

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 Tigray



[Small version of map with region highlighted]

Tigray is in the northern highlands of Ethiopia, and the climate is cool and pleasant. In the old days, most Tigrayans lived on their farms, grew crops and kept cows and sheep. There are many ancient and beautiful churches and monasteries in Tigray,

carved out of rock, and decorated with colourful paintings.

The Stories

1. The Bird and the Elephant
2. The Farmer and the Leopard
3. Weyna and Gella
4. Zeyta Hasebe
5. The Clever Woman
6. The Crane, the Fox and the Vulture
7. The Monkey's Birthday
8. The Monks' Blessing

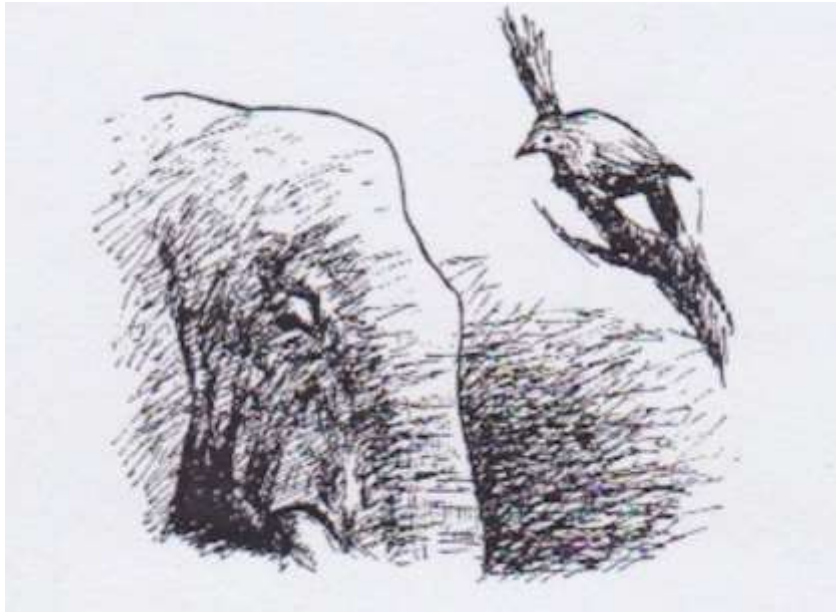
With grateful acknowledgement to Mesele Zeleke and Tsehaynesh Gebre Yohannes of the Tigray Cultural Bureau who collected these stories from schoolchildren in Tigray, and translated them into English.

© Stories retold by Elizabeth Laird

© Exercises written by Elizabeth Laird and Jacek Opienski

© Illustrations by Yosef Kebede and Eric Robson

The Bird and the Elephant



Before you read the story

- Some people think they are very important. What do they say and do?
- Do you know someone who is selfish?
- What do they say and do?

Now read the story

Once upon a time, there was an elephant. He was very big and very proud. He was selfish, too. He did not think about the small animals in the forest.

"I'm the most important animal of all," he said. "I don't care about you."

The frogs in the river were frightened of the elephant.

"Here he comes," they said to their children. "Run away! The elephant will tread on you and kill you."

The birds in the trees were frightened too.

"The elephant's coming," they said to each other. "He'll knock down the trees. We must fly away!"

One little bird did not hear the others. She was looking for a good place to build her nest.

A river ran through the forest and a big tree grew beside it.

"I will build my nest there," thought the bird.

She worked hard and soon her nest was ready. She laid six beautiful eggs in it. She sat on the eggs all day and all night. She was keeping them warm.

One day, the bird heard a noise.

Tap tap! Tap tap!

She looked at her eggs. There was a hole in one of them. She looked at the others. All the eggs had holes in them. The chicks were coming out.

The bird was very happy. She had six little chicks now. She was very proud of them.



But the chicks were hungry. They opened their beaks and cried out for food. "Wait, my little ones," their mother said to them. "I will go and find some food for you."

She flew away and began to look for food.

It was a hot day, and in another part of the forest the elephant was thirsty.

"I'll run down to the river," he thought, "and drink some water."

The elephant began to run. He did not look at the path in front of him. A family of wart-hogs screamed and ran away. He did not look at the trees. Birds cried out and flew away.

The elephant came to the tree near the river. He was happy. He wanted to drink the water and wash himself.

"Ah! Water!" he roared, and waved his trunk.

The end of his trunk hit the bird's nest. The nest fell out of the tree on to the ground. The baby birds cried out, but the elephant did not listen. He did not care. He lifted his big foot and trod on them. The baby birds all died.

The elephant ran into the river and began to drink. The frogs were frightened.

"You're treading on us! Be careful!" they shouted.

But the elephant did not listen to the frogs.

Soon, the mother bird came back. She had caught some insects. She flew up to the tree to give them to her babies, but the babies were not there. The nest had gone.

The mother bird looked down. There, on the ground, was her beautiful little nest. And in it were the bodies of her poor dead babies.

The mother bird began to cry.

"That wicked elephant did this!" she said. "He killed my babies! I can see his footprints on the ground."

The elephant was still drinking water and bathing in the river. The mother

bird flew down to him.

"You cruel elephant!" she said. "You've killed my beautiful chicks!"

The elephant lifted his head from the water.

"Go away," he said. "I'm busy."

"But my babies!" cried the mother bird. "All my beautiful babies! They're dead!"

The elephant laughed.

"Baby birds!" he said. "I don't care about baby birds. Now go away. I told you, I'm busy."

The little bird was very angry.

"You are cruel and selfish," she cried, "and I will punish you."

The elephant laughed louder.

"You, a little bird, will punish me, an elephant?" he said. "Don't be stupid. Now be quiet, or I will start to be angry."

The mother bird flew away into the forest.

"Friends!" she called out. "Come to me! I need your help."

The other birds heard her. They flew to her. Soon, a big crowd of birds was listening to her story.

"That cruel, wicked elephant," they all said. "Yes, we want to punish him. But how can we do it? He is so big and we are so small."

"We are small," the mother bird agreed, "but we can fly. Let's wait until tomorrow morning. The elephant will go to the river again. We'll fly round his head and peck out his eyes."

The next morning, the birds were waiting in the tree. They heard the elephant. He was running to the river. They began to fly round his head and peck his eyes.

"Stop!" cried the elephant. "You're hurting my eyes."

"You didn't stop," said the mother bird. "My babies called out to you, but you didn't listen. You killed them all."

The birds went on pecking at the elephant's eyes. He was blind now. He couldn't see any more.

The mother bird flew down to the water.

"Friends!" she called out. "Come to me! I need your help!"

The frogs heard her. They came out of the water and listened to her story.

"We want to punish the elephant too," they said. "He treads on us and our babies. We call to him, and he doesn't care. But he is so big, and we are so small. What can we do?"

"Jump out of the water and follow me," said the mother bird.

So the frogs jumped out of the river and followed the mother bird. She took them to the edge of a big cliff.

"Sing," she said. "Sing now. Sing loudly!"

The frogs began to sing. They sang loudly.

The elephant heard their song.

"I can hear the frogs," he thought. "Frogs are always near water. I'll go to them. I must have water to cool my eyes."

He ran towards the frogs, and fell over the cliff. The birds and the frogs were happy.

"Our enemy was selfish and cruel," they all said, "He was big and we are only small. But we worked together and we won."

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

The elephant in the story is selfish. He does not think about the small animals in the forest. The small animals are afraid of him.

Put sentences 1, 2 and 3 in the right order.

1. "The elephant's coming," they said to each other. "He'll knock down the trees. We must fly away!"
2. "Here he comes," they said to their children. "Run away! The elephant will tread on you and kill you."
3. "I'm the most important animal of all," he said. "I don't care about you."

In the forest a little bird was looking for a place to build her nest.

Put sentences 4, 5 and 6 in the right order.

4. There was a hole in one of them. She looked at the others. All the eggs had holes in them. The chicks were coming out.
5. But the chicks were hungry. They opened their beaks and cried out for food.
6. She worked hard and soon her nest was ready. She laid six beautiful eggs in it.

In another part of the forest the elephant wanted to drink some water and wash himself. He waved his trunk.

Put sentences 7, 8 and 9 in the right order.

7. The elephant laughed. "Baby birds!" he said. "I don't care about baby birds."
8. The end of his trunk hit the bird's nest. The nest fell out of the tree on to the ground.
9. He lifted his big foot and trod on them. The baby birds all died.

The mother bird told the other birds in the forest what had happened. They decided what to do.

Put sentences 10, 11 and 12 in the right order.

10. They began to fly round his head and peck his eyes.
11. "Yes, we want to punish him. But how can we do it? He is so big and we are so small."
12. So the frogs jumped out of the river and followed the mother bird. She took them to the edge of a big cliff.

B. Sang? Sing? Song?

The frogs began to sing in order to lead the blind elephant over the cliff.

Fill in the blanks in these sentences with either 'sing', 'sang' or 'song'

1. The mother bird took the frogs to the edge of a big cliff. ".....," she said.
2. The frogs began to sing. They loudly.
3. The elephant heard their "I can hear the frogs," he thought.

C. The elephant and the mother bird.

Two of these sentences are about the elephant and two are about the mother bird. Which are which?

1. was very proud of them.
2. was very big and very proud.
3. did not care. lifted his big foot and trod on them.
4. took them to the edge of a big cliff.

D. Now you tell a part of the story

There are two important characters in the story - the elephant and the mother bird.
You can choose either the elephant or the mother bird.

You can start the story like this:

Either: - I am the elephant. It is a hot day, and I am thirsty. I want to run down to the river, and drink some water. So I

Or: - I am the mother bird. I am looking for a place to build my nest. I find a good place in a big tree growing beside a river. When the nest is ready, I

E. What do you think?

- Do you think that the elephant was the most important animal in the forest?
- Do you think that the mother bird was a good mother?
- Do you think that the elephant was selfish?
- Do you think that the birds were right to punish the elephant?
- Do you think that the elephant deserved to die?

[[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 the sentences is 3, 2, 1.

"I'm the most important animal of all," he said. "I don't care about you."

"Here he comes," they said to their children. "Run away! The elephant will tread on you and kill you."

"The elephant's coming," they said to each other. "He'll knock down the trees. We must fly away!"

The right order of the sentences is 6, 4, 5.

She worked hard and soon her nest was ready. She laid six beautiful eggs in it.

There was a hole in one of them. She looked at the others. All the eggs had holes in them. The chicks were coming out.

But the chicks were hungry. They opened their beaks and cried out for food.

The right order of the sentences is 8, 9, 7.

The end of his trunk hit the bird's nest. The nest fell out of the tree on to the ground.

He lifted his big foot and trod on them. The baby birds all died.

The elephant laughed. "Baby birds!" he said. "I don't care about baby birds."

The right order of the sentences is 11, 10, 12.

"Yes, we want to punish him. But how can we do it? He is so big and we are so small."

They began to fly round his head and peck his eyes.

So the frogs jumped out of the river and followed the mother bird. She took them to the edge of a big cliff.

B. Sang? Sing? Song?

1. The mother bird took the frogs to the edge of a big cliff. "**Sing**," she said.

2. The frogs began to sing. They **sang** loudly.

3. The elephant heard their **song**. "I can hear the frogs," he thought.

C. The elephant and the mother bird.

Sentences 1 and 4 are about the mother bird.

Sentences 2 and 3 are about the elephant.

The Farmer and the Leopard



Before you read the story

- Do you like to help people who are in trouble?
- When you do something special for someone, do you want them to thank you?
- What do you feel when they do not thank you?

Now read the story

One day, two hunters saw a leopard. They began to chase him. The leopard ran away from them, but the hunters were young and strong. They could run very fast.

"The hunters will catch and kill me!" thought the leopard. "What can I do?"

Then, far away, he heard some music. A farmer was ploughing his field and singing this song:

"I plough my field
And I sow my grain
And I watch the clouds
That bring me rain."

The leopard ran up to the farmer.

"Oh, please, please help me!" he said. "The hunters are chasing me. They want to catch me and kill me."

The farmer was sorry for the leopard.

"You can hide in my grain store," he said.

So the leopard jumped into the farmer's grain store. He sat very quietly and listened.

Soon the hunters came up to the farmer.

"Did a leopard come this way?" they asked him.

"Yes," said the farmer, "but he ran away. He went up there, into the mountains."

And he pointed to the mountains far away.

The hunters went away, and the leopard came out of the grain store. He opened his mouth and showed the farmer his long, sharp teeth.

"Bring me a sheep," he said. "I want to eat."

The farmer was surprised.

"No," he said. "I'm not a rich man. I can't give you a sheep."

"Then I will eat you," said the leopard.

The farmer was angry.

"I saved your life," he said. "Why don't you thank me? Why do you want to kill me?"

"I'm hungry," said the leopard. "I must eat."

"Stop! Wait!" said the farmer. "Leopard, please don't kill me. I know you are hungry, and you want to eat, but I'm a happy man, and I want to live. Perhaps you are right, and your wishes are more important than mine. But perhaps I'm right. How can we know? Let's go and find a judge. We will ask the judge to decide."

"All right," the leopard said. "We'll ask your ox."

The farmer's ox was pulling the plough.

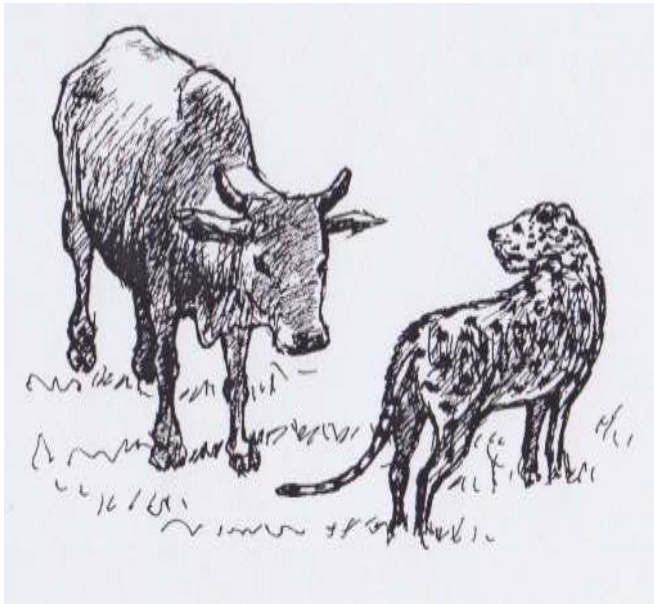
The leopard said to him, "Ox, I'm hungry, and I must eat soon or I will die. I want to eat the farmer. What do you think? Am I right, or am I wrong?"

The ox looked at his master.

"I work hard for this man," he thought. "I pull his plough and break up the hard earth for him. But he never thanks me."

Then the ox looked at the leopard.

"This leopard is hungry," he thought. "If he eats the farmer, he will go away. If he doesn't, perhaps he will eat me."



"The leopard is right," he said at last. "Let him eat the farmer."

"Oh no, no!" cried the farmer. "Please, leopard, one judge is not enough. Let's find another."

"All right," the leopard said. "We'll ask your donkey."

The farmer's donkey was standing at the edge of the field. The farmer and the leopard went up to him.

"My old donkey," the farmer said. "I saved this leopard from the hunters. Now he wants to eat me. Is that right, or wrong?"

The donkey looked at the farmer.

"I don't want to save my master," he thought. "He puts heavy loads on my back. He hits me with his big stick. I work for him, and he never thanks me."

Then he looked at the leopard. The leopard's mouth was open. The donkey could see the leopard's big teeth, and his red tongue.

"I don't want the leopard to be angry with me," thought the donkey.

"The leopard is right," the donkey said at last. "He's hungry. He can eat the farmer."

"Oh, no! No!" the farmer cried. "Please, leopard, let's ask one more person. Look, the fox is over there, on the other side of the field. We'll go and ask him."

So the leopard and the farmer went to ask the fox.

"Fox," said the farmer, "please listen to us. Two hunters were chasing the leopard, but I hid him in my grain store. I saved his life. Now he wants to eat me. But I want to live. Is he right, or am I right? Please help us to decide."

The fox thought for a moment, then he looked at the man.

"I don't understand," he said at last. "You are only a man. The leopard is bigger and heavier than you. How did you put that big animal into your grain store?"

"He jumped inside himself," said the farmer.

"I don't believe you," the fox said. "The grain store is small, and the leopard is big. He couldn't get inside it."

"But I did!" the leopard said. "Look, I'll show you."

And the leopard jumped into the farmer's grain store again.

"Quick!" the fox said to the farmer. "The leopard is yours now. Kill him!"

So the farmer killed the leopard at once.

"My friend," the farmer said to the fox. "You saved me. How can I thank you?"

"Do you really want to thank me?" the fox said. "Then you can give me a sheep."

"Wait here," said the farmer, and he went away.

"The fox is greedy," he thought. "If I give him a sheep today, he will come back tomorrow and ask me for another one."

He called his dogs.

"Drive the fox away," he told them.

So the dogs ran after the fox, and drove him away.

The fox shook his head.

"The man is as bad as the leopard," he said to himself. "He is cruel and ungrateful, too."

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

Two hunters were chasing a leopard. The leopard heard a farmer singing as he

ploughed his field and he asked the farmer for help.

Put sentences 1, 2 and 3 in the right order.

1. "Did a leopard come this way?"
2. "You can hide in my grain store."
3. "The hunters are chasing me. They want to catch me and kill me."

Who said sentence 1?

Who said sentence 2?

Who said sentence 3?

The farmer told the hunters that the leopard had run away into the mountains. It was safe now for the leopard to come out of hiding. The leopard wanted to eat the farmer.

Put sentences 4, 5, and 6 in the right order.

4. "I know you are hungry, and you want to eat, but I'm a happy man, and I want to live."
5. "Bring me a sheep," he said. "I want to eat."
6. "I saved your life," he said. "Why don't you thank me? Why do you want to kill me?"

Who said sentence 4?

Who said sentence 5?

Who said sentence 6?

The farmer asked three animals to help him decide if the leopard's wishes were more important than the farmer's. The three animals each gave their answer.

Put sentences 7, 8 and 9 in the right order.

7. "He puts heavy loads on my back. He hits me with his big stick. I work for him, and he never thanks me."
8. "I don't understand," he said at last. "You are only a man. The leopard is bigger and heavier than you."
9. "I work hard for this man," he thought. "I pull his plough and break up the hard earth for him. But he never thanks me."

Who said sentence 7?

Who said sentence 8?

Who said sentence 9?

The fox tricked the leopard and made him jump into the grain store. So the farmer killed the leopard at once.

Put sentences 10, 11 and 12 in the right order.

10. "The man is as bad as the leopard," he said to himself. "He is cruel and ungrateful, too."
11. "Then you can give me a sheep."
12. "You saved me. How can I thank you?"

Who said sentence 10?

Who said sentence 11?

Who said sentence 12?

B. What were they feeling?

1. The leopard ran up to the farmer. "Oh, please, please help me!" he said. "The hunters are chasing me."

What was the farmer feeling?

2. The leopard said, "Bring me a sheep. I want to eat."

What was the farmer feeling now?

3. "Then I will eat you," said the leopard.

What was the farmer feeling now?

4. "I must eat soon or I will die. I want to eat the farmer."

What was the leopard feeling as he talked to the ox?

C. The Ox and the Donkey

The ox and the donkey did not want to save the farmer's life. They gave their reasons. Which sentences show the ox's reasons and which sentences show the donkey's reasons?

1. "I don't want the leopard to be angry with me."

2. "If he eats the farmer, he will go away. If he doesn't, perhaps he will eat me."

3. "I pull his plough and break up the hard earth for him. But he never thanks me."

4. "I work for him, and he never thanks me."

5. "I work hard for this man," he thought.

6. "He hits me with his big stick."

D. What do you think?

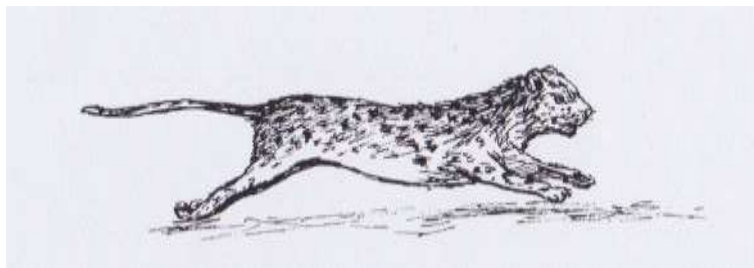
Do you think it was right for the farmer to protect the leopard?

Do you think that the wishes of the leopard were more important than the farmer's?

Do you think that the ox and the donkey were good judges?

Do you think that the farmer was cruel and ungrateful?

[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 the sentences is 3, 2, 1.

"The hunters are chasing me. They want to catch me and kill me."

The leopard was speaking.

"You can hide in my grain store."

The farmer was speaking.

"Did a leopard come this way?"

The two hunters were speaking.

The right order of the sentences is 5, 6, 4.

"Bring me a sheep," he said. "I want to eat."

The leopard was speaking.

"I saved your life," he said. "Why don't you thank me? Why do you want to kill me?"

The farmer was speaking.

"I know you are hungry, and you want to eat, but I'm a happy man, and I want to live."

The farmer was speaking.

The right order of the sentences is 9, 7, 8.

"I work hard for this man," he thought. I pull his plough and break up the hard earth for him. But he never thanks me."

The ox was speaking.

"He puts heavy loads on my back. He hits me with his big stick. I work for him, and he never thanks me."

The donkey was speaking.

"I don't understand," he said at last. "You are only a man. The leopard is bigger and heavier than you."

The fox was speaking.

The right order of the sentences is 12, 11, 10.

"You saved me. How can I thank you?"

The farmer was speaking.

"Then you can give me a sheep."

The fox was speaking.

"The man is as bad as the leopard," he said to himself. "He is cruel and ungrateful, too."

The fox was speaking.

B. What were they feeling?

1. The leopard ran up to the farmer. "Oh, please, please help me!" he said. "The hunters are chasing me."

What was the farmer feeling?

The farmer was feeling sorry for the leopard.

2. The leopard said, "Bring me a sheep. I want to eat."

What was the farmer feeling now?

The farmer was feeling surprised.

3. "Then I will eat you," said the leopard.

What was the farmer feeling now?

The farmer was feeling angry.

4. "I must eat soon or I will die. I want to eat the farmer."

What was the leopard feeling as he talked to the ox?

The leopard was feeling hungry.

C. The Ox and the Donkey

Sentences 2, 4 and 5 show the ox's reasons.

Sentences 1, 3 and 6 show the donkey's reasons.

1. "I don't want the leopard to be angry with me."

The donkey

2. "If he eats the farmer, he will go away. If he doesn't, perhaps he will eat me."

The ox

3. "I pull his plough and break up the hard earth for him. But he never thanks me."

The ox

4. "I work for him, and he never thanks me."

The donkey

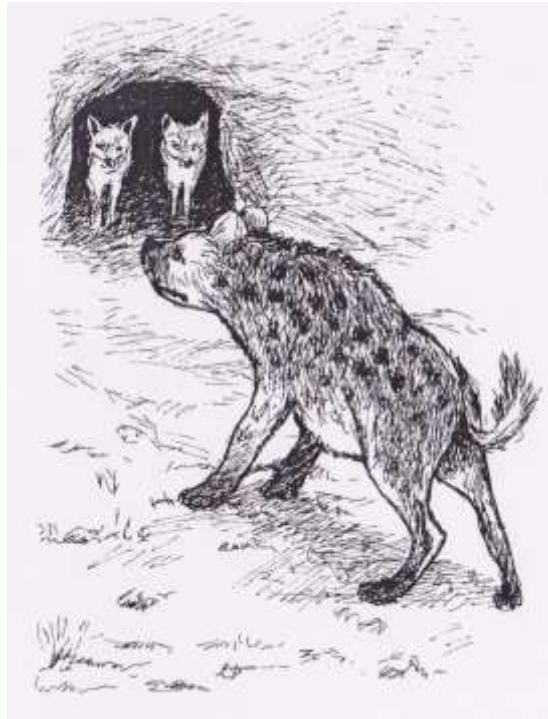
5. "I work hard for this man," he thought.

The ox.

6. "He hits me with his big stick."

The donkey

Weyna and Gella



Before you read the story

- What things are dangerous for children?
- How do parents protect their children from danger?

Now read the story

Once upon a time, there was a mother fox. She had two little cubs, and their names were Weyna and Gella.

Every day, Mother Fox went out to the fields to look for food.

"Stay in the house, children," she said to her cubs. "Don't open the door.

Listen for my voice. When I come home, I will sing to you,

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

So every day the cubs stayed inside the house and their mother hunted for food.

And every day, when Mother Fox came home, she called out,

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

For a long time, the foxes lived happily. But one day a hyena passed the fox's house, and he heard the cubs' voices.

"Aha!" said the hyena. "Fat little fox cubs are very good to eat."

The hyena hid in the bushes and waited. Soon, Mother Fox came home. She went to the door of her house and called out,

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

The fox cubs opened the door and their mother went inside.

"Oho!" thought the hyena. "This is going to be easy."

The next day, Mother Fox went out to hunt again. The hyena was waiting. He ran up to the door of the foxes' house and knocked on it.

"Who's there?" said the cubs. "Our mother isn't here. Go away."

The hyena said,

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

"You're not our mother," the fox cubs said. "Your voice is hard and cruel. Our mother's voice is soft and sweet. Go away."

The hyena ran to his house and found a pot of honey. He ate some honey and his voice became sweet. Then he went back to the foxes' house and called out,

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

"That is our mother's voice," said the fox cubs. "It's soft and sweet. We will open the door for you, Mother dear."

So the cubs opened the door, and the hyena ran into the house and ate both of them.

In the evening, Mother Fox came home. The door of her house was open. She ran inside.

"Weyna and Gella!" she called. "Where are you?"

No one answered.

"Weyna!" she shouted. "Gella! Come to me!"

But the cubs were not there.

Mother Fox looked everywhere in her house. Then, in the dust by the door she saw the marks of the hyena's feet.

"The hyena was here!" she cried. "He has taken my cubs!"

Mother Fox was very, very angry.

"I'll kill the hyena," she said.



The next day, she made a big hole in the ground and she put a goatskin over it. She put a pot on the fire and began to boil some water. Then she went to the hyena's house.

"Hyena," she said. "I've killed a sheep today. Come and eat it with me."

The hyena was always hungry.

"Yes," he said. "I'll come," and he followed Mother Fox to her house.

"Sit there, on the goatskin," said Mother Fox.

So the hyena sat on the goatskin and he fell down into the hole. At once, Mother Fox took the boiling water from the fire and threw it over the hyena.

"My poor cubs," she said. "Your cruel enemy is dead at last."

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

In the story there was a mother fox. She had two little cubs, and their names were Weyna and Gella. Mother Fox told her cubs to stay inside when she went out to look for food.

Put the sentences 1, 2 and 3 in the right order.

1. But one day a hyena passed the fox's house, and he heard the cubs' voices.
2. So every day the cubs stayed inside the house.
3. "Don't open the door. Listen for my voice."

The hyena watched the Mother Fox singing her song to her cubs. So he made a plan.

Put the sentences 4, 5, and 6 in the right order.

4. "That is our mother's voice," said the fox cubs. "It's soft and sweet."
5. The hyena was waiting. He ran up to the door of the foxes' house and knocked on it.
6. He ate some honey and his voice became sweet.

*Mother Fox realised that the hyena had eaten her cubs. So she made a plan.
Put the sentences 7, 8, and 9 in the right order.*

7. The next day, she made a big hole in the ground and she put a goatskin over it.
8. So the hyena sat on the goatskin and he fell down into the hole.
9. Then, in the dust by the door she saw the marks of the hyena's feet.

B. Who sings?

You have read this song five times in the story:

"Weyna and Gella,
My children dear,
Open the door,
Your mother is here."

1. Who sings it the first time?
2. Who calls it out the second time?
3. Who calls it out the third time?
4. Who says it the fourth time?
5. Who calls it out the fifth time?

C. Endings

Match the beginnings of sentences 1, 2 and 3 with the endings a, b, or c.

1. So every day the cubs stayed inside the house
 2. He ran up to the door of the foxes' house
 3. So the cubs opened the door, and the hyena ran into the house
- a) and knocked on it.
b) and ate both of them.
c) and their mother hunted for food.

D. What do you think?

Was it right for Mother Fox to leave the fox cubs alone in the house?
Did Mother Fox make it too easy for the hyena to learn their secret song?
Why do you think the hyena agreed to come and eat with Mother Fox?
Was it right for Mother Fox to kill the hyena?

[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, 2, 1.

"Don't open the door. Listen for my voice."

So every day the cubs stayed inside the house.

But one day a hyena passed the fox's house, and he heard the cubs' voices.

The right order of these sentences is 5, 6, 4

The hyena was waiting. He ran up to the door of the foxes' house and knocked on it.

He ate some honey and his voice became sweet.

"That is our mother's voice," said the fox cubs. "It's soft and sweet."

The right order of these sentences is 9, 7, 8.

In the dust by the door she saw the marks of the hyena's feet.

The next day, she made a big hole in the ground and she put a goatskin over it.

So the hyena sat on the goatskin and he fell down into the hole.

B. Who sings?

1. Who sings it the first time?

Mother Fox

2. Who calls it out the second time?

Mother Fox

3. Who calls it out the third time?

Mother Fox

4. Who says it the fourth time?

The hyena

5. Who calls it out the fifth time?

The hyena

C. Endings

The right endings are 1/c, 2/a and 3/b.

1/c. So every day the cubs stayed inside the house and their mother hunted for food.

2/a. He ran up to the door of the foxes' house and knocked on it.

3/b. So the cubs opened the door, and the hyena ran into the house and ate both of them.

Zeyta Hasebe



Before you read the story

- Do you know someone who tells the future?
- If you met a fortune teller, what would you ask them?
- Would you like to know if you will get married and have children?
- Do you believe in fortune telling?

Now read the story

A long time ago, there was a king. He lived in a palace and he had many servants. But the king had no sons. His only child was a daughter.

A little boy lived near the palace. His mother and father were dead. He liked the palace's fine stone walls and its big courtyard. He came to play there every day.

The king looked out of his window and saw the child. The little boy was big and strong. He could run fast and jump high. He was handsome, too. The other children liked the boy. He was their leader and they all obeyed him.

"Who is this child?" the king thought. "What is he doing here in my palace? Does he think he is a prince?"

Every day, the king watched the boy. Slowly he became afraid.

"This child is too strong. The other children like him too much," he thought. So the king went to visit a wizard. He told him everything.

"Who is this boy?" the king asked the wizard. "What will happen to him?"

The wizard did not speak. He was afraid of the king's anger.

"Tell me!" cried the king. "Or I will call my soldiers."

"My Lord," the wizard said at last. "This boy will be a great king one day. He will kill you and take your throne."



The king went back to his palace. His eyes were dark with anger. He could not eat and he could not sleep. At last he sent for his servants.

"Catch the boy," he said to them. "Put him in a box and throw the box into the sea."

The servants were frightened of the king and they obeyed him.

That night there was a terrible storm. The wind blew, and big waves ran across the sea. The waves carried the box far, far away, and threw it on a beach.

The next morning, an old man was walking along the beach. He saw the box and ran up to it. Inside, someone was crying.

Quickly, the old man opened the box. He jumped back, very surprised.

"A child!" he said. "A little boy!"

He looked at the boy, and at once he loved him.

"Where are your father and mother?" he said.

"I don't know," answered the boy, and he began to cry.

"Don't be afraid," the old man said. "I will be your father now."

He took the child home to his wife. She was very happy.

"After all these years," she said, "God has given us a son. We will call him Zeyta Hasebe, because we did not expect him."

Twelve years passed. For a long time there was peace in the land, and the king stayed in his palace. But then, one day, a war began. The king began to travel to the most distant parts of the country.

One day he came to the house of the old man and his wife. The old man welcomed the king.

"Hurry," he said to Zeyta Hasebe. "Bring some water and wash our guest's feet."

Zeyta Hasebe ran to find water. He washed the king's feet. The king smiled at Zeyta Hasebe. He liked him.

"Here is a fine, strong young man," he thought. "He works hard for his father, and he shows respect for his father's guest."

"Your son is a good boy," he said to the old man.



"This boy is not my son, my Lord," the old man said. "He came to us from the sea."

"What?" said the king. "What do you mean?"

"One day, twelve years ago," the old man went on, "I was walking on a beach. It was the morning after a great storm. I found a box. I opened it, and inside it was a little boy. I took him home with me. My wife was very happy because God has not given us any children. This boy became our son. We called him Zeyta Hasebe."

The king frowned. He looked at Zeyta Hasebe angrily. He did not like him now.

"He is my enemy," he thought. "He will kill me and take my throne."

The king thought quickly. He tried to smile again.

"Listen," he said to the old man. "I like your son. He's a fine boy. I must go back soon to my palace. Send him to me, and I will look after him. He will be a rich man, a powerful man. A great future is waiting for him."

He called to one of his servants.

"Give me some paper and a pen," he said.

The servant brought some paper and a pen, and the king wrote a letter.

"To my guards," he wrote. "Catch this boy and kill him. And bury his body in front of my palace."

"Can you read this?" he asked the boy. The boy looked at the paper and shook his head.

"I don't know this language," he said. "I can't read it."

"Good," said the king. "Don't lose this paper. Give it to the soldiers at the gate of my palace. They will bring you to me."

"Thank you, my Lord," said Zeyta Hasebe.

"Come soon," the king said, and then he went away.

The old man and his wife were sad. They did not want to lose Zeyta Hasebe. They loved him. But Zeyta Hasebe was happy and excited.

"When can I go to the palace and see the king, Father?" he said every morning. "Can I go today?"

"Not yet, my son, not yet," the old man answered.

At last, the old man and his wife agreed. They called Zeyta Hasebe to them.

"Our dear son," they said. "We can't keep you here any longer. You can go to the king's palace. But don't forget us. Come home again soon."

Then they blessed Zeyta Hasebe and said goodbye.

Zeyta Hasebe began his journey. The road was long. It went through deep valleys and high mountains. On the highest mountain of all, he saw the wizard's eagle in the sky. The eagle flew down to Zeyta Hasebe. It began to peck at his clothes. The king's letter fell out of the boy's pocket. The eagle picked it up in its beak and flew away with it.

"No! No!" Zeyta Hasebe called out. "Bring back my letter! It's from the king!"

But the eagle had already gone.

Zeyta Hasebe sat down on a rock. He was unhappy.

"The king will never see me now," he thought. "His servants will keep me away from him."

Then he saw something white on the ground. He picked it up. It was another letter. Zeyta Hasebe looked at it, but he couldn't read it. He didn't understand the language.

"Did the eagle drop this?" he thought. "Perhaps the king's servants will understand it. Perhaps it will help me to see the king."

He put the new letter in his pocket and went on down the road.

At last, Zeyta Hasebe came to the king's palace. It was a fine, stone building.

"But where are the soldiers?" he thought. "Where are the king's guards and all his servants?"

After a long time, a servant came out of the palace. He saw the boy standing by the gate.



"Who are you?" he called out, "and what do you want?"

"The king invited me to come here," Zeyta Hasebe answered.

"The king isn't here," the man said. "Go away."

"But he gave me a letter," said Zeyta Hasebe. "Look, here it is."

"Show it to me," the man said.

So Zeyta Hasebe showed him the letter. The man opened it and began to read.

"This man is Zeyta Hasebe," the letter said. "He is a prince. I have chosen him to be my daughter's husband. Arrange the marriage quickly. Do not wait for my return."

The servant bowed to Zeyta Hasebe at once.

"My master," he said. "I am happy to see you. The princess is here. I will obey the king and arrange the wedding. You will be married tomorrow."

The next day, Zeyta Hasebe married the king's daughter. The cooks made a great feast. The musicians played wonderful music. Zeyta Hasebe saw his bride and she was very beautiful. He loved her at once.

In the evening, the king came home. He rode up to the palace on his white mule.

"What's happening here?" he said. "Why are all these people here? What is the music for, and why is everyone dancing?"

"My Lord," the servant said, "Prince Zeyta Hasebe arrived yesterday. He showed me your letter. I obeyed all your instructions and today he married your daughter."

When he heard this, the king was very, very angry.

"What?" he shouted. "This boy, my enemy, has married my daughter?"

His mule was frightened by the noise, and it reared up. The king fell off. His sword ran into his side and he died.

And so Zeyta Hasebe became the king of the whole country. He sent a servant to bring the old man and the old woman to the palace.

Zeyta Hasebe became a great king. He was just and honest. His people loved him, and he became the father of many fine princes.

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

*In this story a king had no sons. His only child was a daughter.
Put the sentences 1, 2 and 3 in the right order.*

1. The king looked out of his window and saw the child.
2. "This child is too strong. The other children like him too much," he thought.
3. "Who is this child?" the king thought. "What is he doing here in my palace?"

The king was afraid and asked the wizard about the boy. The wizard told the king that the boy would kill the king and take his throne.

Put the sentences 4, 5 and 6 in the right order.

4. The next morning an old man was walking along the beach. He saw the box and ran up to it.
5. The waves carried the box far, far away, and threw it on a beach.
6. "Catch the boy," he said to them. "Put him in a box and throw the box into the sea."

*The old man heard someone crying inside the box.
Put the sentences 7, 8 and 9 in the right order.*

7. "Don't be afraid," the old man said. "I will be your father now."
8. "God has given us a son. We will call him Zeyta Hasebe, because we did not

expect him."

9. Quickly, the old man opened the box. He jumped back, very surprised.

After twelve years the king began to travel. One day he came to the house of the old man. The king realized that the strong young man was the boy he had thrown in a box into the sea.

Put the sentences 10, 11 and 12 in the right order.

10. The king frowned. He looked at Zeyta Hasebe angrily. He did not like him now.

11. "To my guards," he wrote. "Catch this boy and kill him. And bury his body in front of my palace."

12. "He will kill me and take my throne."

B. Who is speaking?

In each sentence, say who is speaking or *writing*.

1. "To my guards," he wrote. "Catch this boy and kill him."

2. "I don't know this language," he said. "I can't read it."

3. "When can I go to the palace and see the king, Father?" he said every morning.

4. "Our dear son," they said. "We can't keep you here any longer."

5. "Who are you?" he called out, "and what do you want?"

6. "What's happening here?" he said. "Why are all these people here?"

C. What were they feeling?

Fill in the missing word that tells us what they were feeling. You may think of another "feeling" word which means the same thing.

1. Every day, the king watched the boy. Slowly he became

2. The servants were of the king and they obeyed him.

3. Quickly, the old man opened the box. He jumped back, very

4. He took the child home to his wife. She was very

5. "Bring back my letter! It's from the king!" But the eagle had already gone. Zeyta Hasebe sat down on a rock. He was

6. "I obeyed all your instructions and today he married your daughter." When he heard this, the king was very, very

D. The King and Zeyta Hasebe

Here are six sentences. Which three sentences are about the king, and which three sentences are about the boy, Zeyta Hasebe?

1. He could run fast and jump high.

2. His eyes were dark with anger.

3. "He is my enemy," he thought.

4. "I don't know this language," he said. "I can't read it."

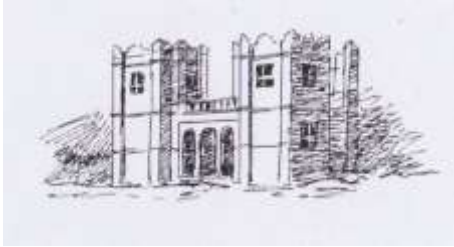
5. He rode up to the palace on his white mule.

6. He was just and honest.

E. What do you think?

Why do you think the king was afraid of the boy playing in his courtyard?

Do you think it was right for the king to throw the boy into the sea?
Do you think that the old man was happy that the boy would live in the king's
palace?
Do you think that the king deserved to die?



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

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 the sentences is 1, 3, 2.

The king looked out of his window and saw the child.

"Who is this child?" the king thought. "What is he doing here in my palace?"

"This child is too strong. The other children like him too much," he thought.

The right order of these sentences is 6, 5, 4.

"Catch the boy," he said to them. "Put him in a box and throw the box into the sea."

The waves carried the box far, far away, and threw it on a beach.

The next morning an old man was walking along the beach. He saw the box and ran up to it.

The right order of the sentences is 9, 7, 8.

Quickly, the old man opened the box. He jumped back, very surprised.

"Don't be afraid," the old man said. "I will be your father now."

"God has given us a son. We will call him Zeyta Hasebe, because we did not expect him."

The right order of the sentences is 10, 12, 11.

The king frowned. He looked at Zeyta Hasebe angrily. He did not like him now.

"He will kill me and take my throne."

"To my guards," he wrote. "Catch this boy and kill him. And bury his body in front of my palace."

B. Who is speaking?

1. "To my guards," he wrote. "Catch this boy and kill him."

The king

2. "I don't know this language," he said. "I can't read it."

The boy, Zeyta Hasebe

3. "When can I go to the palace and see the king, Father?" he said every morning.

The boy, Zeyta Hasebe

4. "Our dear son," they said. "We can't keep you here any longer."

The old man and his wife

5. "Who are you?" he called out, "and what do you want?"

A servant

"What's happening here?" he said. "Why are all these people here?"

The king

C. What were they feeling?

1. Every day, the king watched the boy. Slowly he became **afraid**.

2. The servants were **frightened** of the king and they obeyed him.

3. Quickly, the old man opened the box. He jumped back, very **surprised**.

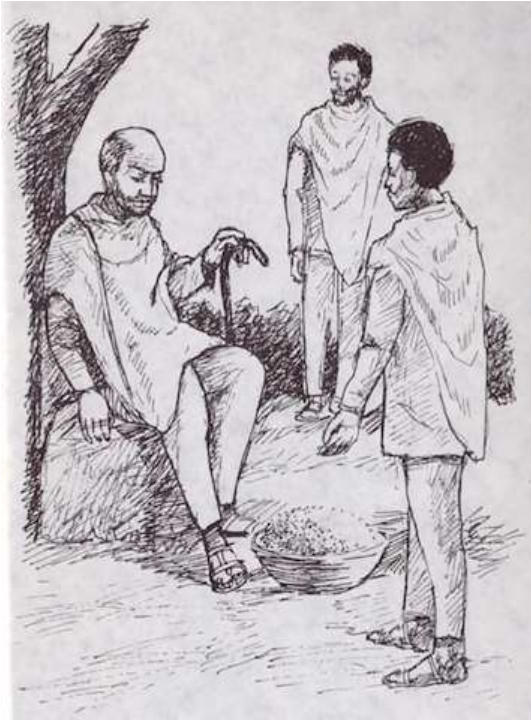
4. He took the child home to his wife. She was very **happy**.
5. "Bring back my letter! It's from the king!" But the eagle had already gone. Zeyta Hasebe sat down on a rock. He was **unhappy**.
6. "I obeyed your instructions and today he married your daughter."
When he heard this, the king was very, very **angry**.

D. The King and Zeyta Hasebe

Sentences 2, 3 and 5 describe the king.

Sentences 1, 4 and 6 describe Zeyta Hasebe.

The Clever Woman



Before you read the story

How would you answer these questions:

- How many stars are there in the sky?
- Where is the navel of the earth?

Tef is a cereal that grows in Ethiopia

Now read the story

There was once an ignorant man with a very clever wife. The man loved his wife, and she loved him, and they lived happily together.

A clever man lived near this happy couple, but this man's wife was an ignorant woman. He did not love her and they were not happy together. The clever man saw his neighbour's clever wife and he was jealous.

"How did that ignorant man marry such a clever woman?" he thought. "It's not right. She deserves a better husband, a clever man. She deserves me."

He thought about his neighbour's wife for a long time, and then he went to visit him.

"Listen, neighbour," he said. "I know that your wife is a very clever woman. But I will be honest with you. You are not clever at all. In fact, you are very ignorant."

The ignorant man said nothing.

"But you know me," the clever man said, "I'm very clever. I'm well

educated. You know my wife too. She's not clever at all. In fact, she's ignorant, like you. Let's exchange our wives. I will have your wife, and you can have mine. We will all be happier."

His neighbour frowned.

"What?" he said. "You want to take my wife? You think that I'm ignorant? But I'm not ignorant at all! I'm as clever as you are."

The other man laughed.

"Do you really think so?" he said. "We'll soon find out. Let's go to the judge. He can decide for us."

The ignorant man was unhappy now.

"Oh, my dear wife," he thought. "I don't want to lose her. What kind of questions will the judge ask me? Will I be able to answer them?"

The two men found the judge. The clever man explained everything to him.

The judge listened carefully.

"You say this man is ignorant?" he said, and he pointed to the ignorant man.

"Yes, yes," the clever man said. "Ask him questions. You will see. He doesn't know anything."

The judge thought for a moment.

Then he said to the ignorant man, "Tell me, sir, how many stars are there in the sky?"

The ignorant man's mouth fell open. He shook his head. He didn't know the answer.

"Here's another question," said the judge. "Where is the navel of the earth?"

The ignorant man shook his head again. He felt very unhappy.

"My poor wife! I've lost you!" he thought.

"My questions are difficult," the judge said. "Think about them. Come back tomorrow and give me your answers then."

The poor man hurried back to his wife's house. The sun had set already and it was dark. He stood outside his house and looked up at the sky. He was trying to count the stars.

His wife came out of the house and found him there.

"What are you doing, my dear husband?" she said. "Come and eat your supper. It's all ready for you."

"I can't come in," her husband said. "I must count the stars. If I can't do it, I will lose you."

"What!" his wife cried. "Why? What has happened?"

Her husband told her everything. He told her about his clever neighbour, and the judge, and the judge's questions. When he had finished, the woman laughed.

"Don't worry, dear husband," she said. "I will give you the answers to the judge's questions. Now come inside and rest."

The next day, the clever man came to the ignorant man's house. He stood outside and called to him.

"Well, neighbour," he said. "Are you ready to see the judge?"

The ignorant man called back to him, "Oh yes! I am quite ready."

His wife gave him a basket of tef and a spear. Then he went outside, and the two men hurried off to see the judge.

"Now," the judge said to the ignorant man. "Let's hear the answer to my first question. How many stars are there in the sky?"

The ignorant man poured out the grains of tef on to the ground.

"The number of stars in the sky," he said, "is the same as the number of grains in this basket of tef. Don't you believe me? Then you must count them

yourself."

The judge smiled.

"That's a good answer," he said. "Now here's the second question. Where is the navel of the earth?"

The ignorant man picked up the spear and stuck it into the ground in front of the judge's feet.

"The navel of the earth is here," he said. "Don't you believe me? Then dig into the ground and you will find out."

The judge laughed.

"This man is not ignorant at all," he said. "He's very clever."

The clever man was angry.

"He's not clever! He's stupid!" he said. "He didn't find the answers to these questions. Someone helped him."

"Is this true?" said the judge. "Did someone give you the answers to my questions?"

"Oh yes," said the ignorant man happily. "My dear wife told me..."

He stopped.

"Oh, I've been stupid. I've made a mistake," he thought.

The clever man laughed.

"Aha!" he said. "You see, judge? He's stupid, isn't he? So let's exchange our wives. I'll take his, and he can have mine."

The judge nodded.

"You're right," he said. "This man is not clever at all. His clever wife needs a clever husband. Go home now, both of you. Get ready to exchange your wives."

The ignorant man was very unhappy. He went home with tears in his eyes.

"My poor husband," his wife said. "What has happened? Why are you sad?"

"I'm sad because I'm stupid and ignorant," the poor man said, "and because I've lost my dear wife."

And he told his wife everything.

His wife tried to comfort him.

"Don't worry, husband," she said. "You haven't lost me yet. Go and see our clever neighbour. Tell him you have agreed. You will exchange your wives tomorrow. Then invite him and the judge to a meal here, at our house."

"I don't understand," her husband said. "That won't help us at all."

"Yes, it will," his wife answered. "You will see."

So the ignorant man invited his clever neighbour and the judge to come to his house, and the next day they came.

"Wife!" he called out. "Our guests are here. Bring them some food!"

His wife brought out a beautiful basket and a pot made of gold.

"Ah," said the clever man. "This looks good."

"Yes," said the judge. "I'm sure this clever woman cooks delicious food."

The woman opened the basket and offered bread to the judge. But the bread was black and burnt.

"What's this?" the judge said.

"It's my bread," the woman answered. "Don't you like it? My bread is always like this."

Then she brought out some chicken stew.

"Please, have some stew," she said to the clever man.

"But this is terrible," the clever man said. "This chicken still has its feathers."

"You don't like my chicken stew?" said the woman. "But I always make it

like this. I never take off the feathers."



The judge tried to eat a little bread and stew, but soon he stopped. The bread was horrible and the chicken stew was horrible too. He couldn't eat it.

"Now," he said. "Let's finish our business. It's time to exchange these women."

But the clever man stood up.

"I think, perhaps..." he began.

"What?" the judge said. "Don't you want this clever woman?"

"Clever?" the clever man said. "She's not very clever at all. Let her stay with her ignorant husband. My wife is ignorant, but her bread is never burnt and her chicken stew is always delicious."

The judge and the clever man went away. The ignorant man and his clever wife laughed and laughed.

"Now," the clever wife said, "it's dinner time. Come, my dear husband, your food is ready."

She threw away the burnt bread and the horrible chicken stew. And she brought out the lovely dinner that she had cooked for him.

"Oh my dear wife, you are so clever," her husband said. "You deserve a better man than me."

"But you are the best man in the world," his wife said. "And I will always love you."

And they lived happily together from that day on.

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

This is a long story, with six "scenes" or parts.

The sentences below describe each scene. Put the scenes in the right order.

1. The ignorant man gave his wife's clever answers to the judge, but then he made a mistake. "My dear wife told me," he said. The judge told the ignorant man to go home and get ready to give his wife to the clever man.
2. The clever man had an ignorant wife, and the ignorant man had a clever wife. The clever man wanted to exchange wives with the ignorant man.
3. The ignorant man went home unhappily, and tried to count the stars in the sky. His wife gave him clever answers to tell the judge.
4. The clever wife told her husband to invite the judge and the clever man to dinner. She gave their guests a horrible dinner. The clever man decided not to marry the clever woman.
5. The clever man and the ignorant man asked the judge to decide between them and the judge asked the ignorant man some questions. The ignorant man couldn't answer the judge's questions. The judge told him to come back the next day.

B. Questions and answers

Who asked these questions, and who answered them?

Fill in the gaps from the list below.

1. "You want to take my wife?" asked
2. "Tell me, sir, how many stars are there in the sky?" asked
3. "Where is the navel of the earth?" asked
4. "What are you doing?" asked
5. "Are you ready to see the judge?" asked
6. "Don't you believe me?" asked
7. "Did someone give you the answers to my questions?" asked
8. "He's stupid, isn't he?" asked
9. "What has happened? Why are you sad?" asked
10. "Don't you want this clever woman?" asked

the clever man, the ignorant man, the judge, the clever woman

C. What were they feeling?

Fill in the gaps from the list below.

1. When the clever man saw the ignorant man's wife, he was
2. When the ignorant man couldn't answer the judge's questions, he was very
3. When the ignorant man gave clever answers to the judge, the clever man was
4. When the clever man went away, the ignorant man and the clever woman were

happy, angry, jealous, unhappy

D. What do you think?

What do you think makes a happy marriage?

Can a clever person be happy with an ignorant person?

Is it better to be clever, or kind?
What kind of person do you want to marry?

E. Brain teasers

Clever questions like the ones in this story are called "brain teasers". Here are some others. Can you and your friends answer them? It's fun to try and think of the answers!

1. The day before yesterday, Marcos was seven years old. Next year, he will be ten years old. How is this possible?
2. Three big ladies are standing under an umbrella, but none of them get wet. Why not?
3. Which is heavier, a kilo of feathers, or a kilo of gold?
4. A girl and her father go out in the rain, but only the girl gets her hair wet. Why?

Do you know any other brain teasers?

[[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 for these scenes is 2, 5, 3, 1, 4.

The clever man had an ignorant wife, and the ignorant man had a clever wife. The clever man wanted to exchange wives with the ignorant man.

The clever man and the ignorant man asked the judge to decide between them and the judge asked the ignorant man some questions. The ignorant man couldn't answer the judge's questions. The judge told him to come back the next day.

The ignorant man went home unhappily, and tried to count the stars in the sky. His wife gave him clever answers to tell the judge.

The ignorant man gave his wife's clever answers to the judge, but then he made a mistake. "My dear wife told me," he said. The judge told the ignorant man to go home and get ready to give his wife to the clever man.

The clever wife told her husband to invite the judge and the clever man to dinner. She gave their guests a horrible dinner. The clever man decided not to marry the clever woman.

B. Questions and answers

1. "You want to take my wife?" the ignorant man asked the clever man.
2. "Tell me, sir, how many stars are there in the sky?" the judge asked the ignorant man.
3. "Where is the navel of the earth?" the judge asked the ignorant man.
4. "What are you doing?" the clever woman asked the ignorant man.
5. "Are you ready to see the judge?" the clever man asked the ignorant man.
6. "Don't you believe me?" the ignorant man asked the judge.
7. "Did someone give you the answers to my questions?" the judge asked the ignorant man.
8. "He's stupid, isn't he?" the clever man asked the judge.
9. "What has happened? Why are you sad?" the clever woman asked the ignorant man.
10. "Don't you want this clever woman?" the judge asked the clever man.

C. What were they feeling?

1. When the clever man saw the ignorant man's wife, he was jealous.
2. When the ignorant man couldn't answer the judge's questions, he was very unhappy.
3. When the ignorant man gave clever answers to the judge, the clever man was angry.
4. When the clever man went away, the ignorant man and the clever woman were happy.

D. Brain teasers

1. The day before yesterday, Marcos was seven years old. Next year, he will be ten years old. How is this possible?

Answer: Today is January 1st. Yesterday was December 31st and it was Marcos's eighth birthday. On December 30th, he was still seven. On December 31st this year he will have his ninth birthday, and next year he will be ten.

2. Three big ladies are standing under an umbrella, but none of them get wet. Why not?

Answer: It's not raining.

3. Which is heavier, a kilo of feathers, or a kilo of gold?

Answer: They both weigh the same, one kilo.

4. A girl and her father go out in the rain, but only the girl's hair is wet. Why?

Answer: The girl's father has no hair. He is bald.

The Crane, the Fox and the Vulture



Before you read the story

- Has anyone tried to hurt you, or taken something from you?
- Did you manage to stop them?
- How did you do it?

Now read the story

One day, a crane made a nest in a tree. She laid her eggs in it. Soon, her chicks came out.

A fox was walking under the tree and he heard the chicks.

"Hmm," he thought. "Baby cranes! I'll have them for my dinner."

He sat down under the tree and waited. Soon, the crane came back.

"Crane!" said the fox. "Give me one of your chicks. If you don't, I'll cut the tree down with my axe. Then I'll eat them all."

The crane was very sad.

"You cruel fox," she said. "Oh, my poor babies! I want to save them, so I must lose one."

And she threw one of her chicks to the fox.

The next day, the fox came back.

"Crane!" he shouted. "Give me another of your babies. If you don't, I'll cut the tree down with my axe."

The poor crane began to cry.

"Who will help me?" she said.

A vulture was flying high up in the sky. She heard the crane. She flew down

and landed in the tree.

"What's the matter, crane?" she said. "Why are you crying?"

"That cruel fox wants to eat my babies," cried the crane. "Yesterday he ate the first one. Now he wants another. If I don't give my baby to him, he will cut down the tree and eat them all."

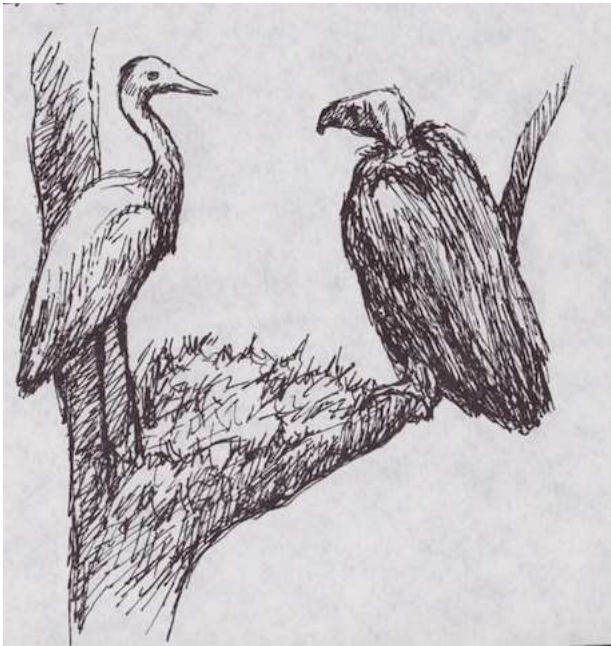
The vulture looked down at the fox.

"And how will he cut down the tree?" she asked.

"With an axe, of course," the crane answered.

"But he hasn't got an axe," said the vulture.

"What?" cried the crane. "He hasn't got an axe? Oh, the wicked fox! He tricked me!"



She looked down at the fox and called out to him, "Go away, fox. You can't cut down the tree. You haven't got an axe."

The fox was angry.

"Who told you that?" he said.

"No one told me," the crane said. "I can see you, and I can't see an axe."

"That crane is stupid," the fox thought. "She has been talking to someone up there in the tree. It was the vulture! I know it was! I'm going to catch that clever vulture, and then I'm going to punish her."

The fox ran off and found a big piece of meat. He put it on his head. Then he sat down beside the road and waited.

The vulture was flying high in the sky again. She saw the meat and flew down to eat it. The fox jumped up and caught her.

"I've caught you," he said, "and now I'm going to eat you."

"Oh! Oh!" cried the vulture. "Please, fox, beat me and eat me and cut off my tail, but don't, don't throw me into the grain store!"

"What?" said the fox. "You don't like the grain store? Then I'm going to put you in there!"

So he took the vulture to the grain store and he shut her in.

The vulture was happy. She ate and she ate. Soon she couldn't eat any more and she fell asleep.

The fox came back and he opened up the grain store. The vulture was still inside. She was still asleep. The fox caught her again.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the vulture. "Please, fox, you can kill me and cook me and cut off my head, but don't, don't throw me over the cliff!"

"Ah!" said the fox. "You are afraid of the cliff? Then I'm going to throw you over it!"

So the fox took the vulture up the mountain, and threw her over the cliff. At once, the vulture flew away.

When she was high up in the sky, she shouted down to the fox, "Fox, fox, I am cleverer than you! I tricked you, and now I'm free."

The fox was angry, but he thought, "I must be careful, or everyone will think that I'm a fool."

He shouted back to the vulture, "And why are you free? Because I was sorry for you. I freed you! I let you go!"

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

There are two parts to this story. In the first part, the fox tricks the crane, and the vulture comes to the rescue.

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

1. "If I don't give my babies to the fox," said the crane, "he will cut down the tree and eat them all."
2. The crane was frightened of the fox, and she threw one of her chicks to him.
3. A fox heard the crane's baby chicks, and he wanted to eat them.
4. A vulture heard the crane crying.
5. "The fox hasn't got an axe," the vulture said to the crane.

In the second part of the story, the vulture tricks the fox, and flies away safely.

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

1. The vulture said to the fox, "Don't throw me over the cliff!"
2. The vulture ate a lot of grain and fell asleep.
3. The fox caught the vulture and put her in the grain store.
4. The fox wanted to catch the vulture, and he put meat on his head and waited.
5. The fox threw the vulture over the cliff and she flew away.

B. Where?

Answer these questions.

1. Where was the crane's nest?
2. Where was the fox when he heard the chicks?
3. Where was the vulture when she heard the crane crying?
4. Where was the vulture when she looked down at the fox?
5. Where did the fox sit with the piece of meat on his head?
6. Where did the fox put the vulture the first time he caught her?

7. Where was the vulture when she fell asleep?
8. Where did the fox take the vulture the second time he caught her?
9. Where did the fox throw the vulture?
10. Where was the vulture when she called to the fox?

C. What do you think?

Who was the cleverest character in this story?

Who was the most frightened?

Can small and weak people ever win against strong and cruel ones?

Can you think of any examples?

D. Stories about tricks

There are other stories on this website about people who trick each other. If you liked this story, click on these links to read them.

[Hirsi and Kabaalaf](#)

[Achok Goes Fishing](#)

[Sinzero and his Brothers](#)



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 for these sentences is 3, 2, 4, 1, 5.

A fox heard the crane's baby chicks, and he wanted to eat them.

The crane was frightened of the fox, and she threw one of her chicks to him.

A vulture heard the crane crying.

"If I don't give my babies to the fox," said the crane, "he will cut down the tree and eat them all."

"The fox hasn't got an axe," the vulture said to the crane.

The right order for these sentences is 4, 3, 2, 1, 5.

The fox wanted to catch the vulture, and he put meat on his head and waited.

The fox caught the vulture and put her in the grain store.

The vulture ate a lot of grain and fell asleep.

The vulture said to the fox, "Don't throw me over the cliff!"

The fox threw the vulture over the cliff and she flew away.

B. Where?

1. Where was the crane's nest?

In a tree

2. Where was the fox when he heard the chicks?

Under the tree

3. Where was the vulture when she heard the crane crying?

High up in the sky

4. Where was the vulture when she looked down at the fox?

In the tree

5. Where did the fox sit with the piece of meat on his head?

Beside the road

6. Where did the fox put the vulture the first time he caught her?

In the grain store

7. Where was the vulture when she fell asleep?

In the grain store

8. Where did the fox take the vulture the second time he caught her?

Up the mountain

9. Where did the fox throw the vulture?

Over the cliff

10. Where was the vulture when she called to the fox?

High up in the sky

The Monkey's Birthday



Before you read the story

- Do you know the date of your birthday?
- How did your parents celebrate your birth?
- Do you celebrate on your birthday?
- When you celebrate your birthday, what do you do?

Injera is a kind of flat bread made from tef.

Now read the story

The hyena, the fox and the monkey lived together in one house. One day, they went hunting. They took four cows from a farmer in the village.

"There is one cow for me," the hyena said, "one for the fox and one for the monkey. But who will have the fourth?"

"The oldest one can have it," said the fox.

"But who is the oldest?" asked the monkey.

"We will find out," said the fox. He looked at the hyena. "When were you born?" he said.

"It wasn't last year," the hyena said. "Or the year before that. I was born many, many years ago."

"And when were you born?" the fox asked the monkey.

"Oh," said the monkey, "I was born on the very first day. It was the day when God made the earth and the sky."

"You are right," said the fox. "I remember it well. Everyone talked about the new baby, with grey hair. On the day of your baptism, there was a wonderful party. My mother took me to it. She carried a basket full of injera. We ate and drank all day and all night."

"Then you are the oldest," the hyena and the monkey said, and they gave the fourth cow to the fox.

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

Put these sentences in the right order.

1. "Oh," said the monkey. "I was born on the very first day."
2. The hyena, the fox and the monkey lived together in one house.
3. They gave the fourth cow to the fox.
4. "It wasn't last year," the hyena said. "Or the year before that."
5. "You are right," said the fox. "I remember it well."
6. "The oldest one can have it," said the fox.
7. They took four cows from a farmer in the village.

B. What do you think?

The clever fox tricks the hyena and the monkey. He is clever, but was he right to trick them?

Do clever people always win against other people?

How can people protect themselves against clever tricks?

C. Jokes

This little story is a kind of joke. It has a clever and funny ending.

Do you know any good jokes? Ask your friends to tell some jokes. Which of your jokes are the best?

[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 for the sentences is 2, 7, 6, 4, 1, 5, 3.

The hyena, the fox and the monkey lived together in one house.

They took four cows from a farmer in the village.

"The oldest one can have it," said the fox.

"It wasn't last year," the hyena said. "Or the year before that."

"Oh," said the monkey. "I was born on the very first day."

"You are right," said the fox. "I remember it well."

They gave the fourth cow to the fox.

The Monks' Blessing



Before you read the story

- Can you find work in the place where you live?
- Where can you go to find work? Will you have to leave your home and family?
- What kind of job do you want to have?

Now read the story

Part One

A young man lived with his father and mother.

"Son," the old man said to the young man one day. "You are our only child. You must marry and have children."

So the old man found a wife for his son. She was a fine young woman, and her young husband loved her. A year passed, and she gave birth to a little boy.

The family lived happily together, but they were very poor. The young man and his father worked hard in the fields. The young woman and her mother-in-law worked hard in the house, but they never had enough food to eat.

"Father," the young man said to his father one day. "This little farm is too small for our family. Let me go and find work in the town. I will earn some money and bring it home to you."

The father was sad.

"You are my only child," he said, "and we need you here at home. But you are right. The farm is too small for us all. Go to the town. Find work and earn some money. We will wait for you here at home."

So the young man kissed his son and said goodbye to his parents and his wife. He began the long journey to the town.

He travelled for two days and at last he came to the town. He stopped at the first big house and knocked on the door. A man opened it.

"Is there work for me here?" the young man asked.

"No, my friend," the man said.

The young man walked on. He went to many houses and knocked on many doors.

His question was always the same.

"Do you have work for me here?" he said.

The answer was always the same, too.

"No," everyone said. "There is no work for you here."

The young man was tired now, and very hungry.

"What can I do?" he thought. "I must find work soon, or I will die."

At last he came to a monastery. He knocked on the door and an old monk opened it.

"Please, Father," the young man said, "let me work for you."

"How long will you stay?" the monk asked.

"For a few months only," answered the young man. "Then I must go back to my family."

The monk began to shut the door.

"Then I can't help you," he said. "If you work for us, you must promise to stay for a long, long time."

"If I don't find work today, I'll die of hunger," the young man thought.

"Father," he said. "Please don't close the door. I promise to work for you for a long, long time."

The monk smiled at him.

"Come in, my son," he said.

Part Two

The next day, the young man began to work. The work was not difficult. The monks were kind to him. The young man worked hard for them and they were pleased with him.

A month past. At first, the young man thought about his family every day.

"Is my son well?" he thought. "Are my parents happy? Does my wife have enough food to eat?"

But slowly, the young man forgot his family. He was happy with the monks.

"You are an honest man," they said to him. "You can look after our money for us. We will trust you."

The years passed quickly.

One day, the young man was sitting on his chair in the monastery. He was counting the monks' money. Suddenly, he heard voices. Children were laughing outside.

The young man looked up.

"They're happy," he thought. "Is my son happy?"

He stood up and looked out of the window.

"How old is my son now?" he thought. "How long have I been here? Five years? Six years? No, ten years! I've been here for ten years!"

The next morning, the young man went to see the monks.

"I've stayed with you for ten years," he said. "And I've been a good servant. I've worked hard for you, but you have never paid me. Now I want to see my family."

Please give me the money you owe me, and let me go."

The monks smiled at him.

"You're right," they said. "You have worked hard for us. Now you can choose. Do you want us to give you your money, or do you want us to give you our blessing?"

The young man frowned.

"I want your blessing," he said, "but I want my money too."

"We owe you four hundred silver dollars," the monks said. "But each blessing costs a hundred dollars."

The young man looked unhappy, but at last he said, "Give me your blessing. It is better than the money."

So the first monk blessed him.

"Do not leave the road," he said. "Do not go to the right or the left. Only go straight on."

The second monk blessed him.

"Soon you will be a guest," he said. "Obey your host. Take what he gives you."

Then the third monk blessed him.

"Do not be angry," he said. "Always think before you act."

Then the monks gave the young man a hundred silver dollars and the young man left the monastery.



Part Three

Soon, he met two men. They were walking along the road together.

"Walk with us," they said. "We'll talk together and our journey will be more interesting."

The young man agreed, and the three men walked on together.

Soon they came to a crossroads.

"Follow me," one of the men said. "I'll show you a better path," and he turned to the left and began to walk along a different way.

The other man followed him, but the young man remembered the first monk's blessing.

"Do not go to the left or the right," the first monk had said. "Only go straight on."

The young man smiled at his new friends.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I cannot go with you. I must go straight on."

He said goodbye to the two men and went on down the road. He crossed the river and walked up the next hill.

Suddenly he heard shouts. He looked back across the river. He could see the two men. They were shouting for help. Robbers were attacking them. He wanted to go back and help his friends, but there were many robbers and they were big and strong.

"If I go down there, they'll kill me," he thought.

He was grateful to the monks.

"The first blessing saved my life. It saved me from the robbers," he thought.

He went on down the road. He walked for a long time. He was hungry and thirsty now, and he was tired too.

"It will soon be dark," he thought. "I must find a place to sleep."

He looked round. He was in a wild place. There were no houses here. He was frightened of hyenas and leopards. He began to walk faster.

It was dark now.

"I must find a place to sleep," the young man thought.

Part Four

At last, he saw a light in the distance. He ran towards it.

The light came from a little house on a hill. The young man ran up to it and knocked on the door. At once an old man opened it. He had white hair and he wore fine, white clothes.

"You are welcome. Come in," the old man said.

The young man followed him into the house.

"Sit down," said the old man. "Wait here. I will fetch some water and wash your feet."

The young man felt ashamed.

"I can't let this noble old man wash my feet," he thought.

The old man went away to fetch the water. Soon he came back. The young man wanted to take the water out of his hands. He wanted to wash the old man's feet. But then he remembered the monk's second blessing.

"Obey your host," the second monk had said. "Take what he gives you."

So the young man sat down, and the old man washed his feet.



Then the old man clapped his hands and a young girl came into the room. She was carrying a dish of delicious food.

"Feed our guest," the old man said to the girl.

The girl did not move, and the young man saw that she was blind.

The old man pushed her towards the young man.

"Feed him," he said again.

So the girl fed the young man, and he ate well. Then he lay down to rest, and he slept all night.

He woke up early in the morning.

"Thank you," he said to his host. "You have been very kind to me. But now I must go on."

The sun was up now and the young man could see his host clearly. The old man did not look fine and noble now. His teeth were long and white and sharp. His eyes were small and cruel.

"Is he a man or is he an ogre?" the young man thought.

"You're lucky," the old man said. "You didn't refuse my hospitality. I wanted to wash your feet, and you accepted. I gave you food, and you ate it. Many people have come to my house. They didn't let me wash their feet, and they didn't accept my food. I killed them all."

He pointed to the ground.

"Their bodies are under your feet," he said.

The young man was very frightened.

"But the girl, the blind girl," he said. "Why didn't you kill her?"

The old man laughed.

"I took her eyes," he said. "I made her blind. And now she is my servant."

"I must go," the young man thought. "I must get away from this terrible man. He is mad!"

"Thank you, goodbye, thank you, God bless you," he said quickly, and he began to walk away.

But the old man called him back.

"Wait," he said. "I have something for you."

He went back into his house, and came out again. He was carrying a sack.

"Take it," he said.

The young man took the sack, and ran away down the road. The sack was very heavy. At last he stopped under a tree and opened it.

"Dollars!" he said. "Silver dollars!"

He tried to count them but he couldn't. There were too many of them.

"The monks saved my life again," he thought. "And their second blessing has made me rich, too."

He went on quickly down the road.

"My dear parents and my wife will be very happy," he thought. "I can look after them well now."

Part Five

He walked for a long time. The sun was high in the sky and he was hot and tired. But he knew this road well. He knew the trees and the rocks and the little streams. He was nearly home.

He came to a church by the side of the road. A crowd was standing there. They were watching an old man and a boy. The man and the boy were fighting.

The young man felt very angry.

"What a wicked boy!" he thought. "He is showing no respect to that poor old man."

He wanted to run up to the boy and beat him with his stick. But then he remembered the monks' third blessing.

"Do not be angry," they had said. "Always think before you act."

He turned to the woman next to him.

"What's happening?" he said. "Who is this old man and this boy? Why are they fighting?"

"It's a sad story," the woman said. "These people are very poor. The old man is the boy's grandfather. Ten years ago his son left him because he wanted to find work in the town. The old man had no one to help him. He has been very unhappy. He wanted to kill himself. His grandson is trying to stop him."

Tears came into the young man's eyes.

"Oh my father! Oh my child!" he shouted.

He pushed his way through the crowd. He took the young boy's arm and looked into his eyes.

"My son!" he said.

The old man had fallen to the ground. The young man helped him to stand again.

"Father!" he said.

The old man looked at him.

"Is it really you?" he said. "Have you really come home again?"

"Yes, Father," the young man said. "And I'll never leave you again."

The young man went to his house with his father and his son. His mother and his wife kissed him, but then they began to cry.

"You have come home only to die," they said. "We have no food here. We ate our last meal yesterday."

The young man opened his sack and showed them the silver dollars. Then he added to it the hundred dollars that the monks had given him

"I haven't come home to die, but to live!" he said. "The monks have blessed me and we will be happy now for the rest of our lives."

[Click here to listen to the story]

Exercises

A. How much did you understand?

The sentences below are headings for each of the five parts of the story. Put them in the right order.

1. The young man stays in an old man's house.
2. The young man works for many years in a monastery.
3. The young man sees his father fighting with his son.
4. The young man leaves home to find work.
5. Robbers attack two travellers on the road.

B. What's in the story?

Read these sentences, which retell Part 1 of the story. One sentence is not true. Which is it?

1. A young man lived with his father, his mother, his wife and his baby son.
2. The young man did not love his wife.
3. The family were very poor.
4. The young man went to the town to find work.

These sentences retell Part 2 of the story. Which sentence is not true?

1. The young man wanted to work in a monastery.
2. The monks were kind to the young man and he worked for them for many years.
3. The young man wanted to become a monk, but the monks refused.
4. At last the young man decided to go home, and the monks gave him three blessings.

These sentences retell Part 3 of the story. Which sentence is not true?

1. As the young man travelled along the road, he met two men.
2. The two men asked the young man to take a different road.
3. The young man remembered the monks' first blessing. "Only go straight on," they had said.
4. The two men attacked the young man and robbed him.

These sentences retell Part 4 of the story. Which sentence is not true?

1. The young man came to a house in a wild place and an old man let him come in.
2. The old man wanted to wash the young man's feet, and the young man remembered the monks' second blessing. "Obey your host," they had said.
3. The old man's servant girl wanted to run away with the young man.
4. The old man gave the young man a sack full of silver dollars.

These sentences retell Part 5 of the story. Which sentence is not true?

1. The young man arrived at last at a church near his home.
2. An old man and a young boy were fighting, and the young man ran to them and tried to stop them.

3. The young man realised that the old man and the young boy were his father and his son.
4. "You have come home only to die," the young man's mother and wife said to him.

C. How much, how many, how long?

Answer these questions.

1. For how many days did the young man travel before he reached the town?
2. For how long did the young man want to stay at the monastery?
3. For how long did the young man stay and work with the monks?
4. How much money did the monks owe to the young man?
5. How much money did they give him?
6. For how many nights did the young man stay with the old man and the blind girl?
7. How many sacks did the cruel old man give to the young man?

D. Acting

This story can make a good play. You can act it with your friends.
Can you think of another title for your play?



[[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 for these headings is 4, 2, 5, 1, 3

The young man leaves home to find work.

The young man works for many years in a monastery.

Robbers attack two travellers on the road.

The young man stays in an old man's house.

The young man sees his father fighting with his son.

B. What's in the story?

These sentences are not true.

Part 1

The young man did not love his wife.

Part 2

The young man wanted to become a monk, but the monks refused.

Part 3

The two men attacked the young man and robbed him.

Part 4

The old man's servant girl wanted to run away with the young man.

Part 5

An old man and a young boy were fighting, and the young man ran to them and tried to stop them.

C. How much, how many, how long?

1. For how many days did the young man travel before he reached the town?

Two days

2. For how long did the young man want to stay at the monastery?

A few months

3. For how long did the young man stay and work with the monks?

Ten years

4. How much money did the monks owe to the young man?

Four hundred dollars

5. How much money did they give him?

One hundred dollars

6. For how many nights did the young man stay with the old man and the blind girl?

One night

7. How many sacks did the cruel old man give to the young man?

One sack