

## Teachers' Notes

### **THE VALUE OF READING**

Much research has been done on the importance of reading and all studies show the same results. Students who read fluently, frequently and with pleasure consistently gain higher test scores at school as well as in their further studies, not only in English, but across the whole curriculum. Reading and enjoying the stories on this website will help your students to learn to love reading, and this will benefit every aspect of their education.

*Learning to read is important, but learning to love reading is even more important.*

Here are ten reasons for encouraging your students to love reading:

- Reading improves language skills, vocabulary and grammar
- Reading strengthens brain connections
- Reading increases depth of knowledge
- Reading improves memory
- Reading helps develop a creative imagination
- Reading improves concentration
- Reading encourages self-discipline
- Reading increases confidence
- Reading relaxes the body and calms the mind
- Reading improves critical thinking

### **HOW TO USE THE EXERCISES**

#### **1. The pre-reading questions**

Prediction is an important element in comprehension. Use the pre-reading questions to help the reader to grasp the theme of the story and understand its progression. The pre-reading questions will help the reader to guess correctly the meanings of words that they may not know.

- Before reading, make sure the students have any background information they may need.
- Encourage discussion around the topic of the story, presented in the pre-reading questions.
- Make sure they know key items of vocabulary.

#### **2. Reading the story**

Allow the students time to read the story themselves in silence. Be ready to help if they stumble over unfamiliar words.

#### **3. The exercises**

The exercises follow a progression. The first exercise, entitled **How much did you understand?**, encourages students to check their overall grasp of the story and its structure. This exercise may take the form of putting sentences in the correct order, or offering true/false choices, or filling in key words. Students may have to read the story through again quickly before they can complete this exercise.

The next exercise (or exercises) focuses in more detail. There are more specific questions about time, place, person, or types of sentence. Please note that the purpose of these questions is not to teach grammar or vocabulary. They are all aimed at helping students to increase their

reading comprehension skills. Some concentrate on the comprehension of individual words. Some encourage open-ended replies.

In the **What were they feeling?** exercises, the reader focuses on the personal impact of the events in the story. These questions encourage empathy with the characters.

The next type of exercise (often entitled **What do you think?**) aims to help the student think more widely, to talk about their own ideas and responses to the story, and increase their confidence in expressing their own opinions.

Where it's appropriate, further activities are suggested, for example enacting the story as a play, thinking of a new title, looking at similar stories on this website, or retelling the story to friends.

One final word. We hope that you and the students will enjoy the stories.

### Stories from Harar



**[Small map with region highlighted]**

Harar is an old walled city in the east of Ethiopia. It lies on an ancient trade route, which carried salt from the Danakil Desert up into the highlands.

Merchants and travellers brought stories from Arabia and beyond to Harar - tales of magic, princes, sorceresses and jinns.

**To read the stories, click on the titles below.**

**The Stories**

1. The Holy Man and the Guava
2. The Good Prince
3. Irit and Nurit

**Originally told by**

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*With thanks to the Harar Education and Culture Bureau, and the translators Nejaha Alkerim, Riyad Ghazal and Mikhail Negussie*

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## The Holy Man and the Guava



### **Before you read the story**

- Do you know any holy men or women?
- What makes them holy?
- Are they holy because they pray to God?
- Or are they holy because they always do what is right?

### **Now read the story**

Once upon the time, there was a very holy man. He lived in the city, and every day he went to the mosque five times to pray. But the city was big, and there were many people in the streets.

"This place is very noisy," the holy man thought. "I can't pray to God here. I must go to a quiet place, far away from the city."

So the holy man went out of the city. He walked for a long time. At last, he came to a high wall. There was an orchard of fruit trees on the other side of the wall.

"This is a fine orchard, with many fruit trees," thought the holy man. "Those guavas and bananas look delicious, and I am very hungry."

A stream of water was running out of the orchard. The holy man looked at it.

"What's that yellow thing in the water?" he thought. "Oh, it's a guava. It's outside the orchard, and no one can see me. I will eat it."

So the holy man took the guava out of the stream and ate it.

Soon it was time to pray and the holy man began to wash himself in the stream. But then he began to think.

"Why did I eat that guava?" he asked himself. "It wasn't mine. It belonged to the owner of the orchard. I did a bad thing. I must go to the owner of the orchard, and I must tell him I am sorry."

So the holy man found the gate of the orchard and he went inside. The orchard was very big, with many guava and banana trees.

In the middle of the orchard there was a big house. The owner of the orchard was coming out of the house.

The holy man went up to him.

"Excuse me, sir. I want to tell you something," he said. "I found a guava in the stream outside your orchard. I was hungry and I ate it. But it was your guava. I was stealing it from you. Please forgive me."

The owner of the orchard looked at him.

"No," he said. "I can't forgive you. You did a bad thing. Now you must do something for me."

"What must I do?" the holy man said.

"You must marry my daughter," said the owner of the orchard. "My daughter has no eyes and she cannot walk. But if you marry her, I will forgive you. If you do not marry her, I will not forgive you."

The holy man was sad.

"This is a big price to pay for a small mistake," he thought, but he said to the owner, "Yes, I agree. I will marry your daughter. Let me see her now."

"No," said the owner of the orchard. "First you must marry her. Then you can see her."

So the holy man married the orchard owner's daughter. She was covered with a veil, and he could not see her.

"Now," said the orchard owner. "My daughter is your wife. Take off the veil and look at her."

The holy man took off his wife's veil.

"Oh!" he said. "But - but you are beautiful! Are you blind? No, you can see! Are you lame? No, you can walk! But your father said, 'My daughter has no eyes and no legs.'"

The owner of the orchard smiled at him.

"You did not understand me," he said. "This was my meaning. My daughter has no eyes for bad things. She never looks at them. And she cannot walk in bad places. She always follows the path of goodness. I was looking for a holy man to be her husband, and now, my dear son-in-law, I have found one."

And from that day, the holy man lived with his wife and her father, and they were very happy.

**[Click here to listen to the story]**

## **Exercises**

### **A. How much did you understand?**

*These sentences retell the story. Put them in the right order.*

1. The holy man took off his wife's veil and he saw that she was beautiful.
2. The holy man asked the owner of the orchard to forgive him for eating the guava.
3. The holy man left the city to look for a quiet place to pray.
4. The owner of the orchard asked the holy man to marry his blind daughter.

5. The holy man ate a guava that had come out of an orchard.
6. The owner of the orchard was very happy with his son-in-law.
7. The owner of the orchard did not let the holy man see his daughter.

### **B. Where?**

*Choose the right answer to these questions from the list below.*

1. When the holy man lived in the city, where did he usually go to pray?
  2. Where did the holy man find the guava?
  3. Where was the orchard?
  4. Where was the owner of the orchard's big house when the holy man first met him?
  5. Where did the owner of the orchard's daughter never walk?
- 
- a) In bad places
  - b) Behind a high wall
  - c) To the mosque
  - d) Coming out of the house in the middle of the orchard
  - e) In the stream outside the orchard

### **C. What do you think?**

The holy man thought that the owner of the orchard's daughter was blind and lame. Was he foolish to agree to marry her?

Was the holy man really stealing when he took the guava out of the stream?

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[[Click here to return to the exercises](#)]

[[Click here to return to the story](#)]

### A. How much did you understand?

*The right order of these sentences is 3, 5, 2, 4, 7, 1, 6*

The holy man left the city to look for a quiet place to pray.

The holy man ate a guava that had come out of an orchard.

The holy man asked the owner of the orchard to forgive him for eating the guava.

The owner of the orchard asked the holy man to marry his blind daughter.

The owner of the orchard did not let the holy man see his daughter.

The holy man took off his wife's veil and he saw that she was beautiful.

The owner of the orchard was very happy with his son in law.

### B. Where?

*Choose the right answer to these questions from the list below.*

1. When the holy man lived in the city, where did he usually go to pray?

*To the mosque*

2. Where did the holy man find the guava?

*In the stream outside the orchard*

3. Where was the orchard?

*Behind a high wall*

4. Where was the owner of the orchard's big house when the holy man first met him?

*Coming out of the house in the middle of the orchard*

5. Where did the owner of the orchard's daughter never walk?

*In bad places*

## The Good Prince



### Before you read the story

- Must children always obey their parents?
- Do you always obey your parents?
- If parents ask their child to do a bad thing, must they obey?
- What do your parents do if you don't obey them?

*This story is long. There are three parts to it. Answer the questions to each part before you read on.*

### Part One

A blind king once ruled the city of Harar. He was very unhappy because he could not see. He called many doctors from different countries but none of them could help him.

One day, a fortune teller came to Harar. The king called him to the palace.

"Tell me," he said, "will I always be blind? Or will my sight come back to me? Can anyone help me?"

"Yes," said the fortune teller. "One person can help you. You have a son, a good, wise prince. Send your son to the sea. There he must find the King of the Seas, the great whale. He must catch the whale and bring him to you. Then your sight will come back to you and you will see."

The king was very happy. He called for the prince and said, "Take two soldiers with you, my son, and go to the sea. Catch the whale, the King of the Seas, and bring him to me. Then my sight will come back to me."

The prince was brave and good. He took two soldiers with him and they went down to the sea. They hunted the whale for a long, long time, and at last they caught him.

Now the whale was very big, and from his head to his tail he was covered with gold. He lay in the prince's net and looked at him.

"Why did you catch me, Prince?" he said.

"I will take you to my father," said the prince. "He is blind. Only you can help him to see."

"I can't help your father," said the whale. "And if you take me out of the water, I will die."

"Is that true? Can't you help my father?" asked the prince.

"No," said the whale.

"And if I take you out of the water, you will die? Is that really true?" asked the prince.

"Yes," said the whale.

"Then I will let you go," said the prince.

"Thank you, oh thank you," said the whale. "You have saved my life, and now I want to help you. One day, you will need me. Come down to the edge of the sea and call to me. Then I will help you."

The prince and the soldiers left the sea, and went back to the king's palace.

"Well, my son?" said the king. "Did you find the whale?"

"Yes, Father," said the prince.

"And did you catch him?" asked the king.

"No, Father," said the prince. "The whale is the King of the Seas. He is too strong for me. I could not catch him."

The king was sad.

"Now I will always be blind," he said. "I will never be able to see."

But the prince's two soldiers were greedy.

"Let's go to the king and tell him the truth," they said. "Then perhaps he will give us some money."

So the two soldiers went to the king.

"Your Majesty," they said. "The prince, your son, did not tell you the truth. We did catch the whale, but the prince was sorry for him. He let him go."

"What?" said the king. He was very angry now. "My son caught the whale, but he did not bring him to me? He is not my son, and I am not his father! Find him, and kill him! My son is now my enemy."

The two soldiers were sorry now. They liked the prince. They did not want to kill him. They went to him and said, "The king is very angry and he wants to kill you. Come with us. We will take you far away from the palace, and there we will let you go. We will come back to the king and we will tell him that you are dead."

The prince was very sad when he heard this. He did not want to die. So he went with the soldiers far away from the palace. Then they said goodbye to him and let him go.

Now the poor prince had no home and no father.

"What can I do?" he thought. "I must travel through the world alone."

## Exercises

### A. How much did you understand?

*Read these sentences from the story. Who is speaking?*

1. "Tell me," he said. "Will I always be blind?"
2. "Send your son to the sea."
3. "I can't help your father."
4. "Then I will let you go."
5. "Did you find the whale?"
6. "The whale is the King of the Seas. He is too strong for me."

7. "The prince, your son, did not tell you the truth."
8. "Find him, and kill him!"
9. "Come with us. We will take you far away from the palace."
10. "I must travel through the world alone."

**B. Describe the characters**

*Choose the right words from the list below to describe these characters from the story.  
Hint: there are two words for each character.*

the king  
the prince  
the whale  
the soldiers

*strong, brave, very big, greedy, blind, sorry, angry*

**C. What do you think?**

Was the prince right to let the whale go?  
Was the king unfair to his son?

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

**[Click here to read Part Two]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[[Click here to return to the exercises](#)]

[[Click here to return to the story](#)]

### A. How much did you understand?

1. "Tell me," he said. "Will I always be blind?"

*The king*

2. "Send your son to the sea."

*The fortune teller*

3. "I can't help your father."

*The whale*

4. "Then I will let you go."

*The prince*

5. "Did you find the whale?"

*The king*

6. "The whale is the King of the Seas. He is too strong for me."

*The prince*

7. "The prince, your son, did not tell you the truth."

*The two soldiers*

8. "Find him, and kill him!"

*The king*

9. "Come with us. We will take you far away from the palace."

*The two soldiers*

10. "I must travel through the world alone."

*The prince*

### B. Describe the characters

the king: *blind, angry*

the prince: *brave, wise*

the whale: *strong, very big*

the soldiers: *greedy, sorry*

## Part Two

The prince began to walk along the road.

Suddenly, an antelope ran in front of him.

"Oh sir, please help me," said the antelope. "The hunters are chasing me! They are going to kill me!"

The prince was sorry for the antelope.

"Come here," he said, "and put your head down."

The antelope came close to the prince and put his head down. The prince took one of his horns and held it.

Soon the hunters ran up.

"That's our antelope!" they said. "Give it to us."

"No," said the prince. "This antelope is mine. I chased him and caught him myself. But there was another antelope, bigger and faster than this one. He ran that way, down the hill. Run fast and you will catch him."

So the hunters ran away down the hill.

The antelope was very happy.

"You saved my life," he said. "and one day, I will save yours. When you need me, call me, and I will come and help you."

"I will remember that," said the prince, and he went on down the road.

Suddenly, a little mouse ran across the path in front of him.

"Oh please, sir," said the mouse. "Some boys are chasing me. They want to catch me and kill me. Please save me!"

At once, the prince took off his cloak, and threw it over the mouse. Then he sat down beside it.

Soon, the boys arrived.

"What are you doing?" the prince asked them.

"We're hunting a mouse," answered the boys. "Have you seen it?"

"Yes," said the prince. "I saw a mouse. It ran into a hole in the ground. You will never find it now."

The boys went away, and the prince picked his cloak up off the ground. The little mouse thanked him again and again.

"You saved me!" she said. "You saved my life! I am very grateful. One day, you will need me. Call to me then, and I will help you."

The prince smiled.

"How can a little animal like a mouse help a man like me?" he thought, but he thanked the mouse, and walked on, down the road.

For many days the prince travelled on, over high mountains, through deep valleys, and across fast rivers. At last one evening, he was very tired, and very hungry.

"Where will I sleep tonight?" he thought.

He looked up, and saw, far away, a beautiful, big house. It was shining like gold in the last light of the evening sun.

Quickly, the prince ran towards the house.

"What kind of house is this?" he thought. "It is made of gold!"

He put out his hand and touched the wall. It was hard and cold. It was made of pure gold.

The door opened and the guard came out.

"Who are you?" said the guard. "What do you want?"

"I'm a poor man," said the prince. "I'm tired and hungry. I need a bed for the night, and something to eat. Who lives here, in this beautiful house? Will they let me come in?"

"Ah, my poor friend," said the guard. "You must be very careful. The owner of this house, my mistress, is a sorceress. She is very beautiful but she is cruel. Many men fall in love with her. They want to marry her. She gives them a test. She sends them away to hide, then she looks for them. 'If I cannot find you, I will marry you,' she says, 'but if I find you, you must die.'"

"And does she find the men?" asked the prince.

"Always," said the guard. "Many men have died. Look, here are their bones."

The prince looked inside the gate, and saw the bones of the dead men.

"Tell me more about your mistress," he said to the guard. "Is she really very beautiful?"

"Very, very beautiful," said the guard. "She is the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Then I will take the test," said the prince. "I will hide, and if she finds me, I will die. But if she does not, I will marry her and be happy."

The guard was sorry for him.

"Don't do it, sir," he said. "I told you. My mistress always wins."

But the prince did not listen to him.

"Take me to her," he said.

## Exercises

### A. How much did you understand?

*Read these sentences from the story. Who is speaking?*

1. "The hunters are chasing me!"
2. "Come here," he said, "and put your head down."
3. "That's our antelope!"
4. "They want to catch me and kill me."
5. "We're hunting a mouse."
6. "It ran into a hole in the ground."
7. "You saved my life! I am very grateful."
8. "Who lives here, in this beautiful house?"
9. "Many men have died. Look, here are their bones."
10. "I will hide, and if she finds me, I will die."

### B. Where, what, when, who

*Answer these questions*

1. When the antelope put his head down, what did the prince hold?
2. Where did the hunters go when they ran away from the prince?
3. What did the prince throw over the mouse?
4. When did the prince see a beautiful, big house?
5. What was the house made of?
6. Who lived in the beautiful house?
7. What did the prince see inside the gate?

### C. What do you think?

What do you think will happen next?

Do you think that the whale, the antelope and the mouse will help the prince?

How will they help him?

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

**[Click here to read Part Three]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[[Click here to return to the exercises](#)]

[[Click here to return to the story](#)]

### A. How much did you understand?

1. "The hunters are chasing me!"

*The antelope*

2. "Come here," he said, "and put your head down."

*The prince*

3. "That's our antelope!"

*The hunters*

4. "They want to catch me and kill me."

*The mouse*

5. "We're hunting a mouse."

*The boys*

6. "It ran into a hole in the ground."

*The prince*

7. "You saved my life! I am very grateful."

*The mouse*

8. "Who lives here, in this beautiful house?"

*The prince*

9. "Many men have died. Look, here are their bones."

*The guard*

10. "I will hide, and if she finds me, I will die."

*The prince*

### B. Where, what, when, who

1. When the antelope put his head down, what did the prince hold?

*One of his horns*

2. Where did the hunters go when they ran away from the prince?

*Down the hill*

3. What did the prince throw over the mouse?

*His cloak*

4. When did the prince see a beautiful, big house?

*One evening*

5. What was the house made of?

*Gold/pure gold*

6. Who lived in the beautiful house?

*A sorceress*

7. What did the prince see inside the gate?

*The bones of dead men*

### Part Three



The sorceress sat in a golden room on a golden chair. She was the most beautiful woman in the world. At once, the prince fell in love with her.

"Marry me," he said.

The sorceress looked at him. He was handsome, and good, and wise. She liked him.

"I want to marry you," she said, "but first you must break my evil magic. Hide yourself. Come back after four days. If I cannot find you, I will marry you. But if I find you, you must die."

The prince agreed.

"You will not find me," he said.

The next morning, very early, the prince left the golden house and went down to the sea. He stood at the edge of the water and called to the King of the Seas. At once, the whale came.

"The sorceress wants to kill me," said the prince. "Hide me, or I will die."

The whale opened his great mouth, and the prince jumped into it. The whale swallowed him, and the prince went down into the whale's stomach.

For three days and nights, the sorceress hunted for the prince. She ran through the mountains. She searched the valleys. At last, on the fourth day, she picked up her magic telescope.

"I'll find him now," she thought. She looked and looked, and at last she saw him.

"There he is," she said. "He is hiding in the whale's stomach."

At the end of the day, the whale swam back to the edge of the sea. He opened his mouth, and the prince walked out of it, on to the land. Then he returned to the golden house.

"Here I am," he said to the sorceress. "You did not find me, and now you must marry me."

"But I did find you," said the sorceress. "I hunted for three days and three nights, in the mountains and the valleys. You were not there. Then I looked through my magic telescope, and I saw you, in the whale's stomach."

The prince was very sad.

"So I will die," he said.

"Not yet," said the sorceress. "You hid yourself well, and I will give you another chance. Go and hide again."

At once the prince ran back along the road.

"Antelope!" he called out. "Where are you? Come to me! I need you now."

The antelope heard him. He ran quickly to the prince.

"Please hide me," the prince said to him, "or the sorceress will kill me."

The antelope took the prince into the high mountains, and he hid him in a cave.

"She will never find me here," thought the prince.

For three days and nights, the sorceress hunted for the prince. She ran through the deserts. She searched the forests. At last, on the fourth day, she picked up her magic telescope.

"There he is," she said. "In the antelope's cave."

At the end of the day, the prince came out of the cave and returned to the golden house.

"Here I am," he said to the sorceress. "Where was I? Did you find me? If not, you must marry me."

"Yes, I did find you," said the sorceress. "I hunted for three days and three nights, in the deserts and the forests. You were not there. Then I looked through my magic telescope and I saw you, in the antelope's cave."

The prince was very sad.

"You must kill me now," he said.

The sorceress looked at the prince. He was very handsome.

"I will not kill you yet," she said. "Your hiding place was a good one. You nearly won. I will give you one more chance. Go and hide again."

The prince hurried away from the golden house.

"Mouse!" he called out. "Where are you? Come and help me!"

The mouse heard him. She ran quickly to the prince.

"You must hide me," said the prince, "or the sorceress will kill me."

So the mouse took the prince to a great hole in the ground. The prince followed her for a long way, down into the earth. At last, they came to the palace of the King of the Jinns.

"Hide here, under the king's throne," said the mouse.

So the prince hid under the throne of the King of the Jinns. He stayed there for three days and three nights.

The sorceress hunted for the prince through the whole world, in the seas, and the islands, the forests, the deserts, the mountains and the valleys. She looked through her magic telescope again and again but she couldn't find him anywhere.

At the end of the fourth day, the mouse came back to the prince. She took him out of the palace of the jinns. The prince followed her up through the earth and out into the world. Then he returned to the golden house.

The sorceress was waiting for him.

"I hunted everywhere for you," she said, "in the forests and deserts, the mountains, the valleys, the sea and the islands, and I could not find you. Now my evil magic is broken, and I will marry you."

So the prince married the sorceress. She never used her evil magic again, and they lived happily in the golden house for many, many years.

**[Click here to listen to the whole story]**

## **Exercises**

**A. How much did you understand?**

*Finish these sentences.*

1. The sorceress wanted to marry the prince, but first he had to break.....
2. The prince stood at the edge of the water and called to .....
3. The prince went down into the whale's .....
4. "You hid yourself well, and I will give you another ....."
5. The antelope took the prince into the .....
6. At last, on the fourth day, she picked up her .....
7. The mouse took the prince to .....
8. The prince hid under the throne of .....
9. The sorceress hunted for the prince through the whole .....
10. So the prince ..... the sorceress.

**B. When?**

*Answer these questions about time.*

1. The sorceress told the prince to come back after how many days?
2. When did the prince leave the golden house to go down to the sea?
3. How often did the sorceress use her magic telescope?
4. When did the whale swim back to the edge of the sea?
5. When the antelope hid the prince, for how many days did the sorceress look for him?
6. When did the prince come out of the antelope's cave?
7. For how long did the prince hide under the throne of the King of the Jinns?
8. When did the mouse come back to the prince?
9. For how long did the prince and the sorceress live together in the golden house?

**C. Read more**

If you liked this story, click on these links to read other stories like it.

***The Head and the Tea Seller from Somalia***

***The Monks' Blessing from Tigray***

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[Click here to return to the exercises]

[Click here to return to the story]

### A. How much did you understand?

1. The sorceress wanted to marry the prince, but first he had to break **her evil magic**.
2. The prince stood at the edge of the water and called to **the King of the Seas**.
3. The prince went down into the whale's **stomach**.
4. "You hid yourself well, and I will give you another **chance**."
5. The antelope took the prince into the **high mountains**.
6. At last, on the fourth day, she picked up her **magic telescope**.
7. The mouse took the prince to **a great hole in the ground**.
8. The prince hid under the throne of **the King of the Jinns**.
9. The sorceress hunted for the prince through the whole **world**.
10. So the prince **married** the sorceress.

### B. When?

1. The sorceress told the prince to come back after how many days?  
*Four days*
2. When did the prince leave the golden house to go down to the sea?  
*The next morning, very early*
3. How often did the sorceress use her magic telescope?  
*Three times*
4. When did the whale swim back to the edge of the sea?  
*At the end of the day/after four days*
5. When the antelope hid the prince, for how many days did the sorceress look for him?  
*For four days*
6. When did the prince come out of the antelope's cave?  
*At the end of the day/on the fourth day*
7. For how long did the prince hide under the throne of the King of the Jinns?  
*For four days*
8. When did the mouse come back to the prince?  
*At the end of the fourth day*
9. For how long did the prince and the sorceress live together in the golden house?  
*For many, many years*

## Irit and Nurit



### Before you read the story

This is a long and beautiful story in four parts. Answer the questions at the end of each part before you read the next one. Think about these questions before you begin.

- There is a lot of magic in this story. Do you believe in magic?
- What kind of magic do you believe in?
- Why do you believe in magic?

*Chat* is a stimulating leaf that people chew.

A *mesob* is a brightly coloured basket that people use like a table.

*Injera* is a kind of flat bread made from tef, which is a species of grain grown in Ethiopia.

### Now read Part One

#### Part One

In the city of Harar, long ago, a little girl lived with her father and mother. Her name was Irit.

One day, Irit's mother died. At first, Irit's father was sad, but soon he married again. After a year, another little girl was born to the man and his new wife. They called her Nurit.

Irit and Nurit grew up together. Irit was a good girl. She was clever and kind. Nurit was not good. She was foolish and selfish. But the girls' mother only loved Nurit. She did not love Irit at all.

One day, the girls' mother said to them, "Go to the field, girls, pick some chat, then take it to the market and sell it."

So Irit and Nurit went to the field to pick some chat. They wrapped the chat in big leaves and made bundles. Then they took the bundles to the market to sell.

On the way to the market, they met an old man. He saw the bundles of chat, and he stopped and spoke to the girls.

"Please, girls," he said. "I'm very tired. Give me some of your chat. If you do, I will bless you."

Irit smiled at the old man. She took some chat from her bundle, and gave it to him.

"Take it, Grandfather," she said. "I hope it will help you."

"Thank you," said the old man. "May God bless you, my child."

He turned to Nurit.

"Now, my daughter, give me some of your chat," he said.

Nurit laughed at him.

"There is no chat in my bundle," she said. "There are only cabbages. I don't want to give them to you. I'm going to sell them in the market and get some money."

The old man was angry.

"I do not believe you," he said. "You will not sell your chat. No one will buy from a girl like you."

The market was full of people. They were buying and selling everything. But no one wanted to buy the girls' chat. They tried and tried to sell it, but they could not.

"That old man cursed me!" Nurit said angrily. "No one will buy our chat because of him. I hate that old man!"

"Don't say that, sister. He was a good old man," Irit said quietly.

When the two girls went home, their mother was waiting for them.

"What's this?" she said. "You still have your bundles of chat? What happened? Why didn't you sell them?"

"An old man cursed us," said Nurit. "It was Irit's fault. She was rude to him. 'I don't have any chat. I only have cabbages,' she said."

Their mother was very angry.

"You are a bad, stupid girl," she said to Irit. "I don't want you in my house any more. Go away, and don't come back."

She tied a rope around Irit, and sent her out, into the street.

## Exercises

### A. How much did you understand?

*Answer these questions.*

1. There were two girls in the family in the story. Which girl did the mother love best?
2. Why did Irit and Nurit go out to the field?
3. Who did Irit and Nurit meet on the way to the market?
4. When Irit gave the old man some chat, what did he do?
5. What did Nurit say that she had in her bundle?
6. Did the two girls sell their chat in the market?
7. Why was Nurit angry with the old man?
8. What did the girls' mother do to Irit?

### B. Truth and lies

*Read these sentences that the characters in the story say. Who is speaking? Are they telling the truth, or are they telling lies?*

1. "Give me some of your chat. If you do, I will bless you."
2. "There is no chat in my bundle," she said. "There are only cabbages."
3. "You will not sell your chat."
4. "He was a good old man."
5. "It was Irit's fault."

### C. What do you think?

Why does the girls' mother love Nurit more than Irit?

Do you know anyone like Nurit?

What will happen next?

**[[Click here for the answers to the exercises](#)]**

**[[Click here to read Part Two](#)]**

**[Click here to return to the exercises]**

**[Click here to return to the story]**

### **A. How much did you understand?**

1. There were two girls in the family in the story. Which girl did the mother love best?

*She loved Nurit best.*

2. Why did Irit and Nurit go out to the field?

*To pick some chat.*

3. Who did Irit and Nurit meet on the way to the market?

*An old man*

4. When Irit gave the old man some chat, what did he do?

*He blessed her.*

5. What did Nurit say that she had in her bundle?

*Cabbages*

6. Did the two girls sell their chat in the market?

*No*

7. Why was Nurit angry with the old man?

*Because he cursed her.*

8. What did the girls' mother do to Irit?

*She tied a rope around Irit, and sent her out, into the street.*

### **B. Truth and lies**

1. "Give me some of your chat. If you do, I will bless you."

*The old man is speaking. He is telling the truth.*

2. "There is no chat in my bundle," she said. "There are only cabbages."

*Nurit is speaking. She is telling a lie.*

3. "You will not sell your chat."

*The old man is speaking. He is telling the truth.*

4. "He was a good old man."

*Irit is speaking. She is telling the truth.*

5. "It was Irit's fault."

*Nurit is speaking. She is telling a lie.*

## Part Two



Poor Irit was alone now, away from her family's house. She was very sad.

"What can I do?" she thought. "Where can I go?"

She began to cry.

Suddenly, she heard a voice.

"What's wrong?" someone was saying. "Can I help you?"

She looked up. An old man with a kind face was standing in front of her.

"My mother has sent me away," said Irit, "because I didn't sell my chat in the market. She doesn't love me. She tied me up with this rope. She sent me out of the house. I can never go home again."

"My poor child," said the old man. "Come to my house. I will look after you."

Irit looked at the old man.

"He is good, I can see that," she thought.

The old man untied the rope, and Irit went to his house with him. She helped him. She cooked his food, and cleaned his house. She gave him his food in a beautiful mesob. She was happy now.

One night, the old man said to Irit, "Tonight, my daughter, watch the house. Black water will come into it. When you see it, do nothing. Do not wake me. But after the black water, golden water will come. When the golden water comes, then you must wake me."

The old man went to sleep, but Irit sat and watched the house. Soon, black water began to run across the floor. Irit waited and did nothing. Then the black water went, and golden water ran across the floor.

Irit went and woke the old man.

"Grandfather, wake up," she said. "The golden water is here."

The old man picked Irit up and threw her into the golden water. Then he went outside and looked up into the sky.

"Wind! Wind!" he called out. "Pick up this girl and take her to her father's house!"

At once, a strong wind began to blow. It picked up Irit, and carried her to her father's house. It put her down on the roof.

Irit's mouth was full of the golden water. She spat it out, and it fell down into the courtyard of the house. It was not water now, but metal. It was pure, yellow gold.

Nurit came out of the house, and began to sweep the courtyard. Soon, she found the gold. She was very surprised.

"Mother!" she called out. "There is gold here, in the courtyard!"

Her mother came and looked.

"You are right," she said. "That's wonderful! Pick it up, my darling, and put it in a jar. We will keep it carefully."

She went inside, and Irit spat again. More gold fell into the courtyard. Nurit looked up, and saw her.

"Mother!" she shouted. "Irit is on the roof of the house!"

Her mother was angry. She did not come outside again.

"Don't talk to me about that girl," she said. "How can she be on the roof? She went away and she never came back. I'm sure the hyenas have eaten her."

Nurit was still looking up at her sister.

"Where did this gold come from, Irit?" she asked.

"I spat it out of my mouth," said Irit.

"I don't believe you," Nurit said.

Irit spat more gold out of her mouth.

"Oh!" said Nurit. "It's true! How did you do it? How did you change your spit into gold? Come down here, my darling sister. I will get you some nice things for you to eat. Come and tell me everything. Perhaps I can learn to spit gold too. Oh, I am so happy to see you again!"

Irit was angry.

"Nurit isn't happy to see me," she thought. "She doesn't love me. She only wants gold."

She wanted to punish Nurit.

"I met an old man," she said, "and I went to his house. I cooked his food, and put it on the floor for him."

"What?" said Nurit. "Didn't you give him his food in a mesob?"

"He likes to eat it from the floor," said Irit.

"What happened next?" said Nurit. "Go on, my dear Irit. Tell me more."

"At night, black water came into the house," said Irit. "When it came, I woke him at once. He threw me into the water. After that, I began to spit gold. Now, Nurit, you promised to give me some nice food. Where is it?"

Nurit laughed.

"If you want food, go to my mother and ask her," she said. "I'm not going to give you anything. I'm going to the old man's house. Soon I will spit gold from my mouth too."

## Exercises

### A. How much did you understand?

*Answer these questions.*

1. When Irit's mother sent her away, who did she meet?
2. Irit helped the old man. How did she help him?
3. During the night, two things came into the old man's house. What were they?
4. When did Irit wake the old man?
5. What did the old man say to the wind?
6. What did Irit spit out of her mouth?

7. Why did Nurit say that she was happy to see Irit?
8. What did Irit tell Nurit to do with the old man's food?
9. Did Nurit keep her promise to give Irit some nice food?

### **B. Where?**

*Answer these questions. Read the part again if you can't remember the answers.*

1. Where did Irit put the old man's food?
2. Where did Irit see the black and golden water?
3. Where did the wind put Irit?
4. Where did Nurit find the gold?
5. Where did Nurit's mother tell her to put the gold?
6. At the end of this part, where did Nurit decide to go?

### **C. What were they feeling?**

*Choose the right word from the list below to fill in the gaps in these sentences. You will have to use one word twice.*

1. When Irit left her family's house, she was feeling very .....
2. When Irit stayed in the old man's house, she was .....
3. When Nurit found the gold in the courtyard, she was very .....
4. Nurit's mother was ..... when Nurit talked about Irit.
5. Irit was ..... when Nurit called her "my darling sister".

*surprised, angry, happy, sad*

### **D. What do you think?**

What does this part tell us about the girls' characters?  
What do you think will happen next?

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

**[Click here to read Part Three]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[Click here to return to the exercises]

[Click here to return to the story]

### A. How much did you understand?

1. When Irit's mother sent her away, who did she meet?

*She met an old man.*

2. Irit helped the old man. How did she help him?

*She cooked his food, and cleaned his house. She gave him his food in a beautiful mesob.*

3. During the night, two things came into the old man's house. What were they?

*Black water, and golden water.*

4. When did Irit wake the old man?

*When the golden water came into the house.*

5. What did the old man say to the wind?

*"Wind! Wind! Pick up this girl, and take her to her father's house!"*

6. What did Irit spit out of her mouth?

*Gold.*

7. Why did Nurit say that she was happy to see Irit?

*She wanted gold.*

8. What did Irit tell Nurit to do with the old man's food?

*She told her to put it on the floor.*

9. Did Nurit keep her promise to give Irit some nice food?

*No.*

### B. Where?

1. Where did Irit put the old man's food?

*In a beautiful mesob.*

2. Where did Irit see the black and golden water?

*On the floor.*

3. Where did the wind put Irit?

*On the roof of her father's house.*

4. Where did Nurit find the gold?

*In the courtyard.*

5. Where did Nurit's mother tell her to put the gold?

*In a jar.*

6. At the end of this part, where did Nurit decide to go?

*To the old man's house.*

### C. What were they feeling?

1. When Irit left her family's house, she was feeling very **sad**.

2. When Irit stayed in the old man's house, she was **happy**.

3. When Nurit found the gold in the courtyard, she was very **surprised**.

4. Nurit's mother was **angry** when Nurit talked about Irit.

5. Irit was **angry** when Nurit called her "my darling sister".

### Part Three

Nurit hurried to the old man's house.

"I am Irit's sister," she said to him. "I have come to help you."

"Good," said the old man. "You can cook my food."

Nurit did not like to work. She cooked the old man's food badly. She only wanted gold.

"Here," she said to him. "It's ready. You can eat it now."

She put the food down on the floor. The old man was angry, but he did not say anything.

When it was night time, the old man went to sleep, but Nurit sat and waited.

"That stupid Irit is rich," she thought. "And I will be rich too."

Soon, black water began to come into the house. Nurit went to the old man and woke him.

"Wake up, old man," she said. "There is water in the house."

The old man woke up.

"You foolish, lazy girl," he said.

He picked Nurit up and threw her into the water. Then he went outside and looked up at the sky.

"Wind! Wind!" he called out. "Pick this girl up and take her to her father's house."

At once a strong wind began to blow. It picked Nurit up and carried her to her mother's kitchen. It blew her into a corner, under the injera pan.

In the morning, Nurit's mother came into her kitchen. She began to light her fire.

Suddenly, she saw Nurit's foot under the injera pan.

"There's a cat in my kitchen," she said. "Pss! Cat! Go away!"

Nurit began to cry.

"Mother, it's not a cat. It's your daughter, Nurit," she said.

Her mother pulled her out from under the injera pan.

"Nurit! What has happened to you?" she said. "You are ugly! You are not a pretty girl now. You are ugly all over!"

"Irit did this to me," Nurit said. "She used magic on me, and made me ugly."

"Your sister is a wicked, wicked girl," her mother said. "Don't worry, my darling. I will punish her."

Nurit was sad now. She hid in her mother's house.

"No one will marry me," she thought. "I am ugly now."

### Exercises

#### A. How much did you understand?

*Read these sentences from Part Three. Who is speaking?*

1. "I have come to help you."
2. "You can cook my food."
3. "It's ready. You can eat it now."
4. "There is water in the house."
5. "You foolish, lazy girl."
6. "Pick this girl up and take her to her father's house."
7. "There's a cat in my kitchen."
8. "What has happened to you?"
9. "She used magic on me, and made me ugly."
10. "Don't worry, my darling. I will punish her."

**B. What do *you* think?**

Was Irit right to punish Nurit?

What do you think will happen next?

**[[Click here for the answers to the exercises](#)]**

## Answers to the Exercises

[[Click here to return to the exercises](#)]

[[Click here to return to the story](#)]

### A. How much did you understand?

1. "I have come to help you."

*Nurit*

2. "You can cook my food."

*The old man*

3. "It's ready. You can eat it now."

*Nurit*

4. "There is water in the house."

*Nurit*

5. "You foolish, lazy girl."

*The old man*

6. "Pick this girl up and take her to her father's house."

*The old man*

7. "There's a cat in my kitchen."

*Nurit's mother*

8. "What has happened to you?"

*Nurit's mother*

9. "She used magic on me, and made me ugly."

*Nurit*

10. "Don't worry, my darling. I will punish her."

*Nurit*

## Part Four

Nurit was uglier than before, but Irit was more beautiful. Men wanted to marry her. Her father chose a good young man, and arranged the marriage.

His wife was angry.

"This young man is too good for Irit," she thought.

She took Irit's hand and pulled her to the river. A big python lived near the river.

"Python! Come and take this wicked girl," Nurit's mother called out.

The python was a wise old snake.

"I know this woman," he thought, "and I know her daughter. The woman is cruel and wicked, but the girl is good. If I do not help her, the woman will kill her."

"Don't be afraid, my daughter," he whispered to Irit, and he opened his mouth and swallowed her.

The next day, the bridegroom and his friend came to Irit's house to take her.

"Irit is not here," her mother told them. "She is a bad girl. She ran away."

The bridegroom was sad. He and his friend began to go away, but then they saw the python by the door.

"Do not be sad, my young friend," the python said to the bridegroom. "I can give you a wife. She is a very beautiful girl, and wise and clever, too. Do you want her?"

"Yes!" said the bridegroom. "Let me see this beautiful girl, and I will marry her."

So the python spat Irit out of his mouth. The bridegroom was very happy when he saw her. He married Irit, and they lived happily together.

But he and the best man took Nurit and cut out her tongue. They put her in the kitchen, to grind the hot peppers.

"You were cruel to your sister," they said to her. "You told lies about her. Learn your lesson. If you do bad things to people, bad things will happen to you."

**[Click here to listen to the whole story]**

## Exercises

### A. How much did you understand?

*Match the beginnings of these sentences with the endings from the list below.*

1. Nurit was uglier than before,
2. Her father chose a good young man
3. She took Irit's hand
4. If I do not help her,
5. He and his friend began to go away,
6. She is a very beautiful girl,
7. Let me see this beautiful girl,
8. He married Irit,
9. But he and the best man took Nurit
10. If you do bad things to people,

- a) and they lived happily together.
- b) the woman will kill her.
- c) bad things will happen to you.
- d) and cut out her tongue.
- e) and wise and clever, too.
- d) and arranged the marriage.

- g) but then they saw the python by the door.
- h) and pulled her to the river.
- i) but Irit was more beautiful.
- j) and I will marry her.

### **B. Where, what, who?**

1. Who pulled Irit to the river?
2. Where did the big python live?
3. What did the python do to Irit?
4. What did the bridegroom and his best man do to Nurit?
5. What did Nurit have to grind in the kitchen?

### **C. What do *you* think?**

Did you like this story?

Which character did you like best?

Did you like the ending?

Did you think that Nurit was punished too much, or not enough?

Can you think of a better title for the story?

### **D. More things to do**

This story can make a wonderful play. Act it with your friends.

**[Click here for the answers to the exercises]**

[Click here to return to the exercises]

[Click here to return to the story]

### A. How much did you understand?

- 1/i. Nurit was uglier than before, **but Irit was more beautiful.**
- 2/d. Her father chose a good young man **and arranged the marriage.**
- 3/h. She took Irit's hand **and pulled her to the river.**
- 4/b. If I do not help her, **the woman will kill her.**
- 5/g. He and his friend began to go away, **but then they saw the python by the door.**
- 6/e. She is a very beautiful girl, **and wise and clever.**
- 7/j. Let me see this beautiful girl, **and I will marry her.**
- 8/a. He married Irit, **and they lived happily together.**
- 9/d. But he and the best man took Nurit **and cut out her tongue.**
- 10/c. If you do bad things to people, **bad things will happen to you.**

### B. Where, what, who?

- 1. Who pulled Irit to the river?  
*Her mother.*
- 2. Where did the big python live?  
*Near the river.*
- 3. What did the python do to Irit?  
*He swallowed her.*
- 4. What did the bridegroom and his best man do to Nurit?  
*They cut out her tongue.*
- 5. What did Nurit have to grind in the kitchen?  
*Hot peppers.*