

# Tug of War



*A classic fable*

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**TUG OF WAR**  
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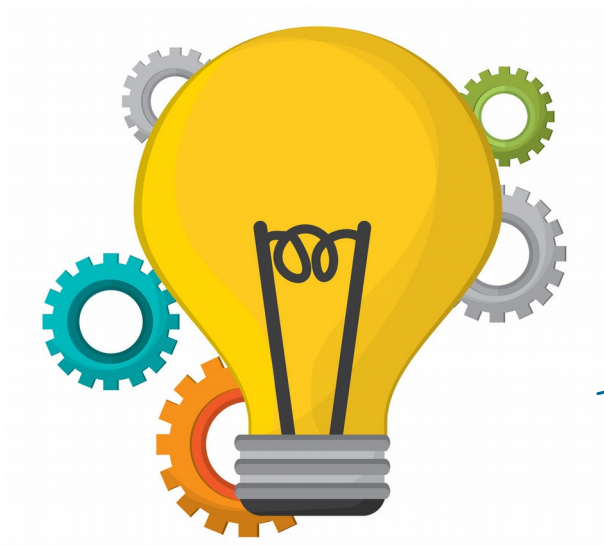
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## **Tug of War**

Turtle was small, but he talked big. He loved to **boast** that he was friends with the biggest animals in the jungle. He would say things like, “I’m just as strong as the biggest animals around here, including Elephant and Hippopotamus. That’s right: Elephant and Hippopotamus and I are friends, because I’m just as strong as they are.”

One day, Elephant and Hippopotamus happened to hear from some of the other animals what Turtle was going around saying. Elephant and Hippopotamus laughed. “So,” they said, “Turtle thinks he is as strong as we are? That’s the silliest thing we’ve ever heard. He’s so tiny compared to us!”

And when the animals told Turtle what Elephant and Hippopotamus said, Turtle became very mad. “So, they do not think that I am as strong as they are? Once they see that I am just as strong as they are, we will definitely be friends. Just wait and see!” Then Turtle set off to find Elephant and Hippopotamus.





He found Elephant lying down in the jungle. Elephant was as big as a mountain; his trunk was as long as a river. But Turtle was **bold**. He walked right up and said in his loudest voice, “Hey, Elephant, my dear friend!”

Elephant looked all around to see where the voice could be coming from. Finally, he looked down—way down—and spotted Turtle. “Oh, it’s you, is it?” said Elephant. “What is this **foolishness** I hear, that you claim to be as strong as I am? How silly! I am much larger than you, and thus much stronger than you! Big animals and little animals cannot be friends.”

“Now, Elephant,” said Turtle, “just listen. You think that because you’re so much bigger than me, that makes you better. Well, let’s have a tug-of-war to find out.”

“A tug-of-war?” said Elephant. He laughed so hard the earth shook for miles around. “Why,” he said to Turtle, “you haven’t got a chance.”





“Maybe so,” said Turtle. “But if you’re so sure, what have you got to lose?” Then Turtle cut a very long vine and gave one end to Elephant. “Here,” said Turtle. “Now, if I pull you down, I am stronger. If you pull me down, you are stronger. We won’t stop tugging until one of us pulls the other over, or the vine breaks. And if the vine breaks, we are equal, and will call each other friend.”

“Now I’ll go pick up my end,” said Turtle, “and when you feel me start tugging, you tug back.”

And Turtle walked off with the other end of the long, long vine until, some time later, he found Hippopotamus bathing in the river.

“Oh, friend, I’m here!” shouted Turtle. “Come out of the water and say hi!”





Hippopotamus could hardly believe his ears. “How could we be friends? You are so much smaller than me,” he said **quizzically**.

“Now hold on, friend Hippo,” said Turtle. “You think that because you’re so much bigger than me, that makes you better. Well, let’s have a tug-of-war to find out. Whoever pulls the other down is stronger. We will keep pulling until one of us wins or the vine breaks. And if the vine breaks, we are equal, and we will finally be friends.”

“But Turtle, how could you win? You are so much smaller than me, and everyone knows that big animals are stronger than little animals,” said Hippopotamus.

“Well, let us see,” said Turtle, and he gave Hippopotamus an end of the long, long vine. “Now I’ll go pick up my end,” said Turtle, “and when you feel me start tugging, you tug back.”

Turtle walked into the jungle and picked up the middle of the vine. He gave it a good hard shake. When Hippopotamus felt this, he started to tug. When Elephant felt the tug, he tugged back.



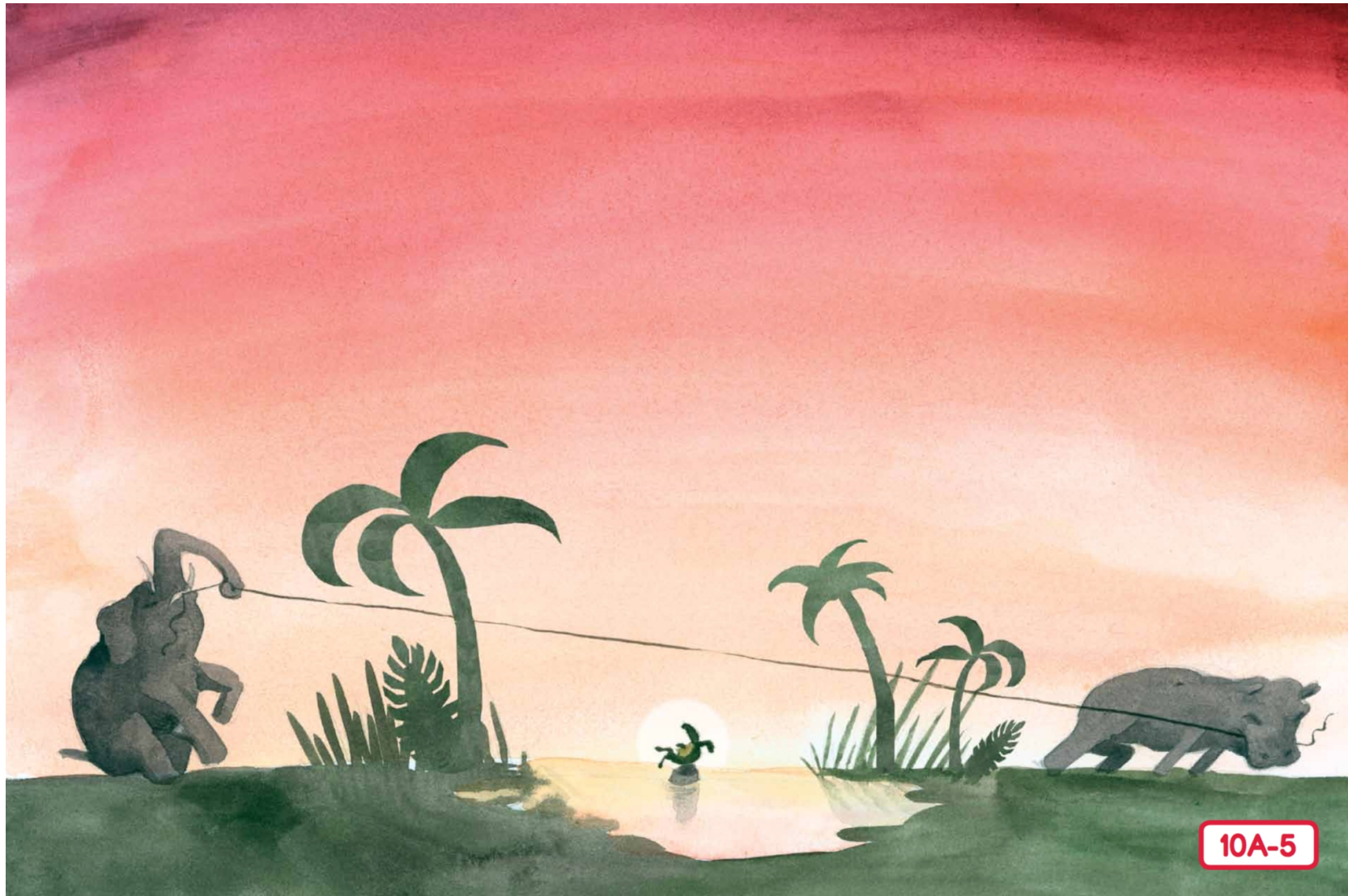


Elephant and Hippopotamus both tugged so mightily that the vine stretched tight. Turtle settled into a comfortable spot and watched for a while as the vine moved just a little bit one way, then just a little the other way. He took out his lunch and munched on his food very slowly, enjoying every bite. Then he yawned and fell asleep.

He woke a couple of hours later, feeling very refreshed from his nap. He looked up to see the vine still stretched tight, and he smiled. Yes, Elephant and Hippopotamus were still pulling with all their **might**. Neither one could pull the other over.

“I suppose it’s about time,” said Turtle, and he cut the vine.





10A-5

When the vine broke, both Elephant and Hippopotamus tumbled down, WHUMP BUMPITY—BUMP BAM BOOM!

Turtle went to see Elephant, and found him sprawled on the ground, rubbing his head. “Turtle,” said Elephant, “you are very strong and quite powerful! You were right; we are equal. I guess that bigger doesn’t mean better after all, and that big animals and little animals can indeed be friends.”

Then Turtle went to see Hippopotamus, who was also sprawled on the ground, rubbing his head. “So, Turtle,” said Hippopotamus, “we are equal after all. You were right, my friend.”



From then on, whenever the animals held a meeting, there at the front sat Elephant, Hippopotamus, and Turtle. And they always called each other friends.

**-THE END-**





10A-7

## Core Vocabulary

**boast, v.** To tell someone about something in a proud way *Example:* Darian loved to boast about how good he was at skating. *Variation(s):* boasts, boasted, boasting

**bold, adj.** Brave and fearless *Example:* The warrior was bold and strong. *Variation(s):* bolder, boldest

**foolishness, n.** A lack of good sense or judgment *Example:* My mother does not allow foolishness, such as dancing on chairs, in the house. *Variation(s):* none

**quizzically, adj.** In a questioning manner *Example:* He looked at her quizzically. *Variation(s):* quiz, quizzes

**might, n.** Physical strength *Example:* I tried to open the bottle using all of my might, and I still couldn't get it open! *Variation(s):* none

## Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who are the characters in the story? (*Literal*)
2. What is the setting of the story? (*Literal*)
3. Do Hippopotamus and Elephant think Turtle can be friends with them? Why not? (*Inferential*)
4. When does Turtle tell Hippopotamus and Elephant to start tugging on the vine? (*Literal*)
5. Where is Turtle during the tug-of-war? (*Literal*)
6. Why do Hippopotamus and Elephant finally agree to be friends with Turtle? (*Inferential*)
7. Remember that “Tug-of-War” is a special kind of fiction story. Which part of the story tells you that “Tug-of-War” is fiction, or a made-up story? What kind of fiction is this story? (*Evaluative*).
8. What else could Turtle have done to become friends with Hippopotamus and Elephant? (*Evaluative*)



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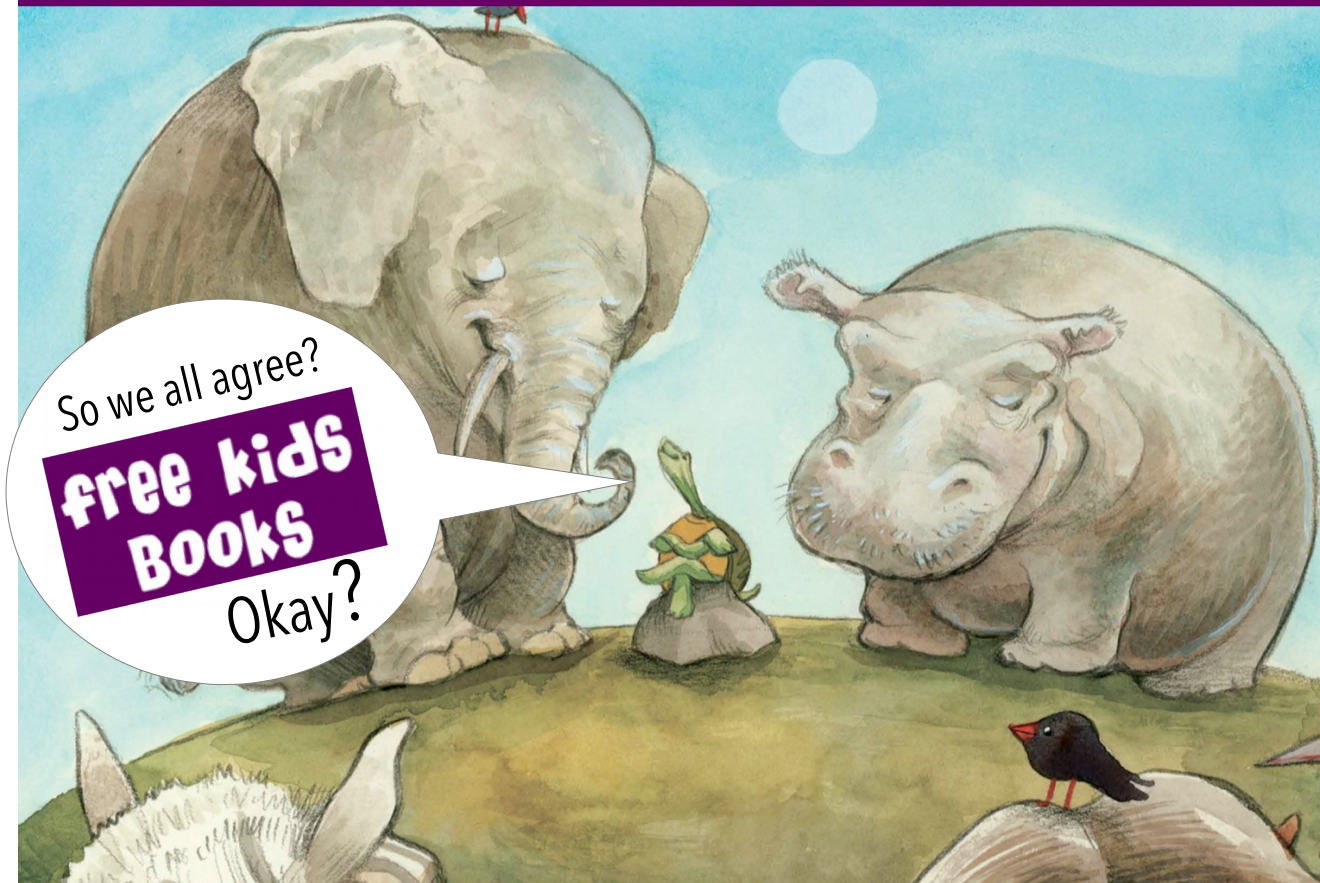


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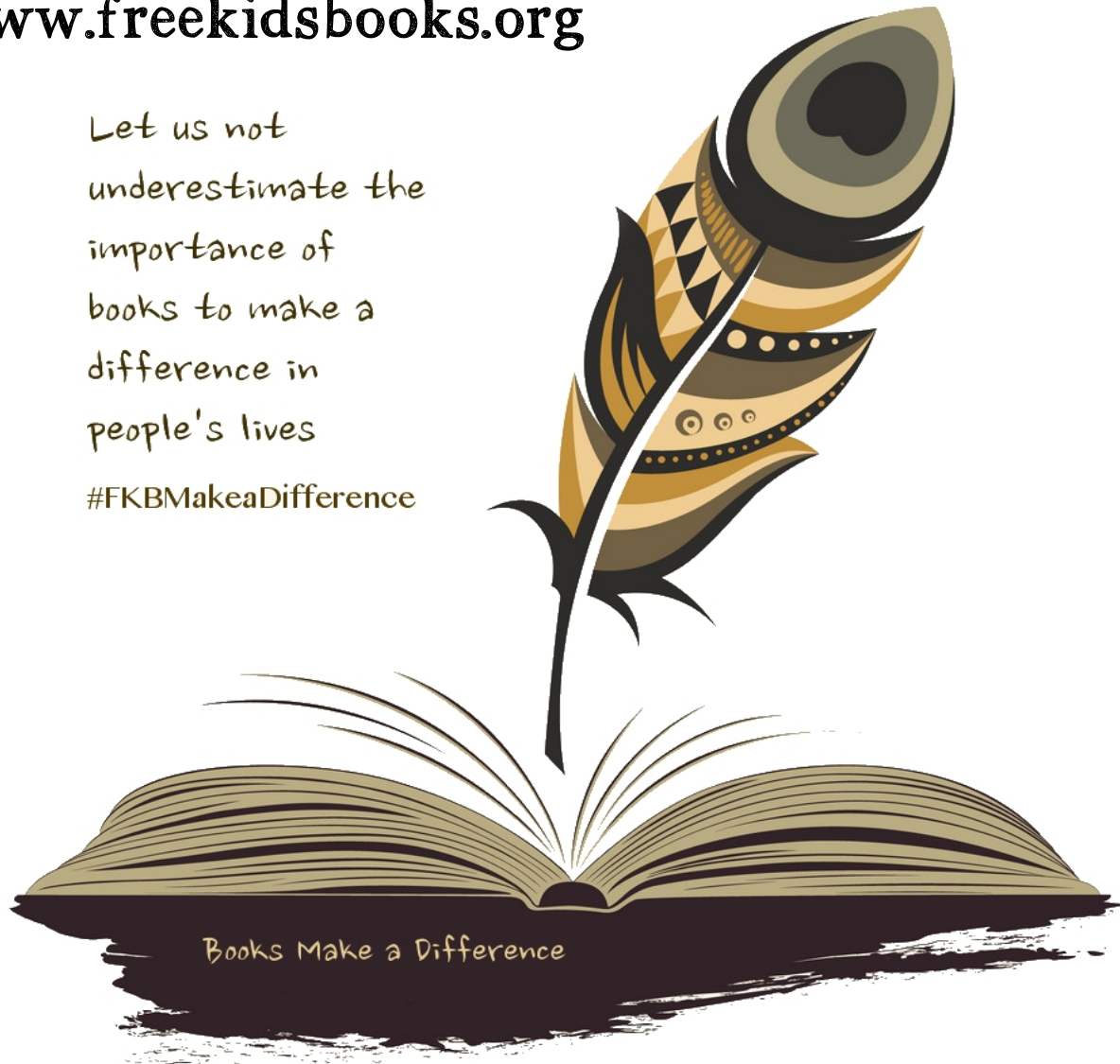
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