

A folk story from India

Primary Lesson Plan

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Source

[Access Asia: Primary Teaching and Learning Units](#)

Learning area

English

Level

Middle and upper primary

Description

Students read and discuss the Indian folk story, *The Silly Monkeys*, and complete related activities.

Purpose

To introduce students to folk stories from an Asian tradition and help them to develop understanding of *qualities* of characters in a story and the *moral* of a story.

Duration

One hour

Possible outcomes

In relation to *English — a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, this lesson can contribute to the achievement of outcomes in all strands.

Materials required

Copies of the handout *The Silly Monkeys* (from below)

Procedure

1. The story

Explain that the class is going to read a folk story from India that is 2500 years old. Read the story on the handout to the class, stopping after the first paragraph to allow students to predict what might be going to happen. Record suggestions.

2. Discussion

Clarify any words or parts of the story that students do not understand. Then discuss the following questions:

- How close were students' predictions to what happened in the story?
- Do monkeys usually appear silly to students? Were the monkeys in the story silly?
- What harm came from the monkey king's decision to pull up the plants?
- What would have happened if the monkeys had stayed in the garden with their king?
- What might have happened to the monkey king later?
- Have students ever been in a situation like that of the monkeys?

3. Writing tasks

Use the board to list the characters in the story. Explain what is meant by the *qualities* of a character. Then ask students to write a few sentences describing the qualities of each character.

Explain what is meant by the *moral* of a story. Ask students to write a suitable moral for *The Silly Monkeys*.

Extension activities

1. Jataka stories

The Silly Monkeys is one of the Jataka tales from the time of the Buddha. Use *Access Asia: Primary Teaching and Learning Units* or other sources to introduce a discussion of who the Buddha was and the basic tenets of Buddhism.

2. Further writing

Ask students to write an account of what happened from the point of view of the monkey king, or one of the other characters.

3. Other folk stories

Use *Access Asia: Primary Teaching and Learning Units* or other resources to provide further examples of Asian and other folk stories. Students examine similarities and differences among the stories.

Acknowledgements

Access Asia: Primary Teaching and Learning Units is part of the Access Asia series, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training through the Asia Education Foundation.

Related resources

Brewer, W. 1995, *Many Flowers*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton, Vic.

Handout

The Silly Monkeys

A long time ago in ancient India, a festival was held in the city of Varanasi. It was to be a grand occasion with singing and dancing and all kinds of food and entertainment. While the festival was in progress, the king of Varanasi issued strict instructions that the gardener should take good care of his beautiful garden. The gardener knew that the king was very proud of his garden but when the festival music sounded, and the people started to flock in the streets, the gardener could not bear to miss out.

A tribe of monkeys lived in the garden and the gardener started thinking, 'If I can get the monkeys to do the watering for me, I can go and enjoy myself too.' He presented himself respectfully to the king of the monkeys, offering his majesty and his subjects fruit and young shoots to eat. Then he asked, 'Would you please do me a favour and water the plants in the garden while I'm away?' 'We would be delighted,' said the monkey king. 'Make sure you do,' said the gardener, giving the monkeys the water-skins and watering-pots to do the work with. Then off he went. The monkeys quickly set to work.

'We should be careful not to waste the water,' observed their king. 'Before you water, first pull up each plant and look at the size of its roots. Give plenty of water to the ones with deep roots and only a little to those with tiny roots.' The monkeys obediently did what they were told. Besides, they were having a lovely time playing with the water, and pulling up the plants added to their fun.

A wise man came by and saw what was happening. He asked them why they pulled up plant after plant and watered them according to the size of the roots. 'Because these are our king's commands,' answered the monkeys cheerily. The wise man pointed out to the monkeys that they had killed all the plants, and went on his way. The monkeys were shocked. They decided to follow the wise man, leaving the monkey king alone in the ruined garden, feeling very foolish indeed.