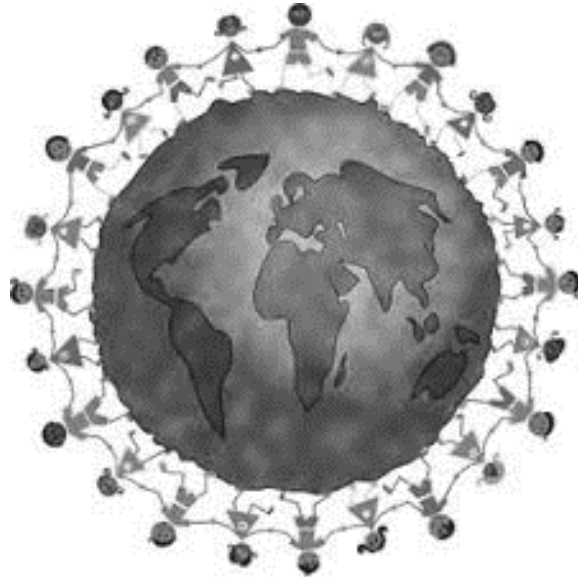


Stories from around the world

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Levels 20 – 25

Angels all around

This is a true story about an English missionary who worked in China. He worked in a hospital helping sick people. One day the missionary and his Chinese helper had to travel to a nearby city to take out some money from the bank, to use for the hospital. In that part of China there were many thieves. They were called bandits. They would wander around the country in gangs, hiding behind rocks or bushes and waiting to attack travellers who passed by.

The trip to the bank would take two days, because it was a long way. This meant that they had to camp on top of a little hill for the night. The return journey was dangerous because they were carrying money. When they camped at night, they knew the bandits could be nearby, watching them and making plans to rob them. The missionary prayed and asked the Lord to protect them. After they had finished praying, they lay down on the ground to go to sleep, with the box containing the money between them. They slept soundly and were thankful to wake up in the morning without being attacked.



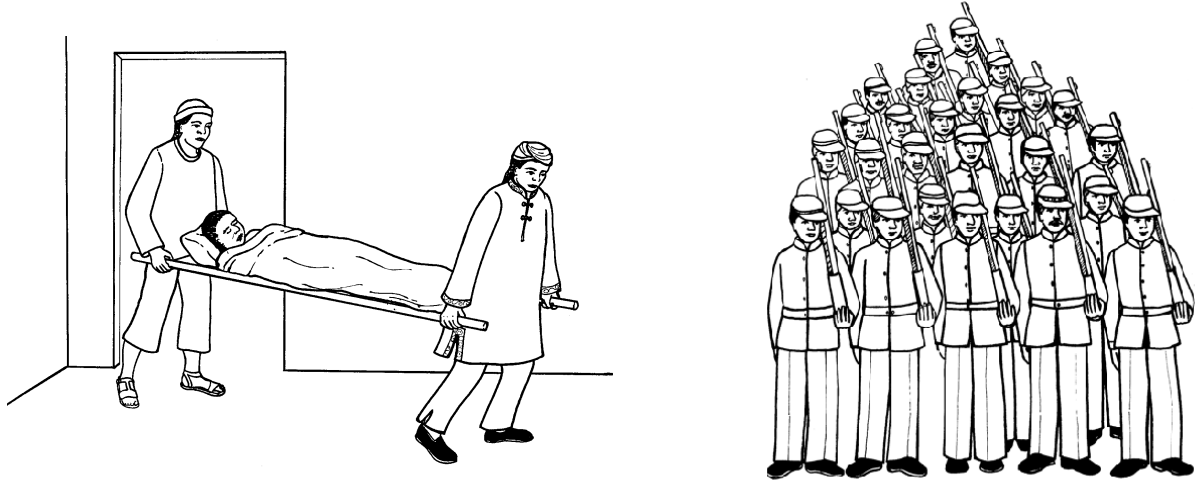
Some months later, the chief of the bandit gang was brought into the hospital for treatment. The bandit chief recognised the missionary and started talking with him. He said, “A little while ago you went to a certain city and brought back money.”

“Yes,” that’s right replied the missionary.

“And you camped at night on top of a little hill. And you had soldier with you.”

“Yes, that’s right,” replied the missionary, “but we had no soldiers with us.”

“Oh, but you did,” said the chief. “We had planned to rob you that night, but when we saw the soldiers, we were afraid they would fight us. We thought we would be killed so we left you alone. I know there were soldiers with you, because I counted them. There were 27.”



But neither the missionary or his helper had seen any soldiers. They knew that the soldiers must have been angels sent by God to protect them while they slept.

Sometime later the missionary made a trip back to England. While he was there, he spoke at a Christian meeting, and told about what had happened. A man in the group asked, “Do you remember the date when this happened?”

“Yes,” said the missionary, “It is very clear in my mind so I will never forget it.” The missionary told him the date.

“I thought so,” replied the man who had asked the question. “On that very same evening, a group of us met in our church to pray especially for missionaries in China.” Then he looked in his diary and added, “I have written it down here. There were exactly 27 of us present in the prayer meeting.”

So as the 27 people prayed in England, God sent 27 angels to guard the missionary and his helper. The angels appeared to the bandits as 27 soldiers.

Psalm 34:7 For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. (NLT)

Psalm 91:11 For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go. (NLT)

A whale out of water

A true story from South Africa

James and his family lived in a house near the beach.

“Mum,” called James, as he rushed inside after school one day. “There’s a whale on the beach! Please can I go and see it?”

“A whale!” exclaimed Mum. “Do you mean a dead one washed ashore?”

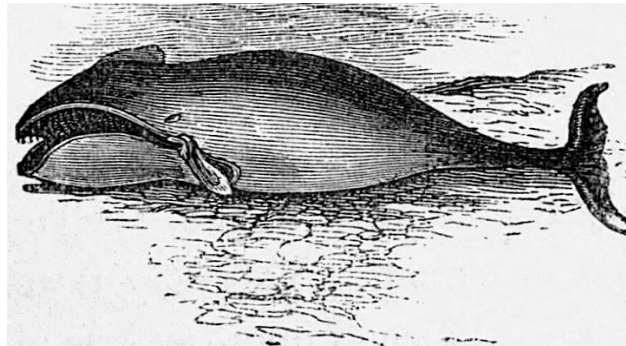
“No Mum. It’s alive, and it’s a baby one. It’s stuck in the sand.”

“OK. Let’s both go and have a look at it,” said Mum.

They hurried down to the beach at Fish Hoek Bay, near Cape Town in South Africa.

On the way James explained to his Mum what the children had told him at school. The tide went out and left the whale out of water, stuck in the sand. Now there is the danger of the whale dying in the hot sun.

When they reached the beach, sure enough, there was the baby whale, lying in the sand. By now there were crowds of people looking at it.



“Oh dear,” said James’s Mum. “I’m afraid this poor little whale hasn’t a hope of surviving in this hot sun. I wonder where its mother is?”

Just then a man walked by. He was in charge of the rescue. He had heard the conversation and explained, "The mother is out there in the bay. She's swimming back and forth in a terrible state because she can't come in and rescue her baby."

"The whale looks quite big to me," said James, "not like a baby."

"The whale is only about 3 months old and weighs about 2 tons!" said the person in charge.

"Will it die?" asked James.

"We're going to do all we can to save it, but I doubt if we will succeed. The tide doesn't come in again for a few hours. We'll try to re-float it then. Meanwhile we'll pour sea water over it to keep it damp and cool.

James joined a group of children near the whale. He put his hand out and stroked its shiny black back. He watched with interest as men came and laid wet sacks all over the whale. Then they brought large hoses to the beach and sprayed sea water over the sacks. They kept on doing this, but the little whale showed no signs of life. Many people feared that it was dead.

At long last the tide began to come in. Slowly, slowly, the breakers came nearer. There was a loud cheer from the crowd when the first wave went over the young whale. They hoped to see it float. But no. It did not move. More waves came and broke over the whale until it was almost covered with water.

"Oh no, it's dead!" cried James.

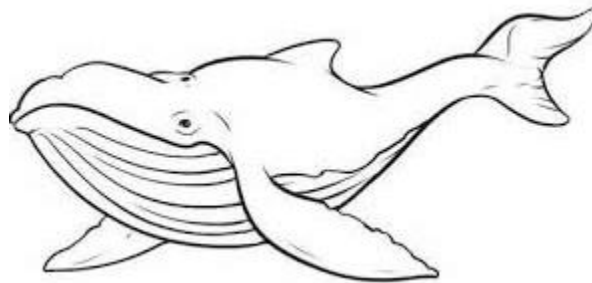
"No," said the person in charge of the rescue, "It's stuck too deep in the sand to move."

Just then, two divers arrived. They went down under the water on each side of the whale and scooped out the sand under it. They had a strong canvas sheet that they rolled under the whale. They needed many helpers to do this difficult job.

A row of men took hold of the canvas on each side. As each wave broke over them, they pushed forward in a mighty effort to try and release the whale. Again, and again, they tried. Then a very big wave broke over them. They gave one more big push and the whale rose up out of the sand. Suddenly a little spurt of water shot up from the whale. The crowd cheered.

“It’s alive! It’s saved,” shouted James.

The next minute the whale used every bit of strength it had and shot out into the bay. It went at full speed until he joined its anxious mother. Together they sped out into the deep sea. Hundreds of people on the beach clapped and cheered.



What a story James had to tell Dad when he got home. Later that evening, as Dad was praying with James before bed, he asked James what he had learned from the experience of the whale.

“Well, I know that God wants us to care for His creatures, and help them when they are in trouble...,” said James

“And I think that little whale may not have listened to its mother when she told it NOT to swim towards the beach. If the whale had stayed with its mother, it wouldn’t have been stranded.”

“That’s so right,” said Dad. We all must listen when we are warned of danger, and most of all, we listen to God. He tells us how to avoid danger.

The Bible says, *“Whoever listens to me will have security. He will be safe, with no reason to be afraid.”* Proverbs 1:33 (GNB)

Story by Elsie M Milligan, from “The Peanut Butter Hamster”

Bernard and his dogs

A true story from Switzerland

The highest mountains in Europe are called the Alps. They are so high that there is always snow on them, even in the summer. The Alps stretch across three countries: France, Switzerland and Italy.

This is the story of a boy called Bernard who was born a long time ago in a town in the Alps. When he was old enough, he learned to climb these mountains. It was a wonderful feeling to climb up and up, until the houses below looked like a little toy town. It was sometimes dangerous, because you could easily slip and fall on the steep rocks, or have great piles of snow fall on you if there was an avalanche. There were also cracks in the ice that you could fall into, and then great snow storms would cover you so that no one could find you.

When Bernard grew up, he went to live in a house high up in the mountains. He lived near a mountain pass. A pass is a way through the mountains, and travellers used to come through this way. But sometimes these travellers would get lost in the snow and ice, and then Bernard and his friends would go out and find them. Sometimes they would find these lost people, and bring them safely home, but sometimes the snow was so deep that the lost person could not be found, and they died of cold in the snow drifts.

This made Bernard and his friends very sad. One day Bernard had an idea. 'Dogs would be better at finding lost people than we are,' he thought. 'They can smell people buried in the snow, and get to them more quickly than we can.' So he went to the town at the bottom of the mountain and bought some big dogs. They were huge dogs with white and brown coats and long flapping ears, and they had big paws that could move over soft snow without sinking in.

These dogs were trained to go out and look for lost people in the snow. Round their necks they carried baskets with food and drink. The dogs would run all over the mountain side, and when their noses told them that there was someone buried under the



snow, they would dig down with their strong paws until they reached the lost person. The person would look up and see a dog's kind, gentle face above them and know that they were now safe. The food and drink around the dog's neck would help to make the person feel strong again. The dog would go back to its master and let them know that a lost traveller had been found. Then the master would come quickly to rescue the person. The traveller would be taken to a place of shelter which had been built especially for this purpose, and cared for they were well again.

The place where Bernard and his friends built this shelter is still called Saint Bernard Pass today. It is in the Alps of Switzerland. The great dogs Bernard trained for rescuing lost travellers are called Saint Bernards, named after the kind man who first had the idea of using them to rescue people lost in the snow.

More about Saint Bernard dogs

With an excellent sense of direction, an excellent ability to navigate through dense fog, snow storms and to warn of an avalanche, the dogs always accompanied the monks on treks. But the dogs later did make expeditions on their own in small packs of two or three to search for travellers buried in after an avalanche or snow storm. The dogs would often dig through metres of snow and ice and if found alive the traveller would be kept warm, conscious and comforted by one dog one whilst the other would return to the shelter to raise the alarm. Over the approximated 200 years that the Saint Bernard dogs worked on the Pass it is estimated that 2000 people were rescued. The last rescue recorded was of a 12-year-old boy who was nearly frozen to death and found in a crevice and was awakened by a Saint Bernard dog in 1897.



Joey

A story from Australia by W.L. Williams, from the book "Among Friends"

Joey was a baby kangaroo. He had been only 2 centimeters long when he was born, but now he was much bigger. He was as big as a small dog, and was able to eat grass for himself. He no longer needed to be fed on his mother's milk.

But he was a lazy little fellow. When his mother wanted to take him back to the bush after feeding on grass in the paddocks, she would have to carry him in her pouch, even though Joey could have hopped all the way by himself. It was the

same everywhere they went. She hopped and Joey rode in the pouch.



Like all mother kangaroos, Joey's mother had a large pouch at the front. Joey had lived in it for weeks, from the time of his birth, and it had kept him warm and safe. He still jumped into it, head first. Then he would kick and wriggle until he was the right way up. If there was danger, his mother would be off, with great leaps.

Joey was like any other baby. He was not very good at eating his food. He nibbled on the grass for a little while, and then he was off to play. Round and round his mother he raced, just for fun, while she went on eating. But every now and then she would stop eating, lift her head and listen. She was listening for sounds of danger. Joey had no thought of danger, so she had to take care of herself and him as well. Every sound from the far-off farm made her raise her head for a moment.

All of a sudden, she sat up straight. She had heard the thud of horses' hoofs. Joey could hear them too. His mother bounded towards him, and he made a flying leap and landed in the pouch. As his tail went out of sight, his ears and nose poked out. His mother stood up and looked at the line of trees towards the farm. Four dogs raced out from the trees. Three men on horses followed them. At once she turned and sprang away, heading for the bush.

As she sped over the grass and over the logs, she heard the men shouting and the dogs barking. They were hunters. The chase was on, and the edge of the bush was

a long way off. She could not go as fast as she wanted to, because Joey was quite big now, and heavy in her pouch. The dogs and the horses were gaining fast. When she reached the edge of the bush, they were close behind.

Yes, Joey was heavy. As she bounded over the top of the fence she slipped. Her hind feet struck the rail, and she rolled over and over. In a flash she was up and off again, but the dogs were already at the fence. She thought of Joey and she felt afraid. If the dogs caught her, he would be killed. As she moved through the bushes she reached into her pouch, and with a quick jerk she threw him out. He rolled under a bush and lay still, too scared to move.



Then on went the mother, leading the dogs after her. She went more easily now. Besides, she could make her way through scrub better than the dogs and far better than the horses. For ten minutes more she bounded and the hunters followed. She did not try to hide. She wanted the dogs to see her for a while yet. While they were after her there was no chance of them finding Joey. So, she bounded high above the bushes and made a great deal of noise as she crashed her way through.

The dogs, now growing tired, barked only once in a while. Now and then one of them yelped as he hit a log. The horses were a long way behind, but the men were shouting, and the mother kangaroo knew that they were still coming.

Then she made for a steep gully. After a few leaps along its side, she dived down the hill among the bushes and ferns. She



paddled on all fours up the stream as fast as she could, but quietly. Then she crept in between some rocks and lay still.

The dogs had lost her. She heard the barking and the crashes die away, but she stayed where she was for two hours. Her breath came back and her fear left her. Then she went slowly back along the path by which she had come.

She remembered the right bush and went straight to it. There was Joey, safe and sound but very lonely. As he crept into her pouch, she touched him with her cool wet nose. Then she went easily back toward the deep gullies and the rough hills, and once more, one small nose and two small ears poked out in front.

More about kangaroos

Baby kangaroos

The young kangaroo, or joey, is born when it is only about 2 cm long and weighs less than a gram. As soon as it is born, it crawls up the mother's body and enters the pouch. The baby attaches its mouth to one of four teats, which holds the young animal in place. The joey stays in the mother's pouch for about 9 months and drinks its mother's milk. Only female kangaroos have pouches.

How many babies does a kangaroo have?

Mother kangaroos only have one baby at a time, although they can have their babies 9 months apart. This means that there could be two babies at a time drinking from the teats in her pouch, (one newborn and one older one).

Why are kangaroos hunted?

These peaceful animals are hunted by those who want to sell their meat and skins, or by farmers who want the pasture where they're found, so that there is more grass for their cattle and sheep.

Saint Francis and the Wolf

Long ago in Italy there lived a man named Saint Francis. He was kind and gentle, and everyone loved him. Even the birds and animals knew he was their friend. Birds would fly down to him from the sky, and animals would come to him to listen to him.

One day, Saint Francis went to stay in a town where there was a fierce wolf. The wolf stole sheep and lambs for food. It was so fierce that it sometimes attacked people in the street. Everyone was afraid of it. Mothers and Fathers could not let their children go out and play. Men carried sticks and swords when they went to work. No one would go walking on the hillside outside the town.

Saint Francis was sorry to find the people so unhappy and afraid. He told some of the people that he would go out and see the wolf.

“No, no,” they said. “It will kill you.”

They tried to stop him from going, but Saint Francis said, “Let me go. I am not afraid.”

The people went a little way along the street with him. Then they waited, and watched him go alone up the green hillside. Almost at once the wolf came running to Saint Francis. Its mouth was open. Its white teeth looked sharp and cruel. Just as it was about to spring on him, Saint Francis stretched out his hand, and said softly, “Come here Mr. Wolf. Do not hurt me. I am your friend.”

The fierce wolf closed its mouth, and stopped running. It walked up to Saint Francis and sat down at his feet, just as a friendly dog would do.

“Mr Wolf,” said Saint Francis, “you have been very bad. You have killed animals and men. You have been cruel and wicked.”

The wolf pricked up his ears as if he was listening. Then he hung his head as if he was ashamed.

The Saint Francis said, “Mr Wolf, I want to make peace with you. I know that you were cruel because you were hungry. If I make sure that the people of this town give you food every day, will you promise me that you will never hurt a man or animal again?”

The wolf nodded his head.

“Will you promise me this?” said Saint Francis again.

The wolf nodded his head. Then he lifted his paw and put it into the hand of Saint Francis. This was his promise.

“Come then Mr Wolf. Let’s go into the town and tell the people.”

So Saint Francis walked back into the town, and the wolf walked along beside him like a dog. How surprised the people were to see the fierce wolf looking so tame. In a little while everyone had heard the news. Crowds of people went to the market-place to see Saint Francis and the wolf. Saint Francis put his hand on the wolf’s head and spoke to the people.

“Listen,” he said. “Mr Wolf has made a promise to me. If you will give him food every day, he will not hurt you or your children or your animals. Will you promise to feed him every day?”

“Yes,” shouted the people.

Saint Francis spoke to Mr Wolf. “Will you make your promise before these people?”

Again, the wolf nodded his head and put his paw in the hand of Saint Francis. So the wolf lived in the town and the people fed him. He kept his promise and they kept theirs. The wolf went from door to door, walking in and out of houses. The people patted him and talked to him. The children played with him. So the wolf became friendly and gentle and everyone loved him.



About Saint Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi was a Catholic priest, born in 1182, in Assisi, Italy. He was known for his love of nature and animals. It was said that Francis could tame wild animals.

Francis set up the first known Nativity scene to celebrate Christmas in 1220. He believed that actions were the best example, telling his followers to "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary, use words."

Activities

1. Why do you think the animals loved Saint Francis?
2. Why did the wolf kill?
3. How did the wolf show Saint Francis that he agreed to the promise, not to kill again?
4. How did the wolf change?
5. What did the town's people do to show that they now loved the wolf?
6. Dogs come from the wolf family. What do you think the wolf in the Garden of Eden would have been like?

Tusker and Flicka fight the cobras

A true story by Delores Elaine Bius, from the book, "The Peanut Butter Hamster"

Jean and Bob Williams were missionaries in Kenya, East Africa, on the shore of the Indian Ocean. Not all missionaries have problems with snakes, but Jean and Bob had to always be looking out for them.

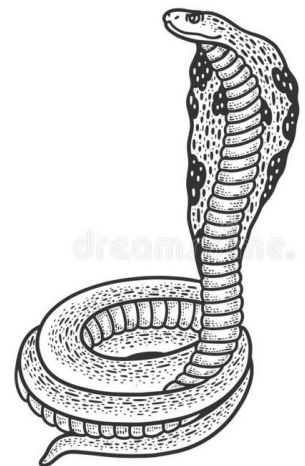
One morning as Jean reached for a cooking pan on a shelf, she found a small black snake wrapped around the handle. Bob killed it with a knife. Another time she was sweeping the floor and discovered a small red snake staring at her from under a cupboard. Bob and Jean lived near the African Gariama village.

Sometimes thieves from the village would come to their property at night and try to steal things. Bob and Jean had two German Shepherd dogs to help keep thieves away. The dogs also did a good job of keeping away snakes!

One night when Bob and Jean were ready to go to bed, they heard their male dog, Tusker, barking and barking. Usually it was Flicka, their female dog, who was the most protective. They saw that Tusker had not eaten his food so they thought something must be wrong. Bob decided to get the car and shine the headlight down into the area where Tusker was barking. He chose to drive the car because it was dangerous to walk out around the coral rocks at night.

Suddenly, their African garden helper, Charo, came running from his house. He was barefoot and only wearing his shorts. He knew the dog was in trouble and had brought a big knife with him. He bravely went to investigate, then came running back to report to Bob.

"Tucker has a big cobra cornered," he said. He ran to get a long stick and then went back to the snake with his big knife ready. Bob heard the "wap, wap" of Charo hitting something. The Charo came out of the darkness, carrying a cobra about a metre long on his stick. The snake was still writhing but dead. Bob and Jean praised the Lord that Tusker had kept the dangerous cobra away from their home and thanked Charo for killing it.



The next day, they discovered that Flicka's throat and neck were swollen three times their normal size. They found drops of blood on the porch. Flicka she must have found the snake first, and tried to chase it away. But there were drops of venom from the snake's fangs on her face. She had been bitten. Bob and Jean took Flicka to a vet who said that seeing she had survived for the past day, she must be strong and had overcome the venom. She would therefore recover.

Then two weeks later, on a Sunday afternoon, Bob and Jean woke from having an afternoon rest, when they heard Tusker barking. Jean went out in front of the house and found bright red drops of blood on the concrete again.

"Bob," she called, "come and have a look at this! It looks as if one of the dogs is in trouble again."

They walked around the house and found Flicka lying on the grass, her tongue out, her face covered in blood. She was barely breathing.

"Oh, Bob, she must have been bitten again!" Jean cried. "And she is in a bad way this time."

"And it sounds as if Tusker may have the snake cornered," said Bob. Tusker was not far away, barking excitedly. Bob grabbed a lead pipe nearby and ran to help.

"Be careful, Bob!" Jean warned.

Sure enough, Tusker was dancing around and around a much larger cobra. The snake's head was up, swaying back and forth, trying to strike.

When Tusker saw Bob coming, he charged in, grabbed the snake in his teeth and shook it. At one point he had the snake's entire head in his mouth.

Bob moved carefully. He knew that a cobra's bite is deadly to humans. Finally, he lunged and hit the snake hard on the head. It fell back, dead.

Poor Flicka did not survive the second attack. It was Sunday and the vet was closed. Flicka died about 10 o'clock that night. Tusker started to swell, but they got him to the vet the next day and he recovered.

Bob and Jean were sad to lose Flicka, but they praised God for their furry 'guardian angels' – two brave dogs who were willing, if necessary, to give their lives to protect their masters.

Comprehension activities for Stories from Around the World

Thinking about the story

1. Choose 3 words that you think someone might find difficult to understand. Write the meaning of these words. Use a dictionary if possible.
2. Find three verbs in the story.
3. Find three nouns in the story.
4. Find three adjectives in the story
5. Who were the main characters in this story? Write a sentence about each one.
6. Where did this story take place?
7. Make a list of 4 events in the story. Put the events in order of when they happened, from first to last.
8. What was the most exciting part of the story?
9. How did the story end?
10. How did this story make you feel and why?