

Stories About The Importance of Honesty

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

A Shepherd Boy tended his master's Sheep near a dark forest not far from the village. Soon he found life in the pasture very dull. All he could do to amuse himself was to talk to his dog or play on his shepherd's pipe.

One day as he sat watching the Sheep and the quiet forest, and thinking what he would do should he see a Wolf, he thought of a plan to amuse himself.

His Master had told him to call for help should a Wolf attack the flock, and the Villagers would drive it away. So now, though he had not seen anything that even looked like a Wolf, he ran toward the village shouting at the top of his voice, "Wolf! Wolf!"

As he expected, the Villagers who heard the cry dropped their work and ran in great excitement to the pasture. But when they got there they found the Boy doubled up with laughter at the trick he had played on them.

A few days later the Shepherd Boy again shouted, "Wolf! Wolf!" Again the Villagers ran to help him, only to be laughed at again.

Then one evening as the sun was setting behind the forest and the shadows were creeping out over the pasture, a Wolf really did spring from the underbrush and fall upon the Sheep.

In terror the Boy ran toward the village shouting "Wolf! Wolf!" But though the Villagers heard the cry, they did not run to help him as they had before. "He cannot fool us again," they said.

The Wolf killed a great many of the Boy's sheep and then slipped away into the forest.

Liars are not believed even when they speak the truth.

Questions to ask your children:

1. Why did the boy tell the people that a wolf was around?
2. Instead of sinning by lying, what else could the boy have done to help his boredom?

3. Why didn't the people believe the boy after he falsely told them a wolf was coming?
4. What bad things happened all because of the boy's lie?
5. What, if anything, could the boy do now to be believed again in the future? What should he do to try to fix things?

The Monkey and the Dolphin

A sailor, bound on a long voyage, took with him a Monkey to amuse him while on shipboard. As he sailed off the coast of Greece, a violent tempest arose in which the ship was wrecked and he, his Monkey, and all the crew were obliged to swim for their lives. A Dolphin saw the Monkey contending with the waves, and supposing him to be a man (whom he is always said to befriend), came and placed himself under him, to convey him on his back in safety to the shore. When the Dolphin arrived with his burden in sight of land not far from Athens, he asked the Monkey if he were an Athenian. The latter replied that he was, and that he was descended from one of the most noble families in that city. The Dolphin then inquired if he knew Piraeus (the famous harbor of Athens). Supposing that a man was meant, the Monkey answered that he knew him very well and that he was an intimate friend. The Dolphin, indignant at these falsehoods, dipped the Monkey under the water and drowned him.

Bragging, lying, and pretending, has cost many a man his life and estate.

Questions to ask your children:

1. Why did the monkey lie?
2. What should you do if you want someone to like you or do you a favor, so you want to impress them?
3. If you met someone who said things about himself that weren't true, how would you feel about that person? Say you met someone who pretended to like what you like, but he really doesn't, and you find out about it: how would you feel about him? What would you think about him? Would you believe him in the future?

The Crow and the Raven

A crow was jealous of the Raven, because he was considered a bird of good omen and always attracted the attention of men, who noted by his flight the good or evil course of future events. Seeing some travelers approaching, the Crow flew up into a tree, and perching herself on one of the branches, cawed as loudly as she could. The travelers turned towards the sound and wondered what it foreboded, when one of them said to his companion, "Let us proceed on our journey, my friend, for it is only the caw of a crow, and her cry, you know, is no omen."

Those who assume a character which does not belong to them, only make themselves ridiculous.

Questions to ask your children:

1. If you want someone to like you, what should you do? What shouldn't you do?
2. If you know of someone who's able to do something better than you can, what should you do? What shouldn't you do?

The Emperor's New Clothes

Many years ago, there was an Emperor who was so very fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them. He did not trouble about his soldiers. He did not care to go to the theatre. He only went out when he had the chance to show off his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day. Most kings could be found sitting in council. It was said of the Emperor, "He is sitting in his wardrobe."

One day, two fellows calling themselves weavers came to town. They said that they knew how to weave cloth of the most beautiful colors and patterns. The clothes made from this wonderful cloth would be invisible to everyone who was unfit for the job he held, or who was very simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "If I had such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my kingdom are unfit for their job. I would be able to tell the wise men from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." He gave large sums of money to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work at once.

So the two pretend weavers set up two looms. They worked very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the finest silk and the purest gold thread. They put both into their own knapsacks. Then they pretended to work at the empty looms until late at night. "

I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth," said the Emperor to himself one day. When he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his job would be unable to see the cloth he began to worry. To be sure, he thought he was safe. However, he would prefer sending somebody else to bring him news about the weavers, and their work. All the people in the kingdom had heard of the wonderful cloth. All were eager to learn how wise or how foolish their neighbors might be.

"I will send my faithful old wise man to the weavers," said the Emperor at last. "He will be best able to see how the cloth looks. He is a man of sense. No one can be better for his job than he is."

So the faithful old wise man went into the hall where the thieves were working with all their might at their empty looms. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. "I cannot find the least bit of thread on the looms." However, he did not say his thoughts aloud.

The thieves asked him very kindly to be so good as to come nearer their looms. Then, they asked him whether the cloth pleased him. They asked whether the colors were not very beautiful. All the time they were pointing to the empty frames. The poor old wise man looked and looked. He could not see anything on the looms for a very good reason. There was nothing there.

"What!" thought he again. "Is it possible that I am a fool? I have never thought so myself. No one must know it now if I am so. Can it be, that I am unfit for my job? No, the Emperor must not know that either. I will never tell that I could not see the stuff."

"Well, Sir!" said one of the weavers still pretending to work. "You do not say whether the cloth pleases you."

"Oh, it is excellent!" replied the old wise man, looking at the loom through his spectacles. "This pattern, and the colors, yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay, how very beautiful I think them."

"We shall be much obliged to you," said the thieves. Then they named the many colors and described the pattern of the pretended stuff. The old wise man listened with care to their words so he might repeat them to the Emperor. The thieves asked for more silk and gold saying that it was necessary to complete what they had begun. Once again they put all that was given them into their knapsacks. They went on working with as much effort as before at their empty looms.

The Emperor soon sent another man from his court to see how the weavers were getting on. Now he wanted to know if the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the wise man. First he looked closely at the looms on all sides. He could see nothing at all but the empty frames.

"Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you, as it did to my lord the wise man?" asked the thieves of the Emperor's second advisor.

"I certainly am not stupid!" thought the man. "It must be, that I am not fit for my good job! That is very odd. However, no one shall know anything about it." And so he praised the stuff he could not see. He declared that he was happy with both colors and patterns. "Indeed, your Imperial Majesty," he said to his emperor when he returned. "The cloth which the weavers are preparing is extraordinarily magnificent."

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth, which the Emperor had ordered to be woven.

Finally, the Emperor himself wished to see the costly material while it was still in the loom. He took many officers of the court and the two honest men who had already admired the cloth. As soon as the weavers saw the Emperor approach, they went on working faster than ever although they still did not pass even one thread through the looms.

"Is not the work absolutely magnificent?" said the two officers of the crown, already mentioned. "If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! What a splendid design! What glorious colors!" and at the same time they pointed to the empty frames; for they imagined that everyone else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship.

"How is this?" said the Emperor to himself. "I can see nothing! This is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen—Oh! The cloth is charming," said he, aloud. "I approve of it completely." He smiled most graciously and looked closely at the empty looms. No way would he say that he could not see what two of his advisors had praised so much. Everyone with the Emperor now strained his or her eyes hoping to discover something on the looms, but they could see no more than the others.

Nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!" and advised his majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material for the parade that was planned. "Magnificent! Charming! Excellent!" was called out on all sides. Everyone was very cheerful. The Emperor was pleased. He presented the weavers with the emblem of an order of knighthood. The thieves sat up the whole of the night before the day on which the parade was to take place. They had sixteen lights burning, so that everyone might see how anxious they were to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms. They cut the air with their scissors and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they, at last. "The Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

The Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers. The thieves raised their arms, as if in the act of holding something up. "Here are your Majesty's trousers! Here is the scarf! Here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; one might fancy one has nothing at all on, when dressed in it."

"Yes indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything of this special cloth. The Emperor was undressed for a fitting, and the thieves pretended to array him in his new suit.

The Emperor turned round and from side to side before the looking glass.

“How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes, and how well they fit!” everyone cried out. “What a design! What colors! These are indeed royal robes!”

“I am quite ready,” said the Emperor. He appeared to be examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to carry his Majesty’s train felt about on the ground as if they were lifting up the ends of the mantle. Then they pretended to be carrying something for they would by no means want to appear foolish or not fit for their jobs.

The Emperor walked under his high canopy in the midst of the procession, through the streets of his capital. All the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, “Oh! How beautiful are our Emperor’s new clothes! What a magnificent train there is to the mantle; and how gracefully the scarf hangs!”

No one would admit these much admired clothes could not be seen because, in doing so, he would have been saying he was either a simpleton or unfit for his job.

“But the Emperor has nothing at all on!” said a little child.

“Listen to the voice of the child!” exclaimed his father. What the child had said was whispered from one to another.

“But he has nothing at all on!” at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was upset, for he knew that the people were right. However, he thought the procession must go on now! The lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever, to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold, and the Emperor walked on in his underwear.

Questions to ask your children:

1. Why did all the people but the boy pretend to see the Emperor’s clothes when he wasn’t wearing any?
2. Why did the people finally admit that the Emperor wasn’t wearing clothes after the little boy cried out that he wasn’t?
3. If you were in that crowd of people watching the Emperor walk by, what would you be thinking? And what would you do?