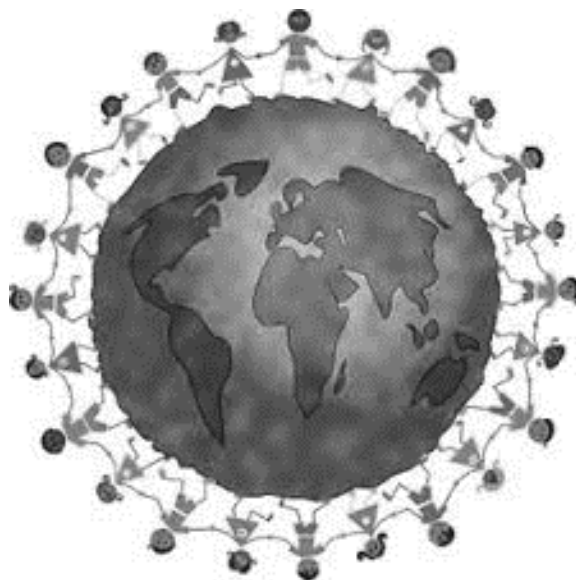


Stories from around the world

4 & 5



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Levels 20 – 25

The Princess and the pea

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

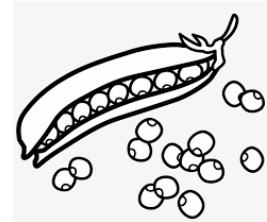
Once upon a time, there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess. She had to be a real princess though.

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

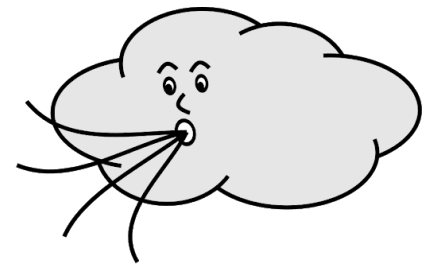
One day, a boastful wind declared to the sun, 'You know that I am the strongest and most effective of all weather!'

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

But the stubborn wind disagreed.

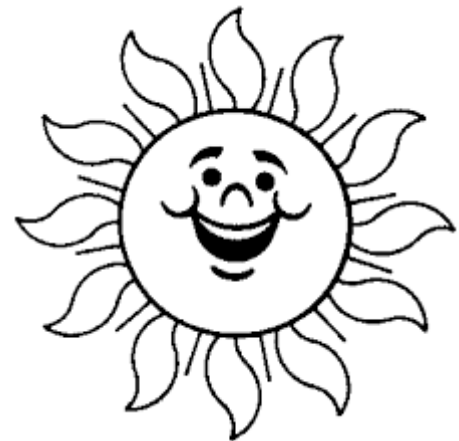
'All weather is strong,' said the wind, 'but I am the strongest of all. Let us have a competition to prove this. The weather that makes people remove the most of their clothing will show that they are indeed the strongest of all.'

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?

Meena of Nepal

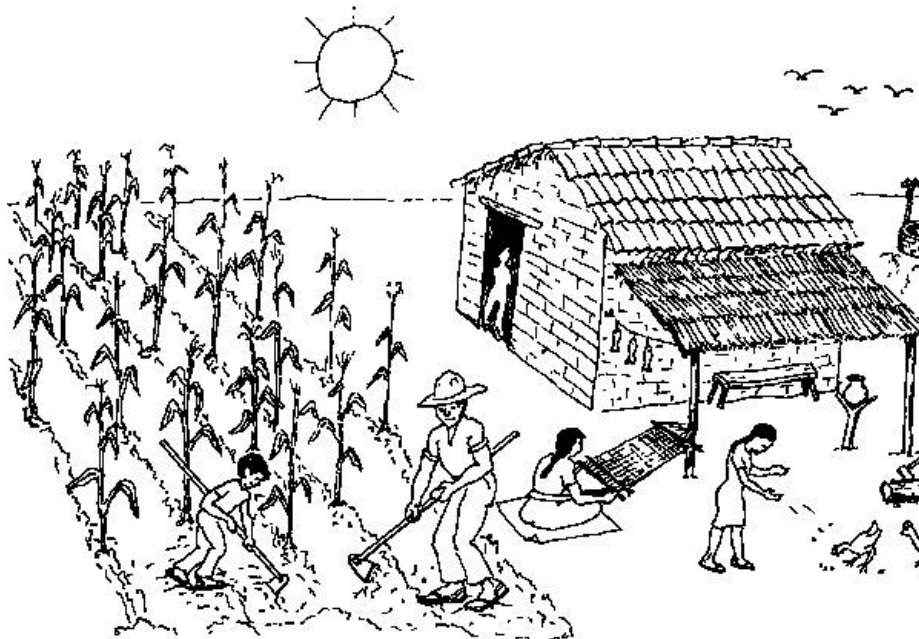
Meena lived on a mountainside in Nepal, a tiny kingdom located between China and India.

The people of Nepal generally short and have brown skin, dark eyes, and black hair. Nearly all of the Nepali people climb mountains. In fact, they have to if they ever go anywhere, because Nepal is covered with the highest mountains in the world.

Like most of the people in Nepal, Meena's father was a very poor farmer. Because their little farm was on the side of a steep mountain, he has to make small terraces of flat land on which to grow his crops. He hoped one day to be able to afford a water buffalo so he would not have to plow and dig the land by hand.

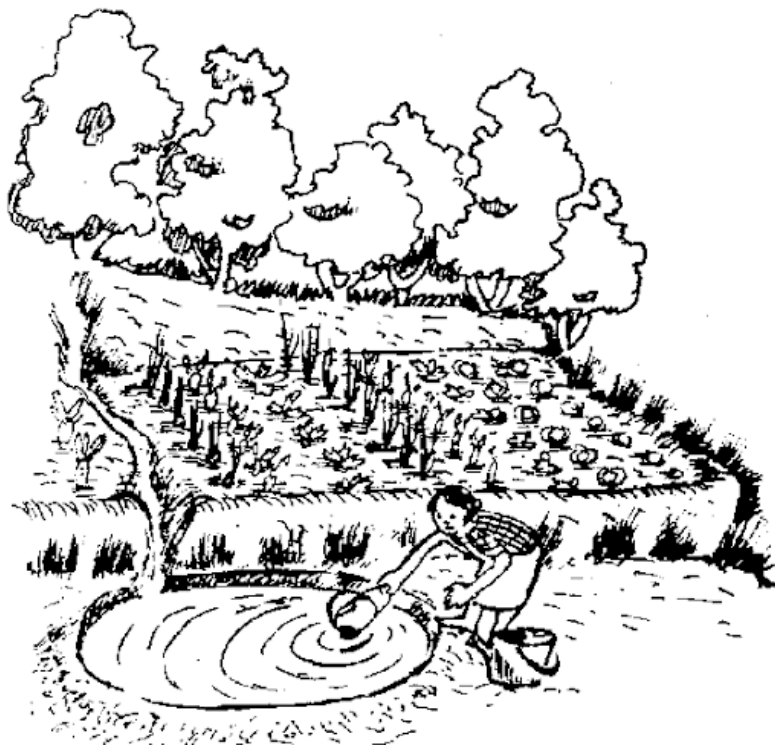
Meena's house was made of bricks covered with a mixture of cow dung and mud. The straw roof had to be replaced every few years to keep out the monsoon rains.

The lower story of the house was just one big room with a campfire in the middle. At night Meena slept on a straw mat near the fire. The whole family always slept in the same room together.



As the morning sun climbed slowly over the mountaintops, the chickens would be put out of the house amidst a flurry of feathers and cackling and clucking. To prevent wild animals such as mongooses, tigers, or jackals from eating them, they were kept in the house at night. At dawn each morning, having taken care of the chickens and started a fire, Meena and her sisters would go down the mountainside to fetch water.

At the local water tap the girls filled their large, handmade clay pots, then carried them slowly back up the trail to their home. This would be the family's water supply for the day.



Having fed the goats, Meena would go out to gather cow manure from different mountain trails. The manure, which is considered "clean" because it comes from "holy" cows, would be then mixed with mud and spread on the floors in Meena's house. This is the way Nepalis wash their floors. To put cow dung on the floor is called "lipnu."

Meena's family cooked over a campfire every day right inside the house. Her father and brothers were responsible for bringing the firewood which they cut up with big Nepali knives called kukuris.

At breakfast time entire family sat on the floor and ate with their fingers. Meena's family could afford only two meals a day — eating rice, lentils (like split peas) and spiced vegetables at each meal. Two or three times a month they could eat meat with their meal and occasionally they could afford fresh fruits or eggs. Meena had never eaten cake, or ice cream, or candy bars.

After meals Meena washed the dishes outdoors by the side of the house. Instead of soap she used ashes from the fire to clean them.

Some evenings Meena played with her friends. Since none of the children had toys, they made up various group games to play. All the families were very poor — most of her friends did not have shoes and most could not afford to pay the 75-cent fee each week in order to attend school. Only a few of the more fortunate ones would ever learn to read and write.

But many evenings the children were too busy to play. They worked in the fields, or helped grind wheat to make flour, or watched the younger children while mother cut grass off the steep mountainside for the cows.

Meena helped her father on the farm. As he plowed the ground by hand, she would break up the clods of dirt behind him. In Nepal, farming is a family affair.

Every day Meena prayed to a small bronze god. Prayer time is called "puja." Puja means 'worship' in the Nepali language. Meena prayed to a small bronze god in her house, and during the week she often went with her sisters to the village Hindu temple. There she would give a few coins or a handful of rice to the ugly stone idol. She had always been taught that these man-made idols are really gods and that they would be angry with her if she did not worship them often. These gods looked very mean and ugly, and deep down in her heart Meena was afraid of them. Of course, she would not tell anyone, but deep down inside she did not really believe that God is a bunch of cold, hard statues. But... these are the only gods she knew about.

Meena was afraid of growing up. Nobody remembered just when she was born, so she was not sure of her age. But she knew that when she is about fourteen her parents would make her marry a man she had never met before. She would have to live with his family then and wash the clothes and cook the food for the whole family. Would the man and his family treat her well? Often, she worried about that.

Also, she was afraid of growing old because she did not want to die. Though her life was not very happy, the thought of death was terrifying to her. "What happens after death?" she wondered. "Since life was so difficult and unhappy, is there a possibility of happiness after death? If so, how can one find out about it?" These were unanswered questions that she thought about often.

It was a happy day for Meena when her "Daju" (big brother) returned from serving in the army. He had been gone two long years — the first member of her family to travel away from their village. The experiences he'd had and the sights he had seen while in big cities were so exciting to hear about!

He showed Meena an army boot and explained, to her surprise, that nearly all the people in big cities wore shoes or boots made of leather! ("What wealthy people must live in cities!" Meena thought to herself.) He told her of a big white box with a door on one side. The inside, he said, is actually cold all the time. He told her how, when placed in the box, food is kept for days without spoiling. She was amazed at such a magical device called a refrigerator.

One thing Daju related really troubled Meena. "Our religion is not the only one in the world," he had said. "I heard of another which follows only one God. Unlike our gods, that God is loving and kind to people. Someone said He made a way for people to go to heaven and actually live at peace with Him when they die."

Meena yearned to hear more about this religion. Could this be the answer to her inner longings? Was this the way to really know God? "Tell me more," she said anxiously. "What is that Way?" But Daju had not heard any more. He did not know the Way. Meena was left with a hungry heart — desiring to know how to find peace, to know the truth, but with no one to tell her.

One day Meena's brother convinced their parents to allow Meena to go with him to visit the big city. While they were buying food in the market place, they met two girls, about the same age as Meena. They soon made friends and the girls explained that they were from an orphanage. Their parents had died, but they had been brought up under the care of Christians, who taught them about the way of Jesus, God's Son.

Because of the civil war that lasted for years there are a lot of orphans in Nepal. Now many children live in orphanages where they receive a Christian upbringing and can study at school in their local language. But there are still many orphans in need of safety, food and education.

Meena asked her new friends many questions and knew in her heart that she wanted to follow Jesus. Life as a Christian would be difficult, because her family would not understand. Also, the government has made it illegal to talk to others about the Christian way. This means that Christians who openly share the Gospel can be imprisoned. Many Christian churches have been closed. But about 1.5% of Nepal's population are Christian and many more are finding Jesus.

One Christian pastor said, "I read all the different religious books, but when I read the Bible, I found the answers to my questions."



<https://www.wholesomewords.org/children/misscc.html>

Manuel of Brazil

Manuel was a little South American Indian boy who lived on the banks of the Amazon River in Brazil. His father was chief of the tribe. Their home was a hut built on high stilts with a roof made of palm leaves, and they had a little farm back in the jungle.

One day Manuel sat on a big log on the bank, dreamily looking out over the broad river. Grandmother had taken the canoe and gone across the water to visit a friend. Father and Mother were at work on the farm.

Manuel was too young to have many worries, but one thing did make him afraid at times. He would hear his people talk about the "river spirits." They did not know much about them, but it was commonly believed they captured people and made them their slaves.

This morning as Manuel sat and dreamed, he became aware of a rumbling and a great movement beneath him. The log began to move toward the river. It was a small landslide, and before Manuel could flee to the safety of the bank, he found himself carried swiftly into the great stream.

Terrified, the poor boy clung to the log and screamed and cried for help. All the while the powerful current was carrying him swiftly downstream. Fish nibbled at his toes, submerged branches struck him as he was swept along, till he was sure the "river spirits" were trying to get him. As he clung to his strange boat, many thoughts went through his mind and he asked himself where would his soul go if the "river spirits" captured him. In his terror he held on more desperately, and two hours went by.



In the meantime, Manuel's father, hearing the boy's cries, had rushed to a neighbor's farm and borrowed his boat. Heading downstream he paddled as fast as he could, hoping to find his boy still alive. By and by he thought he could see a speck on the river far on ahead which might be his son, and he paddled on with renewed energy and hope. Several hours later he caught up with the swift moving log to which Manuel was still clinging bravely.



Oh how great was their joy as he pulled alongside and lifted Manuel into the boat, safe at last! Then they headed for home.

"Tell me, Father," said Manuel, "where would my soul have been if the "river spirits" had got me? Where do we go when we die?"

"I do not know, my son," was the only reply.

Manuel asked many people that question during the next three years, but no one could tell. Then one day some strange people came to visit their tribe. They were not dark-skinned as the Indians were, but white. Manuel's people learned that they were missionaries, and soon they began to teach them some strange and wonderful things out of a black book they carried. They spoke about God who lived in heaven, and about His wonderful Son who came down into this world and died for all men everywhere — even Indians.

The missionaries invited all who would come to the Sunday school to learn from the great and wonderful Book. Manuel went and thought how marvelous it would be to possess that Book for himself. Then he was thrilled one day when the missionary offered a Bible to anyone who could recite the names of the 66 books of the Bible by heart. The missionary thought this would take the Indian children a long time, but what was his surprise the very next Sunday to hear Manuel say them off perfectly. To be sure he got a copy of the Book and then he set about to learn how to read it. All the while the boy listened carefully to everything the missionaries said and searched his own Bible for himself.

As the months went by, Manuel wanted to become a follower of Jesus. He asked the missionaries how to do this, and how glad they were to tell him that the Lord Jesus had died to put our sins away upon the cross, that He had taken the punishment we, and now God forgives every one that believes in Jesus. The Book said, "Whoever received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God." John 1:12

With a heart overflowing with thanksgiving, Manuel opened his heart and received the Lord Jesus as his Saviour that night. A wonderful peace filled his soul. He knew that the river spirits could never have any power over him because Jesus, whom he now worshiped was greater. He also knew that he would always be in the care of Jesus, both now and when he died.

Sometime after, both his father and mother, his grandmother and his sister, all became followers of Jesus, and great was the rejoicing in that happy family.

When Manuel grew older, he preached to his own people the wonderful news of a Saviour who died for people everywhere.

Tomi's Prayer

Just outside the gate of the little Japanese town was the shrine of the Kishibojin god, and every morning, often before it was light, a girl of twenty could be seen throwing herself before the god in earnest prayer. Sometimes she poured cold water over her body as she prayed; sometimes she cut off strands of her hair and offered them to the god. Tomi felt that she must have her prayers answered, so she tried in every way she knew to make the god hear her. Still her prayers were not answered.

Each day, when her prayer was over, she would leave the shrine, go to the factory, work hard all day, and then go home to care for an invalid father and two small children. Tomi was always tired, even in the morning when she went to pray.

Things had not always been so hard. Her mother had died when she was just a little girl, but she had had an elder brother who was kind and who cared for the home. Then her father was taken ill and her brother began to do many things that were not right. He drank alcohol, and was in a bad way when he came home. Finally, after he had struck a policeman, he ran away from home to get rid of paying a fine, leaving his wife and two small children to be supported. Soon his wife ran away also, and so Tomi had her father had the children to care for.

For what was she praying so earnestly? She was praying that her brother might become a good man, and return home to make the last days of his father happy ones. It seemed as if the Kishibojin god might give her this one request. At last, she decided that she must make the promise which was the last resort of those who prayed. After she had made her routine for prayer and sacrifices one day, she said to the god:

"If you will make my brother a good man, I offer up before your shrine both my body and soul."

But the brother did not come home, and still Tomi prayed. One night Tomi was invited to go to a meeting which was being held for the factory girls by visiting missionaries. She listened with great interest as the missionary told of the Saviour, the Loving Friend who cares for all our sorrows. She thought of her brother and wished this Great Friend could help her to find him. She longed to have someone care for her. The next night Tomi again went to the meeting, and soon she was so much interested in Christianity that she wanted to ask the missionaries how she could become a Christian. But one thing held her back—her vow to the Kishibojin god. What would the god do to her if she did not fulfill her vow? Could she forsake the god? Had she not promised to give body and soul to him when her brother came home?



Yet as she reasoned with herself, she found herself wondering why the god had not answered her prayer. Perhaps he did not want her body and soul. Perhaps she did not please him. It was a big problem to her.

One day she went to a Christian Japanese pastor ask him what to do. She told him of her hard home life of the unhappiness of her father, and the wickedness her brother. She told him how many things she had done to please the Kishibojin god and of the final vow she made. The pastor listened to her story and then said that he had come to see that an idol could not answer prayer, and that he felt she could become a Christian and still pray for her brother. For many days Tomi thought the matter over, afraid to leave the idol god, yet eager to know more of Christ. Finally, she made her decision and a great new happiness came into her life as she was baptized and joined the church, and her new friends in that church joined her in praying for the lost brother.

One day, not many weeks later, word came that her brother had been found, that he had tried to commit suicide when he had been trapped by the police, and that he was very ill. Tomi went to him; she was kind to him; and as soon as he could be moved, she brought him back to the home again. He paid his debt to the police. He stopped drinking. And at last, he began going to the Christian church with Tomi, having made up his mind to be a better father to his little children.

In the town where Tomi lived, people had noticed that the girl, whom they had long admired because of her fine spirit when things were so hard, was becoming more beautiful in character. Little by little the story of her change from worshiping the Kishibojin god to the Christian God became known, and the villagers watched to see if the new god would bring her brother home. When he finally returned, changed his ways, and joined the church, they felt that a miracle had happened, and they wanted to know more of this new faith. So Tomi became the center of a new interest in Christianity.

Several years have passed by since she became a Christian. She found that she was not content to be ignorant, for she wanted to give the Bible to others; so she began to study. She asked to be allowed to work for her board in one of the Mission schools so that she could study the Bible in her spare time.

"If God wants my life, he will supply my needs," Tomi said to her friend. "God answers prayers, as I well know, and now I am praying for an education."

<http://www.temkit.com/13-Missionary/World%20Mission/40%20stories.pdf>

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?