

How the Children Became Stars



**A Children's Treasury of Inspirational Stories,
Myths, and Fables from Around the World**

Aaron Zerah

How The Children Became Stars –<http://www.atozspirit.com>

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*A CHILDREN'S TREASURY OF INSPIRATIONAL
STORIES, MYTHS, AND FABLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD*

AARON ZERAH



**To my daughter, Sari, and all children of spirit: may you shine
like the brightness of the heavens and the stars forever.**



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How the Children Became Stars

INTRODUCTION

All children love stories. Parents and teachers love them too because they connect us to the wisdom and beauty found in all cultures and peoples of the earth. *How the Children Became Stars* is a gift of fifty-two of our most time-tested and often-told stories, myths, and fables for today's children to learn from and enjoy.

In this book, they'll discover a whole world of inspiration — from the Aboriginal Australian hero who chased a kangaroo and discovered the sunrise to the Zoroastrian "Noah" who helped save all living things from a most terrible winter of extinction. Confident queens and kings, battling bullies and peacemakers, masterful teachers and students, and all kinds of animals — greedy monkeys, magic fish, terrible lions, beautiful butterflies, and laughable donkeys — come to life as well in these extraordinary traditional tales.

In addition to these entertaining and educational stories, *How the Children Became Stars* also provides a Sharing Activities section in each chapter that allows children to explore the themes, lessons, and meanings of the stories in relation to their own lives. They'll draw or paint, talk and write about the characters and their own experience, and share a lot of fun along the way!

And one more important note: *How the Children Became Stars* is designed to be shared with children of all ages — from the very youngest to early teenagers — in either a home or school setting. By listening, reading, and participating, everyone becomes a brilliant star!

**In kindness,
Aaron Zerah**





How the Children Became Stars

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CHAPTER ONE

How Turtle Helped Make the Earth

In the beginning, everything was dark. There was no sun, no moon, no stars in the sky. There was water everywhere and it was running very fast.

Two creatures came from the north on a small boat — Turtle and his friend. Then a rope made with feathers came down from the sky and, climbing down the rope, came Begins-the-Earth.



He went right over to the boat and stepped in. His face was covered and could not be seen, but his body was bright like the sun.

Turtle asked, "Brother, can you make some dry land for me, so I can come out of the water sometimes?"

Begins-the-Earth turned to Turtle and said, "You want dry land; where am I going to get earth to make dry land?"

So turtle spoke up. "Tie a rock to my left arm. Then I'll dive down to the bottom of the water and get some." Turtle jumped into the deep water.

Turtle was down at the bottom of the water for six years. When Turtle finally came to the surface, all the earth he had gathered had been washed away by the water. He had just a little bit left under his nails.

Begins-the-Earth took a stone knife and scraped this little bit of earth from under Turtle's nails. Then he put it in his hand and rolled it into a ball the size of a pebble.

Begins-the-Earth kept looking at the pebble. Four times he looked at it and in that time the ball had grown to be as big as the world.

The earth was now dry land and there were big mountains all around. That is how Turtle dove into the water and helped make the earth.

- Traditional Native American Story



How Turtle Helped Make the Earth

Sharing Activities

- Together go outside, touch the earth, and scoop up a handful of earth. Put all the earth together in one bowl or flower pot. Plant a few quick-growing seeds (wheat, alfalfa, or sunflower are excellent) in this earth and water them every day.

- What Turtle did was hard and very courageous. Draw or paint a picture about how Turtle helped make the earth.

- Draw or paint a picture about something you've done that was difficult or courageous.

- Turtle helped make the earth by making an extra special effort. Think about one thing you can do to make an extra special effort to help someone today.

- When your seeds have fully sprouted, share what you most enjoyed about helping things to grow in the earth.

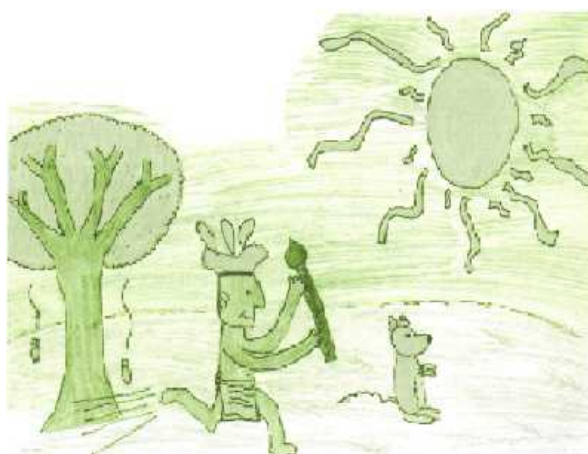


CHAPTER TWO

Bamapama's New Dream

Long, long ago, in the time called Dreamtime, there was a man named Bamapama who everyone thought was crazy. Bamapama and all the people lived under the earth where the sun stayed in one place all day long. It never went down and it was always very hot.

Bamapama decided to come up to the surface of the earth. “I’ll go hunting,” he said. When he got up to the top, he saw a big kangaroo. Bamapama started chasing it, but he couldn’t get close enough to throw his spear.



The kangaroo hopped away to the west and Bamapama followed. The day was long and the sun was going down farther and farther in the sky. The kangaroo stopped hopping and Bamapama caught up to it. He was about to throw the spear when the sun disappeared. It was now dark.

Bamapama had never seen the night before. Where he lived it was always light. He became very frightened and started to cry. He climbed a tree to see if he could find light high above, but it was dark there, too. So he climbed down the tree and fell asleep.

When he woke up the next day, it was morning and the sky was light again. Bamapama was full of joy. Looking at the sun, he said, “Here they sleep at night and rise with the sun. This is a good way to live.”

Bamapama went back home and everyone wanted to know where he had been. He

told them all about chasing the kangaroo, the setting of the sun, and how when he woke up from the dark night, it was light in the sky once more. “It's very different up there, but it's a better place for us. Come and see,” he said.

The people agreed and Bamapama led them to the surface of the earth. When the darkness came, the people were frightened, and like Bamapama had done, they all rushed to climb up the tallest trees. But Bamapama called out to them, “Don't be scared! Everything will be alright!” and the people came down and slept.

The sun rose the next morning and the people stretched out in its warm rays. They said, "Crazy Bamapama was right after all. This is much better than living under the earth where it is always so hot. Here if we get cold we can get wood from the trees and make a fire. Let's stay.”

So Bamapama and all the people chose to forever live with the kangaroos in a new place on the earth.

- Traditional Aboriginal Story of Australia



Bamapama's New Dream

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you were like Bamapama and had never seen the dark of night or the stars shining. How would you feel when you first saw them?

- The next time you go outside, take a good look around you. Think about three things you never noticed before and share them with your friends and family.

- Imagine some new place, school, or country you may go to in the future. Write or draw how you feel about going there.

- Imagine your friends have never seen flowers before. Draw or paint a picture of what they will see.

- Draw or paint a picture of Bamapama and all the people living on the earth at the end of the story.



CHAPTER THREE

When the Birds Became Friends

When the birds first flew in the sky, they were not friends. One bird would say to another, "I am better than you," and soon they would start to shout and fight.

But one day, the Pheasant met the Crow and just didn't feel like arguing. So, instead of picking a fight, the Pheasant said, "Crow, you are better than me."

The Crow was very surprised and very happy to hear what the Pheasant said. So, to be polite, he answered, "No, Pheasant. You are a better bird than I am."

And they sat down together on a tree branch and began to talk. After a while, the Pheasant said, "Crow, I like being with you."



"I like you too, Pheasant," the Crow said, and they decided to live together in a big tree.

The longer they stayed together, the more the two birds liked each other, and the more they treated each other with kindness. All the other birds saw how the Pheasant and the Crow stayed together and didn't yell or fight.

Finally, some of the birds decided to see if the Pheasant and Crow really were friends. When the Crow was away, they came and asked the Pheasant, "Why do you stay with that awful crow?"

"You shouldn't say such things," the Pheasant told them. "The Crow is a better bird than I am and he kindly lets me live with him in this tree."

The next day the Pheasant was away and the troublesome birds came to see the Crow.

"Crow," they asked him, "why do you stay with that awful Pheasant?"

"Please don't say that," said the Crow. "The Pheasant is a better bird than I am and he kindly lets me live with him in this tree." The birds saw that the Pheasant and the Crow really did care about each other. They said to themselves, "Instead of fighting, why can't we be like the Pheasant and the Crow?"

And from then on, all the birds knew how to become friends.

- Traditional Buddhist Story



When the Birds Became Friends

Sharing Activities

- Is there someone (or some animal) you just don't like? Write that person or animal's name on a piece of paper. Write or draw what you think you don't like about that person or animal.

- On that same piece of paper, write or draw one thing you do like about that person or animal. Make it really big.

- Still on that same paper, write one bad thing you have thought about that person or animal. If you have said something bad about them or hurt them, write that down, too.

- Now share your paper with a friend that you sometimes argue with. Tell her or him why you're happy to be friends.



CHAPTER FOUR

A Big Piece of the Sky

There was a time when people did not have to plant seeds and harvest food to eat. The children did not have to carry water and wood for the cook-fires. When people got hungry they just reached up to the sky, broke off a piece, and ate it. The sky tasted very good.



The king of this land was called the Oba and he and all his people celebrated many festivals with drumming, dancing, and eating. But the sky was starting to get angry because people took far more than they could eat. They threw the leftover sky into big heaps of garbage.

One morning the sky, instead of shining brightly, became dark. Great clouds covered the Oba's palace and the sky called out, "Oba! I am warning you. If your people keep wasting my gifts, the sky will not be there for them to eat anymore."

Oba was very afraid and he sent messengers to tell everyone. All the people — the children, too — were warned to eat the sky only when they were hungry.

And for a long while that is what they did. Then came the time of the great festival. The best dancers, even the Oba himself, danced and celebrated for many days. The Oba watched so that nobody took more than they could eat.

But on the very last night of the festival a woman named Adese and her husband Otoló came to the Oba's to celebrate. Adese was the kind of person who always

wanted more. She wore so many heavy coral necklaces she could hardly walk. Still, she wished to get more of them. And Adese really loved to eat.

Adese had a great time at the Oba's palace and went home with Otolo. "How wonderful it was," she thought, "the drumming and dancing, the beautiful clothes, and especially the food were all wonderful!" Remembering how delicious the sky had tasted, Adese had to have more. She reached up and took a huge piece of sky.

But it was so big, and Adese was already so full, she could only finish part of it. She just could not swallow one more bite.

"What have I done?" Adese shouted. "Otolo, come here. I must not throw away any of the sky. You eat it." Otolo tried, but he was too full. All the children were called but they had been to a party and were too stuffed to take more than a few very small bites.

The neighbors and all the villagers came, but Adese was still left with a big piece of sky on her hands. Finally she said, "What does one more piece matter anyway?" She threw it on the garbage pile behind her house and then buried the entire heap until it was completely hidden from sight.

Suddenly there was a great sound of thunder that shook the earth. Lightning flashed above the Oba's palace but no rain fell. "Oba! Mighty One!" the sky called with a great loud voice. "Your people have not been respectful. Now I am leaving and going far away."

"What will we eat? How will the people live?" the Oba cried out.

"All of you must learn to work the land and hunt for food," the sky answered.

"Maybe then you will learn not to waste the gifts offered to you."

And from that day on all the people worked to have food to eat and the sky was far, far away just as it is today.

- Traditional African Story



A Big Piece of the Sky

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you're the sky. Is there anything you're angry about that someone in your family is wasting?

- Draw or paint a picture of the big pieces of sky on Adese's garbage pile. Why do you think Adese tried to hide what she had done?

- Ask yourself, "What are my favorite things to eat or drink?" Pick one, and just for today, don't have any of it.

- If you see any garbage on the street or on the ground anywhere today, stop to pick it up and throw it out in a proper place.

- Go through your stuff. If you find something you don't need or have too much of, give it away to someone else.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Little Fish and the Snake Bully

Once there lived in the sacred River Ganges of India a big water snake. He used to hide underneath a rock and look for a fish swimming by. Then the snake would dart out from under the rock, grab the fish in its mouth, and eat it. The snake always took the fish by surprise and always got to eat it.

One day when the snake was swimming in the river, he saw a big school of very small fish eating their meal together. "How fortunate I am today!" the snake said to himself. "I have so many fish right here for me to eat."

And the snake opened his mouth very wide and swam into the middle of all the fish. He was expecting to catch the fish as easily as he usually did. "I'm going to eat them all up," the snake said.

But before he could eat even one of them, the whole school of fish surrounded the snake and started biting him. They bit the snake from head to tail and made him bleed all over.

The snake was afraid that the tiny fish would end up killing him, so he swam away as quickly as he could to the riverbank.

The snake was in great pain and lay down to rest. Near him, he saw a big green frog who was lying on a rock and getting warm in the afternoon sun.

The snake called out, "My dear sir, just look at what those fish did to me! Does it seem right to you that they should attack me in such a way?"

The big green frog looked at the bloody snake and croaked out in reply, "You are used to sneaking up on the fish one at a time and eating them up. Now you thought you could gobble them up all at once by swimming among them.

"You are just a bully, but you found out that together the fish are stronger than you. Now they have gotten the better of you!"

- Traditional Buddhist Story



The Little Fish and the Snake Bully

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the snake. If you were a fish swimming alone, would the snake scare you? Tell a story about how someone tried to bully you.

- Pretend you are a fish that somehow got away from the snake. What would you do? Imagine you were a friend of the fish that got away. What would you do when you heard about what the snake was doing?

- Think about what the frog said. Do you think the snake agreed with him? Do you think the fish all agreed with him?

- Do something today — moving something big and heavy, for example — that only a whole group of you can do together.

- Draw or paint a picture of how you would like to see the fish and the snake getting along at the end of the story.



CHAPTER SIX

King David and the Spider

When King David was still a boy watching over his father's sheep, he often came upon spiders' webs strung across tree branches and shining in the sun. David thought the spiders were wonderful to weave such webs, but he could see no use for them.

David decided to ask God about it. Why, O Creator of the world, did you make spiders? You can't even wear their webs as clothing!



God answered David, "A day will come when you will need the work of this creature. Then you will thank me."

David grew up and became a courageous warrior. He defeated the giant Goliath and many enemies of the people of Israel. He married King Saul's daughter and the people adored him as the greatest man in the land.

But King Saul became jealous and afraid of David, and, in a fit of anger, sent his soldiers to kill him. David ran away to the wilderness until it would be safe to return. He hoped King Saul would quickly calm down and call off his soldiers, but they kept chasing him.

At last, the soldiers were very close. David ran into a cave to hide. He heard the footsteps of the men and knew that they would soon find him. David was so afraid his bones shook and hurt.

Then David saw a big spider at the front of the cave. Very quickly, it was spinning a

web all the way across the opening. Just before the soldiers came up to the cave, the spider finished the web.

As the men started to enter the cave, they ran straight into it. "Look," they said, "This web is unbroken. If David were here, he'd have torn the web to pieces. He must be hiding somewhere else. Let's go!"

So because of the spider, David's life was saved. David understood that God was wise and thanked God for creating all the creatures, including the spiders.

- Traditional Jewish Story



King David and the Spider

Sharing Activities

- Together, go look at a spider's web. Then draw or paint a picture of both a spider and a web.

- Now imagine you are a spider. Draw or paint a picture of your most wonderful web.

- Tell a story about when you really needed help and someone you didn't expect — like the spider — ended up helping you.

- Name three other animals than spiders. What are you grateful for about them?

- The spider's gift is making webs. What's one special gift you have?



CHAPTER SEVEN

There's a Time for Everything

Long ago in China everyone in a family had something important to do. It was the same in heaven, and when things were done properly, all went well.

One day the old ruler of heaven was called on business to a faraway part of the realm. He could not attend to his regular duties, so before he left he told the old mother of heaven, "I'm going to be away for three days. Now it's up to you to look after things on the earth. Just remember that all you need to do is to grant whatever wishes you hear people make."

The old mother of heaven happily agreed. "What a pleasant assignment to have," she thought, and with that, she left the palace, climbed on a cloud, and traveled until she came to a big river.

Just at that moment, a sailor on a boat looked up and said, "If only there were a strong wind. Then I could sail whenever I wanted!" The old mother of heaven immediately commanded the wind to blow and continued on her way.

In a little while, she was passing a large pear orchard when she heard someone crying to the heavens, "Please stop this terrible wind. If it keeps blowing, it will knock down all the pears before they are ripe, and we'll have nothing to pick." This was too much to bear for the old mother of heaven and she went back to her palace.

The next morning she mounted the cloud and returned to listen to wishes again. Soon she heard an old farmer saying, "May there be rain sent today. With rain, I can plant my bean seeds and they will grow." So the old mother of heaven made a heavy rain to fall the whole day long.

But in the evening on her way home, she heard a deep sighing voice. "Oh, how I wish the weather would clear up! If this rain doesn't stop, all the ginger I'm trying to dry may end up rotting instead!" The old mother of heaven was overcome with confusion, and once more rode the cloud back to her palace.

On the third day, the old mother of heaven stayed in her room without going out to

hear wishes at all. At last, the old ruler returned from his journey. The old mother of heaven was most sorry about what had happened.

"What could I have done differently?" she asked him. "It isn't really so difficult," the old ruler answered kindly. "In fact, it's rather easy when you've learned the way of things. You just need to send a strong wind over the rivers and a gentle one on the pears. Make it rain in the night for the beans to grow and let the sun shine in the day for the ginger to dry. When all is right with heaven and earth, everyone's good wishes come to be."

The old mother of heaven understood and she smiled once more. "Still," she said, "I only wish you had told me about all this from the very beginning!"

- Traditional Chinese Story



There's a Time for Everything

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you were, like the old mother of heaven, asked to help make people's wishes come true. What would your answer be?
- Draw or paint a picture of yourself on a magical cloud about to go off to grant wishes.
- Share a story about when you tried to do something for the first time and things didn't turn out so well. Did you keep trying?
- Share a story about something you wished for that you didn't get right away.
- If you were the old mother of heaven, what would you do the next time you heard the same wishes? Draw or paint a picture of what it would look like afterward.



CHAPTER EIGHT

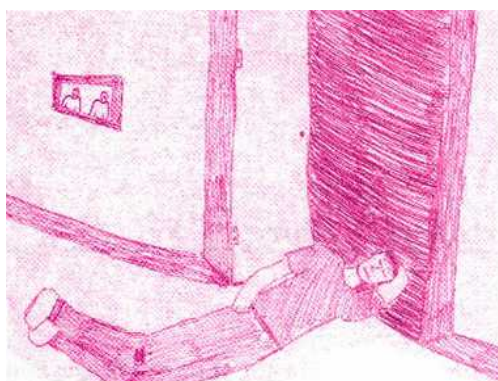
The Right Things to Do

In Japan, many families thought it was a great honor to have a child accepted as a student by a master teacher. Many stories were told about these great masters and how they taught the students in their care. Here are two of them.

Master Soyen Shaku was known as one who never wasted a moment. Though he was a tough taskmaster, especially on himself, he allowed his young students to have good long sleeps on hot summer days and this is why.

When Master Soyen Shaku was but a boy of twelve, he had already begun studying the deepest questions about what was right to do in life. He talked to the older monks as if he were a monk himself.

One summer day, while his teacher was away, Soyen became so sleepy in the stuffy air that he couldn't help himself from laying down near the doorway and napping right there in the classroom.



Three hours later, little Soyen suddenly woke up. His master had come back!

But it was too late to move. There he was on the floor and the master was opening the door.

"I beg your pardon," Soyen's master said, as he most carefully stepped over his little

student's body. "I beg your pardon."

Soyen never slept in the afternoon again.



The master Sengai had a student who would not stay in the temple rooms at night and be quiet like all the other boys. Rather, he would get up and climb over the walls and go to the nearby town to have fun.

One night Master Sengai looked in on the sleeping boys and found that the student was missing. He saw a very tall stool had been placed up against the wall.

The boy had most certainly used the stool to escape over the wall and, when he returned, would surely step on it again to get back down on the floor.

Master Sengai moved the stool to the side. He then stood there in its place and waited.

- Traditional Zen Buddhist Stories



The Right Things to Do

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you are the young Soyen Shaku. When you hear your teacher at the door, what would you do?

- Imagine you are Soyen Shaku's teacher and you see him lying sleepy-eyed on the floor. What would you do?

- Imagine you are the monk, Master Sengai. What would you do when you knew the boy was missing?

- Imagine you are the boy who escaped over the wall. When you came back and stepped on Master Sengai instead of the stool, what would you do?

- Imagine you are one of Master Sengai's other students and you know the boy is going to town to have fun. What would you do?



CHAPTER NINE

The Lotus Tree

One day Dryope and her sister Iole went to the pool. They wished to gather flowers in honor of the nymphs, divine spirits who dwelled on the earth.

Dryope was carrying her little son in her arms. When she saw a lotus tree blooming with bright flowers, she stopped to pick some for her little boy because she knew he liked these pretty flowers so much.

But as soon as she picked the blossoms, Dryope saw a horrible sight. Drops of blood were running down the flower stems!

The tree was not what it seemed to be. It was really the nymph Lotis who was hiding from an attacker and had become the tree herself. Dryope was terribly frightened to see her bleeding and tried to run away. But Dryope's feet stuck like roots in the ground.

As her sister Iole watched, Dryope's body began turning to tree bark. Iole could do nothing but go and get Dryope's husband and father.

By the time they returned, only Dryope's face was not yet fully covered. The two men ran and hugged the tree trunk, still warm with their beloved Dryope's blood. They cried so much that their tears ran down to water the tree.

Dryope had only a few moments to talk before her mouth became part of the lotus tree. She told them that she had meant no harm and begged them to bring her child to the tree often.

"Let him come and play in the shade," Dryope said. "Some day you will tell him the story and he will know his mother is here in this tree."

Dryope had one last important thing to say. "Tell the child never to pick flowers, for any bush or tree may really be a divine spirit."

These were Dryope's final words. The bark covered her face and she became a tree forever.

- Myth of Ancient Greece



The Lotus Tree

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the lotus tree and its bright flowers.

- Imagine you are Dryope. How do you feel when the tree starts bleeding?

- Tell a story about a time you hurt someone without knowing until later what had happened. What did you do then?

- Imagine again you are Dryope and you have been the tree for a long time. If you could tell your son anything then, what would it be?

- Go and touch a tree. Tell the tree you are sorry that so many trees all over the earth are being hurt and destroyed.



CHAPTER TEN

The Kings' Search

It is told in India that Lord Krishna wished to see if the kings of his land were wise. So he called first a king named Duryodana.

Duryodana was known as a cruel man and the people in his kingdom feared him. Lord Krishna told Duryodana that he was to take a journey throughout the lands. "I want you," Lord Krishna said, "to look for one truly good person for me."

Duryodana obeyed Lord Krishna and began his travels. He found many different kinds of people and spoke to them about many things.

After a long time away, Duryodana returned to Lord Krishna and said, "Lord, I have done what you commanded me and looked the whole world over for one truly good soul. I did not discover such a person. Each one I met was selfish and evil-minded. A truly good person cannot be found anywhere!"

Lord Krishna sent Duryodana on his way and called King Dhammaraja to see him. The people of his kingdom loved Dhammaraja very much because he was always kind and generous to them.

Lord Krishna said to King Dhammaraja, "I want you to journey throughout all the lands and find me one truly evil person."

Dhammaraja bowed and said, "As you wish my Lord," and like Duryodana he set off on a long journey.

After much time had passed, Dhammaraja came to Lord Krishna and said, "I'm sorry, my Lord, I have not brought back the truly evil person you wished to see.

"I found that people make mistakes; I found that they are fooled by others; I found that they act as if they are blind. But I could not find even one truly evil person. Everywhere in the world, the people all are good in their hearts!"

- Traditional Hindu Story



The Kings' Search

Sharing Activities

- Tell a story about when you first moved to a new place or went to a new school. How did the new people treat you?

- Tell a story about when someone new moved into your neighborhood or came to your school. How did you treat them?

- Imagine you are King Duryodana, the one who only saw evil in people. After returning to your kingdom, would you change your behavior?

- What do you think King Dhammaraja, the one who only saw good, would advise you to do?

- Draw or paint a picture of yourself as a queen or king in India with lots of happy people and animals around you.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Tiger Carries Miao-Shan to Heaven

In China long ago lived King Miao-Chuang and Queen Pao-Ying. They had three daughters and the youngest of the princesses was named Miao-Shan. When Miao-Shan was born, the fragrance of flowers spread throughout the land and all the people saw that a very special soul had come into the world.

Miao-Shan's parents wanted their three daughters to learn how to behave properly so that when they grew up they would be prepared to marry the noble young men their father chose for them. Miao-Shan's sisters were only too happy to do as their parents wished. They loved being dressed in the finest silk clothes and being served the richest of foods on fancy porcelain plates.

But Miao-Shan's father was most displeased with his youngest daughter. Unlike her sisters, Miao-Shan dressed herself in simple robes and ate only once each day. She was kind and gentle to everyone and spent much time in prayer. As she grew older, Miao-Shan wanted to live not in a palace but in a place called the White Sparrow where a group of women were learning how to be of greater help to others.

When Miao-Shan's request was brought before her father, at first he angrily refused to let her go. But then an idea came to him. "I know how I can stop Miao-Shan once and for all," he said to himself. "I'll pretend to give her my permission, but secretly I'll order the women in charge at the White Sparrow to be especially hard on her. All day long she'll have to carry heavy buckets of water and dig the rocky earth in the gardens. Miao-Shan will hate it so much," the king thought, "she will return and do as I say."

But Miao-Shan did not change her mind. She simply did her work no matter how difficult it was. One day, as if by magic, a spring gushed up near the gardens. Then there was plenty of water for the vegetables and, with Miao-Shan's care, even in the cold of winter they grew big and tall.

All this only made the king much angrier than before. "I will show my young daughter," he declared. He ordered his soldiers to march to the White Sparrow and burn it down. After they started the fire, Miao-Shan smelled smoke in the kitchen.

She called out, "O, goddess of the sky, please send rain now!" In a flash, a great downpour came and put out the fire!

When he heard what happened, the king went out of his mind with rage. "Take my daughter to the forest and kill her!" he shouted to his soldiers. They all trembled at the thought. Like everyone in the palace the soldiers too loved Miao-Shan for her good heart and kindness.

But fearing for their own lives, the soldiers went to take Miao-Shan away as the king commanded. She did not fight or say anything to blame them. Then the soldiers raised their swords high in the air. Suddenly, a huge tiger, bigger than any tiger could be, came running at them. With a giant paw, the tiger knocked the swords out of all the soldiers' hands and carried Miao-Shan off in its mouth like a little kitten.

The tiger brought Miao-Shan to a mountain cave and disappeared. When Miao-Shan awakened, it was as if she were no longer living on the earth, but instead a heavenly place where no one was angry and no one hurt each other.

Not long after, because he had been so cruel, a terrible disease came upon Miao-Chuang. He was in great pain and about to die. His wisest doctor told him, "O King, there is only one medicine to heal you. Someone whose heart is free of anger and holds only love must give both of their eyes and arms to you." "But who will do such an awful thing to save someone like me?" cried the king.

When Miao-Shan heard what her father needed to live, she did not think about what he had done but only of his suffering. She went to the palace right away and gave him her own eyes and arms and the king was instantly healed.

Then something wonderful happened to Miao-Shan! At once, she became Kuan-Yin, the goddess of a thousand eyes and a thousand arms. Now, it is said, she is the one in heaven who hears the cries of parents when their children are sick or unhappy and reaches out in love to help and protect them forever.

- Traditional Chinese Buddhist Story



The Tiger Carries Miao-Shan to Heaven

Sharing Activities

- Share a story about a time you did something especially kind for one or both of your parents.

- Share a story about something especially kind one or both of your parents did for you.

- Draw or paint a picture of Miao-Shan after the tiger carried her to the mountain cave.

- Talk about King Miao-Chuang. At the beginning, do you think he realized he was being so cruel? At the end, do you think he was sorry?

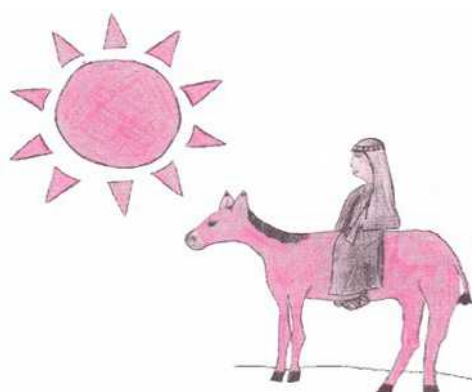
- Tell a story about a time you forgave someone for something terrible they did or said to you. How did you feel afterward?



CHAPTER TWELVE

A Donkey's Tale

Although the Mullah Nasruddin sometimes acted as if he were very wise and learned, all the people in his village, especially the children, knew him really to be a simple and sometimes even silly man. The children particularly delighted in hearing stories about Mullah Nasruddin and his donkey because there always seemed to be so much funny trouble between the two of them. Here is one of those donkey's tales.



One day, Mullah Nasruddin loaded a great many bags of salt on his donkey's back. They were going on a long journey to a place far away where the salt was to be sold. The donkey was not happy to be carrying such a heavy burden and, braying and kicking, she showed her owner her displeasure.

At last they came to a stream. The donkey hesitated, but Mullah Nasruddin commanded her to cross. As soon as she entered the water, the salt began dissolving. In just a few moments there was almost nothing left in the bags!

Of course, while his donkey was overjoyed at the turn of events, Mullah Nasruddin was definitely not. He got very upset and grumbled the whole way home.

After some time passed, Mullah Nasruddin decided to go into a new business — selling wool. When he was ready to go to market again, he placed great big bundles of it on his donkey's back. Although the new load was very bulky, it was also very

light and the donkey was quite relieved.

So off they went again taking the same path they had before. At the stream, the donkey barely needed any encouragement to cross. But this time she was in for another surprise. In just a little bit, the wool became completely soaked with water. Now her load felt just as heavy as the salt!

Looking at the donkey standing sadly in the middle of the stream, Mullah Nasruddin could not keep himself from laughing. "So," he said, "you must have imagined that every time you pass through a stream things will go lightly for you. But now we know just because something happens once doesn't mean it's always going to be that way again!"

- Traditional Sufi Story



A Donkey's Tale

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the Mullah Nasruddin and the donkey with the heavy load of salt before she entered the water. Who looks happy and who does not?

- Draw or paint another picture of the two of them when the donkey's carrying the light wool. Who looks happy and who does not?

- In each case, who do you think was most surprised? Talk about a time you had a great surprise — either good or bad — in your life.

- If you were the Mullah Nasruddin, what would you do differently before you took the donkey back to the marketplace again?

- If you were the donkey and you could speak, what would you say before going on another journey with the Mullah Nasruddin?



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Why Fight?

The Buddha's people, the Shakyas, and their neighbors, the Kolis, were just about to fight.

A river ran between their two cities and both peoples needed the water from the river to raise crops in their fields. A dam had been built so that everyone got enough. But then a great drought came and the water almost all dried up. Both sides claimed that what little water was left was theirs.

The Shakyas and the Kolis in the area started calling each other very bad names and cursing one another as well. Soon the princes of both countries heard about the terrible argument. The stories they were told made it look like everyone hated each other and would never give in. Out of anger, they called their soldiers to battle.

The two armies marched to the river and faced off. Though he was far away, Buddha saw in his mind that a war was just about to begin. He sent himself through the sky and came to the battleground. When they saw him, the Shakyas cast down their swords for they honored Buddha as the jewel of their people. The Kolis did as well.

In a light manner, Buddha asked them as they were gathered at the river, "Have you all come to celebrate a water festival?"

"No," they told him. "We came to fight."

Buddha asked them why they felt they had to fight. The princes were not really sure, so they asked the generals, who were not sure themselves. The generals in turn asked the other officers and no one really knew until the farmers of the land told Buddha, "We're fighting about this water."

"So you think water has so much value," Buddha said, "but what about people? What value do they have?"

Both the Shakyas and the Kolis said that the value of water was really very little, but the value of people was very great indeed.

"Why, then, do you prepare to fight and waste the greater for the lesser?" Buddha simply put forth.

Hearing this, everyone agreed to call off the war.

- **Traditional Buddhist Story**



Why Fight?

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the river and the two cities after the drought had dried up all the land.

- Share a story about a time someone called you names. What did you do? Have you called someone names? Tell that story. What happened afterward?

- Share a story about a fight you saw starting. What did you do?

- Draw or paint a picture of what it might have looked like if the Shakyas and the Kolis had actually gone to war with each other.

- Draw or paint another picture of the people at the end of the story who had chosen not to fight.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

When the Bones Came to Life

Hundreds of years ago in India there lived four boys who became childhood friends. As they all came from noble families, they were expected to study holy books and to grow up to be true leaders of the people and advisors to kings.

Three of the boys studied hard all day long and gained as much knowledge as the most learned scholars of the land. But they understood very little about real life.

The fourth boy didn't think that learning from books was the only way to learn, so as soon as he was old enough, he went out to explore the world. He saw and heard many things on his journey, and by the time he returned home had become wise enough to know which things were good to do and which were not. In short, he had developed a great deal of common sense.

One day the four friends were talking about their future when an exciting idea came up. "Let's travel to see the king," they said to each other. "We'll surely find favor with him and become rich. Since we're friends, we'll share all our wealth!"

But before they had gotten very far, the first scholar thought to himself, "The king gives riches only to those who have learned much from books, not to people just because they may have sense. We three should be the only ones to go and get a share, not him!"

Together, the three scholars argued over this idea for a while, but finally agreed that their friend, stupid as he seemed to them, could still come along. So all four kept on their way through the forest path.

Not long after, the four travelers came upon the dried up bones of a dead lion. "With our great knowledge," the three scholars thought, "we can bring this creature back to life!"

The first one said, "I know how to put all the bones back in the right order."

The second one said, "I can make the flesh and blood, and cover the beast with skin, too!"

The third one said, "I can give it breath and make it live again!"

So the first scholar got the skeleton together and the second one the flesh and blood and skin. The third was just about to give the breath of life when the fourth, the only one who had sense, cried out, "Don't you know that is a lion? If you bring the beast back to life, it will kill us all!"

"You have not studied like we have!" the three scholars said. "We won't let you stop us!"

"Since you won't listen to me and be sensible," the fourth one said, "I'm going to climb this tree."

Looking down from his safe spot high up on a branch, he watched the three scholars bring the lion back to life. With its first breath, the great beast arose from the earth, saw the three scholars — and instantly killed them all.

- Traditional Hindu Story



When the Bones Came to Life

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the dead lion's bones. Talk about why you think the three scholars wanted to make the lion come alive again.

- Has a friend ever warned you that you are headed for trouble? Did you listen? Tell a story about what you imagine would have happened if you had changed what you were doing.

- Have you ever warned a friend about something they were going to do? Did your friend listen to you?

- Sit still and take five deep breaths, in and out. Pay attention to where you sense the breaths in your body and then share your experience.

- Draw or paint a picture of the lion living in a peaceful new home.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Is it Fair?

Once a man was out searching in a forest for a lost horse when, at last, he came to a gap in a mountain he had to cross. As he was climbing over, he saw a terribly large snake below him with its tail caught between some very big rocks.

The snake hissed at him and said, "Kind sir, please help me! I'm sorry to say but I'm stuck here and cannot escape. If you lift these stones and set me loose, I'll see that you are justly rewarded!"

So the man took his staff and pried the boulders off the snake's tail. The snake was free!

"Now then," said the man, "what is to be my reward?"

"Death," the snake instantly answered. "You will receive death as your reward."

"But that doesn't seem fair," said the man. "Let's ask the first animal we meet if what you say is right."

So the man and the snake went along the path until they came upon a bear. Then the man told the bear what had happened and what the snake had said. "What do you think is fair as a reward?" he asked. "Death," said the bear simply.

The snake nodded in agreement, but the man said, "Let's go on a little further and see what another animal has to say." Before too long they met a wolf. After the man explained the story again, he asked the wolf, "What do you believe is a fair reward for one such as me?"

"Death," the wolf also answered.

"That's enough for me," the snake spitefully announced. "It's only fair that you surrender to the fate that you deserve!"

"No," protested the man. "Let's give one more animal a chance to speak."

"Certainly," said the snake, "But you must promise that the next one will be the last."

In a little while the man and the snake met a fox and, once more, the story was told.

But the fox, unlike the bear and the wolf, did not rush to give an answer. Instead, he said, "Before I give my judgment, I must understand exactly what has happened. Please take me back to the very spot where the snake was caught in the rocks."

When they got there, the fox asked the man to pry apart the big rocks again and he told the snake to put its tail just where it had been. When the snake's tail was in place, the fox called out to the man, "Let go of your staff!"

"Oh no," screamed the snake, "that's not fair! Look how I'm stuck in these rocks again!"

"Well," said the fox, "it seems perfectly fair to me. Now things are all even between the two of you, just like they were before!"

- Traditional Northern European Story



Is it Fair?

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the snake caught in the rocks.
- If you had come upon the snake, would you have helped him get free?
- Share a story about a time you did a good deed. Was the person grateful or not?
- Share a story about when someone did something to help you, but you didn't thank them.
- If you were the snake, what would you do the next time someone came by the rocks you were trapped in?



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The First to Get the Bow

In the very beginning, the Creator Kareya made the world. He made the fishes of the ocean first, then he made all the animals that live on the earth, and after the fishes and the animals at last Kareya made a man. Kareya made all the creatures so that no one was, more powerful than another and no one was seen as better or worse than any other. This is how Kareya made all the creatures.

One day Kareya spoke to the man and told him, "I am going to call together all the animals. You go make as many bows and arrows as there are animals in the world. You will give the animal that is meant to have the most power the longest bow and arrow and the one that is meant to have the least power the shortest bow and arrow."

In nine days, the man made a bow and arrow for every animal, and Kareya called all the animals together to listen to him. "Tomorrow," Kareya said, "the man will come and give you a bow. The animal who gets the longest bow will have the greatest power of all."



They all wanted the longest bow, but Coyote was the only one who believed he knew how to get it. He thought if he were the first animal the man saw in the morning that he, Coyote, would get the longest bow.

So when all the animals went to sleep, Coyote lay down too. But Coyote was only pretending to sleep. He was going to stay awake until the sunrise and then get the longest bow for himself.

But as the night went on, Coyote grew more and more sleepy. He got up and walked around, but still he was sleepy. He scratched at his eyes and started jumping and hopping about, but the sound woke up a few of the other animals. Coyote had to find another way to stay awake.

When the first star in the morning sky came up, still some time before the sun would rise, Coyote just could not keep his eyes open anymore. So he found two sticks and made them sharp and pointy. Then he stuck them in his eyelids. Now Coyote felt sure his eyes would stay open long enough for him to be the first one to meet the man and get the longest bow.

But in no time at all, Coyote was sound asleep again. The pointy sticks had broken right through the skin of his eyelids and instead of keeping his eyes open, the sticks pinned Coyote's eyes shut. When all the other animals got up, Coyote did not stir from his deep sleep.

The longest bow went to Cougar, and to Bear the next longest. And so the bows were given until the last one for Frog.

But there was still one left over — the shortest bow. The man called out, "Which animal has not received a bow?" The animals all went to find out who was missing and they saw Coyote still sleeping on the ground. They laughed a great-hearted laugh and danced all around him.

The animals were laughing so hard that the man felt sorry for Coyote. Now Coyote would get the shortest bow and be the weakest one of them all. So the man prayed to Kareya for Coyote and Kareya made Coyote the cleverest and trickiest of all the animals. And that's how Coyote got to be so tricky.

- Traditional Native American Story



The First to Get the Bow

Sharing Activities

- Why do you think Coyote believed the first one to meet the man would get the longest bow? If you were the man, would you do it that way?

- Draw or paint a picture of the longest bow and arrow.

- Tell a story about when you were given a special gift, award, or prize. Did you believe you deserved it?

- Why do you think Kareya chose the man to give the bows? Why didn't Kareya do it himself?

- Talk about what happens when you want something that everyone else in the family also wants.

- Imagine you are Coyote. At the end of the story, if you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Monkeys Reach for the Moon

One night the king of the monkeys looked down from a high cliff to the water far below. He saw the brilliant silver moon reflected in the water and thought, "That is the most magnificent jewel I have ever seen. I must find a way to get this treasure for myself."

He told all the other monkeys about the beautiful jewel he had seen below, hoping they would help him get it. But they all said, "That's much too difficult. We can never reach down so far."

Then the king of the monkeys had an idea. "Look," he said, "here's how it can be done. One of you will climb a tall tree and hold on tight. Stick out your tail and the next monkey will hold onto it. Each monkey will hold onto the tail of the one above, making a long, long chain down to the water. Then the last monkey will be able to reach the jewel."

So the monkeys, five hundred of them, followed the king of the monkeys' plan and, one by one, they held on tight to the tail of the monkey above them. All of them were connected in the chain to the first monkey, who was holding tightly to the tree.

Just as the last monkey was about to reach the object that the king of the monkeys so desired, the weight of the monkeys proved to be too much and the monkey holding onto the tree let go.

All five hundred monkeys fell into the water and all five hundred monkeys drowned.

- Traditional Buddhist Story



The Monkeys Reach for the Moon

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of one thing you really want to have.

- Share a story about when someone you know really wanted to get something and asked you to help. Share a story about when you really wanted something and you asked others to help you.

- Imagine you are one of the monkeys. What would you do when the king of the monkeys came up with his idea to make the chain?

- Imagine you are the king of the monkeys. Would you join the chain or stand back and watch?

- If you were a monkey from another place and you saw what happened, what would you tell your monkey friends when you got back home?



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Bee that Bit King Solomon on the Nose

King Solomon was known throughout all the lands as the wisest of the wise. In the holy city of Jerusalem, he built a grand palace with wonderful gardens close to the Great Temple.

Every morning, King Solomon sat among the flowers and prayed to find peace in his heart. But one sunny day, he was rudely surprised. A bee bit him right on his kingly nose!

"Ow!" he cried, feeling his nose swell to what felt like the size of a pomegranate. "How dare a bee sting me!"

Now, as it has been told, King Solomon knew the ways of all the animals and could even speak their languages. When he found a tiny bee hiding inside a red rose right next time him, he demanded of it, "Why did you bite my nose?" The little bee was quite afraid. "Please forgive me, O King," she said. "It was truly just an accident. You see I was buzzing around looking to gather nectar from a sweet red rose —they're my favorites — when I thought I saw a lovely one and I headed straight for it. How was I to know it was really your nose shining red in the sun!"

King Solomon laughed and laughed. He wasn't angry anymore. "You may go in peace, young one," he said to the little bee. "Thank you, thank you," she said buzzing with happiness. "Some day I'll do something kind for you," she told him and flew away.

The little bee rapidly disappeared from King Solomon's mind. He had a lot to think about. The great Queen of Sheba was coming all the way from Africa to meet him!

After the queen arrived at the palace, King Solomon soon found out that she wanted to see if he was so wise. The queen was going to test him with the toughest and trickiest riddles in all the world.

The Queen of Sheba first asked him, "What waters flow neither from heaven nor mountain snows? They can be sweet as honey or bitter as medicine, yet they always come from the same place." King Solomon said instantly, "The answer is tears. When we are happy, tears are sweet, but when we are sad and grieving, tears can be most

bitter indeed. Yet they always come from the same place — our eyes."

"Excellent," the queen replied. Then she called sixty children who had journeyed with her from Africa to enter the Great Hall. "Behold," she said to King Solomon, "all the children here are the same age and size and they are all dressed in exactly the same robes. Which are the girls and which are the boys?"

King Solomon immediately ordered a sack of delicious nuts to be brought and a big handful given to each child. The boys quickly lifted their robes to stuff the nuts in the pockets of the pants they wore underneath. The girls made their robes into pouches and filled them with nuts, too. "So it is revealed," King Solomon said pointing at the children. "Now anyone can tell which are the girls and which are the boys."

"May I ask one more?" the Queen of Sheba requested. She had saved the most difficult riddle for last. "Of course," said the king. When the queen clapped her hands, forty royal artists came into the room carrying forty bouquets of most beautiful red roses. The queen smiled. "Only one of these bouquets is made of real roses," she said to King Solomon. "Can you tell merely by looking which among the fakes is the sweet-smelling one?" A big frown came upon King Solomon's face. How could he solve this last riddle?

Then King Solomon heard the voice of a tiny bee calling out to him. It was the same bee who had bit him on the nose!

The little bee flew over to the bouquets and dove right smack in the middle of the only one which was real. It was so easy for her to smell the nectar inside the roses. King Solomon bowed to the Queen of Sheba and walked over to pick up the bouquet. "This is the one," he said to the queen.

Then King Solomon made a soft buzzing sound and only the little bee heard him say, "Thank you for your help, my dear friend. Thank you so very much."

- Traditional Jewish Story



The Bee that Bit King Solomon on the Nose

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the little bee biting big King Solomon on the nose.

- If you were King Solomon, what would you have done right after? What if you were the bee?

- Share a story about a time a friend blamed you for something that, like the bee, you were really innocent of doing. Tell a story about a time you blamed a friend for something you found out later was just an accident.

- On half a sheet of paper, draw or paint a picture of the bee and King Solomon at the end of the story now that they are good friends.

- On the other half, draw or paint a picture of you and a friend from one or both of the two stories you have just shared.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Morning and Evening

Morning and Evening were brothers, sons of Mahu. Mahu was God of all the people, but he did not treat Morning and Evening with equal generosity.

Morning was the one born first, so Mahu gave him many people to rule over and a great number of precious things also. Evening, the younger one, got a calabash gourd filled with two kinds of beads — nana and azumun — contained inside it. These two kinds of beads were the only things that Mahu had not given to his older son, Morning. Morning had riches of all sorts, but of nana and azumun he had none.

One day Morning fell sick and the doctor was called to cure him. The doctor said there was only one treatment for Morning's illness; he needed a nana bead and an azumun bead. Then Morning would be well again.

Since Morning had none of these beads, his people went out to get them. But nobody in all the land had any. Evening was the only one who had nana and azumun beads.

"How much will you give me for these beads?" Evening asked the people his brother Morning sent.

"We will pay one hundred precious cowrie shells for each one," they answered.

So Evening sold them the beads and they left. When Morning was cured, Evening began to think. "If Morning were to get sick over and over again," Evening schemed, "I would get a great many precious cowrie shells all for myself."

Evening remembered that when Morning passed a calabash plant, the leaves curled up. So Evening placed wholly-open calabash leaves in Morning's path. When Morning's feet touched them, he became ill right away.

In this way, Evening made Morning sick as often as he wished. Morning had to keep giving his brother cowrie shells and after a while Evening had all of them. He became the richest one in the land and the people looked at Evening as their new king.

- Traditional African Story



Morning and Evening

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of Morning and Evening at the beginning of the story.

- Imagine you were one of Morning's friends. What would you say to him if you knew that the two brothers were not speaking to each other?

- Imagine you were one of Evening's friends. What would you say to him if you found out he was making his brother sick?

- At the beginning of the story do you think Morning felt there was anything wrong in his life? What about at the end?

- At the beginning of the story, do you think Evening thought he had problems? What about at the end?



CHAPTER TWENTY

Who Is the Oldest?

A long time ago a monkey, an elephant, and a partridge lived as neighbors high up in the Himalayan Mountains. They were friends but still were often rude and unkind to each other.



One day they met under a great banyan tree and said, "Let's decide to treat the oldest one of us with real respect. That will be a better way to live." And the three agreed.

But which one of them was the oldest? The monkey, the elephant, and the partridge thought about this question for quite a while until at last they came up with a way to find out.

"O, elephant," the other two animals said together, "we all sit under this same banyan tree. How tall was it when you first saw it?"

"Good friends," the elephant answered triumphantly, "when I was very small, I walked right over this tree. And when I stood upon it, the highest branches, that now seem to touch the sky, tickled my belly. So you would have to say that I am so old that I knew the tree as just a little bush."

Then the elephant and the partridge asked the monkey and he said, "Good friends, when I was little more than a baby, I would sit underneath the banyan and reach my head up to eat the green shoots at the very top. Since it first began growing, I have

known the tree."

The monkey and the elephant now turned to the partridge to ask how long he had known the tree. "Good friends," the partridge said, "there grew near this spot a great banyan tree very much like the one under which we are now sitting. I used to fly up into that great big tree and eat of its fruit, and drop its seeds all around. That is how this banyan came to grow here. So I knew this tree even before it was born. That makes me the oldest!"

Then the monkey and the elephant bowed to the clever partridge and said, "You are surely the oldest of us in wisdom. From now on we will listen to you and be more respectful to each other." "Me too," agreed the partridge.

After that, the three friends never argued about who was older again.

- Traditional Buddhist Story



Who Is the Oldest?

Sharing Activities

- On half a piece of paper, draw or paint a picture of yourself, your sisters and brothers (if you have them), and some of your closest friends.

- Put each persons name, including yours, next to or underneath their picture.

- Now imagine what each of you will look like as adults. On the other half of the paper, draw or paint a picture of everyone and put their names in again.

- Imagine you are meeting everyone in the last picture all grown up just like you are. What would you ask them about their lives? What would you want to tell them about yours?

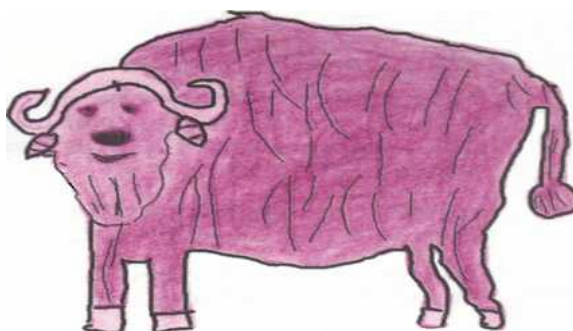


CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Master Tall and the Water Buffaloes

Because he was so much taller than the other boys of his age, they all teased him and called him Master Tall. He was a good boy who tried his best to learn, but although he listened to everything his teachers said, it seemed like nothing they taught him stuck.

After his schooling was over, Master Tall was old enough to work, but what could he do? No one in the village had a job for him and, in the end, poor Master Tall became a herdsman, caring for his father's three water buffaloes.



But Master Tall had a problem right from the start. It was almost impossible for him to tell one buffalo from another. Once he had put his father's buffaloes to pasture, he could not find them among the buffaloes of his friends and the other herdsman.

Discovering Master Tall's failing, the other herdsman took advantage. They lay at ease on the grass, laughing and joking and playing on their reed pipes. Whenever they saw a buffalo going astray into a field, they shouted, "Master Tall, Master Tall, there goes your buffalo!"

Thinking every buffalo that wandered off was his, Master Tall spent the whole day chasing and catching buffaloes. When evening came, he had to wait until all the buffaloes had been taken away before he could bring the only three left back home.

By the time Master Tall arrived it was very late. His worried father wanted to know

why all of Master Tall's friends and the other herdsmen had returned long before, but the boy simply had no explanation to give him. The same thing happened for many days, until Master Tall's father finally found out the trick being played on his son.

The next morning Master Tall's father placed wreaths made of palm leaves on the horns of his three buffaloes and said, "Now, my son, look at the buffaloes carefully and remember that only a buffalo which has a wreath of palm leaves around his horns is your responsibility. Do not tire yourself out by herding all the buffaloes of the village."

That day, whenever the other herdsmen shouted, "Hey, Master Tall, there goes your animal," Master Tall glanced at the straying buffalo's horns, and if he saw no wreath on its horns, he just sat down and took no further notice.

But, after a while, the boys discovered Master Tall's secret and also put wreaths on their buffaloes. When he finally got home, Master Tall saw his father waiting for him at the gate.

"What happened today, my son, that has made you come home so late again?" he gently asked.

Master Tall sighed and said, "This is all I can tell you, father. Everything was alright in the morning, and only our buffaloes had wreaths on their horns. But somehow by the afternoon everyone else's buffaloes had them too!"

- Traditional Burmese Buddhist Story



Master Tall and the Water Buffaloes

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you were Master Tall. What would you do when the other boys teased and tricked you? Would you tell about it?

- Imagine you were Master Tall's father. What would you do when Master Tall came home after chasing all the buffaloes again?

- If you were one of Master Tall's friends, how would you help him come up with some ways to be sure which buffaloes belonged to him.

- Draw or paint a picture of Master Tall and his three buffaloes safe at home.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Crossing Over the Sea

When the Hebrew people left Egypt and marched into an unknown desert, they hoped they would find a better life in a new land. In the great crowd were people from many different countries. Out of hunger, their ancestors had crossed over to Egypt long ago only to become bound in service to the Pharaoh. Now at last they were free to go!

In the desert it was hard to know which way to go, but a great moving cloud came every day before the people and at night a great moving fire showed them the way. They soon came to a watery place called the Sea of Reeds. They had not seen an Egyptian for many, many days and once they passed over the sea they would be safe. A new life was possible!

But then the people who were camping on the shore heard a terrible sound in the distance. It was the Egyptian army coming fast with thousands of soldiers and hundreds of chariots!

The horses' hooves pounded the sand as they ran toward the terrified people. Now everybody looked to Moses to help them for he was the one who had always dealt with Pharaoh before. But Pharaoh and his awful army were quickly upon them. They had no place to go but the sea!

Some wept bitter tears. "O, why did we ever leave Egypt?" they cried.

Then Moses heard the word of God, the Holy One who said "I am always with you," and turned to face the frightened people. "Be still in your hearts," Moses said, "and you shall see the Holy One will bring us all across to safety. The Holy One says to you, 'Go forward!'"



Moses raised his staff high above the sea and reached out his hands. A strong wind from the east blew over the sea and began pushing the water to both sides. As one of the people on the shore stepped into the sea, the earth appeared and a clear path opened up for everyone to cross over!

When the Egyptians saw those whom they had ruled for so long leaving them behind, they were amazed. They whipped their horses and ran madly after the people to catch them before they reached the other side.

But their chariots got stuck in the muddy earth and the trapped soldiers could not get through. When the people were all safely across, the wind stopped blowing and the waters of the sea crashed down upon the Egyptians.

From the first to the last, everyone had crossed over to freedom!

- Traditional Jewish Story



Crossing Over the Sea

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you were one of the people who chose to leave Egypt. When you first heard and saw the Egyptian army coming after you, what would you do?

- Draw or paint a picture of the Egyptian army with their horses and chariots. Now add to your picture the people camped out on the shore of the Sea of Reeds.

- Imagine you were one of the Egyptians. When you saw the first person step into the sea, what did you think would happen? What would the people find on the other side of the sea?

- Imagine you were one of the people who had crossed over. The clouds and the fire are no longer before you. How will you find your way?



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

It All Started with Holey Clothes

In India, a man who wished to live a saintly life went to his teacher and said, "O guru, bringer of light into the darkness, how shall I become a holy person, a true sadhu? Please tell me."

The guru told the man to own as little as possible and to live as simply as he could. So the student gave up all his things and moved to a tiny hut far from other people.

Every morning he woke up at dawn, did yoga, and sat in silence for a long time. Then he'd wash his loincloth, the only piece of clothing he had, and leave it to dry in the hot sun.

One day the man discovered something quite unusual had happened. Birds had come and pecked so many holes in his loincloth that he couldn't really wear it much longer. Since he had nothing else, it seemed he had no choice but to go to the village and beg for another.

The villagers were happy to give him one, but only a few days later the birds returned and ruined it again. "Well," the villagers said, "you not only need a loincloth, but you need a cat to protect it from the birds."

So the man asked for and got a cat. Then he needed to beg for milk to feed the cat. After a time the villagers grew weary of giving him milk for the cat.

"You need to keep a cow," they told the poor man.

So he went and asked for a cow. Once he had the cow, he needed hay to feed the cow. His neighbors told him to stop begging and grow his own hay. Surely he could see that there was plenty of farmland to be had.

So the simple man became a farmer. Soon he had to build barns and hire workers. Now, because his life was like everyone else's, he married, had children, and became just as busy as all the other householders.

After a long time without hearing from his student, the guru came at last to see how he was doing. Finding a large farm buzzing with servants, he inquired of one, "A poor holy man used to dwell in these parts. Do you know where he has gone?"

Receiving no answer, the teacher went to the grand main house where he ran into his surprised student.

Seeing him in such a place and dressed in such fancy clothes, the guru instantly asked, "What has happened to you?"

The man simply fell to the feet of his teacher and, with pity in his voice, said, "Good sir, it did not seem possible, but it all started with a single loincloth."

- Traditional Hindu Story



It All Started with Holey Clothes

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the simple man at the beginning of the story.

- The man started with a cat and ended up with a very different kind of life than the one he wanted to have. Tell a story about how something you did turned out much different than you wanted.

- Tell a story about seeing that happen to someone else.

- Draw or paint a picture of the man at the end of the story when his teacher came to visit.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Gluscabi's Magic Bag

When he was young, Gluscabi went hunting in the forest for some animals to eat. But even though Gluscabi walked very quietly in his moccasins, the animals sensed he was there and hid from him. Gluscabi did not catch a single one. He returned home and sat down near his Grandmother Woodchuck's wigwam.

"Hunting is too hard," Gluscabi said, and he began to sing a wishing song for a game bag to make hunting easier. Grandmother heard his singing and she made him a special game bag with hair from a deer.

Gluscabi was not satisfied with it. Then Grandmother wove moose hairs into the bag, but Gluscabi kept on singing. Finally Grandmother took some hair from her own belly and sewed it into the bag. Now the bag could stretch and stretch and become bigger and bigger.

Gluscabi was pleased with this magic game bag and carried it back to the forest with him. He called out, "All animals, listen to my warning. The earth is going to be destroyed. But have no fear; I have come to help you."



The animals were scared but eventually they crept toward Gluscabi and asked how he meant to help them. Gluscabi held out the magic bag and said, "Climb in here and

you will not see the end of the world."

One by one the rabbits, muskrats, porcupines, deer, squirrels, raccoons, and bears — all the animals of the forest — climbed into Gluscabi's open bag. Gluscabi tied the bag closed with all the animals in it and ran home. He was very happy. "Now I never have to go hunting again," he said to himself.

But soon Grandmother asked Gluscabi, "What's making all that noise?"

Gluscabi showed her the magic bag. "See," he said, "I'm so smart. I got all the animals to go into the bag. Now whenever we want to eat meat we can take one out."

Grandmother was not pleased. "Listen, Gluscabi," she said, "everything is so quiet. There are no animals left in the forest, and all the animals in your bag will die without food and water. They cannot breathe. There will be no animals left on the earth."

Grandmother looked at Gluscabi and asked, "Is this the gift you are leaving to the world?"

Gluscabi said to Grandmother, "No. I want my children, their children, and all their children to live with the animals. I only did this because hunting is so hard."

Grandmother said, "Hard work will make you strong and smart. The animals will become wiser too when you hunt them. Some will always get away from the arrows you shoot and the traps you set. All will live in balance. This is a good way."

Gluscabi agreed. He took the magic bag back to the forest and let all the animals go. He shouted, "The danger is passed. You are safe now."

And all the animals went back to their place in the forest. Gluscabi listened to Grandmother, so we still see animals everywhere on the earth.

- Traditional Native American Story



Gluscabi's Magic Bag

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of Gluscabi hunting and all the animals hiding from him at the beginning of the story.

- Imagine you are Gluscabi. What would you do after you found hunting to be so hard? Would you ask for help?

- Imagine you are Grandmother. Would you make a magic bag for Gluscabi?

- Imagine you are Gluscabi and you've just let all the animals go. What do you do now?

- Imagine all the animals at the end of the story back in their forest home. Draw or paint a picture of how they are living now.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Great Waves of a Great Ocean

Once there was a young boy named Onami who dreamed of becoming a great wrestler. He was big and strong and, from the first of his lessons, practiced hard to learn all the moves his teacher taught him. By the time he grew up Onami became so good at wrestling that he could even defeat his own teacher.

But that was only when they were alone. If people were watching, it was entirely different. Then even some of the newer students could toss Onami to the ground.

"Why do I lose my strength and skill like this?" Onami wondered. "I wish I could find a way to always be powerful and ready to win!"

One day Onami heard about a master teacher named Hakuju who was visiting a little temple nearby. Although Hakuju wasn't a wrestling instructor, Onami decided to see him anyway. He just might have the answer to Onami's troubles!

Right away Hakuju was kind to Onami and offered to help. "You surely have within you all that you need. Look at what your name means," he said, "great waves of a great ocean!"

In his heart, Onami knew that what the master said was right, but still he was afraid. "Don't worry," Hakuju told him. "Here's what you are to do. Tonight, go sit in the temple and concentrate on being quiet and still. Breathe deeply and imagine yourself as great waves coming from a great ocean. Then you will see how powerful you really are!"

Inside the temple, Onami sat alone and began to see himself as a great wave. Whenever he became distracted, Onami remembered to concentrate on his name again. Soon the waves grew higher and higher and started washing over the tables and the flower vases in the room.

Then a huge flood came, and in Onami's mind, swept away the wooden timbers of the temple itself! By the rising of the sun all that remained was Onami sitting peacefully before an endless ocean.

When Hakuju returned later that morning to check on Onami, he saw him smiling. He

too smiled. "Now," he said, "nothing can get in your way. You are a great wave that can overcome anything."

And it was true. From that day on Onami won every contest he entered for the rest of his life.

- Traditional Japanese Buddhist Story



Great Waves of a Great Ocean

Sharing Activities

- Think about something that seems like a big problem or obstacle to you. Draw or paint a picture that includes both you and the problem in it.

- After you've finished making your picture, sit quietly like Onami did and see yourself as a great wave from a great ocean.

- Now imagine your problem being completely swept into the sea. Draw or paint another picture and look at it for a little while.

- Share your pictures with everyone else. If you want, talk about what changed from the first picture to the second and how you feel about yourself now.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Throwing Stones on the Road

A very, very rich man lived in a very, very large house. His servants made a lovely garden for him, so that even in the hottest days of summer the rich man could sit in the cool shade of his tall trees.

Still, the rich man was always thinking about more things his servants could do for him. He commanded them to dig new gardens and build more stone walls around his property.



When the servants dug through the earth, they found many rocks, far too many for them to use. They went to the rich man and asked, "Master, what should we do with all these extra stones?"

The rich man pointed to a wall and said, "Just throw them over that wall into the road." And because the master ordered them to do it, the servants tossed the stones into the road where everybody walked. They did this day after day.

At last, a wise old man came walking along and saw the stones being tossed into the road. He asked the servants why they were doing this and they said, "Our master told us to."

So the wise old man went to see their master, the rich man, and asked, "Why are you throwing stones from what belongs to you to what does not belong to you?"

The rich man paid little attention to the old man. "All I care about," the rich man said,

"is that I get these stones off my property."

"But what about all the people who must walk on this road?" the old man asked.

The rich man said, "Why should I care about them?" and started to walk away. The wise old man said to himself, "I believe someday you will wish you had not said what you have said." And the wise old man left.

After that day, everything went badly for the rich man. All the businesses that had made so much money for him failed, and he lost all that he owned.

The rich man was forced to leave his big house and walk the very road on which he had ordered his servants to throw stones. Now those same stones hurt his feet badly and the rich man thought, "The wise old man was right to ask about throwing stones from what belonged to me to what did not belong to me. How I wish that I had cared then!"

- Traditional Jewish Story



Throwing Stones on the Road

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the rich man's garden.

- Imagine you were a servant of the rich man. When he told you to dig out more rocks and throw them on the road, how would you feel about him then? What would you say to him?

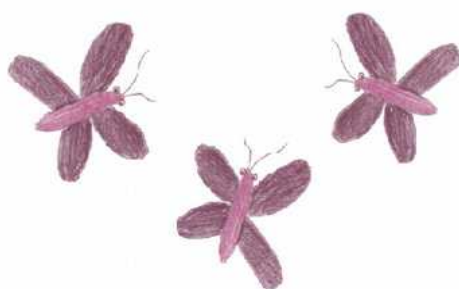
- Imagine you were the wise old man. When the rich man didn't listen to you, what would you do? Would you walk away without saying anything more?

- Imagine you saw the rich man, now very poor, walking down the road with no shoes and bruised feet. Would you do anything to help him?



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Gifts of the Butterflies



One day the Creator said, "I'm going to watch the children playing in the village." The children were laughing and singing, but the Creator was sad in his heart for he thought, "Someday they will grow old. Their skin will become wrinkled like their grandmothers' and grandfathers', and they will lose their teeth. The young hunters will get weak and the beautiful girls will become ugly. And all the bright, colorful, wonderful flowers they are playing with will lose their colors. The leaves will fall to the ground, too," the Creator said to himself. And his heart was even sadder.

The sun was still shining and it was bright. The Creator saw the sunlight all golden, the sky so blue, the white corn, the yellow leaves, and all the colors of the flowers. He smiled and said, "I'll take these colors and I'll make something with them, something for the children to see and make them happy, and this will bring joy to my heart."

The Creator took a bit of sunlight, some sky blue, the white color of corn, the dark gray shadows the running children made, yellow from the falling leaves, pine needle green, black from a beautiful girl's long hair, and purple, orange, and red from growing flowers. He put all this in a special bag. After all that, he put in the songs of the birds, too.

The children were playing in a field and the Creator said to them, "Children, I have a gift for you. Look in this bag and you'll see."

Many, many colored butterflies flew out of the bag when the children opened it — so

many they filled the sky. They fluttered from flower to flower and danced on top of the children's heads. The children had never seen such beautiful creatures. There was joy in their hearts.

Then the beautiful butterflies began to sing. This too made the children happy. A songbird heard the butterflies singing their songs and flew to the Creator. The bird sat on the Creator's shoulder and spoke harshly in his ear. "You promised the birds, everyone of us, would have a song of our own. Now you have given them away to these new creatures. It is not a good way. These new creatures are full of beautiful colors. Haven't you given them enough?"

"You speak the truth," the Creator told the bird. "The songs belong to you, one song for each of you just as I said it would be."

- Traditional Native American Story



The Gifts of the Butterflies

Sharing Activities

- The butterflies have beautiful colors; what is beautiful about you? Draw or paint a picture showing how beautiful you are.

- The birds have the gift of song; what special gifts or talents do you have? On a separate piece of paper, please write about or illustrate your gifts and talents. If you want, you may do both.

- Pretend you're the butterfly. How do you feel at the end of the story?

- Now imagine you're the songbird. How do you feel at the end of the story?

- How do you think the Creator feels at the end of the story?



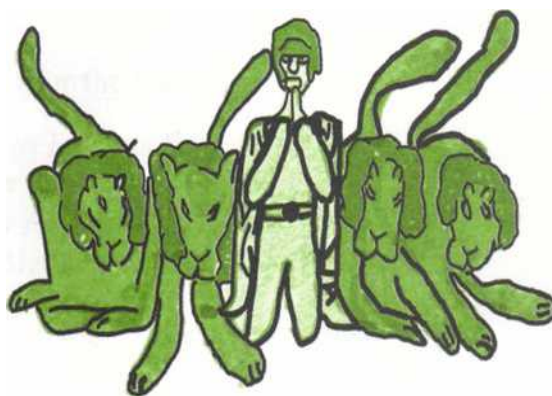
CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

When Daniel Faced the Hungry Lions

Daniel was thrown into a dark hole in the ground. There were lions all around, ready to tear him to pieces. He heard their growling and roaring and they sounded hungry.

"O God," Daniel prayed, "help me! Keep me from the mouths of these terrible lions!"

Daniel's friend, King Darius of Babylon, waited to see what would happen to him. In his heart, secretly he hoped Daniel would come out alive.



But Daniel's enemies, King Darius' advisors, were happy. Because they were jealous of Daniel, they all wanted him to die, and it was they themselves who had tricked the king into punishing him.

The king, they knew, had come to trust Daniel more than them, so the wicked advisors came up with a plan. They went to the palace and bowed before the king. "O Great One," they said to him, "everyone knows all good things are gifts from you."

The king was delighted to hear this. "Go on," he told them.

"As this is true," the men said, "then no one should be permitted to pray to anyone but you, King Darius." Again they bowed.

"You're right," said the king. "I am greater than any of the gods."

So the king made a law that no one in the kingdom could pray to anyone but him and disobeying the law meant death. That's how the advisors fooled the king. They knew

when they praised him as the greatest god he would forget that Daniel prayed to the living God, not the king, and that Daniel always would.

Daniel prayed to God three times every day and when he heard the new law he still prayed to God. The advisors told the king and he was forced to give Daniel to the lions. It wouldn't be right to let Daniel go and punish others for doing the same thing.

The sun came up. Now the king and all the advisors could see what happened to Daniel. He was alive!

Daniel cried out, "My God sent an angel to protect me. Look, the lions are asleep and did not hurt me!"

Then King Darius commanded that the wicked advisors be thrown in with the lions themselves. He told everyone in the kingdom, "Daniel's God is the living God who does the greatest of things."

- Traditional Ancient Hebrew Story



When Daniel Faced the Hungry Lions

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the ferocious lions Daniel faced.

- The first thing Daniel did was get very still and quiet. How do you think he felt before he got still? How do you think he felt after?

- Tell a story about a time you were in great trouble, like Daniel was with the lions roaring all around him. What did you do?

- Now that you know Daniel's story, what will you do if you find yourself in a situation like that again?

- Draw or paint a picture of King Darius and Daniel after Daniel had escaped from the lions.



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Two Silly Cats

In the hills of Japan a long while ago two cats lived together. One was black and very big and the other a tabby, much smaller in size. They were the best of friends, these two, and were very good to each other.

One day, each of them found a most delightful treat — a fresh, sweet rice cake. "Look at mine!" the big cat cried out. He held it in his paws and said, "It looks so delicious!"

The small cat said, "Well, look at my cake. It smells more wonderful than a fat field mouse!"

So the two cats sat down together to look at each other's cakes and compare them. They soon noticed that the two cakes were very different in size. The big cat had a small cake and the small cat a much bigger one.

"I'm big, so I should have the big cake," the black cat complained. "Let's swap." But the little tabby hissed and threatened to bite his friend. "I am small," he argued, "so I need to eat the bigger one. I will never trade with you."

They started calling each other names, and soon they were snarling and trying to scratch each other. For hours the big cat and the small cat chased each other around the trees and howled.

Finally, the black cat, out of breath, said, "Let's stop this fighting and go see the wise monkey. He can make equal shares of the rice cakes for us."

As the cakes were already beginning to get hard, the small cat agreed. Both cats wanted to eat the cakes while they were still fresh and tasty, so they hurried off to find the wise monkey. Into the forest, through thick grasses and vines and over many fallen logs they ran, calling out, "Mr. Monkey! Mr. Monkey!"

At last there he was, sitting in a high branch of a tree, wearing a red hat. The wise monkey held a set of golden scales in his hands that he used to solve problems just like the one the two cats had.

They talked both at once but the wise monkey soon understood. "Oh, I see your difficulty," he said with a serious voice. "How right you were to come to me!"

He promised the cats that each of them would get an equal share. Then he took the two cakes from them and put one on each side of the scale. The sides did not balance because the big cake was much heavier than the small one. "Your quarrel was quite understandable," the wise monkey said. "The big piece is much heavier. I will have to take a bite to even them out." And he did.

But he took too much, and now the other cake was the heavier one. "Oh no," the wise monkey said. "Now I shall have to take another bite." So he did, but once again the two cakes were not equal. The wise monkey kept taking bites out of one and then the other and both cakes got smaller and smaller.

The two cats cried out, "That's enough!" and "They must be even now!" but the clever monkey paid no attention to them. He kept weighing and eating and weighing and eating until he had eaten up all of both rice cakes.

"Well," he said to the cats, "you see, the cakes are equal now. That is what you came for, is it not? Now, there is nothing left for you to fight about."

And the two cats never did quarrel again.

- Traditional Japanese Story



The Two Silly Cats

Sharing Activities

- Pretend you're the big cat. How do you feel when you first find the rice cake? Pretend you're the small cat. How do you feel when you first find the rice cake?

- Tell a story about how you shared something without fighting. How did you feel afterward?

- Draw or paint a picture of the two cats and the cake they brought to the wise monkey.

- Pretend you are the monkey. What would you do when the two quarreling cats came to see you?

- Imagine you are each of the two cats. How do you feel at the end of the story?



CHAPTER THIRTY

A Cup of Water in the Desert

A holy man named Aman made a journey to see the rich and powerful Haroun Al-Rashid, the Caliph who ruled over many lands. When Aman at last was allowed to see the great Caliph, the simple man asked him a simple question: "If you were dying of thirst all alone in the desert, what would you give for a single cup of water?"

The Caliph did not even pause for a moment before answering. "I'd give half of my kingdom!" he shouted.

Aman nodded. Then quietly he asked, "And what if the water you drank filled you up so much you were about to burst? With your life in danger, O great Caliph, what would you give for a few pills that would cure your condition and keep your soul alive?"

"Surely I would give up the other half of my kingdom," Haroun Al-Rashid declared.

"Why then, O great Caliph," the saintly Aman inquired, do you boast about what fantastic worth you possess when you yourself are willing to give up the whole kingdom for a mere cup of water and a handful of pills?"

- Traditional Sufi Story



A Cup of Water in the Desert

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you are the simple Aman. Draw or paint a picture of what it's like living in the desert.

- Imagine you are the great Caliph. Draw or paint a picture of what it's like living in a magnificent palace.

- Pretend you are Haroun. Do you have what is really important to you or is something missing?

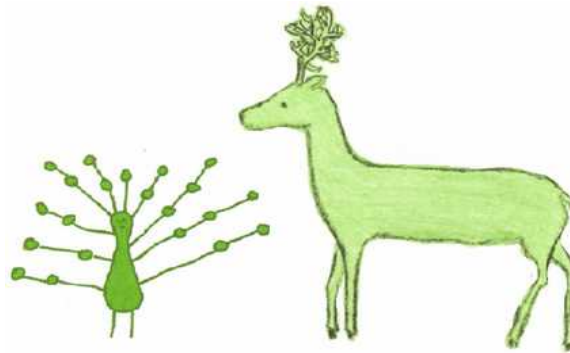
- Think about what you would do or give to help yourself or someone in your family when they were very sick.

- Once more imagine you are Haroun and you are all alone in the desert. What would you wish for?



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The Peacock and the Deer



One day a farmer went out from his farm. He closed the gate to the yard where all the animals stayed, meaning to return in a short while.

But days and days went by and the farmer did not come back. All the animals became very hungry and thirsty. Even the rooster lost the energy to crow.

The animals sat motionless in the shade of a big tree. They were trying to stay alive until the farmer gave them food and water again.

But the peacock gathered all his remaining strength together. He rose up, opened his multi-colored tail, and strutted before all the other animals.

"Mama," asked a little chicken, "why is the peacock showing off his tail like that?"

"Because the peacock is so proud of the way he looks," she answered. "My child, this is a fault that will only disappear with death."

- Fable of Leonardo Da Vinci



A deer came to a pool to drink, and stopped to look at his image in the water. When he saw his mighty antlers, the deer swelled with pride. When he saw his legs reflected

in the water, the deer was sorry that they appeared to be so skinny and weak.

While he was thinking these thoughts, a lion suddenly ran right at him. The deer took off and quickly outran the lion chasing him, for a deer's strength is in his legs and a lion's strength is in the heart.

As long as the deer kept running on the plain, he kept ahead of the lion. But when the deer ran into the forest, his antlers got stuck on some tree branches and the lion caught up to him.

Just as the lion was about to kill him, the deer sadly said to himself, "How strange things are! My scrawny legs almost got me away to safety, and my magnificent antlers cost me my life!"

- Ancient Greek Fable of Aesop



The Peacock and the Deer

Sharing Activities

- The peacock was proud of his tail and the deer of his antlers. Draw or paint a picture of both of them.

- Now draw or paint a picture of something about yourself that makes you very proud.

- Imagine you are the peacock. How do you think the other animals feel about you and your tail?

- Imagine you're the deer. How do you think the lion felt about your legs?

- Share a story about someone you know who has a disability. What is special about her or him?



CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Turtle Who Talked Too Much

Turtle was always talking. He talked so much the other animals in the pond became very annoyed with him and moved away when Turtle came near. They just didn't want to hear him talking anymore. So Turtle began talking to himself.

One day two new geese came to visit the pond. Turtle started talking to them right away. He told the geese how beautiful their feathers were and went on and on about it. After a while, the geese were tired of Turtle's talking and they were about to fly away to another pond.

"Take me with you," Turtle pleaded. "It's so lonely here and you two have been so good to talk to."

"How can you possibly come with us?" the geese said to Turtle. "You cannot fly."

Turtle said, "Wait. I'll think of something." And then he said, "I know how. It's simple. We'll get a long, strong stick. Then you will each take one end in your beak and I'll bite hard in the middle. When you fly, all I'll have to do is hold on with my mouth."

The geese looked at the tall trees they would have to fly over to get to another pond. They said to Turtle, "What if you fall from such a height? Are you insane?"

"My mouth is so strong," Turtle said, "I won't fall."

The geese said, "Your mouth must be strong from so much talking, but you'll only be safe if you keep your mouth closed on the stick."

So the geese agreed to do their part and take Turtle up in the air. They got a long stick, Turtle bit down in the middle of it, and the geese flew up high over the tall trees.

Soon the children below saw an amazing sight in the sky — two geese carrying a turtle! "How smart those geese are!" they cried out. "They found a way to carry turtles! They're so smart!"

Turtle heard all of this and thought, "I'm the one who thought this up, not the geese."

I'm the one who is so smart." He was so outraged with the children that he opened his mouth to shout at them.

And Turtle fell straight down to the earth.

- Traditional Buddhist Story



The Turtle Who Talked Too Much

Sharing Activities

- Is there someone who annoys you by doing too much of something, like talking? Is there someone that holds back because they're too quiet or shy?

- Imagine you're one of the geese. What would you do when Turtle talked on and on to you?

- Draw or paint a picture of Turtle and the geese flying high in the sky.

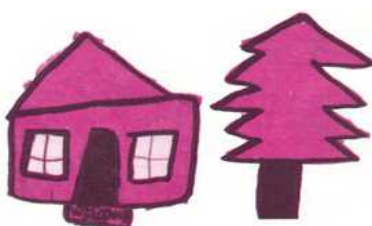
- Turtle talked too much and he did it at the wrong time. Think about something that you overdo. Today do less or, if possible, none of that one thing.

- Think about one thing you feel you don't do often enough. Spend one whole day doing more of that thing.



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Can It Get Any Worse?



A poor man lived with his wife and six children in a very small one-room house. They were always getting in each other's way and there was so little space they could hardly breathe!

Finally the man could stand it no more. He talked to his wife and asked her what to do. "Go see the rabbi," she told him, and after arguing a while, he went.

The rabbi greeted him and asked, "I see something is troubling you. Whatever it is, you can tell me."

And so the man told the rabbi how miserable things were at home with him, his wife, and all their six children eating and living and sleeping in one room. The man told the rabbi, "We're even starting to yell and fight with each other. Life couldn't be worse."

The rabbi thought very deeply about the poor man's problem. Then he said, "Do exactly as I tell you and things will get better. Do you promise?"

"I promise," the man said.

The rabbi then asked him a strange question. "Do you own any animals?"

"Yes," the man said. "I have one cow, one goat, and some chickens.

"Good," the rabbi said. "When you get home, take all the animals into your house to live with you. "

The poor man was astonished to hear this advice from the rabbi, but he had promised to do exactly what the rabbi said. So he went home and took all the farm animals into the tiny house.

The next day he ran back excitedly to see the rabbi. "What have you done to me, Rabbi?" he cried. "It's awful. I did what you told me and the animals are all over the house! Rabbi, help me!"

The rabbi listened and said calmly, "Now go home and take the chickens back outside."

The man did as the rabbi said, but hurried back again the next day. "The chickens are gone, but Rabbi, the goat!" he moaned. "The goat is smashing up all the furniture and eating everything in sight!"

The good rabbi said, "Go home and remove the goat."

So the poor man went home and took the goat outside. But he ran back again to see the rabbi, crying and wailing. "What a nightmare you have brought to my house, Rabbi! With the cow it's like living in a stable! Can human beings live with an animal like this?"

The rabbi said sweetly, "My friend, you are right. Go home now and take the cow out of your house." And the poor man went quickly home and took the cow, the last of the animals, out of the house.

The next day he came running back to the rabbi again. "O Rabbi," he said with a big smile on his face, "we have such a good life now. The house is so quiet and we've got room to spare! What a joy!"

- Traditional Jewish Story



Can It Get Any Worse?

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the poor man's tiny house with everyone in his family living there.

- Draw or paint a picture of your house with everyone in your family in it.

- Think about your biggest complaint. What do you think the rabbi would tell you if he heard it?

- Imagine you are the man at the end of the story. If a friend complained to you, what would you say?

- Draw or paint a picture of the family and the animals at the end of the story.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Who's to Blame?

One day, a woodcutter went out to chop a load of firewood to sell in the market, but his favorite axe was gone. He looked all through the woodpile, behind his house, and even in his house.

He looked everywhere he thought he might have put the axe, but he could not find it. The more he looked, the more upset and frustrated he became. He exhausted himself looking for his precious axe.

Then he noticed a boy — his neighbor's son — standing near the woodshed. The woodcutter stared at the boy and thought to himself, "What's he doing hanging around the woodshed, just walking back and forth? He's got his hands behind his back and his face has a guilty look, too."

The longer he stared at the boy the more convinced the woodcutter was that he was a thief. "Why that boy must have stolen my axe! I can't prove it, but I'll make that boy pay anyhow."

The next day the woodcutter walked over to a pile of firewood he had forgotten about and tripped on something. It was his axe!

"Oh yes," he remembered, "that's where I left it when I was cutting wood the other day."

Then the woodcutter saw the neighbor's son again. He inspected the boy up and down, from head to toe. He looked at him right in the eye.

"How strange," the woodcutter thought, "today the boy looks completely innocent."

- Traditional Chinese Taoist Story



Who's to Blame?

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the woodcutter and the boy at the beginning of the story.

- Pretend you are the woodcutter. Would you do anything differently? Pretend you are the boy. Would you do anything differently?

- Tell a story about a time you were blamed for something you didn't do.

- Tell a story about when you blamed someone for something you found out later they didn't really do.

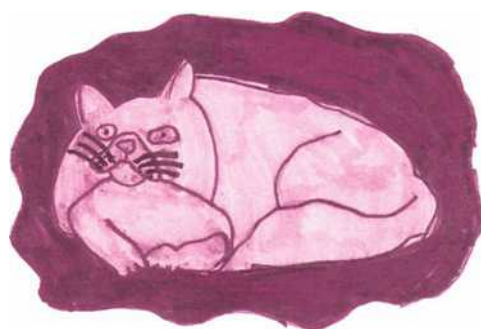
- Draw or paint a picture of how you imagine the woodcutter and the boy will be after the story ends.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

The Cat that Slept on Muhammad's Precious Robe

In the middle of the hot desert, the prophet Muhammad was reading from the holy book to a large group of eager listeners when a sickly cat walked up. After Muhammad nodded a warm welcome to the cat, it sat right down on the hem of his very precious robe, and went to sleep.



All day long Muhammad shared with the assembly, and as the sun rose to its greatest strength and fell again, no one moved from their place. The cat as well remained asleep and still, healing in the way cats do, in the protection of the prophet Muhammad and the softness of his robe.

At last, the day came to its end and everyone returned to their dwelling places to find peace for the night. Muhammad was the last to leave.

All alone under the stars, Muhammad took a knife and cut off the hem where the cat lay sleeping. He had ruined his precious robe, but had not woken up the cat!

- Traditional Muslim Story



The Cat that Slept on Muhammad's Precious Robe

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you are Muhammad and you are giving an important speech. What would you do when the sick cat walked up to you?

- Imagine you are one of the people listening to Muhammad. What would you do when the cat sat on his precious robe?

- Share a story about a time you asked somebody to help you.

- Share a story about a time a person or an animal needed your help.

- Draw or paint a picture of the cat sleeping alone on the cut-off piece of the precious robe at the end of the story.



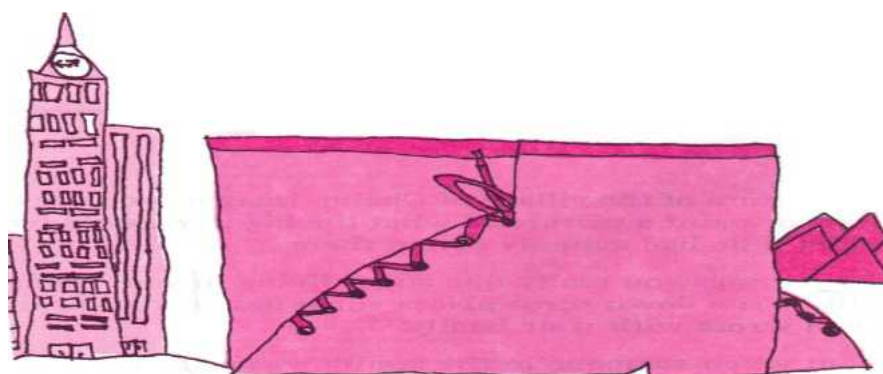
CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

The Silly Shoemaker Finds His Way Home

Chelm was a little village in Poland where everybody was known to be just a little silly. In the village lived a shoemaker who one day decided to head off for the big city of Warsaw.

It was a long way to walk, and after a while the poor shoemaker grew very tired. But he was afraid to go to sleep. "Whichever way I look," he said to himself, "the road seems exactly the same. When I wake up, I won't know which way to go."

So the shoemaker thought up a clever idea. Before he lay down, he took off his boots. He placed one boot with the toe pointing toward the big city and the other one with the heel pointing back home to Chelm.



But as luck would have it, while the shoemaker snored away in a deep sleep, a forester's wagon passed by and a tree branch hanging over the side bumped into the shoemaker's boots. The boots got all turned around and now the toe of one boot pointed to Chelm, his hometown, and the heel of the other to Warsaw, the strange big city.

So what did the shoemaker do when he woke up and looked at his boots? What else? He followed the toe straight back to Chelm!

He walked right by the village marketplace with its few small shops. He passed the little synagogue where the people came to study and pray.

"Why did people tell me so much about the wonderful things I'd see in Warsaw?" he wondered. "We have things just like this in Chelm."

Soon he saw a small stone house that looked completely like his own, and in the house was a woman and six young girls who smiled happily at him. They were the very image of his own wife and six daughters. The woman and girls hugged and kissed the shoemaker just as if he were their very own husband and father returning home from a very long journey.

Then the shoemaker said to himself, "I must have a twin here in Warsaw and this must be his home. I think I'll stay here and wait to see if he returns."

And as anyone who has been to Chelm will tell you, that is exactly where the silly shoemaker lived for the rest of his life!

- Traditional Jewish Story



The Silly Shoemaker Finds His Way Home

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the village of Chelm.

- Now pretend you are the shoemaker. Draw or paint a picture of what you might have imagined the big city of Warsaw would look like.

- Draw or paint a picture of a place you'd most like to visit.

- Tell a story about a time someone in your family was away for a while and what happened when she or he came back home.

- Imagine sometime in the future you're returning home after being away for a long time. What would you like your family and friends to do for you when you get back?



CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Why Mulungu Escaped from the Earth

In the beginning there were no people on the earth. All the animals lived with their father, Mulungu, and the world was a peaceful place.

One day Chameleon put a fish trap in the river and, when he checked, it was full of fish. Chameleon took the fish home and ate them. So he put the trap in the river again, but this time when he pulled it out it was empty. "I have no luck today," he said. "I better set the trap again."

The next morning Chameleon again found no fish in his trap. Instead there were two creatures he had never seen before — a little man and a little woman.

"What are they?" Chameleon wondered, and he took the creatures to Mulungu. "Father, look what I have brought!" Chameleon said.

Mulungu looked at the little man and woman and told Chameleon, "Take them out of the trap and put them on the earth. There they will grow."

Chameleon took them out and the little man and little woman grew on the earth. They grew until they were as tall as men and women are now.

The animals came to see what the man and woman would do. The man and the woman rubbed sticks together and made a fire. The fire jumped from bush to bush and swept through the whole forest. The animals had to run very fast to get away!

The man and the woman hunted a buffalo and killed the animal and roasted it on the fire they made. Then they ate it. The next day they killed again and cooked the animal for their food. So they did every day.

Mulungu said, "They are burning everything all up with their fires! And they are killing all my animals!"

The beasts ran as far away from the man and woman as they could go. Chameleon ran up into the tall trees.

Mulungu said, "I'm leaving the earth!" He asked Spider, "How do you climb up so high?"

"Very well," said Spider to Mulungu, and Spider made a web-rope for Mulungu to climb.

So Mulungu climbed the rope all the way into the sky, far away from the men and women of the earth.

- Traditional African Story



Why Mulungu Escaped from the Earth

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the fire that the man and woman made burning through the forest.
- Tell a story about a time when something you did caused a big problem.
- Imagine you are the man or the woman. What would you do differently?
- Imagine you are Mulungu. When you see what is happening on the earth, what would you do?
- Imagine you are Chameleon or one of the other animals at the end of the story. What would you say to the man and to the woman? What would you say to Mulungu?



CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Sandcastles on the Beach

Once there was a place where a winding river ran quietly to a distant sea. On warm summer days, the children would come out to play in the sand beside the river. They'd splash in the water and look at it sparkling in the sun.

One day, all the children decided it would be fun to build sandcastles. But instead of working together, each one chose to build their own.

"Look how big mine is getting!" shouted one boy.

"I'm making mine so high that you can see it from across the river!" boasted a girl.

They all thought that their sandcastle was the most special and wanted to keep it for themselves. But after everyone's had been finished, a boy running toward the river kicked over someone else's castle.

Instantly the owner went crazy with anger. It didn't matter whether what had happened was by accident or on purpose. The only thing that counted was that his castle was completely ruined!

"Look," he cried out as he grabbed the other boy by the hair, "see what he's done to my castle! Let's all give him the punishment he deserves!"

Hearing this, the children quickly jumped on the boy and beat him until he fell down on the ground. Then each one of them rushed back to their own sandcastle shouting, "You better stay away! This sandcastle is mine! No one but me can have it!"

But as the sun started to go down, and the sky was getting darker and darker, the children thought only about going home for the night. Nobody cared about the sandcastles anymore.

A girl stomped on hers and a boy smashed his until soon there was not a single sandcastle left standing by the shore. Then, without looking back, all the children returned home to their families.

- Traditional Buddhist Story



Sandcastles on the Beach

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of something you have that's very special to you.
- Do you only keep it for yourself or do you sometimes share it?
- Have you ever had a favorite toy get broken or lost? How did you feel about it? Did it matter whether you were the one who broke or lost it?
- Have you ever given away something that you really liked? Has anybody done that for you?
- Exchange your picture with someone else. Take turns telling each other all about what makes the thing you painted or drew so special.



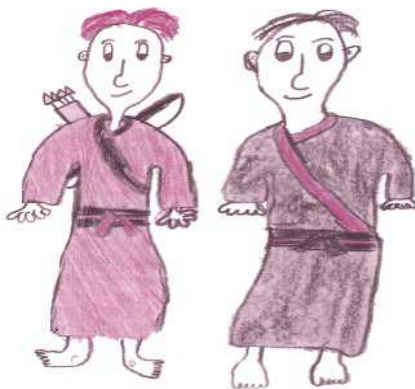
CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

The Blessings of the Twins

Isaac was the son of Abraham, the first of the Hebrew fathers to be blessed by God. When Abraham died, the blessing had passed to Isaac and Isaac in turn was to give it to his oldest son.

But Isaac's wife Rebekah gave birth to not one, but two sons. These twins, Esau and Jacob, were as different as they could be.

The older one, Esau, was born covered with fiery red hair. He grew up to be a wild and adventurous young man who wanted only to hunt. Jacob was born holding onto his brother's heel, and he liked staying home and learning.



Esau was the father's favorite. He brought the old man the good hearty meat he had hunted and killed. Jacob was the mother's favorite. He learned cooking and many other things from her.

One day Esau was out hunting and Jacob was home, cooking a pot of lentil stew. Esau had been gone the whole day and was hungry as a bear. When he came in, Esau shouted at Jacob, "Give me some of that stew right now before I faint!"

And Jacob said, "I will if you trade it for the blessing from our father."

Esau grunted, "I'll give it to you. I'm dying from hunger anyway. Just get me some

food!"

Isaac grew to be very old. He had become blind and was soon to die. "Go hunt a deer, my son," he said to Esau, "so that I may have from you the delicious meal I love so much one last time. I want to eat of it so that my soul may bless you before I die."

Rebekah heard Isaac's request of Esau and she wanted her son Jacob, not Esau, to get the blessing, so she told Jacob her plan. "While Esau is out hunting," Rebekah said, "I'll cook the special meal he wants and you'll go in disguised as Esau and bring it to him. Then he will give you the blessing!"

"But Esau is all hairy, and I am not," Jacob said. "Our father will know."

Rebekah calmed Jacob. "We'll dress you in Esau's clothes and put goat skins on your hands and arms."

It worked. Old blind Isaac was fooled into believing it was his son Esau he touched. He gave Jacob the blessing.

When Esau came in later, he realized what had happened. He was angry and afraid that there was nothing left for him. "Have you not a blessing for me, too, Father?" Esau asked.

And Isaac blessed Esau too. He said, "The fortress of the earth and the waters of heaven will be for you. Someday," he told Esau, "you will have as good a life as your brother."

- Traditional Ancient Hebrew Story



The Blessings of the Twins

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of Esau and Jacob at the beginning of the story.

- If you were Esau, would you have traded your blessing with Jacob? If you were Jacob, would you have done what you did if you had known that it would cause him to hate you for a long time?

- What are the special things about Esau? What are the special things about Jacob?

- What could Esau learn from Jacob and what could Jacob learn from Esau?

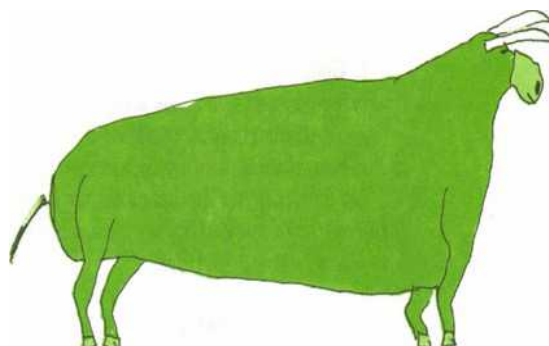


CHAPTER FORTY

Great Joy

In the land of Gandhara in India, there lived a Brahmin, a good and noble man. He was given a young ox-calf as a present and was so happy with the ox that he named him Great Joy.

He treated the young ox with kindness, feeding him rice and other special foods. Great Joy grew and grew, until he was very, very big and very, very strong.



One day Great Joy said to himself, "The Brahmin has been so loving and kind to me and I have grown to be the strongest, most powerful bull in all the land. Now I want to do something for him."

So Great Joy walked over to the Brahmin's house and said, "Kind sir, I know a way I can repay you for your goodness to me. Please listen." Great Joy told the Brahmin to go to town and say to the merchants there: "My ox, Great Joy, is so strong that he can pull a hundred carts filled with sand, gravel and stones." When a rich merchant answered "That is impossible," the Brahmin was to say, "I will bet you one thousand pieces of silver he can do it!"

The Brahmin went to town, found a merchant, and made the bet for one thousand pieces of silver. They agreed that the next day Great Joy would try to pull the hundred carts, all filled with sand and rocks. The whole town turned out to see what would happen. Could a single ox pull such a heavy load?

The Brahmin harnessed Great Joy to the line of carts and climbed into a seat right

behind him. He gave the ox some grain to eat and then, waving his driving stick, the Brahmin shouted at the top of his voice, "Now, you beast, you devil, pull with all your strength!" And then the Brahmin hit the ox with the stick.

"Beast? Devil? What is it that you call me?" Great Joy thought, and he refused to move. The Brahmin cursed and threatened him more, but Great Joy stood his ground. Everybody laughed and hollered and made fun of the Brahmin and his ox. Finally the Brahmin had to release Great Joy, pay the merchant one thousand pieces of silver, and go home.

The Brahmin was heartbroken and, crying many tears, he went to bed. Great Joy went to the window, peeked in, and asked the Brahmin, "Why are you crying, my friend?"

"How can you ask this question?" the Brahmin wailed. "You know I have lost all my money today. Everyone in the town is laughing at me, and it's all because of you."

"Dear Brahmin," said the ox, "in all my days living with you, have I ever tramped through your garden? Or broken a plow? Or stepped on your children's feet?"

"No," answered the Brahmin. "In truth, you have never done any harm to me."

"Then why did you call me names like 'beast' and 'devil' today, and hit me with your stick?" Great Joy asked. "Do I not deserve to be treated with kindness?"

The Brahmin, hearing this, was ashamed. He knew the ox was right. In kindness, Great Joy said, "Look. Let us start over again. Go back to the merchant and bet him two thousand pieces of silver. Be kind to me and we will win!"

The Brahmin followed Great Joy's advice and the bet was made. Again the carts were loaded, the townspeople came to watch, and Great Joy readied himself to pull. This time, the Brahmin held the stick in his hand and gently said, "My good friend, my dear brother, my Great Joy, you have the strength. Please pull the carts now."

And with one great pull, Great Joy pulled the carts. At first they moved just a little. Then the carts got rolling and Great Joy pulled them all the way out of town and back again.

The Brahmin was paid the two thousand pieces of silver and everyone cheered for Great Joy!

- Traditional Buddhist Story



Great Joy

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the ox Great Joy and his friend the Brahmin at the beginning of the story.

- Imagine you are Great Joy. What would you do when the Brahmin yelled at you?

- Imagine you are the Brahmin. What would you do when Great Joy refused to move?

- Share a story about a time someone treated you kindly and encouraged you to do something. What happened afterward?

- Share a story about a time you treated someone kindly and gave them encouragement. Did it help?

- Draw or paint a picture of Great Joy and the Brahmin at the end of the story.



CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Falling for the Fox's Tricks

One day a fox fell into a very deep well. It was so deep that the fox, no matter how desperately he tried, could not get out.

The fox had just about given up hope when a goat came to the well to quench his thirst. He saw the fox and asked, "What are you doing in the well, old fox? Do you know if the water in this well is good to drink, my friend?"

The fox didn't let on that he was trapped in the well. Instead he told the goat peering over the edge of the well, "This is the finest water around. And you better jump right in and drink your fill now, because there's no rain coming for a long time. That's why I jumped in myself."

The goat got into the well as quickly as he could and, thanking the fox, drank all the water that he could. When he finished, the goat asked the fox, "How do we get out now?"

"Easy," said the fox. "You brace your strong legs against both walls of the well and lift your head up high. I'll climb up your back and push off the horns of your head and leap out of the well. When I'm out, I'll reach back down into the well and pull you out."

The goat agreed and the fox was out of the well in no time at all. Then the fox ran away and the goat was left stuck in the well.



A crow stole a piece of cheese one day and flew to the highest branches of a tree to sit and eat it. The crow had just taken the delicious treat in its beak and was about to swallow it when a clever fox sitting below called out, "O most wonderful bird, most glorious crow! How lucky I am to see your beauty today!"

The crow listened to the words of the fox and smiled. But the cheese stayed gripped

in the crow's beak and again he went to eat it.

The fox's mouth started to water. He shouted up at the crow, "You are truly the most wonderful of all birds and although I have yet to hear your song, I am certain that you have the most wonderful of voices, far sweeter than any other."

The crow was very pleased to hear the fox praise him so, especially the things he said about his voice. Why, no one else wanted to hear the crow sing. Everyone said his voice made their ears hurt!

The crow was so delighted the fox wished to hear his marvelous song that he opened his beak to sing. The delicious cheese popped right out of the crow's beak and straight into the fox's mouth!

That's how the crow lost his cheese and the clever fox got to eat it all.

- Ancient Greek Fables of Aesop



Falling for the Fox's Tricks

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the fox and the goat at the beginning of the story.

- Imagine you are the fox stuck in the well. What would you say to the goat when he first saw you there? Now imagine you are the goat. What would you do when you first saw the fox in the well?

- Draw or paint a picture of the crow with the piece of cheese in his beak. Draw or paint a picture of the fox with his mouth watering.

- Tell a story about how you listened to someone even though you felt they were lying. What happened?

- Tell a story about when you didn't tell the whole truth so you could get something you wanted. How did you feel?



CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Joseph's Jealous Brothers

Israel was happy to be the father of such a large family. He had twelve sons and one daughter and together they all lived in the land of Canaan.

But of all the children, Joseph, the next to last-born of the boys, was Israel's favorite. Joseph's mother, Rachel, was Israel's most beloved, and when she died giving birth to Joseph's younger brother Benjamin, Israel grieved greatly. Because he loved Rachel so much, Israel loved Joseph too with all his heart.

Israel gave Joseph special gifts. One of the gifts was a many-colored coat, the kind that was only worn by the privileged son.



Joseph's older brothers were very angry and jealous. To make matters even worse for them, Joseph had two powerful dreams. He said to his brothers, “Listen to the dream I had. We were tying up bundles of grain out in the field. Suddenly my bundle rose and stood up straight. Your bundles gathered around my bundle and bowed down to it.”

His brothers said to him, “Do you plan to be king over us? Will you really rule over us?”

Then Joseph had another dream. “Listen,” he said. “I had another dream. This time the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me.” So they hated him even more because of his dreams.

Israel sent the brothers out to take care of the family's flock of sheep a good distance away, but Joseph stayed home. After a while his father told Joseph to find his brothers and report back if the brothers and the sheep were well.

When the brothers saw Joseph coming, all dressed up in his special coat, they angrily talked among themselves and said, "Let's kill him." But at last they decided to throw him into a pit instead. Then they sold Joseph to slave traders who took him to Egypt.

Joseph's jealous brothers had torn off his precious coat and splashed sheep's blood on it. They told their father that they had found the coat and Joseph must have been eaten by a lion!

Meanwhile, in Egypt, all of Joseph's dreams came true. He helped the Pharaoh of Egypt understand his own dreams and, because he was both wise and good, Joseph was made governor of all the land.

After a time, Joseph forgave his brothers and saved his whole family from starvation. Then they all lived together again.

- Traditional Ancient Hebrew Story



Joseph's Jealous Brothers

Sharing Activities

- At the top of a sheet of paper, write the name of a person you are jealous of. Now below that person's name write or draw something wonderful about her or him.

- Draw or paint a picture of Joseph's dreams.

- Draw or paint a picture of one of your dreams.

- Draw or paint a picture of a many-colored coat you'd like to receive as a gift. Give the picture to the one you are jealous of.



CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

How Ijapa and Ojola Treated Each Other

Ijapa the tortoise went on a long walk. He walked very far, Ijapa did, and got very tired. Ijapa was very hungry, too.

Ijapa came to the village where Ojola, the boa snake, lived. Ijapa thought, "I am so hungry, I will stop here. Ojola will surely give me food to eat."

Ijapa went to Ojola's and Ojola welcomed him. They sat in the cool house and talked. Ijapa smelled food cooking in the other part of the house. Ojola said, "Come, let us get ready to eat together."

Ijapa went outside to prepare for the meal. When he came back, the food was placed in the center of the house and Ijapa smelled the aroma.

But Ijapa could not reach the food. Ojola, the snake, was coiled all around it. Ojola's body was so long and his coils were piled so high that there was just no way Ijapa could get to the food. Ijapa got more and more hungry.

Ojola said, "Come sit with me and eat."

Ijapa said, "I would be very happy to sit and eat. But Ojola, why are you surrounding the meal?"

Ojola replied, "This is the way of the snakes. When we eat, we sit around the food like this." Ojola ate and ate of the food, but Ijapa could not get to it at all. Ojola finished eating at last. He said to Ijapa, "How good it is to eat with a friend."

Ijapa was even hungrier after the meal than when he came to Ojola's house. He felt much in his heart about what happened.

Ijapa decided to invite Ojola to his house for a meal on a feast day. Ijapa's wife prepared all the foods and Ijapa went out to weave a long tail for himself out of grass. He stuck it on with tree gum.

Ojola arrived to share the feast. Ijapa welcomed him and said, "You have come a long way and you are hungry." Ojola went to wash at a spring and when he returned to Ijapa's house, he saw Ijapa was already eating. Ijapa had coiled his long grass tail

all around the food. Ojola could not get near enough to eat. Ijapa heartily ate the food. Around and around Ojola went. He could not get to the food. "Ijapa," the snake said, "How is it that you used to be so short and now you are so very long?" "One person learns from another," Ijapa said. Then Ojola remembered how it was when Ijapa had come to eat at his house.

- Traditional African Story



How Ijapa and Ojola Treated Each Other

Sharing Activities

- Tell a story about when someone did not share with you. How did you feel?
- Tell a story about when you didn't share with someone else. How did you feel then?
- Draw or paint pictures of Ijapa and Ojola at both the beginning and the end of the story.
- Imagine you are Ijapa. How do you feel at the end of the story? Imagine you are Ojola. How do you feel at the end of the story?
- Imagine you are a friend of both Ijapa and Ojola. What would you say to them?



CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

On the Way to the Promised Land

Moses, Aaron, and their sister Miriam led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt and into the desert wilderness. They believed that God was taking them to a land where they would be free and happy, the land God had promised them.

On the way, God did many great and wonderful things for the people. When they were so terribly thirsty that they thought they would die, God helped Moses and Aaron make water gush right out of a rock! And God also gave them food, the miraculous manna that arose like dew around the bushes every day. There was always enough manna for all to eat — and it tasted good, too!

When the Hebrews were near the promised land, Moses sent his young helper Joshua, along with Joshua's friend Caleb and ten other spies, to see what it was like. Everyone could hardly wait for the twelve to return!

The spies brought back a very happy surprise with them. "Look at the fruit that grows in this rich country!" they shouted. "The grapes are so heavy two of us had to carry the bunches together!"

The Hebrews were very glad to hear the good news. They were ready to go!

But ten of the spies looked sad and said, "The cities have great walls around them and the people there are like giants compared to us!"



Then the Hebrews let out an awful cry. "Why did we ever come to this place?" they complained. "We can never go into this land and live there!"

Joshua and Caleb then spoke up. "God promised us that we would live in a good land. Let's go!"

But the people listened to the ten discouraged spies and not to Joshua and Caleb. "We'll all be killed!" they shouted at Moses. "Let's give up and go back to Egypt!"

God heard the cries of the Hebrews and said to Moses, "These people do not believe that the land I promised them is theirs. They will not go in, but wander in this desert for many years. Their children will go into the land I promised and Joshua and Caleb, too, for they believed."

- Traditional Ancient Hebrew Story



On the Way to the Promised Land

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the delicious fruit the spies brought back with them.

- Draw or paint a picture of the gigantic people and the strong walled cities the ten spies told everyone about.

- Tell a story about when you were afraid to do something you really wanted to do and you gave up. How did you feel?

- Tell a story about when you were afraid to do something you really wanted to do and you did it anyway. How did you feel?

- Draw or paint a picture of the grown-up children, and Joshua and Caleb, when they finally arrived in the promised land.



CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

The Golden Fish that Made Wishes Come True

Once upon a time a very poor fisherman and his wife lived in a small cottage by the sea. Although the fisherman worked very hard, the couple had very little and his wife was never satisfied. She scolded him when he returned home having caught only a few fish.

One morning the fisherman threw his heavy nets into the sea hoping to catch a lot of fish. But there was only one, a bright golden fish!



The fisherman was amazed to see such a strange fish and he was even more amazed when the fish talked! "Please, kind fisherman," the golden fish said, "let me go. If you do, I will make any wish of yours come true, for I am the son of the King of the Sea!"

The fisherman was so startled that he tossed the fish back into the sea without thinking about a wish at all. When he told his wife about the golden fish and the wish it had promised to fulfill, she was very angry.

"Go back," she yelled at him, "and ask for a new tub for washing. See how bad the old one looks? That is my wish!"

So the poor fisherman went back and called out to the golden fish, "Please come. My wife has a wish!" And the golden fish suddenly appeared and said, "It is good you have returned. Now tell me what your wish is."

"My wife wants a new washtub," the fisherman simply said.

Without hesitation, the golden fish told him, "Go home. You will find it there just as I promised."

The fisherman's wife was very pleased at first with her wonderful new tub. But then she thought, "It's just a washtub. I should have asked for a big house!" She nagged her husband to go back and talk to the golden fish again.

At the shore he cried, "Golden fish, golden fish, please come once more."

The golden fish popped its head out of the water and asked, "Are you here for another wish?"

"My wife wishes for a big house," the fisherman said softly.

"Very well," the golden fish said. "Since you were so kind to me and let me go, I'll grant you one more wish."

The fisherman was pleased to make his wife happy, but when he returned she stood in front of the big house and said, "Hurry back to that fish! We shouldn't be happy with a house like this when we can have a palace and fancy clothes and jewels, too!"

The fisherman sadly went back and called on the golden fish to grant his wife's new wish. The golden fish agreed to make the palace and all the precious things, but not so pleasantly as before. Still the fisherman was glad his wife was getting what she wanted.

How magnificent the palace was! And there stood the fisherman's wife all dressed up and covered with sparkling jewels!

As her husband approached, she shouted at him, "Go back again!" But the fisherman stopped her. "Can't we be satisfied with this? What more could we possibly need?"

"No," she screamed at him, "It's not enough! Go ask the fish to make me a queen!"

This time the sky was black and stormy over the sea. Lightning flashed and the fisherman saw the golden fish swimming on the big waves. He told the golden fish his wife's wish. But the golden fish said nothing and then disappeared in the dark sea.

Another flash of lightning lit up the sky and the fisherman saw that the palace had disappeared. Everything the golden fish had given was gone and the old house stood right where it had always been.

The fisherman's wife cried and cried, but the fisherman did not shed a tear. In his heart he was content with what they had.

After that, the fisherman went fishing every day but never saw the golden fish again.

- Traditional German Folktale



The Golden Fish that Made Wishes Come True

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the golden fish.

- Pretend you had saved the golden fish and been given the chance to make one wish. What would you wish for? Talk about why you made that one wish.

- Talk about three things you've asked for and received. Were you happy with what you got or did you ask for more?

- Imagine you are the fisherman's wife at the end of the story. Do you want the golden fish to come back again?

- Imagine you are the golden fish. Would you ever come back? If so, when?



CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

The Secret Helpers

King Solomon wanted to build a great temple for people to pray to God. He wanted to build on the holiest of places in all Israel, but what spot was that?

One night, it is said, Solomon took a long walk in the fields. He saw a man carrying heavy sacks of wheat, one after the other, from one barn to another barn nearby.

The man slipped away into the dark night. "He must be a thief," Solomon thought, but he decided to keep watching.

Soon a different man appeared. He did the same thing, only he carried the sacks of wheat back to the original barn! Then he, too, left in silence.

The next day Solomon commanded the first man to come see him. "Why do you steal wheat from your neighbor in the middle of the night?" he asked him.

The man replied, "No, I do not steal. My neighbor is my brother. He has a wife and many children to feed while I do not. He needs much more than I do, but he won't take any extra wheat from me. So every night I secretly carry wheat from my barn to his."

Then Solomon asked the other man to come and asked him why he took wheat from his barn and put it in another. The man answered, "I have the help of my whole family, but my brother has none. He has to pay for help, and so he needs more wheat. He won't take it from me, so in the night I secretly give the wheat to him."

Solomon brought the two men together and told them what each of them had done. "No wonder my pile of wheat sacks always stays the same," they both said, and laughed. And then they embraced each other with a hug full of love!

Solomon said, "Now I know the holiest place in all Israel! It is your land, where brothers love each other this much. So the temple shall be built here!"

- Traditional Jewish Story



The Secret Helpers

Sharing Activities

- Share a story about how you did something in secret for someone or an animal. How did you feel? Share a story about when someone did something for you in secret and then you found out who did it. How did you feel?

- Imagine you are King Solomon and you've just discovered what the two brothers had done for each other. What would you do?

- Draw or paint a picture of the great temple that was built on the two brothers' land.

- If you were a member of either of the two families and you knew that your family's wheat was being given away, what would you do?

- Tell a story about a person or animal (or anything else) that you feel is a part of your family.



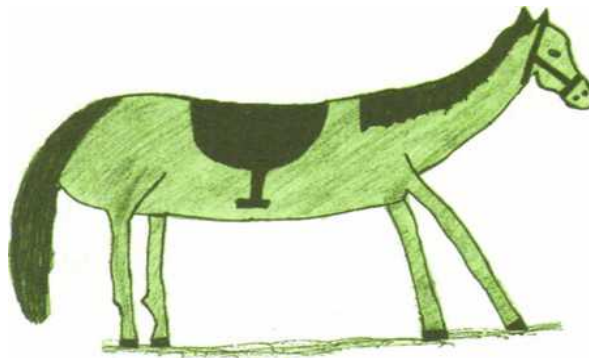
CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Let's Wait and See

A poor farmer's prize horse disappeared one day, and was seen heading for the country of the barbarians. The other farmers, poor like him, knew how much the horse meant to the family and expressed their sympathy.

The farmer said only, "Let's wait and see. How do you know this isn't good fortune?"

A few months passed. Lo and behold, the farmer's horse came back, bringing with it another horse. The new horse was very strong. The neighbors congratulated the farmer for his good luck.



The old farmer said, "Let's wait and see. How do you know this doesn't mean some big trouble is coming?" The peasants merely shook their heads and went back to their work.

After a while, the two horses became father and mother to many fine horses and the family became very rich. The farmer's son, with leisure time now on his hands, took a fancy to riding his magnificent horse.

One day he fell off and broke his hip. Once again came the other farmers to say how badly they felt and to offer their wishes for his son's quick return to complete health.

The farmer told them, "Let's wait and see. How do you know this is not a good thing?"

Well, the hip did not heal well, and the son became lame as a result. Some time went by, and the barbarians crossed the border into the farmer's country and attacked.

All able-bodied young men were required to fight in the war. Nine out of ten of them died.

The farmer's son, lame as he was, stayed home and alive.

- Traditional Chinese Taoist Story



Let's Wait and See

Sharing Activities

- Draw or paint a picture of the poor farmer's magnificent new horse.
- Share a story about something that happened to you in your life which you thought was bad. How did it turn out?
- Share a story about something that happened which you thought was good. After a while, did you still feel the same way?
- Draw or paint a picture of the poor farmer and his son at the end of the story.
- What do you think will happen next in the story?



CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Lion's Enemy

In India long ago there lived a lion who ruled the jungle. Just to show all the other animals how powerful he was, the lion hunted and killed even when he had eaten his full. Everyone was terribly afraid of him.

So the animals of the jungle got together to talk about how they could get the lion to stop killing so many of them and agreed to a plan. Each day one animal would go to the lion and offer to be the lion's meal. The animals hoped the lion would then be satisfied.

When they went to the lion, they said, "This will be so much easier for you. You won't have to hunt at all, but just eat the animal who comes to you." The surprised lion agreed, but he roared loudly and said, "The animal must arrive at my regular mealtime. I, the king of the jungle, will not wait for anyone."

The next day the old rabbit was the animal chosen to be the lion's meal. He walked slowly, stopping to chew on bits of grass and talk to friends along the way. The wise old rabbit had plenty of time to think. When he finally approached the lion's place, the sun was setting. It was very, very late, far past the lion's mealtime, and the lion was very, very hungry.

The lion roared in anger at the rabbit. "Why are you so late?"

The rabbit answered, "O great King, it is not my fault. A most terrible lion prevented me from getting here on time. I was very lucky to escape with my life!"

The lion paused to listen. "Yes," the rabbit went on, "I see him before me still. That long, thick mane just like you, that strong, powerful body just like you, and those nasty, sharp claws and teeth just like you!"

The lion became very angry. "Another lion in my jungle!" he shouted. "Take me to see him."

"Certainly, my king, follow me," said the rabbit and he led the lion to a well. "Look, that terrible lion is right down there!"

The lion looked down and, seeing his reflection in the well, believed it was his enemy

— the new lion that the rabbit had described to him. He let out a terrific roar!

The roar echoed right back to him and the lion demanded, "Who are you?"

His own question echoed back and in answer the lion roared once more, "I am king of this jungle!" This too was the answer from the lion in the well.

"How dare you come here!" the lion raged, but he heard the same threat, "How dare you come here!" from the well.

The lion was beside himself with anger. He leapt into the well to kill his enemy — and drowned instantly.

The rabbit returned home and told all the animals how the lion had attacked his own reflection in the well. The lion was dead and would never eat any of them again.

- Traditional Hindu Story



The Lion's Enemy

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you are one of the animals in the jungle. Draw or paint a picture of the lion and yourself at the beginning of the story.

- Imagine you are the old rabbit chosen to be the lion's meal. What would you do?

- Imagine you are the lion. What would you do when the rabbit told you about the other lion he had seen?

- Imagine you are the lion looking into the well. Draw or paint a picture of the reflection you see.

- Draw or paint a picture of all the animal friends after the lion drowned in the well.



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

The Most Terrible Winter

The coldest winter was about to come, a winter like none the world had ever seen before. This winter would destroy all the creatures of the earth if something was not done to save them.

So Ahura Mazda, the Creator, spoke to Yima, the first man and the first king of the earth, to tell him what was going to happen.

"O Yima," he said, "upon all the living things in the world, both animals and plants, will fall a killing frost, and snow so heavy that the highest mountains will be covered.



"Before this terrible winter, the earth gave plenty of grass for cattle. Now the beasts that live in the wild places, from the mountaintops to the sweet meadows of the valleys, will have to find shelter under the earth.

"When the snow melts, O Yima, it will be a wonder to see the footprint of a single sheep!

"O Yima," Ahura Mazda said, "this is what you must do. Make a place for the creatures to live and close it off on all sides so that they may be safe.

"Bring to that place oxen and sheep, human beings, dogs, birds, animals of all kinds, and fires that burn red and hot.

"Build a special place, O Yima, for human beings to live and also one for the birds,"

Ahura Mazda told the man.

"For the birds, make a stream to flow in a pool. There the green plants will grow forever and the birds will always have food.

"You, too, shall build a house there, a big house, with a place from which to look out and a great yard in which to walk," Ahura Mazda said to Yima.

"Then you shall together live a life of perfect happiness."

- Traditional Ancient Zoroastrian Story



The Most Terrible Winter

Sharing Activities

- Imagine you are Yima. What would you say when Ahura Mazda told you such a terrible winter was coming?

- Draw or paint a picture of the world before the winter of destruction comes.

- Draw or paint a picture of the world after the winter comes.

- You and your friends have a special assignment. Together, find out about some of the animals and plants that used to live on the earth but in the last fifty years have become extinct. Write down the names of five of them.

- Now find out about five animals or plants that almost became extinct but didn't because people did something to protect them. Talk about what those people did. Talk about what you and your friends can do to keep all the living things of the earth alive.



CHAPTER FIFTY

Aiming at the Target

Nasruddin brought a bow and arrows with him to the country fair. His students all came to see Nasruddin compete in the archery contest.

Like all other competitors, Nasruddin was given three shots at the target. Before he took his first shot, Nasruddin put on the kind of hat a soldier wears and stood up very straight.

Then he pulled the bow back hard and fired. The arrow sailed over the target. Nasruddin had completely missed and everyone in the crowd laughed at him.

For his second shot, Nasruddin drew the bow again, but with much less strength than before. Although the arrow flew straight at the target, it fell very far short.

Nasruddin only had his third shot left. This time he simply turned to face the target and fired the third arrow. It hit dead center!

For a moment, the whole crowd went crazy! Then, so surprised were they that the man everyone laughed at had made a perfect shot, they became totally silent.

Nasruddin made no fuss at all. He went over to get his prize for winning the contest and started walking away. But Nasruddin's students and everyone else wanted to know how he made the final shot after not even having come close with the first two.

"I'll tell you," Nasruddin said. "With the first shot, I was imagining I was a soldier and a terrible enemy faced me. Fear caused the arrow to fly high over the target. When I took the second shot, I was thinking like a man who had missed the first one and was so nervous he could not concentrate. He was weak with worry, and the shot was too."

Nasruddin paused. Finally a courageous soul spoke up. "And what about the third one? Who fired that arrow?"

"Oh," said Nasruddin. "That was me!"

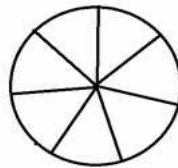
- Traditional Sufi Story



Aiming at the Target

Sharing Activities

□ Draw a big circle on a special piece of paper. Make seven sections in the circle so that it looks like a pie with seven pieces.



□ You are going to complete a holy work of art — a mandala. In five of the sections, write or draw something you feel is true about yourself. Feel free to use different colors, different symbols, different designs and words. Write or draw as big or as small as you want.

□ Think about one thing that is only true about you and no one else. Write or draw that in the sixth section.

□ Is there someone you dream to be? In the last section, describe or draw your dream. You have now completed your very own mandala. Share your mandala with whomever you want.



CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

How the Children Became Stars

Once, it is told, twelve children came together to play near the lodge-houses of their parents. They knew all sorts of games, but today they made up a new one. This is the game they played.

All the children joined hands and made a circle. They stood on the grass and each danced and sang, "We are dancing. We are dancing."



The parents listened to the children's song and watched the children's dance. The children kept singing, "We are dancing. We are dancing."

Then the parents saw something amazing. The children's feet no longer danced on the earth, but above it. The children were moving towards the sky.

The parents were very afraid and they ran to make the children stop their singing and dancing. But the children, all the while still holding hands, soon rose far above their parents' reach.

Disappearing from sight, the children sang, "We are dancing. We are dancing."

Everyone kept looking out for the children and listening for their song. At last they were seen!

The children were the twelve stars that shone in the heavens high above the lodge-houses of their parents. They were a circle of twelve stars with just one star a little bit out of place.

Every night when we look in the sky, we see these twelve stars and remember the children who sang, "We are dancing. We are all dancing!"

- Traditional Native American Story



How the Children Became Stars

Sharing Activities

- Greet the sun today and say, "Great Star, thank you for your light and warmth." At night go out and see the stars.

- Imagine you are one of the children and your feet started lifting off the ground. What would you do?

- Imagine you are one of the parents and you saw the children going into the sky. What would you do?

- Imagine yourself as a brilliant star. Now draw or paint a picture of yourself.

- Play some music that everyone in the group likes — music you're all happy to listen to. Join hands in a circle and dance as the spirit moves you.



CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

All We Need Is a Story

When Israel ben Eliezer was a very young boy, his parents died. The people in his village took care of him and made him go to school to study the Torah, the Jewish holy books.

But young Israel had very little desire to stay inside the schoolroom and study. He wanted to wander in the forest just beyond the village. When he was with the trees and the animals and all the beautiful things of nature, Israel felt God was there with him.

When he became a man, Israel helped many sick people to get well and many uneducated people to understand how God wanted them to have a good and happy life. He was called the Baal Shem Tov, the Master of the Good Name, because he knew how to talk to God.

The Baal Shem Tov shared the story of his childhood walks in the forest and how he prayed there with his friends. This is a story they told to their friends, who told it to others, and so on to today.

The Baal Shem Tov, may he be remembered, used to go to a certain place in the forest whenever he faced an especially difficult situation. There he would light a fire and pray, and whatever needed to be done was done.

After the Baal Shem Tov died, the new rabbi followed in his footsteps, and he, too, went to the very same place in the forest. He said, “We cannot light the fire anymore, for we don’t know the Master’s way with it, but we can say the prayer.” And whatever he asked in prayer was, as before, accomplished.

When that rabbi passed on, the next rabbi went to the woods and said, “The fire we are unable to light, and the prayer is gone from our minds. All we know is this holy place in the forest, and that will have to do.” This rabbi's prayers also came to be.

The rabbi who came after him no longer made the journey to the holy place. He

stayed at home, for, as he said, “The fire we cannot light, the prayer we don’t know anymore, nor do we remember the right place to go. All we can do is tell the story.” And that, too, was quite enough.

- Traditional Jewish Story



All We Need Is a Story

Sharing Activities

- As a child, Israel loved to walk in the forest. Take a walk today in your most favorite place.
- After you return, draw or paint a picture of you in your special place.
- Imagine you are eighteen years older than you are now. Write down on a piece of paper three things you want to see in that future for (a) yourself, (b) your family, (c) the world.
- The Baal Shem Tov loved telling stories to his friends because he knew they enjoyed them so much. Be like the Baal Shem Tov and create a story about your life.
- Share your story with your friends and listen to theirs.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



From early childhood, Aaron`s parents, both Holocaust survivors, showed (and continue to show) him the power of acceptance and love. As an ordained Interfaith Minister, teacher, and parent, Aaron honors the wisdom found in all peoples and cultures. Aaron believes in the spirit of children and their power to create a world of peace and joy.

Aaron currently lives in the lovely town of Sechelt, British Columbia (near Vancouver) with his seventeen-year-old daughter, Sari, who is the delight of his life.



How the Children Became Stars

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