The Boy Who Cried Wolf

Once there was a shepherd boy who spent his days on the hills watching the sheep. The boy got bored and lonely on the hill all day with only the sheep for company. I know, he thought to himself. I will call out, “Wolf!” and then the others will come running to help me, and I will not be alone. So the boy called out, as loud as he could, “Wolf! Wolf!” All the boys and men from his village came running. “Where is the wolf?” they asked. “It ran off,” the boy said. But one of the other boys stayed with him all the same, and he had company for the rest of the day. A few days later, the boy was feeling bored and lonely again. I would really like some company, he thought to himself. So once again he called out, “Wolf! Wolf!” and all the boys and men from his village came running. Again he told them that the wolf had been frightened away by the sound of them coming. This time there was grumbling among the men, who didn’t believe him. They were getting angry at having to drop their work and come running for no reason because of this foolish boy. Still, as a precaution, they allowed one of the other boys to remain with him until it was time to bring the sheep back in the evening. A few days later, the boy was once again on the hill, tending his sheep, when he saw a real wolf skulking about the edges of his flock. The wolf was huge, and he had sharp, white teeth and bright, yellow eyes. The boy was very frightened. “Wolf! Wolf!” he cried out. “Wolf!” But this time, no one came. The men in the village, who had become wise to the boy’s trick, only laughed. “There is no wolf,” they said to themselves. Meanwhile, the wolf ate all of the boy’s sheep.

Big World, Small World

The theme of a story is bigger than just what happens in the story. The theme can be expressed as a single sentence, and it communicates a message about life or human nature. One theme can be expressed in different ways through different stories, because the theme is about how the “big world” of life works, not just about how the “small world” of the story works.

1. What happens to the boy in the story?
2. Explain what the story means to you, and how you should conduct your life.
3. In a single sentence, write what you think is the theme of The Boy Who Cried Wolf.

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