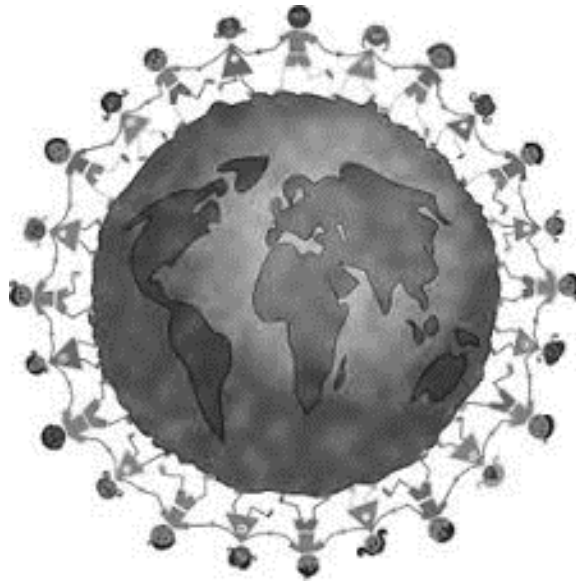


Stories from around the world

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The Princess and the pea

First published in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1835. Author: Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time, there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess. She had to be a real princess though.

The prince looked all over the world, but he couldn't find who he wanted. Many young women said they were princesses, but were they really? It was hard to know for sure! There was always something about them that did not seem quite right.

So the prince came home again and was sad. He still wanted to find a real princess to marry. One evening, there was a terrible storm with thunder and lightning. The rain came down hard as the wind howled. Suddenly, someone knocked at the castle door.

A young woman stood outside. She said she was a princess who had been caught in the storm. But what a sight the rain and wind had made her look! The water ran down from her hair and clothes. It ran into the toes of her shoes until they overflowed. Still, she said that she was a real princess.

We will soon find out! Thought the old queen. She went into the bedroom and stripped all the bedding off the bed. She took a pea and laid it on the bare bed-frame. Then she took twenty mattresses and placed them on top of the pea. Finally, she put twenty blankets stuffed with goose feathers on top. On this bed, the princess had to lie all night.



In the morning, the queen asked her how she had slept.

"Oh, very badly! I barely closed my eyes all night," said the princess. "I don't know what it was, but I was lying on something hard," she added. "I am black and blue all over my body—it was horrible!" she cried.

Now they knew that she was a real princess. She had felt the pea right through twenty mattresses and twenty goose-feather blankets. Nobody but a real princess could be that sensitive.

So the prince married her, for now he knew that she was a real princess.



How the mongoose saved the ostrich chicks

A traditional folk tale

The pride and joy of Mama Ostrich were her two baby chicks, hatched from her very own eggs.

One day, when Mama Ostrich returned home from gathering food for her two dear chicks, she looked and looked for them but could not find them anywhere. Imagine her alarm when she discovered lion tracks around her two-footed chicks' tracks! Fearful but determined to find her babies, she followed the lion tracks.



The tracks led into the bush and finally ended at the den of Mama Lion. In the opening through the cave there lay her own dear chicks in the arms of Mama Lion.

"What are you doing with my chicks?" cried Mama Ostrich. "Return them to me at once!"

"What do you mean your chicks?" Mama Lion growled. "These are my cubs, that's plain to see."

"It's not at all plain to see," said Mama Ostrich. "Those are chicks -- ostrich chicks -- and I'm an ostrich and you're a lion!"

"Is that so?" snarled Mama Lion. "Then you won't have any trouble finding any other animal who agrees with you. I dare you: Find any animal at all that will look me in the eye and tell me that these are not my cubs. Do that, then I'll release them to you." Mama Lion got up, stretched, and roared a ferocious roar.

Mama Ostrich quickly ran off to each and every animal to tell them that she was assembling a meeting to discuss a terrible injustice. When she arrived at the home of the Mongoose and told him her sad story, the mongoose thought and thought. Then he had an idea. He told her to dig a hole under an ant-hill and to make a second exit out of the ant-hill. This she did, and then she told all the animals -- including Mama Lion -- to gather there at the ant-hill.



When all had gathered, Mama Ostrich explained to the group how Mama Lion had captured her dear, sweet chicks. The zebras and antelopes and all the other animals glanced at the chicks held closely by Mama Lion, and nodded with understanding. But when Mama Ostrich said that she needed just one animal to come forward and look Mama Lion in the eye and tell her that she was not the mother of these chicks, each and every animal in the meeting looked down at the ground, and just whispered quietly to themselves that the little ones definitely belonged to Mama Lion, and there was no question about that. But they were afraid to say it out loud, wondering what the lion would do to them.

When it came to Mongoose's turn, he cried out, "Have you ever seen a mama with fur with babies that had feathers? Think of what you are saying. Mama Lion has fur! The chicks have feathers! They belong to the ostrich!" And having said that, Mongoose jumped down the hole under the ant-hill, and escaped out the other end. At once, Mama Lion jumped after him, and when she did so the two ostrich chicks were freed. Of course, they scrambled immediately right into their mother's open wings.

Not knowing about the second exit, Mama Lion paced and paced by the ant-hill hole, waiting for Mongoose to come out of the hole by which he had entered. The other animals at the meeting cautiously departed one by one. Mama Lion was left waiting at the entrance to the ant-hill for a very, very long time.



Questions

1. Why didn't the animals want to look the lion in the eye and tell him that the chicks didn't belong to him?
2. Why was the mongoose different to the other animals?

Stone soup

A traditional folk tale from Europe

Once upon a time, a wise old man decided to go on a journey. So he packed a small bag, said goodbye to his wife, and set off. He traveled all day without meeting anyone. When it was evening, he came to a small village. "I think I'll stop here for the night," he said to himself.



Near the centre of the village, he met a group of people. So he introduced himself. "I'm a simple traveler," he said, "looking for a safe place to sleep and a hot meal."

"We'd be glad to offer you a place to sleep," the villagers told him, "but we have very little food. Our crops were very poor this year, and there's not much to eat in the whole village. Most of us are just barely getting by."

"I'm sorry to hear that," the old man said. "But you needn't worry about feeding me. I already have everything I need. In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you."

"Stone soup?" the villagers asked. "What's that? We've never heard of stone soup."

"Oh, it's wonderful," said the old man. "Best soup I've ever tasted. If you bring me a soup pot and some water, I'll make some for all of us."

And so the villagers rushed back to their homes. When they returned, one was carrying a large soup pot, another had wood for a fire, and others brought water.

When the fire was going and the water had begun to boil, the old man took out a small silk pouch. With great ceremony, he reached in and pulled out a smooth, round stone. He carefully dropped the stone into the boiling water. The villagers watched eagerly. The old man began to slowly stir the pot, sniffing the aroma and licking his lips in anticipation. "I do like a tasty stone soup," he said. "Of course, stone soup with cabbage—now that's really special."

"I might be able to find a bit of cabbage," one villager said. And off she went to her house, returning with a small cabbage she had stored away in her pantry. "Wonderful!" said the old man, as he added the cabbage to the pot. "This reminds me of the time I had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salted beef. It was unbelievably good."

After a moment of silence, the village butcher spoke up. "I know where there's a bit of salted beef," he said. And off he went to his shop to get it. When he returned, the old man added the beef to the soup pot and continued to stir.

“Can you imagine what this soup would taste like if we had a bit of onion...and perhaps a few potatoes...and a carrot or two...and some mushrooms. Oh, this would be a meal fit for royalty.”

And before he knew it, the soup pot was filled to the brim with vegetables of all kinds—carrots and potatoes, mushrooms and onions, turnips and green beans, beets and celery—all brought by the men and women and children of the village. Not only that, but the village baker came out with some fresh bread and butter.

And as the soup simmered slowly over the fire, the wonderful aroma began to waft over the villagers. And they began to relax and talk together, sharing songs and stories and jokes.

When the soup was finally done, the old man ladled it out into bowls, and they all shared a delicious meal together. There was more than enough for everyone to eat their fill. Afterward, they all declared that it was the best soup they had ever tasted. The mayor of the village pulled the old man aside, and quietly offered him a great deal of money for the magic stone, but the old man refused to sell it.

The next morning, he woke early and packed up his belongings. As he was leaving the village, he passed by a group of children playing at the side of the road. He handed the youngest one the silk pouch containing the stone, and he whispered, “It was not the stone that performed the magic. It was all of us together.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What does this story tell us about our lives?
2. What does this story tell us about feeding the hungry?
3. What bible story does the Stone Soup story remind you of?
4. How could we make enough “soup” to feed the hungry people of the world?

The Wind and the Sun

A story from Ghana or the Ivory Coast of Africa

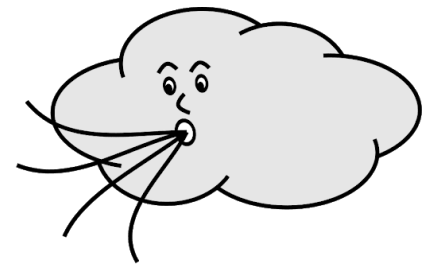
One day, a boastful wind declared to the sun, 'You know that I am the strongest and most effective of all weather!'

And the sun replied, 'All weather can be strong and effective.'

But the stubborn wind disagreed.

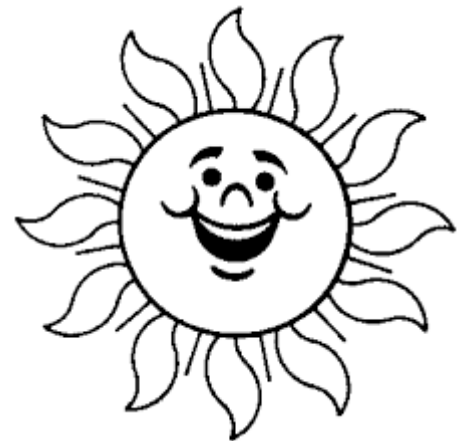
'All weather is strong,' said the wind, 'but I am the strongest of all. Let us have a competition to prove this. The weather that makes people remove the most of their clothing will show that they are indeed the strongest of all.'

The sun agreed to take part in the competition and suggested that the wind should go first. And so the wind blew and blew upon the earth, creating first a light breeze, and then massive gales that swept across the lands below. Peoples' hats flew up into the air and many were forced to hold tightly to their jackets and coats so that they would not lose them in the mighty gale.



After many minutes of blowing and blowing, the wind had managed to cause a great deal of chaos. He had swept away empty bottles, rubbish, newspapers and umbrellas. But he had not caused people to lose their clothes.

Next it was the turn of the sun and the sun shone brightly in the clear blue sky, heating up the earth below until the people began to take off their clothes. First, they removed their shoes, then socks and shirts, then jackets. Some even removed their trousers in an attempt to stay cool in the lovely afternoon heat.



When the wind saw how efficient the sun had been, he grew very angry indeed and caused the weather to change from sunshine back to wind so that the people below had to quickly put their clothes back on and head indoors away from the unexpected gale. Wind could not believe that the sun had won the competition and proven himself to be the most effective of all weather.

The rain and clouds, and the rest of the weather, all cheered for the sun and hailed him as the new hero. But the sun immediately stopped the cheering and told everyone that he was not a hero at all, but that all weather was important in its own unique way.

'There cannot be one of us without the other,' explained the sun. 'Each of us does an important job; each of us depends on the other to create the seasons. We water the earth, we blow the clouds across the sky, give people light and shade, and make sure that trees and flowers and crops grow in the earth.'

The sun explained to the wind that all weather was part of a team and that they should all be proud of the work that they do.

Wind then understood that everything and everybody is different. It is important not to feel that you are better than anyone else. Wind also understood how important it was to work as a team so that you might make the most of the strengths of those around you. And so it was that all weather worked in harmony, each doing the task best suited to them, each appreciating the work of the other.

Questions

1. What is the character quality you could use to describe the wind?
2. Who wanted to hold the competition – the sun or the wind?
3. What was the reason for wanting to hold the competition?
4. What was the result of the competition?
5. What did the sun say to the other members of the weather, when they cheered and treated him as a hero?
6. What did the sun say to the wind?
7. What can we learn from this story?