

# The Blossom Tree: Storytelling tips and Learning tools

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## **Before narration:**

Introduce this story as being based on a Buddhist folktale from Tibet that emphasizes the importance of good friendship.

## **Storytelling:**

- Use character voices where appropriate and show facial expressions of the characters in each scene.  
For example, use trembling voices for the woodcutters when they tell the king about felling the blossom tree, an angry tone for the king's response, and a sad tone for the king's wife as they decide to agree with the woodcutters on felling the tree
- Use gestures:
  - Point to the roof when the king asks his masons to inspect the damage
  - Wipe imaginary sweat off your forehead to imitate the tired masons sitting under the tree
  - Place your hand on your head for the sad king sitting with his wife under the tree
  - Outstretch your hands and sway them to symbolize the happy tree swaying her branches after being rescued by the chameleon
- Hold suspense at the point before the king responds when the woodcutters tell him about the rotten blossom tree. Ask the children, "Guess what the king said?"  
The kids might suggest an angry response from the king.  
After the students have provided their responses, tell them, "Let's see what happens in the story." Then give them the story's ending

## **After narration:**

Ask the children:

- To notice how the outfits of the characters in the illustrations are different from those in their country
- To describe the king, tree, and chameleon
- If the king was right in deciding to fell the tree? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- If there are any proverbs they know that could apply to this story  
[Example: A friend in need is a friend indeed]
- If there are other similar/different tales they know from other countries  
[A different tale would be that of two boys who run into a bear. One escapes by climbing up a tree without helping his friend. The friend lies still on the ground, pretending to be dead. The bear sniffs at the boy on the ground and goes away. After the bear is gone, the boy from the tree climbs down and asks his friend what the bear whispered in his ears. To this his friend answers, "He told me to be careful about the friends I choose for only true friends help out during tough times."]
- If they have a best friend (real/imaginary) and to write about them
- To suggest one alternate happy ending and one sad ending for the story

## **Extended activities:**

- The story can be performed as a drama in class by students
- It can also be used to talk about plant and animal habitats that co-exist on trees (symbiosis)

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## Reading Comprehension:

Ask the children:

- 1) Why did the king like his blossom tree?
- 2) What they think would have happened had the merchant not brought wood for the king's palace?
- 3) To imagine what the blossom tree must have looked like, and to write a few sentences to describe it. What other plants, insects, birds, and animals do they think lived on the tree?
- 4) What does "wrath" mean?
- 5) In the story, the chameleons "camouflaged" themselves. What does it mean?
- 6) Do they know other animals that camouflage? Why do they do so?

## Answer Key

- 1) The king had fond memories of the tree as a child. Now, the tree relaxed and comforted him and gave him peace of mind
- 2) Left up to the students' imagination
- 3) Left up to the students' imagination
- 4) Rage, extreme anger
- 5) To change color, to disguise and/or blend with the environment
- 6) Ex. Leopards, butterflies. To escape from predators (butterfly) or to catch prey (leopard)