

The Woodcutter and the axe: Storytelling tips and Learning tools

Before narration:

Introduce this story as a folktale from India.

Author's note: I have also seen a video of the Nepalese version of this tale.

The illustrations in this version are western in style, just for a change from the usual styles that accompany this tale.

Storytelling:

- Use character voices for the woodcutter (base), the goddess (soft), and the neighbor (gruff).
- Use simple gestures and appropriate facial expressions for:
 - Sad woodcutter after losing his axe: Hand cupped on chin
 - Happy, smiling woodcutter talking to his wife
 - Neighbor peeping and eavesdropping (place your hand near your ear as if to listen)
 - Neighbor in pain when he is stung by bees
- Ask the children to guess what the goddess tells the lying neighbor when he drops his axe in the river. Appreciate any responses you get and then disclose the ending.
If the kids guess that the neighbor will be punished for being greedy, it shows their sense of justice.

After narration:

- Ask the children to:
 - Extrapolate about what would have happened when the neighbor told his story to his wife
 - Describe the characters in the story
- This story has a clear sense of greediness being punished and honesty being rewarded.
 - Discuss with the children about what the neighbor did wrong? Why is it wrong to lie?

Extended activity:

This story can be performed in class by the students.

Reading Comprehension:

Ask the children:

- 1) What does eavesdropping mean?
- 2) Why did the neighbor think that the woodcutter was foolish?
- 3) Can you imagine the decorations on the golden and silver axes? Describe them in a few words

Answer Key

- 1) Listening without the speaker's knowledge or permission
- 2) The neighbor did not hear the full story. He thought the woodcutter was foolish to have told the truth about the axes, giving up the expensive axes for his old, steel axe.
- 3) Left up to the students' imagination (Ex. precious stones, pearls)