

"Just a joke, my boy. Just a joke. It has been nine years."

Page 88. *He didn't know whether to feel that it was a wonderful thing to be able to train dragons or to feel sad thinking of these two young females trying again and again to have babies and being trained to drop their failures into the sea as fish food.*

Page 118. *"I wonder if Winthton will be all right. Maybe I should go out and look for him." Axel turned toward the doorway and said, "Why don't I do that?"*

- Page 137. *"I can smell the meat roasting."
"Does it smell like Winthton?"
Axel turned his back and said, "Sidney, that's a terrible thing to say."*
- Page 146. *Sidney looked at the woods where they had left Grrr, and said, "You could put the blue shirt on the dog and we could see how that works."
Shaking his head, Axel said, "I couldn't do that."*
- Page 161. *We have everything we want or need. I'm able to take care of the ones I love and the ones who trust me. Molly, Sid, Winthton. . . Winthton. What about him? Still alive. . . or is he roasting over one of those big fires? My poor donkey, cooked.*
- Page 253. *Axel was leading Charger out of the stall when he turned and said, "Sidney, I almost forgot, what about the twins. Will they be all right with you gone?"*
- Page 255. *The twins looked back at Sidney, and he hesitated for a moment while he looked into Axel's eyes. When Axel smiled and nodded, Sidney cocked his arm and pointed toward the blue dragon.*

AXEL IS BRAVE.

- Page 9. *Still, he knew he didn't stand a chance if they (the two men) meant him harm, but they were going to know they'd been in a fight if they forced it and he had to to protect his family and farm.*
- Page 168. *They hadn't seen him, at least he didn't think they had. He wanted to lie down and hide. He wanted to turn and run. He wanted to cry, but he knew that he had to pretend that he was one of them. He continued to walk toward the spot in the woods where he'd seen the horse.*

AXEL TAKES THE JOB OF BEING A FATHER SERIOUSLY.

- Page 36. *Decisions are always easy when the choices are clear and duty isn't split between them. I want Sid to understand this thing I have to do the same way I do, but that can't be. He can't see all sides of this. He has to see things from where he is. So, how do I do this? . . . I could just tell him that I have to go and that's the end of it. That's the way it is and he has to take it whether he likes it or not.
I don't think that's the way to handle this, though. I want him to understand that I don't want to go but I have to. And I want him to understand why.
But he's only eight and he can't. I wish Sidney had left some books here that talked about how to think through problems like this one. . . I know what I'll do, I'll try*

what's worked for me in the past. I'll do what Sidney taught me—break the problem into pieces and that'll make it easier.

Page 38. *" . . . That was hard to explain. Maybe some day these things will all be written down in a list or something. Then men won't have to invent the list every time they talk to their sons. It would be a lot easier to decide what would be the right thing to do if the rules for life were written out for us, wouldn't it, Sid?"*

Page 91. *"I don't want to change anybody's nature, Sidney. I don't want to be that way myself. I'm not a killer, and I don't want Sid to be one, either. I won't raise him to be part of that nature."*

AXEL IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS.

Page 13. *Axel looked back at his house, thinking of Molly and Sid. He turned back. "Did he ask you to take back any message?"*
"No."
"Is there trouble in the kingdom? Is Sidney having trouble? What can I do?"

Page 21. *He was not just a knight, he was a friend, and friends are expected to help each other. Axel felt he had a duty to the kingdom but an even bigger one to Molly and Sid. If he were to help the king and were killed in some fight, he knew Molly and his son would suffer. Was it fair to do that to them? But what would Sid think of him when he was older? He wondered what he'd tell him if he didn't go and Sid asked him some day, "Dad, what did you do when the men came in ships and invaded our land? Did you protect us?"*

Page 30. *"Knowing about your trouble is just what I want," Axel said, as he lifted her face by putting his knuckles under her chin and tipping it up gently. "Tell me about them."*

Page 25. *His work clothes were stiff when he dressed, but he would have to light the lantern to find clean ones, and he didn't want to wake Molly.*

Page 101. *When she sat, it was like someone had let the air out of a balloon shaped like a person. She went all loose and flat. She must be tired. I wonder how many years she's worked in this small kitchen cooking for the king? And how old she is? She's older than my mother. I can tell that. "Some things are best not discussed with strangers," she said as she leaned on the table with both elbows.*
"I didn't think I was a stranger here."
She took a drink. "It's not that you're a stranger, but you're his friend, not mine."
"Can't I be friends to both of you?"

The cook looked at him for a moment and smiled. "Yes, I think you could, Sir Axel."

"Good. What's your name?"

"Orna."

"Orna, I'd like it if you and Sidney could get along since you're both my friends now."

Page 103. *Axel understood now. Orna felt used and rejected by his friend. He felt sorry for her.*

Page 104. *Axel didn't know how to make her feel better about Sidney and so he finished his eating in silence.*

Page 120. *Axel felt that what he said would be important for his friend and he answered carefully, "Sidney, you've always been a wizard as far as I ever knew." He smiled. Sidney grinned back and said, "Thank you, my boy. . ."*

Page 125. *Axel reached across the table and patted the back of one hand that was now twisting the fingers of the other one. "I promise that I won't let them get to you, Orna." Axel could see Sidney slowly shaking his head and rolling his eyes.*

AXEL IS LOYAL TO PEOPLE HE CARES ABOUT.

Page 18. *He said, "The last thing Sidney said to me was, 'I'll be there if you ever need me.' He was telling me that if I had trouble he'd help me. I have to do as much for him."*

Page 22. *He thought: If I were to make a list of what's important to me it might help. What am I? . . . I'm a man. . . What's that mean? . . . I have a family. As soon as he started the list, he knew where it would take him. Molly's right, I'm first a father and then a husband and then a friend and then a knight and then a farmer. When he was done with the listing of what he was, he knew what the list of what was important to him would be like, and he knew what he had to do.*

Page 233. *Axel felt badly that Sidney didn't seem happy but didn't know what he could do about it. Maybe he'd like to visit the valley again. "Sidney, would you like to come back to the valley with me? You could stay as long as you like. We could build you a house somewhere near the lake if you want to."*

AXEL HAS AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HE NEEDS TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT HIMSELF.

Page 19. *"Molly, I have to live with myself. I wouldn't be any good to you and Sid if I didn't like and trust myself."*

Page 20. *"I don't have any choice, Molly. I have to respect myself as much as you and Sidney do or I won't be worth anything to anyone. I have to do what I think's right, no matter what."*

Page 233. *"Even the first day I met you, you knew exactly what you wanted. You remember that?" Axel nodded, but didn't say anything. "You told me that first day that you wanted to learn to kill dragons so that you could marry your Molly. I was proud of your ambition even as I was afraid of your methods of getting what you wanted."*

WHEN AXEL MAKES A DECISION HE'S CLEAR IN HIS MIND ABOUT IT.

Page 20. *"I can't do that either. I'm going to finish as much plowing as I can today and we'll talk about this tonight. No matter what I do, I won't leave you and Sid alone here. If we decide that I go, you and Sid'll go back to Greenwater and wait for me at your father's inn. We'll talk about this later." Axel stood, stepped into the dust of the bright yard and walked through the chickens to the barn.*

Page 217. *I'll do it, but I'll sure have to cover up that blue before I introduce him to the dragons or they'd be dropping eggs on him every day.
That might solve part of the problem. He might like the taste of dragon eggs. That could solve two problems at the same time. We could get rid of any new eggs and the blue man would have lots to eat.*

AXEL IS AGAINST KILLING.

Page 8. *Axel called out. "That's close enough, right there. Do you come as friends or do we fight?" He didn't know what he'd do if they said "Fight." He'd never fought with a person. He'd never used the sword for anything and he didn't want to now. He was done with killing.*

Page 21. *The flies of the afternoon had been replaced by mosquitoes and he brushed at them as he washed. Since he'd been back from killing the dragons, he'd tried not to kill anything, even mosquitoes, Molly laughed at him until he'd told her how he'd felt when he had to kill the last female dragon who was doing what she had to to guard her egg and what it had done to him to realize that she was the last dragon there ever would be.*

Page 90. *Axel looked away across the hills toward the south where the burned town still smoldered in his memory. "I can't kill them, Sidney. I'm not a killer. I learned that when I was fighting the dragons." He shook his head, "No, that's not true. I didn't mind killing the first three. I felt proud. I didn't know it until after I'd killed the last one when she was defending her nest. It was later, when the king was telling me that she was the last dragon that there'd ever be that I realized that killing's not for me. There's got to be some other way to drive these people away."*

Page 96. *When Axel turned back to the table after watching the king, he was startled to see that all the men were looking at him. He sat up straight and said, "I don't know what to tell you. I said what the king heard, and I meant it. I can't kill anymore and I can't advise others how to kill."*

Page 115. *Sidney turned and looked for the cook. When he saw she was by the cistern, he turned back and whispered, "I'll always help you if I can. You know that. But, you have to decide what you're going to do about killing."
"I've already decided. I can't kill anything anymore."
Now Sidney leaned forward and said, "You can't say that to the king."
"I know."*

Page 130. *I wonder where they come from and why it's so bad for them there that they have to come here and attack us. Why can't they stay home and make lives for themselves that they're happy with? We have to protect ourselves from people like this, but I wish we didn't have to kill them to do it.*

Page 198. *What can I do? The king's made up his mind and the blue men will be slaughtered as they lie on the ground, sick. It won't be a fight at all and it's my fault. The blue men have to be disarmed and sent back, but they can't be killed like so many sheep. I can't be a part of that. But the king won't listen to me, and I can't make him. Maybe I can strike a bargain with him and we can both get what we want. First, I have to wake him up.*

Page 211. *Tilting his head back, Sidney roared with laughter. The blue man watched this and then, around a mouthful of bread, he too laughed loudly. Axel said, "We have to make him understand, Sidney. If we don't, they'll all be killed."*

AXEL FEELS THAT LYING IS WRONG AND WON'T LIE TO ANYONE, EVEN TO SAVE HIMSELF.

Page 97. *"I don't know. I can't lie and I can't kill. What can I tell him?"*

- Page 104. *After Axel had given Winthton feed and water, he sat with Grrr in the stall on a pile of straw and worried about what he was going to say to the king in the morning. He knew he wouldn't lie. He knew he wouldn't kill. But, he had to do something or he'd be in big trouble.*
- Page 105. *Let's see, I can't tell the king I won't kill for him. That's one thing that won't work. I can't lie to the king. I just won't do that.*
- Page 192. *Axel couldn't even see Sidney now. He must have been over by the doorway, or maybe he left. I can't lie to the king, but I can't tell him the truth, either. This is a problem and there doesn't seem to be any help from my friend. I'll have to do this alone. Axel decided that he'd have to tell the king about the tunnels, but he didn't know how he'd be able to protect the guard, and he had to do that, too. "Sir, the way—"*
- Page 221. *Now what? I can't tell the king about the eggs. Sidney would suffer if I did. I can't lie and say I don't know. I can't make up a story about poisoned food or something.*
- Page 238. *(Axel was overwhelmed.) The king said it would be an honor if I came to dinner. What would Molly think about that? I don't know if I'll even be able to tell her what the king just said. She might not believe it. . . .Of course she would. She'd believe me because I've never lied to her, but she'd be excited if she could hear the king say that.*
- Page 247. *Axel was surprised by this and didn't know if the king was serious, but he felt that he had to take what he'd said seriously. "I cannot lie to you, I'd do what I have to do, Sir."
The king slammed his hand down on the table and thundered, "You will do what I say you will do."
Stunned, Axel jumped up and blurted out, "I am first a father and then a husband and then a friend and then a prince."*

You understand this process now. There are many other characteristics that Axel has that young readers should like, but you and your children can pick them out as well as I can. It shouldn't be necessary for your children to pick out every characteristic they identify with. All that is necessary is that they understand the process of identification. This means that they have to know why they like Axel and are emotionally involved in what happens to him.

The same type of a list could be made for the other characters in this book, but it would have to be much shorter. In any novel that you might chose to have your children read, you should be able to create such a list of characteristics that create a character with whom your children would identify.

UNDERSTANDING DECISIONS BY EXAMINING CHARACTERS' ACTIONS

In using fiction to help young readers decide how to function in their lives, you could first select the ideas or thoughts behind actions and then identify the actions for your children as products of those thoughts or ideas.

This is not at all complicated. We have very obvious examples in history: religious, political and educational experiences we constantly use as models for actions. The difference in fiction is that you have such a wide variety of actions from which to choose.

This makes your job much more exciting. You're taking your student by the intellectual hand and saying: "See how that character makes decisions? You like that character, and if you were to act in similar ways, you might be as good or effective in deciding things about your life as that character is."

In your identification of actions that you would want to point out to your children that the identified-with character performs that are based on the way that character thinks, you have choices in what you give your children. These are not clearly identified in each novel, but are ones you pick for use. Even in stories that you don't like, you can find actions by characters that you would like your children to be able to identify as coming from some value that that character has. The following actions are the ones I picked that I might want to identify for a student of mine. You can make your own list.

AXEL HAS WORKED ON HAVING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS SON. HE PLAYS WITH HIM, TALKS SERIOUSLY WITH HIM ABOUT PROBLEMS, AND IS PATIENT WITH HIM WHEN HE'S ASKED QUESTIONS.

Page 4. *When Axel lay down, Sid sat on his stomach. . .*

Page 5. *He reached over, grabbed her arm and pulled her to him. Sid yelled as he tumbled off and laughed as he climbed back on his father's stomach.*

Page 21. *If he went to help the king and died in some fight, he knew Molly and his son would suffer. Was it fair to do that to them? But what would Sid think of him when he was older? He wondered what he'd tell him if he didn't go and Sid asked him some day, "Dad, what did you do when the men came in ships and invaded our land? Did you protect us?"*

Page 35. *Axel took Sid's hand and led him away from the others to the tree on the edge of the lake and asked him if he'd sit with him.*
Axel reached for Sid's hand and held it tightly. "Sid, you know that I have to go and help the king, don't you?"
Sid was slow to answer but said, "Yes, Mama told me when I got up."
"I don't want to go."
Sid seemed surprised by that for he looked up at his father and said with the assurance of logic and conviction of reason common to children, "Don't go then."
"I don't have that choice."
There was a slight whine to Sid's voice then when he said, "I remember you telling me that we always have choices, and that's why we're responsible for everything we do."
"That's true, Sid."
"Then choose not to go. I don't understand why you can't tell those women to go back and tell the king to fight his own war."

Page 36. *I want Sid to understand this thing I have to do the same way I do, but that can't be. He can't see all sides of this. He has to see things from where he is. So, how do I do this? . . . I could just tell him that I have to go and that's the end of it. That's the way it is and he has to take it whether he likes it or not.*
I don't think that's the way to handle this, though. I want him to understand that I don't want to go but I have to. And I want him to understand why. But he's only eight and he can't.

Page 39. (After trying to explain to his son why he has to leave and go to war and Sid still doesn't understand, Axel is patient with him:)

Sid's eyes looked directly into his and Axel was struck by how much his son looked like Molly. The boy's eyes were fully open and trusting when he asked, "Why not stay home with Mamma and me? You have honor right here in our valley, don't you?"

Axel grabbed up his son and held him tightly. Tears were running down his cheeks and his voice was tight in his throat. When he could speak again, he said, "I love you, Sid and I'll come back as soon as I can."

AXEL ACTS WITH DECISIVENESS WHEN FACED WITH PROBLEMS.

Page 8. *When they were close enough that he could see into their eyes, Axel called out. "That's close enough, right there. Do you come as friends or do we fight?" He didn't know what he'd do if they said "Fight."*

- Page 12. *Axel had pulled out the long sword and was holding it over his head with both hands. Even though the men were wearing armor, the heavy sword could cut off an arm or cave in a skull.*
- Page 54. *Axel thought of kicking Charger forward, but as soon as he did he realized that it was too late. He twisted further in the saddle so that he would have some chance of ducking under the first swing of the axe.*
- Page 122. *Axel held up his hand, palm toward his friend. "I have to think about this for a bit."
"About what?"
"Quiet, Sidney."
The wizard settled back, closed his eyes and waited.
Axel jumped up. He started for the doorway, saying "Come on, Sidney, we've got lots to do."
"Wait, where are you going?"
"I have the answer. I know how to get rid of the invaders but we don't have much time. Hurry."*
- Page 127. *Axel put his elbows on his knees and glancing at Sidney said. "I have to plan more, but I have an idea that may work, but it's got to do with you and the dragons, and we have to be at the cave to do it."
"You want to leave here and walk to the cave at night?"
"Yes."
"The countryside has to be full of invaders. We'd never get that far."
"That's why we have to go as soon as it's dark. We can start right after supper."*
- Page 167. *Another problem. I don't have time to go all through that process again. I need to come to a quick decision. I have to walk down there. I'll be easy to spot because I'm not blue. If I was only bl. . .That's it. "Sidney, help me get blue."
"What?"
"If I'm blue, it won't matter if they spot me or not. We've got that blue cloth. I've got the blue shirt. If I make a hood and cover my hands, from a distance I'll look like they do."*
- Page 168. *When he was close enough to see that it was Winthton standing in the shadows just inside the edge of the woods, he heard a cry. Looking over at the two men, he saw they were waving to him. He couldn't stand any closer inspection than this so he waved back, pretending that he thought that they were only recognizing that he was one of them. Axel jumped to the top of the piled stones that made the wall that ran along the edge of the woods and glanced toward the two men. They were now running in his direction. He waved again and leaped off the wall and ran into the woods.*

AXEL IS COMPASSIONATE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH OTHERS.

- Page 28. *"You don't have to be afraid here, Marie. I'm your friend. You should know that."
"I do, Sir Axel."
"Why don't you call me Axel? We don't need the Sir part. And besides, it embarrasses me."
"Oh, I couldn't do that, what with you being a knight and all."
Axel sat on the edge of the well and said, "You do whatever makes you feel good, Marie."*
- Page 30. *Marie looked down again and said, "I don't want to bother you with my troubles, Sir Axel."
"Knowing about your trouble is just what I want," Axel said, as he lifted her face by putting his knuckles under her chin and tipping it up gently. "Tell me about them."*
- Page 31. *Marie was sobbing now, and Axel put his arms around her again and held her and said, "There, there, Marie." He knew she was seeing in her mind her husband being killed by these fierce men. "It'll be all right. Of course I'll come and do what I can."*
- Page 45. *If that man had stopped and asked me for help, I know I'd have felt I had to do something for him and I can't.*
- Page 56. *When he was sure that the man was no longer a threat, Axel bound his feet together, and as he was preparing to tie his hands with leather thongs he'd carried in Winhton's pack, he realized that Grrr had broken the man's arm. It flopped unnaturally at the point where Grrr's teeth had left deep tears in the flesh.
It was hard picking the man up, especially being careful of that arm, because he was limp and kept slipping and falling to the ground.*
- Page 59. *As the knife touched the man's throat Axel called out, "Stop that." Axel didn't think that he'd use the knife until then, and he couldn't let the barbarian be butchered.*
- Page 208. *He glanced up at Axel and said, "What do we do with this thing?"
Axel was bent over the unconscious man tying a rag around his chewed arm. He looked up at Sidney and said, "You mean this man?"
"Of course that's what I mean."
"That should stop the bleeding," Axel said as he stood. "Let's take him to the king's kitchen and feed him. I bet he could use a good meal."*

Page 217. *That's it. I'll hide the blue man with the dragons until I can teach him to talk. If only the man wasn't blue. If he weren't blue and I cut his hair, he could pass for any big man and not have a problem. He could go and live anywhere.*

Page 227. *It was a short time before Sidney said anything. When he did, he didn't look at Axel, rather at the ground. "I hate to admit it, Axel, but you're right about that. I thought that after what those men did to the people along the coast, I'd be glad to see all of them starve, but now that we've done this, I feel strangely good about it." Axel leaned over and put his arm around Sidney's shoulder and hugged the thin man. "I knew you would, Sidney. I've always known you were a kind person."*

Page 233. *Was he (Sidney) missing the valley? After all, he'd lived there for years, and he might want to return to it. Axel felt badly that Sidney didn't seem happy but didn't know what he could do about it. Maybe he'd like to visit the valley again. "Sidney, would you like to come back to the valley with me? "*

FINAL OBSERVATION

Even though this manual of operations is short and the process of teaching others how to apply their values in their decision-making efforts is not complicated, this skill is a very helpful one to have. This will be obvious to you when you think about it, for one of the major goals when educating young people is opening up the world for them in controlled ways. The limits of the world we expose them to are determined by the values and expectations we have as parents and Parents. Our adult values are based on our religions, our political views, our educations and the models and experiences given to us by our parents and/or teachers. When we help children develop value systems and teach them to make decisions based on them, we have the responsibility to present to them the training that will serve them best in their religious, educational and social lives.

Dictating how values can be used in making decisions has never been shown to be an effective way of transmitting them. Most people learn best by example and personal experience. Parents show children, by what they do and expose them to, what they expect of them, and give their children experiences designed to help them learn decision-making processes they know are best for them to have.

Most parents give values to their children, and this novel and manual were designed as an introduction to your children of ways of using those values in making the decisions they have to make in their lives.

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