



DRIVING QUESTION:  
What does someone gain from making a sacrifice?

**(2) During the First Reading**

**[Goal: Decode and comprehend the text.]**

While reading, you will mark the text in three ways:

1. **Identify New Vocabulary:** Circle and define a minimum of 8 new vocabulary words.
2. **Ask Questions:** Write 5 questions that describe something you are confused about or would be an interesting topic for debate.
3. **Create Main Idea Statements:** Write a plot summary where it is indicated in the text.

New Vocabulary	Page #	Definition/Synonyms
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

# Federigo's Falcon

from *The Decameron*  
Giovanni Boccaccio  
translated by G. H. McWilliam



Once Filomena had finished, the queen, finding that there was no one left to speak apart from herself (Dioneo being excluded from the reckoning because of his privilege) smiled cheerfully and said:

It is now my own turn to address you and I shall gladly do so, dearest ladies, with a story similar in some respects to the one we have just heard. This I have chosen, not only to acquaint you with the power of your beauty over men of noble spirit, but so that you may learn to choose for yourselves, whenever necessary, the person on whom to bestow your largesse, instead of always leaving these matters to be decided for you by Fortune, who, as it happens, nearly always scatters her gifts with more abundance than discretion.

**Main Idea – What has happened in the story so far? Who is speaking? What are they talking about?**

You are to know, then, that Coppo di Borghese Domenichi, who once used to live in our city and possibly lives there still, one of the most highly respected men of our century, a person worthy of eternal fame, who achieved his position of pre-eminence by dint of his character and abilities rather than by his noble lineage, frequently took pleasure during his declining years in discussing incidents from the past with his neighbors and other folk. In this pastime he excelled all others, for he was more coherent, possessed a superior memory, and spoke with greater eloquence. He had a fine repertoire, including a tale he frequently told concerning a young Florentine

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called Federigo, the son of Messer Filippo Alberighi, who for his deeds of chivalry and courtly manners was more highly spoken of than any other squire in Tuscany. In the manner of most young men of gentle breeding, Federigo lost his heart to a noble lady, whose name was Monna Giovanna, and who in her time was considered one of the loveliest and most adorable women to be found in Florence. And with the object of winning her love, he rode at the ring, tilted, gave sumptuous banquets, and distributed a large number of gifts, spending money without any restraint whatsoever. But since she was no less chaste than she was fair, the lady took no notice, either of the things that were done in her honor, or of the person who did them.

In this way, spending far more than he could afford and deriving no profit in return, Federigo lost his entire fortune (as can easily happen) and reduced himself to poverty, being left with nothing other than a tiny little farm, which produced an income just sufficient for him to live very frugally, and one falcon of the finest breed in the whole world. Since he was as deeply in love as ever, and felt unable to go on living the sort of life in Florence to which he aspired, he moved out to Campi, where his little farm happened to be situated. Having settled in the country, he went hunting as often as possible with his falcon, and, without seeking assistance from anyone, he patiently resigned himself to a life of poverty.

Main Idea –

Now one day, while Federigo was living in these straitened circumstances, the husband of Monna Giovanna happened to fall ill, and, realizing that he was about to die, he drew up his will. He was a very rich man, and in his will he left everything to his son, who was just growing up, further stipulating that, if his son should die without legitimate issue, his estate should go to Monna Giovanna, to whom he had always been deeply devoted.

Shortly afterward he died, leaving Monna Giovanna a widow, and every summer, in accordance with Florentine custom; she went away with her son to a country estate of

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theirs, which was very near Federigo's farm. Consequently, this young lad of hers happened to become friendly with Federigo, acquiring a passion for birds and dogs; and, having often seen Federigo's falcon in flight, he became fascinated by it and longed to own it, but since he could see that Federigo was deeply attached to the bird, he never ventured to ask him for it.

And there the matter rested, when, to the consternation of his mother, the boy happened to be taken ill. Being her only child, he was the apple of his mother's eye, and she sat beside his bed the whole day long, never ceasing to comfort him. Every so often she asked him whether there was anything he wanted, imploring him to tell her what it was, because if it were possible to acquire it, she would move heaven and earth to obtain it for him.

After hearing this offer repeated for the umpteenth time, the boy said:

"Mother, if you could arrange for me to have Federigo's falcon, I believe I should soon get better."

Main Idea –

On hearing this request, the lady was somewhat taken aback, and began to consider what she could do about it. Knowing that Federigo had been in love with her for a long time, and that she had never deigned to cast so much as a single glance in his direction she said to herself: "How can I possibly go to him, or even send anyone, to ask him for this falcon, which to judge from all I have heard is the finest that ever flew, as well as being the only thing that keeps him alive? And how can I be so heartless as to deprive so noble a man of his one remaining pleasure?"

Her mind filled with reflections of this sort, she remained silent, not knowing what answer to make to her son's request, and even though she was quite certain that the falcon was hers for the asking.

Main Idea –

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At length, however, her maternal instincts gained the upper hand, and she resolved, come what may, to satisfy the child by going in person to Federigo to collect the bird, and bring it back to him. And so she replied:

"Bear up, my son, and see whether you can start feeling any better. I give you my word that I shall go and fetch it for you first thing tomorrow morning."

Next morning, taking another lady with her for company, his mother left the house as though intending to go for a walk, made her way to Federigo's little cottage, and asked to see him. For several days, the weather had been unsuitable for hawking, so Federigo was attending to one or two little jobs in his garden, and when he heard, to his utter astonishment, that Monna Giovanna was at the front door and wished to speak to him, he happily rushed there to greet her.

Main Idea –

When she saw him coming, she advanced with womanly grace to meet him. Federigo received her with a deep bow, whereupon she said:

"Greetings, Federigo!" Then she continued: "I have come to make amends for the harm you have suffered on my account, by loving me more than you ought to have done. As a token of my esteem, I should like to take breakfast with you this morning, together with my companion here, but you must not put yourself to any trouble."

"My lady," replied Federigo in all humility, "I cannot recall ever having suffered any harm on your account. On the contrary I have gained so much that if ever attained any kind of excellence, it was entirely because of your own great worth and the love I bore you. Moreover, I can assure you that this visit which you have been generous enough to pay me is worth more to me than all the money I ever possessed, though I fear that my hospitality will not amount to very much."

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So saying, he led her unassumingly into the house and thence into his garden, where, since there was no one else he could call upon to chaperon her, he said:

"My lady, as there is nobody else available, this good woman, who is the wife of the farmer here will keep you company whilst I go and see about setting the table."

Though his poverty was acute, the extent to which he had squandered his wealth had not yet been fully borne home to Federigo; but on this particular morning, finding that he had nothing to set before the lady whose love he had entertained so lavishly in the past, his eyes were well and truly opened to the fact. Distressed beyond all measure, he silently cursed his bad luck and rushed all over the house like one possessed, but could find no trace of either money or valuables. By now the morning was well advanced, he was still determined to entertain the gentlewoman to some sort of meal, and, not wishing to beg assistance from his own farmer (or from anyone else, for that matter), his gaze alighted on his precious falcon, which was sitting on its perch in the little room where it was kept. And having discovered, on picking it up, that it was nice and plump, he decided that since he had nowhere else to turn, it would make a worthy dish for such a lady as this. So without thinking twice about it he wrung the bird's neck and promptly handed it over to his housekeeper to be plucked, dressed, and roasted carefully on a spit. Then he covered the table with spotless linen, of which he still had a certain amount in his possession, and returned in high spirits to the garden, where he announced to his lady that the meal, such as had been able to prepare, was now ready.

Main Idea –

The lady and her companion rose from where they were sitting and made their way to the table. And together with Federigo, who waited on them with the utmost deference, they made a meal of the prize falcon without knowing what they were eating.

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On leaving the table they engaged their host in pleasant conversation for a while, and when the lady thought it time to broach the subject she had gone there to discuss, she turned to Federigo and addressed him affably as follows:

"I do not doubt for a moment, Federigo, that you will be astonished at my impertinence when you discover my principal reason for coming here, especially when you recall your former mode of living and my virtue, which you possibly mistook for harshness and cruelty. But if you had ever had any children to make you appreciate the power of parental love, I should think it certain that you would to some extent forgive me.

"However, the fact that you have no children of your own does not exempt me, a mother, from the laws common to all other mothers. And being bound to obey those laws, I am forced, contrary to my own wishes and to all the rules of decorum and propriety, to ask you for something to which I know you are very deeply attached--which is only natural, seeing that it is the only consolation, the only pleasure, the only recreation remaining to you in your present extremity of fortune. The gift I am seeking is your falcon, to which my son has taken so powerful a liking, that if I fail to take it to him I fear that he will succumb to the illness from which he is suffering, and consequently I shall lose him. In imploring you to give me this falcon, I appeal, not to your love, for you are under no obligation to me on that account, but rather to your noble heart, whereby you have proved yourself superior to all others in the practice of courtesy. Do me this favor, then, so that I may claim that through your generosity I have saved my son's life, thus placing him forever in your debt."

Main Idea –

When he heard what it was that she wanted, and realized that he could not oblige her because he had given her the falcon to eat, Federigo burst into tears in her presence before being able to utter a single word in reply. At first the lady thought his tears stemmed more from his grief at having to part with his fine falcon than from any



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other motive, and was on the point of telling him that she would prefer not to have it. But on second thoughts she said nothing, and waited for Federigo to stop crying and give her his answer, which eventually he did.

"My lady," he said, "ever since God decreed that you should become the object of my love, I have repeatedly had cause to complain of Fortune's hostility towards me. But all her previous blows were slight by comparison with the one she has dealt me now. Nor shall I ever be able to forgive her, when I reflect that you have come to my poor dwelling, which you never deigned to visit when it was rich, and that you desire from me a trifling favor which she has made it impossible for me to concede. The reason is simple, and I shall explain it in few words.

"When you did me the kindness of telling me that you wished to breakfast with me, I considered it right and proper, having regard to your excellence and merit, to do everything within my power to prepare a more sumptuous dish than those I would offer to my ordinary guests. My thoughts therefore turned to the falcon you have asked me for and knowing its quality, I reputed it a worthy dish to set before you. So, I had it roasted and served to you on the trencher this morning, and I could not have wished for a better way of disposing of it. But now that I discover that you wanted it in a different form, I am so distressed by my inability to grant your request that I shall never forgive myself for as long as I live."

Main Idea –

In confirmation of his words, Federigo caused the feathers, talons, and beak to be cast on the table before her. On seeing and hearing all this, the lady reproached him at first for killing so fine a falcon, and serving it up for a woman to eat; but then she became lost in admiration for his magnanimity of spirit, which no amount of poverty had managed to diminish, nor ever would. But now that her hopes of obtaining the falcon had vanished she began to feel seriously concerned for the health of her son, and after thanking Federigo for his hospitality and good intentions, she took her leave of him,

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looking all despondent, and returned to the child. And to his mother's indescribable sorrow within the space of a few days, whether through his disappointment in not being able to have the falcon, or because he was in any case suffering from a mortal illness, the child passed from this life.

After a period of bitter mourning and continued weeping, the lady was repeatedly urged by her brothers to remarry, since not only had she been left with a vast fortune but she was still a young woman. And though she would have preferred to remain a widow, they gave her so little peace in the end, recalling Federigo's high merits and his latest act of generosity, namely to have killed such a fine falcon in her honor, she said to her brothers:

"If only it were pleasing you, I should willingly remain as I am; but since you are so eager for me to take a husband, you may be certain that I shall never marry any other man except Federigo degli Alberighi."

Her brothers made fun of her, saying:

"Silly girl, don't talk such nonsense! How can you marry a man who hasn't a penny with which to bless himself?"

"My brothers," she replied, "I am well aware of that. But I would sooner have a gentleman without riches, than riches without a gentleman."

Seeing that her mind was made up, and knowing Federigo to be a gentleman of great merit even though he was poor, her brothers fell in with her wishes and handed her over to him, along with her immense fortune. Thenceforth, finding himself married to this great lady with whom he was so deeply in love, and very rich into the bargain, Federigo managed his affairs more prudently, and lived with her in happiness to the end of his days.

Main Idea (Story's Conclusion) –

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You may have already written your questions on the text. List your questions here. Record the page number in parentheses at the end of each question. (It is the page you were on when you wrote/thought of each question.) Remember, these questions can be things you're confused about OR things you think would be interesting to discuss.

#1 ( )

#2 ( )

#3 ( )

#4 ( )

#5 ( )

**(3) After the First Reading**

**[Goal: Understand the author's thoughts about the driving question.]**

Write what you imagine the author's response to the driving question would be: **According to Giovanni Boccaccio, what does someone gain when making sacrifices?** (Think about the plot and characters in relationship to making sacrifices. Who makes sacrifices in the story? Why do these characters make sacrifices? What happens as a result of making sacrifices?)

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**(4) During the Second Reading**

**[Goal: Notice, notice patterns, and analyze the text.]**

Mark what you notice by underlining and labeling three different types of information:

**Background, Arguments, and Symbols.**

**BG:** Background information for the author’s response to the driving question. This includes details about the characters and setting.

**A:** Arguments are reasons or examples that support the author’s response to the driving question. This includes details that relate to the theme of making sacrifices.

**S:** Symbols are objects or words that represent multiple meanings. The strongest symbols are repeated more than once in the text AND relate to the theme of making sacrifices. Symbols within a story act like pieces of evidence that support the author’s arguments.

**(5) After the Second Reading**

**[Goal: Evaluate and judge whether the information chosen is of a high quality. Apply the details you noticed by using them within an organized and well thought-out response to the driving question.]**

Write three paragraphs explaining what you imagine the author’s response to the driving question would be: **According to Giovanni Boccaccio, what does someone gain when making sacrifices?** Organize your response into MEL-Con format. Use direct evidence from the story to support your response. (You may use the following pages to write your MEL-Con paragraphs.)

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<p><b>M</b>ain Idea</p> <p>What is the answer to the driving question? What reason/example supports this answer?</p>	
<p><b>E</b>vidence =</p> <p>Set-up</p> <p>+</p> <p>Direct Quotation or Paraphrase with Citation</p> <p>Citation = (last name of author, page number)</p>	<p>Provide 1-2 sentences describing the context of the evidence. What is happening in the story? What are the characters thinking/doing/feeling?</p>
<p><b>L</b>ink</p> <p>How does this evidence support the main idea? What part of this evidence appears to have a double meaning?</p>	
<p><b>C</b>onclusion</p> <p>Thinking about the entire paragraph ... What should the reader learn about the character or the topic of making sacrifices?</p>	

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<p><b>M</b>ain Idea</p> <p>What is the answer to the driving question? What reason/example supports this answer?</p>	
<p><b>E</b>vidence =</p> <p>Set-up</p> <p>+</p> <p>Direct Quotation or Paraphrase with Citation</p> <p>Citation = (last name of author, page number)</p>	<p>Provide 1-2 sentences describing the context of the evidence. What is happening in the story? What are the characters thinking/doing/feeling?</p>
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<p><b>M</b>ain Idea</p> <p>What is the answer to the driving question? What reason/example supports this answer?</p>	
<p><b>E</b>vidence =</p> <p>Set-up</p> <p>+</p> <p>Direct Quotation or Paraphrase with Citation</p> <p>Citation = (last name of author, page number)</p>	<p>Provide 1-2 sentences describing the context of the evidence. What is happening in the story? What are the characters thinking/doing/feeling?</p>
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