

The Short March to Wisdom

***by Venerable Yung Dong
and
Marjorie Jacobs***

Illustrated by Peter Martin

International Translation Center
Focusing on Chan

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Introduction

There have been many books published on Buddhism as religion, philosophy, and psychology. Most of them are theoretical and abstract, difficult for the beginner and/or student to understand, especially in a practical way. Even when books have been written in an easy-to-read story format, they have usually been available in Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Korean but few have been published in English.

Our common interest in teaching, popular education, and Humanistic Buddhism brought us together as friends and colleagues to write *The Short March to Wisdom*. Each of us has over twenty years teaching experience, together ranging from elementary school, high school, adult education, and university levels. For seven months, we met almost every day at the International Buddhist Progress Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, discussing the application of Buddhist concepts to every day living, exchanging educational approaches, and exploring how we could best spread the Dharma, teachings of the Buddha. They were meetings of Eastern and Western teachers discovering a shared passion and belief that by helping people develop openness and more positive thinking, they could create their own happiness, improve their relationships with others, and contribute to community.

It is through our long-standing commitment to education that we bring you *The Short March to Wisdom*. It is a collection of thirty-two illustrated, Buddhist stories written according to the ancient Chinese tradition of story telling. Since most of the stories are old from Sutras, we translated and adapted them to modern society so that they would be relevant and engaging to today's reader who seeks to explore and understand basic concepts and practices of ethics. The stories can be interpreted at many levels and are written to be accessible to a broad cross-section of people. The stories are suitable for self-study and guided instruction in a variety of settings, such as in schools with teachers and students, at home with parents and children, and in organizations with youth and adult groups.

The allegorical, pen and ink illustrations accompanying each story open windows to Buddhist thought and philosophy. They also stylistically bridge the divide between traditional Eastern and Western art, reinforcing the notion that *The Short March to Wisdom* is a book for multicultural American and other English-speaking audiences.

We used a Chan approach throughout the book. Every story in *The Short March to Wisdom* is accompanied by six questions. By studying the illustration and reflecting on the questions, meaning unfolds. Each story's questions guide you, the reader, in your search for the essence of the Buddha's teachings and progress from the concrete

to the more abstract. They encourage you to investigate and think deeply about seemingly simple concepts.

By answering the questions and understanding the stories, you can learn many lessons, such as the benefits of joy, compassion, honesty, flexibility, and kindness, which can be applied to daily life and relationships. When used in classes or study groups, the questions can also stimulate discussion and writing. Students will, consequently, have the opportunity to improve their reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills. In addition, the questions to the stories can help foster a non-judgmental attitude by people learning to accept and respect different viewpoints. There is no right or wrong way to answer most of the questions. The stories can be understood from different perspectives as they teach several Buddhist concepts, not just one. We hope that the lessons learned from *The Short March to Wisdom* ultimately promote open-mindedness, self-reflection, and positive thinking and action.

We have intentionally not provided commentary and an answer key. This will hopefully inspire you to search for deeper meaning whenever possible and embrace different ideas without judgment. You have to figure out which story illustrates which of the Buddha's teachings. We invite you to familiarize yourself with the list at the end of this introduction. It covers all the lessons of the stories drawing upon general ethical concepts, the five precepts

(vows to guide behavior and improve relations with all sentient or living beings), the five poisons (things to avoid in your daily living), and the six perfections (things to guide your daily living).

The Short March to Wisdom was piloted prior to publication in public and private schools and in temples of the International Buddhist Progress Society in the United States and Canada. Many friends, followers, young people and adults in discussion groups, and students in adult basic education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes had the opportunity to use this book and provide us with much valuable feedback. We invite you to read *The Short March to Wisdom* and take on the challenge of cultivating wisdom, good relationships, and happiness.

Yung Dong

and

Marjorie Jacobs

*"When learning,
strive for depth and breadth.
When cultivating,
be patient and tolerant."*

-- Venerable Master Hsing Yun

The Founder of Fo Guang Shan and
the International Buddhist Progress Society

About the Illustrator

Peter Martin is an architect, urban designer and exhibit designer. His artwork can be seen in museums throughout the USA. Born and educated in Leicester, England, he now resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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General Ethical Concepts of Stories:

- * acting with flexibility (according to skillful means)
- * attachment
- * awareness
- * Buddha Nature (All beings are born with a good, pure nature)
- * compassion
- * equality
- * expectation
- * forgiveness
- * happiness
- * impermanence
- * importance of community (sangha)
- * importance of creating good relationships with others
- * importance of rightful (clean) speech
- * joy
- * making vows or a promise
- * moderation in doing all things or following the middle path
- * open mindedness
(having a non-judging or accepting attitude of others)
- * power of positive thinking
- * practice of mindfulness
- * realization and practice
- * repentance
(feel sorry or regret for past acts and thoughts and promise to change)
- * self-help
- * showing appreciation
- * showing remorse
- * suffering

Five Vows (Precepts):

1. not to kill
2. not to steal
3. not to engage in sexual misconduct
(extramarital sexual relations)
4. not to lie
5. not to take intoxicants (alcohol, illegal drugs)

Five Poisons:

1. greed
2. anger and hatred
3. ignorance
4. arrogance
5. doubt

Six Perfections:

1. giving
2. observing the five precepts
3. patience
4. diligence
5. concentration
6. wisdom

The Short March to Wisdom

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Two Buckets

Two buckets hanging on a well are relaxing on a sunny afternoon. They are enjoying the first days of summer. The spring rains are over. The flowers are blooming. The air smells sweet and fresh. People are busy carrying water, making tea, watering the flowers, washing clothes, and hanging them outside to dry.

The two buckets begin to chat to each other. One bucket says, "I feel so useless. Every time when stupid people fill me with water, they empty me immediately. Then I'm left alone. I'm so isolated that I have nothing to do but stare at the sky, and it looks so gray. The flowers don't even thank me for the water I hold. When the people are drinking tea, they don't even think of me."

The other bucket replies, "I feel very appreciated. People handle me with care admiring my beautiful wood. Every time they empty me, they fill me up again immediately. I'm never alone. People flock to me. When they water their flowers, they keep coming back to me for more. Without me, they have no way to get water for their tea. I'm proud to be indispensable!"



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *What are the two buckets doing on a sunny afternoon?*
2. *How does each bucket feel?*
3. *What does each bucket represent?*
4. *Which bucket would you prefer to be and why?*
5. *How can the first bucket not feel so useless and alone?*
6. *What does the story teach us about how to have a happy life?*

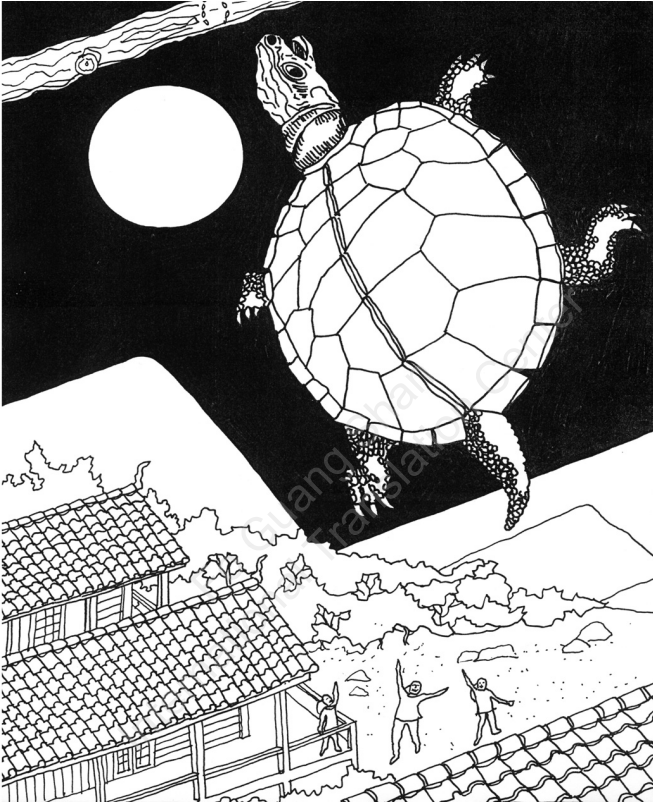
The Turtle and the Cranes

In a rural area of Southeast Asia, two cranes and a turtle lived in the same pond. They were all friends. They enjoyed a peaceful life and rarely fought with each other. Their relationships were very harmonious.

After several months, the water dried up. The two cranes decided to move and asked the turtle to join them. The turtle liked the idea because he did not want to be alone. However, he could not see how this was possible since he could not fly. The cranes, who were ingenious problem solvers, came up with an idea. Each of them could hold the end of a wooden pole in its beak, and the turtle could hold onto the middle of the pole with his mouth. Then the three of them could fly to another pond which was full of water.

A few days later they set off on their trip. When they flew through a village, many children looked up at them. They started shouting and laughing, "Look, two cranes are holding up a turtle so he can fly."

Upon hearing the children, the turtle became angry and embarrassed. He wondered why the children were staring and laughing at him. He got so annoyed that he shouted, "Mind your own business." As he spoke, he lost his grip on the pole and fell from the sky to his death.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. Why did the children laugh at the turtle?*
- 2. Why did the turtle get angry?*
- 3. Who was responsible for the turtle's death and why?*
- 4. How could the turtle have saved his own life?*
- 5. How could a turtle and a crane be friends?*
- 6. Why did the cranes include the turtle in their plan to survive?*

Big House, Little House

A young couple was very much in love. Their life together was very hard because they were poor. After saving some money, they decided to move to a new country in order to find work and a better life. They had relatives there.

After they moved, they were surrounded by beautiful things: big houses, elegant furniture, and many stores. With the help of their family, they bought a small house at the foot of a hill. They raised their first child in this house.

The husband worked long hours and did not spend much time at home. The couple began to save money to build their dream house. The wife was very busy taking care of their four children and keeping the home clean and tidy. She also had her own business making and selling cakes.

After fifteen years, the couple had enough money saved to build a big house. The rooms were so large and empty that their voice echoed. The wife spent most of her time shopping in the stores. She wanted to fill up their dream house with pretty things and make sure that all the neighbors would see how well dressed her children were.

The husband now was a successful business man. He became upset with his children who were always running from room to room. They hardly spoke to him. He got upset with himself too and sometimes felt guilty. One day he realized that he was a stranger in his own home and began to cry.

A month later, he donated the giant house to an orphanage so that children without parents could have a nice home. He quit his job and moved his family back into their happy little house.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the couple move to a new country?*
2. *What was this new country like?*
3. *Why was the husband never home?*
4. *Why was the father upset and feeling guilty after he moved into the new house?*
5. *Why did the husband donate his new home to an orphanage and move back to his old, small house?*
6. *Can money and nice things really bring you happiness? Please explain why or why not?*

The Monkey and the Beans

Once upon a time deep in the forest, a monkey carrying a handful of beans was happily returning to his little shelter. Suddenly, he dropped one bean on the ground. The monkey panicked. He got very nervous and let go of all the beans he was holding. He walked back a few feet in order to search for that single bean. In the meantime, hens and ducks gathered to eat the beans on the ground.

The monkey searched very hard but was unable to find the one bean he had dropped. Feeling disappointed, he went back to pick up the other beans. There he found the hens and ducks. They were eating all the beans.

In the end, the monkey was left with nothing.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why did the monkey release all the beans that he was carrying?
2. What mistake did the monkey make?
3. How could the monkey have prevented his loss?
4. What kind of a person does the monkey represent?
Please explain.
5. What were the benefits of this experience for the monkey, the hens, and the ducks?
6. What did you learn from the monkey?

The Accident

A young student loved to climb mountains. One weekend his college friends and he went to climb Five Finger Mountain which was five kilometers from his village. When he had almost reached the top, he lost his footing and fell sixty feet.

One of his friends ran to the nearest town to find a telephone to call the student's father and look for a doctor. It was night when he arrived. He called a small health clinic. The telephone rang and rang. At last, a doctor, who had been sleeping, answered the telephone. The mountain climber described the accident, and the doctor agreed to help. The student was so tired from running several hours that he stayed in the town to rest but gave the doctor directions to the location of the accident.

When the doctor was less than two kilometers away from Five Finger Mountain, an old man, who was walking quickly on the road, flagged down the car. The doctor pulled over to the side of the road. He got out of his car. The old man kicked the doctor in the knees. When he fell down, the old man jumped in the car and drove off.

After a few minutes, the doctor got up from the ground. Realizing that he was not hurt, he started running very fast to get to the injured mountain climber. When the doctor arrived at the scene, the young man was already dead. An old man was holding him in his arms and sobbing. The doctor recognized this man as the one who had stolen his car.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. What were the causes of the mountain climber's death?*
- 2. What did one of the student's friends do when the accident happened?*
- 3. If the students were on a climbing trip today, what could they do or bring with them to prepare for an accident?*
- 4. Why did the old man steal the doctor's car?*
- 5. What was the mistake that the old man made?*
- 6. What can "climbing a mountain" represent in our life?*

The Scorpion and the Turtle

A scorpion wanted to cross a river, but he could not swim. When he saw a turtle, he called loudly to him, "Would you please help me cross the river?"

The turtle answered, "No, you will sting me."

The scorpion replied, "No, I won't sting you. If I sting you, both of us will drown and die. I promise not to sting you."

Trusting the scorpion's words, the turtle swam to him. The scorpion climbed onto the back of the turtle. The turtle swam hard until he almost reached the other side of the river. Suddenly, without thinking, the scorpion stung the back of the turtle's neck. The turtle wailed with pain and little by little began to sink. As he was drowning, gasping for breath, he asked the scorpion, "Why did you turn on me? You promised not to sting me. I am going to die, and soon you will die too."

The scorpion answered, "I don't know why."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *What did the scorpion ask the turtle to do?*
2. *Why was the turtle, which is a bigger animal, afraid of the scorpion?*
3. *Why did the turtle help the scorpion?*
4. *Why did the scorpion sting the turtle?*
5. *If you were the turtle, would you help the scorpion?
Please explain your answer.*
6. *How can we prevent such accidents like the one described in this story?*

The Young Boy and the Monk

The Japanese Master Chin Run made the decision to become a monk at a young age. When he was nine years old, he went to see the Chan Master Tsung Cheng and asked him to shave his head.

Chan Master Tsung Cheng said, "You are so young. Why do you want to become a monk?"

The boy replied, "Yes I'm young, but my parents died a year ago, and I don't understand why. I don't know why my parents left me all alone. I would like to become a monk to find the answers."

The Chan Master Tsung Cheng was impressed by the boy's explanation and told him, "Okay, I accept you as my disciple. However, it's too late now. I will shave your hair early tomorrow morning."

The boy did not agree with the Chan Master's decision. He protested, "Although you promise to shave my hair tomorrow morning, I'm too young to promise that I won't change my mind by then, and you're too old to promise that you will be alive in the morning."

The Chan Master Tsung Cheng was very happy with the little boy's thinking. He said, "You are right. I will shave your head right now."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

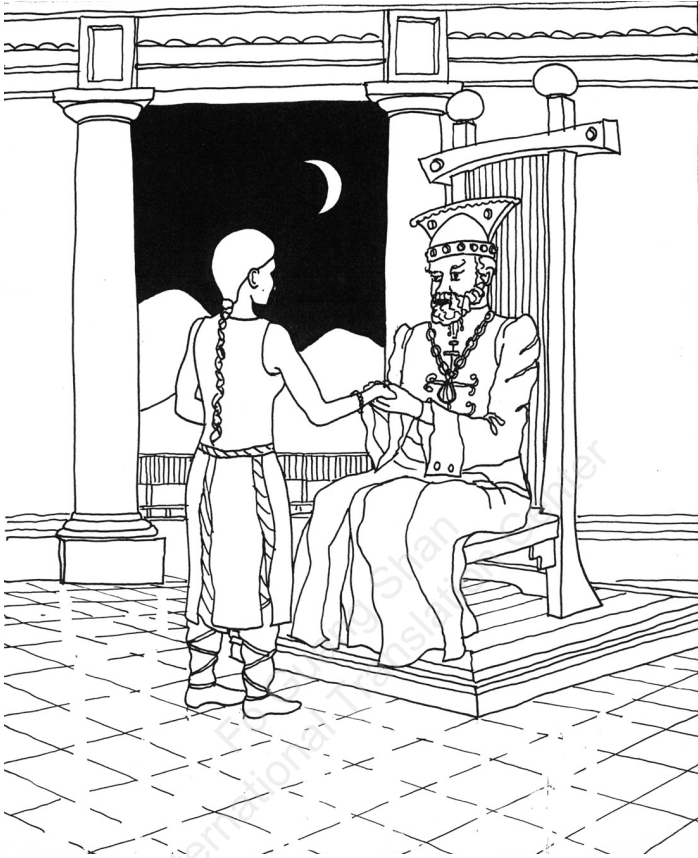
- 1. What did the young boy ask the monk to do?*
- 2. Why did the young boy decide to become a monk at age 9?*
- 3. Why did the monk refuse to shave his head immediately?*
- 4. Why was the Chan Master impressed by the boy?*
- 5. What does this story tell us about the relationship between age and wisdom?*
- 6. What was the Chan Master's real reason for deciding to shave the boy's head immediately?*

The King and His Princess

There was a king who had a new born daughter. He loved her very much and played every day with her. However, he worried that she was growing too slowly, so he called upon all the doctors around the kingdom. He asked them to help her grow faster.

The king's personal doctor was afraid to refuse the request from the king. Reluctantly, he agreed to help the little princess. He said to the king, "I can help, but I must get medicine from overseas. May I take her with me? Also, you must promise me that you will not try to see her during the time when we are away. If you cannot do this, the medicine will not work."

Twelve years later, the doctor came back with the princess so that she could see her father. The king was very happy to be reunited with his daughter. With gratitude, he spoke to the doctor. "Your medicine was so effective, so wonderful. Now my little princess is tall and full grown."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

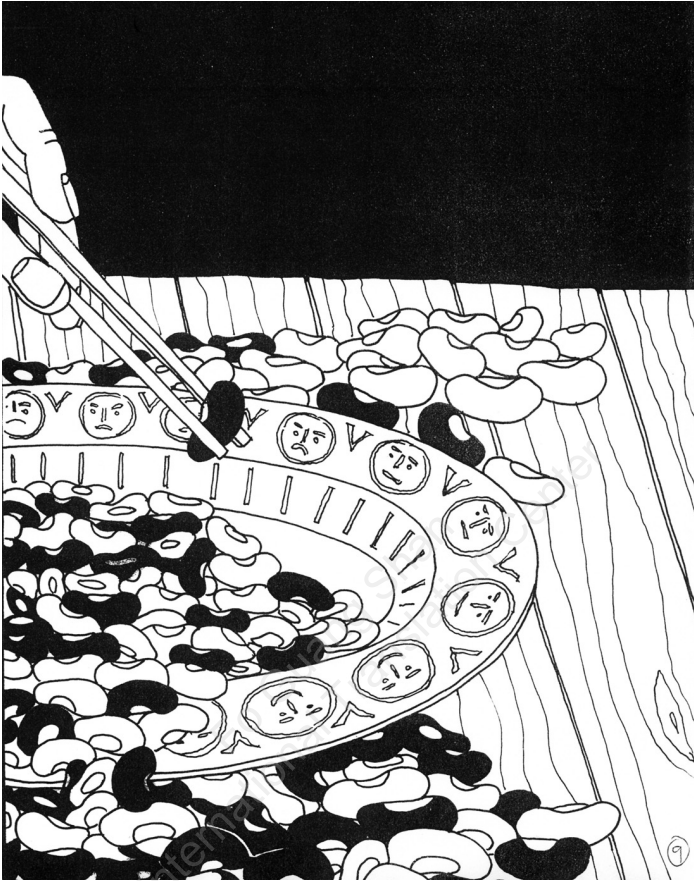
- 1. What was worrying the king?*
- 2. Why did he ask for the help of doctors?*
- 3. What kind of medicine did the palace doctor use?*
- 4. Why was the doctor not eager to help the king?*
- 5. What happened during the 12 years when the doctor and the princess were away?*
- 6. What does this story teach us about the relationship between time and development, especially human development?*

White and Black Beans

A serious man wanted to do good things during his life. In order to do them, he had to change the way he thought. He made up a game to see which of his thoughts were good and which were bad. Each time he had a good or positive thought, he placed a black bean on his dining room table to the left of his plate. When he had a bad or negative thought, he placed a white bean to the right of his plate.

In the beginning, the white beans outnumbered the black ones, 3 to 1. He had a big pile of them on the table. The man felt so disappointed with himself that he practiced having happy thoughts even harder. He observed his thoughts more carefully. Gradually, he found the black beans increasing in number. Still, he was not satisfied with himself because there were some white beans to the right of his plate. He worked more to increase his positive thinking and decrease his negative thoughts. His friends noticed the difference and wanted to spend more time with him. Before, he spent most of his days alone or in arguments with other people.

Day by day he watched and enjoyed the increasing number of black beans. They became his favorite food.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the serious man invent a game?*
2. *What were the rules of the game?*
3. *What kinds of your thoughts would receive a white bean and which ones would receive a black bean? Give some examples.*
4. *How did the serious man increase the number of black beans?*
5. *What did winning this game mean for him?*
6. *At the end of the story what were the results of his game?*

The Poor Man and the Mirror

In ancient China, a poor man lived by himself. He could not even afford a mirror framed in bronze which most other people had. He never knew how he looked. He could see every body else except himself, so he felt bad.

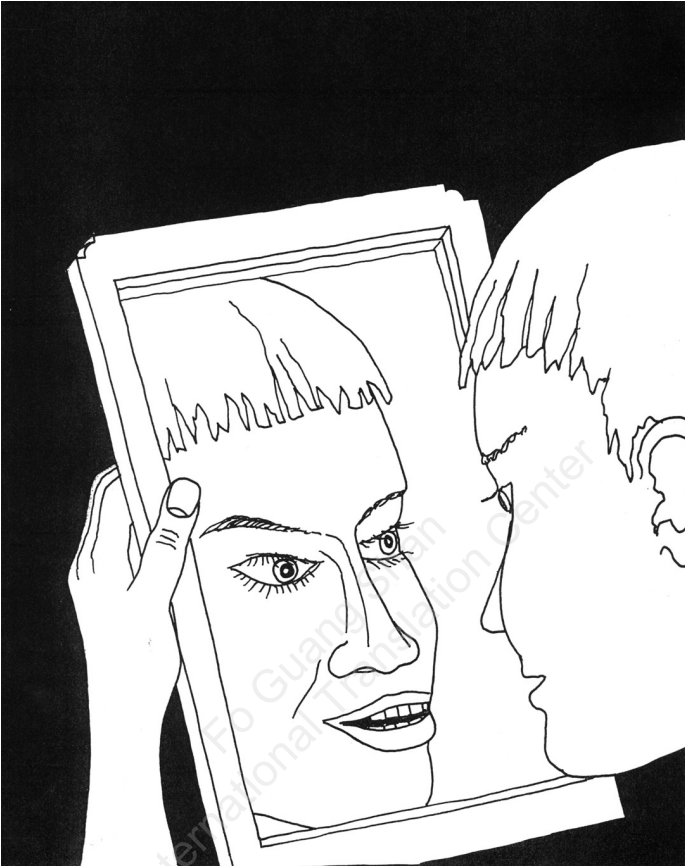
One day his friend Pin lent him a mirror. The poor man was very happy with the opportunity to see himself for the first time. He was so joyous that he danced by himself all around his home. Every day he held the mirror up, and with excitement and wonder, he examined his face.

A few days later Pin took the mirror back. The poor man became nervous and sad. Everywhere he went, he shouted, "My head is gone. My head is gone."

When Pin heard about his friend's suffering, he went to visit him. The only thing the poor man could say was, "Where's my head? Where's my head?"

Pin turned around and hit his friend in the head. "My head is killing me," complained the poor man.

Finally, the poor man found his head!



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why didn't the poor man know how he looked?*
2. *Why did his friend Pin lend him a mirror?*
3. *How did the poor man feel when he received the mirror?*
4. *Why did Pin take back his mirror?*
5. *What lesson did Pin teach his friend when he hit him in the head?*
6. *Why did the poor man suffer when Pin took the mirror back?*

The Moon Is Watching

A poor man suffered a lot because he did not have a job or enough money to support his family. He got into the habit of stealing vegetables from his neighbor's garden.

One night he went with his son to the garden to steal some turnips. When he picked the third turnip, his son suddenly shouted from behind, "Daddy, somebody is watching you! "

The father asked, "Who is looking at me?"

The son answered, "Look up, the moon, daddy, the moon is watching you."

After listening to the son's answer, the father felt embarrassed. He immediately put down the turnips. He felt very sorry, yet he was happy at the same time. He walked home silently holding his son's hand . On his way, he thought that he would use both his hands to earn a living the honest way.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. What did the poor man steal from his neighbor's garden?*
- 2. Why did the poor man steal from his neighbor's garden?*
- 3. Who was watching the poor man?*
- 4. Why did the poor man feel bad?*
- 5. How did the son help his father?*
- 6. What did the poor man mean when he said that he would "use both his hands to earn a living the honest way"?*

The Well Digger

Thuan wanted to dig a well to find water, so he asked his neighbor to show him a good place. He was excited to start. He dug to the depth of eight meters, but he could not find any water. He was disappointed and gave up.

Days later Thuan met a person while shopping in a nearby town. Thuan asked if the man knew where there was a good place to dig a well. The man showed him a location. Day and night Thuan dug until he went down 10 meters. He uncovered soil, rocks, and worms but no water. He felt very frustrated and left the site.

On a sunny afternoon the next week, Thuan headed to a beach. He saw two fishermen standing on a pier. He asked them if they knew where he could find a good spot for a well. They showed him a place. Thuan dug diligently to the depth of twelve meters. Again, he could not find a drop of water. He sat on the ground close to the hole he had dug and put his hands over his face. This time he was so upset and angry.

The next month while Thuan was taking his Saturday walk in the woods, he met three hikers and explained to them his problem of finding water. They advised him to go to a field nearby to dig a well. This time he dug to the depth of fifteen meters. Still no water came out. Now he was fuming and very angry with himself.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why was Thuan digging a well?
2. What was Thuan's problem?
3. What words in the story describe how Thuan was feeling?
4. Who did Thuan ask to help him find a good site for his well?
5. Why couldn't Thuan find water?
6. What was the real reason that Thuan was angry with him self, and what could have done to prevent the situation from occurring in the first place?

Papa Frog and Little Frog

A little frog was playing in a field on a farm. He saw a gigantic cow lying down. He was very excited because it was so big. He got very close to it and jumped on its back. The cow felt something itchy and began to "moo, moo." The little frog got scared and leapt all the way home.

Late at night when his father arrived home, little frog told him what he had seen during the day. He described the cow's big stomach. After carefully listening, Papa Frog stuck out his belly and asked him, "How big was that cow? As big as this?"

Little Frog shook his head "no."

Papa Frog sucked in so much air that it pushed his belly out even further.

Again Little Frog shook his head "no."

Five more times Papa Frog tried to make his stomach as large as a cow's, and each time Little Frog said, "No, not big enough."

On the eighth try, Papa Frog breathed in so much air that an old house would fall down, but still it wasn't big enough. Before his Little Frog's eyes, Papa Frog suddenly exploded.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why was Little Frog in the field?
2. What did Little Frog see in the field?
3. Why was Papa Frog filling his belly with air?
4. How did Little Frog know the size of the cow?
5. Each time Little Frog said "No," what did his father do?
6. At the end of the story what happened to Papa Frog and why?

The Monk's Vow

A monk had a lazy disciple who always got up at noon. One day the monk was very angry and yelled at the young monk, "It's 12 o'clock now, and you're still in bed. Even the turtles are swimming at the surface of the pond enjoying the sunlight."

At that moment, a man, who was walking by the outside wall of the discipline's bedroom, heard the loud voice. He was on his way to the pond. His mother was very sick, and her doctor suggested giving her some turtle meat. The meat would help to cure her.

When the man arrived at the pond, he saw two turtles swimming near the shore. He stepped into the water and pulled out a net from his pocket. He caught both turtles on his first try. He took them home and cooked them for his mother. He made a big turtle soup.

The man brought some soup to the monk to show his appreciation. The monk thanked the man, and then realized that this man had heard his speaking about the turtles. He felt sorry and guilty about the turtles' deaths. He made a vow that he would never talk again.

A few days later, the monk was sitting outside in front of his temple. He saw an old, blind man walking toward the pond. He tried to stop him, but when he opened his mouth, he remembered his vow. He felt a conflict in his mind, but he kept silent. Suddenly, the blind man fell into the pond and drowned.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

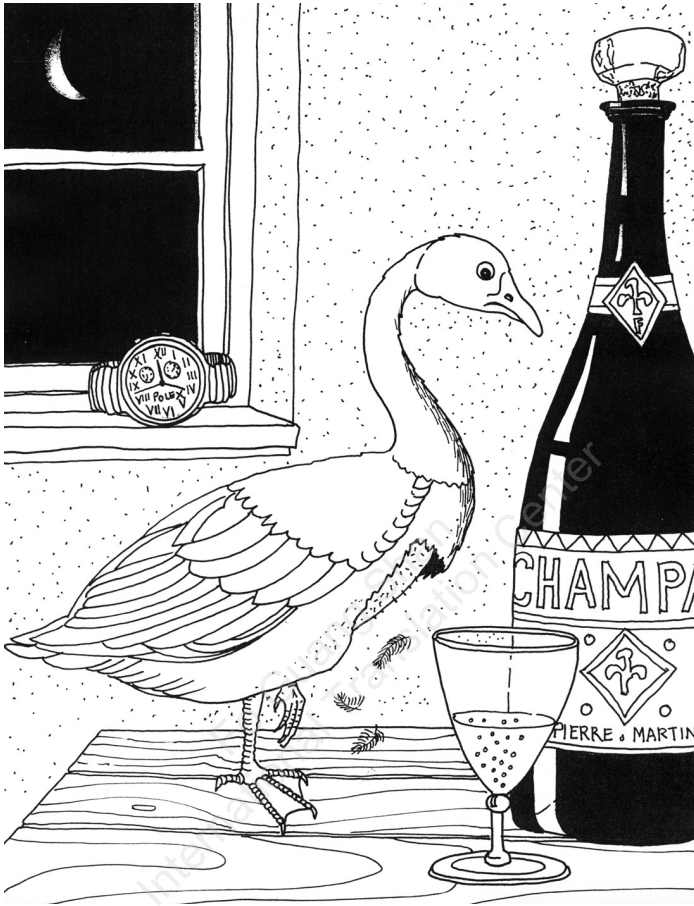
1. *Why did the monk yell at his disciple?*
2. *Why did the man walking by the disciple's bedroom go to a pond?*
3. *How did the man capture the turtles and what did he do with them?*
4. *Why did the monk feel guilty, and why did he make a vow to never speak again?*
5. *Why did the monk feel conflicted?*
6. *What were the consequences of the monk's vow, and how could they have been prevented?*

The Golden Goose

A married man died from heart disease at forty years old. After he died, he wanted to be reborn as a golden goose. He wanted to come back to show his wife appreciation and love for everything she had done for the family. He hoped to lessen her suffering from money problems as well.

The wife loved her golden goose. She used him to make money to support herself. Every day she plucked one golden feather and sold it. It was tiring and troublesome for her to sell only one feather a day. It was not bringing her enough money to survive.

One day she decided to pluck all the goose's golden feathers at once. The goose cried from the pain. A miracle happened. Suddenly, the goose grew new brown feathers all over his body and flew away.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. Why was the married man reborn as a golden goose?*
- 2. How did the wife support herself after her husband died?*
- 3. In what way did she like the golden goose?*
- 4. What does it mean to be reborn?*
- 5. Can a person choose his rebirth and how?*
- 6. How did the golden goose fly away and why did he leave his wife again?*

Two Brothers

After a twenty-five year separation, two brothers, each with 20 ounces of gold, met on a trip back to their birth place. They stopped to rest near an isolated mountain where there were no people.

The older brother had a hateful thought which was to kill his younger brother to take his twenty ounces of gold. At the same moment, the younger brother had the identical thought. He would kill his older brother for his twenty ounces of gold. Although the two brothers shared the same thought, neither one of them had the courage to carry it out. They only stared uncomfortably at each other. Each of them could see nervousness in the other's face.

The brothers continued on their journey. After walking mindfully for a couple of miles, each of the brothers realized how bad his thought was and transformed his hatred. Separately and to themselves, they thought, "It's good if my brother has money and I also have money. Why should I, therefore, kill my brother?"

They kept walking until they reached a pond by the road. The older brother thought, "Gold is a poison which misled me to think about murdering my brother." He stepped close to the pond. Piece by piece, he threw all his gold into the water.

When the younger brother saw the gold disappear, he said, "Great, great." Then, he tossed all of his gold into the water too.

The older brother praised his younger brother for doing the same. Both of them confessed what each of them had been thinking.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Where did the two brothers meet after a twenty-five year separation?*
2. *What did each brother think about doing?*
3. *Why didn't either one of the brothers put his thoughts into action?*
4. *Why did each brother change his mind?*
5. *Why did each brother throw all his gold into the pond?*
6. *How did each brother feel at the end of the story?*

Animal School

A rabbit, duck, sparrow, eel, owl, and squirrel had a meeting to start a school for all of them. They talked about what classes they would need.

The rabbit said, "Running is important. We should have a running class. We can prepare our students for the Olympics.

The eel added, "Swimming is necessary too..."

The bird interrupted and said, "We can't forget a class on flying. We can visit our friends and family faster."

The squirrel argued, "Climbing trees is even more useful because most of us can't afford a plane ticket."

Finally, the animals accepted all the ideas for classes at their new school. They decided to offer classes only during the day.

While the rabbit was trying to learn to fly during one of his classes, he broke his hind leg. Therefore, when he took his running test, he got a "C" instead of the "A" which he had expected. Even worse, he received a "D" on the flying test.

The sparrow was naturally a good flier, but he only got a "C." This happened because he broke one of his wings and his beak when he was digging a hole. He blamed the owl who wanted the school to have a special class on digging.

Although the eel passed all his tests, he was frustrated. He received barely passing grades. The owl decided not to go to the school.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. Why did the animals have a meeting?*
- 2. How many kinds of animals met?*
- 3. What kind of a school did the animals want to have?*
- 4. What happened to the rabbit in school?*
- 5. Why didn't the owl attend the school?*
- 6. Why couldn't the students get good grades and feel happy with their results?*

Chan Master and the Writer

During the Tang Dynasty, a Chan Master lived in Hang Chou, a city of mainland China. He practiced meditation in a tree day after day, and for this reason, he was called Chan Master Niao Chiao, which means "nest."

The famous writer, Chuyi Pei, went to visit Chan Master Niao Chiao to ask what was the meaning of Buddhadharma. The Chan Master answered, "Buddhadharma is doing good things and not doing any evil things."

After listening to the answer, Chuyi Pei said, "It is not difficult. Even a three year old child knows what Buddhadharma means."

The Chan Master replied, "You are right. Everybody understands its meaning. However, you should know that although a three year old knows it, not even an eighty year old man can carry out the teachings of the Buddha. Even you, a great writer, cannot follow the way of Buddhadharma."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the famous writer visit the Chan Master?*
2. *Why did the Chan Master receive the name "Niao Chiao"?*
3. *What does "Buddhadharma" mean?*
4. *What kind of an action would a "Buddhadharma" take?
Please give an example from your own life.*
5. *How did the Chan Master know that Chuyi Pei did not really understand the meaning of "Buddhadharma"?*
6. *How is it possible that an 80 year old person cannot know the true meaning of "Buddhadharma"?*

A Dream

A pile of earth dreamed one day of being delivered to a ceramic factory. There she would become a beautiful vase to give pleasure to others. She imagined holding beautiful red roses for everyone to smell and admire. She waited and waited; however, no one came for her.

Months later in the middle of summer, a giant truck stopped at her side. Two men got out with big shovels. Load by load, they piled her into the truck. She was transported to a factory where she was made into an ugly bowl. She complained about what had happened to her to all the workers who walked by her, but nobody heard her. At the end of two weeks, she was sent to a gift shop.

As the days passed, she became depressed sitting on a shelf in the store. By this time, summer was over, and the students were returning to school. She thought she would die alone in this gift shop. Eventually, a kind man bought her.

One day the man gave the bowl a compliment. He said, "Because of you, we have the most lovely lily flowers in the world. Don't you know that the roots of the lily flower grow in you?"

After listening to the compliment, the bowl felt much better. She began to look around her and appreciate everything she now saw.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *What did the pile of earth dream and why?*
2. *What happened to the pile of earth?*
3. *Why did the bowl become depressed?*
4. *What effects did the compliment have on the bowl?*
5. *What does this story tell us about our dreams?*
6. *If you were a pile of earth, what would you like to become and why?*

The Eagle and the Wolf

An eagle flew to her nest in a nearby tree holding a piece of bear meat in her mouth. A hungry wolf smelled the fresh meat and got close to the base of the tree. He jumped up on the tree and barked to get the attention of the eagle. When the eagle looked in his direction, the wolf said, "Oh, you look so pretty sitting in your nest. If your song is as beautiful as your feathers, you will be the queen of all the birds in the forest."

After hearing the compliments from the wolf, the eagle started to sing loudly and proudly. As her song came out of her mouth, the meat she had been chewing fell to the ground. The wolf immediately picked it up. She began to cry and asked, "What am I going to do? I flew so far and fought so hard to get this food."

The wolf said happily, "Queen of the birds, you should remember not to be so proud when you receive a compliment from others. Losing a piece of meat is nothing for the lesson you have learned."

The wolf ran off, the meat hanging from his mouth. The eagle felt sorry for herself and ashamed. She promised to herself that she would never listen to compliments anymore.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the eagle return to her nest?*
2. *What did the wolf want from the eagle?*
3. *How did the wolf get what he wanted from the eagle?*
4. *What did the eagle do when she received the wolf's compliment?*
5. *What lessons did the wolf teach the eagle?*
6. *Why did the eagle feel sorry and ashamed?*

Man with an Artificial Eye

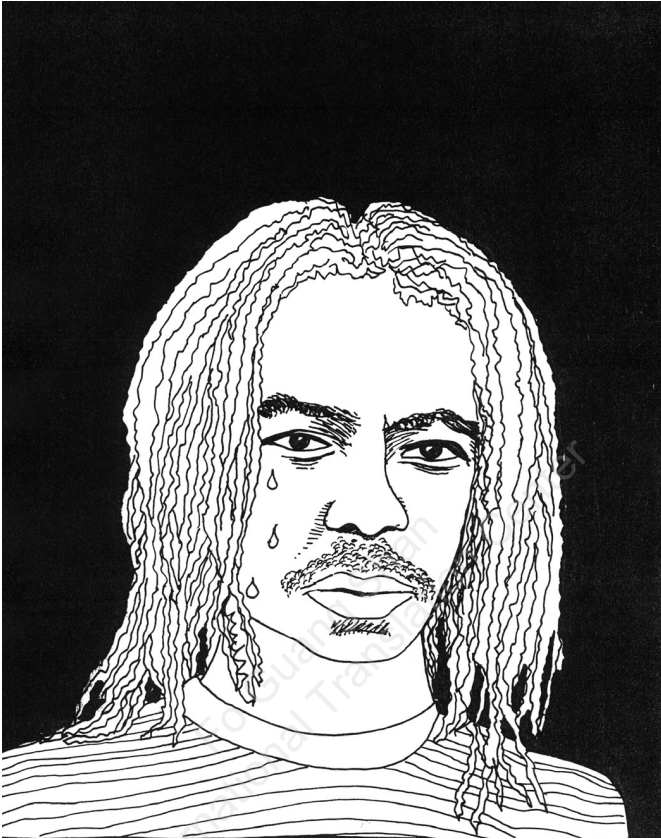
A very rich and well known actor was living in Hong Kong. He used his money to shower himself in things. He bought a new Mercedes Benz every year and had the finest designer clothes and jewelry.

Unfortunately, this actor was blind in his left eye from birth. He spent thousands of dollars to buy an artificial eye. It looked like a real one, so nobody noticed. He felt very proud of his false eye and showed off his good looks.

One day the actor was shopping. A young boy and his mother saw him. The boy was so excited. Holding a video in his hand, he ran up to the actor and asked for the star's signature to show the autograph to his friends. The actor saw the boy's happiness and smiled. When he was signing his name, the boy noticed something about the actor's eyes. He pointed to the left eye and asked, "Why does your left eye look different?"

The actor was embarrassed and asked the boy's mother, "Why is your son asking me this?"

The mother said, "It's simple. Your right eye still has some compassion. I can see a tear of joy on your cheek."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *How did this actor spend his money?*
2. *Why did he have an artificial eye?*
3. *What was he proud of and why?*
4. *Why did the young boy run up to the actor?*
5. *What did the young boy notice?*
6. *How could the mother answer the actor's question?*

Man in the Pond

A man lived alone in the mountains. One day he went down to the town to buy some things. On his way, he saw a still, blue pond surrounded by willow trees. He walked to the edge of the water. When he looked down at his reflection in the water, he got scared. He shouted, "Help, help!"

Hearing his cries, some people who were picnicing under a willow tree, ran over to him. They asked him, "What is the matter?"

He said, "I'm in the water. I don't know how to swim, so I'm going to drown."

The people asked, "What are you talking about? How can you drown here on land?"

They dragged him closer to the water. He said, "Look, I'm still in the water. I'm going to drown. All of you will drown, too. Help! Help!"

Finally, the man went crazy. He fell to the ground. He kicked and screamed. He started ripping his shirt and pulling off his pants. The people, seeing how out of control he was, took him to a hospital.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why did the man yell, "Help! Help"?
2. Who ran to the man and what were they doing?
3. Why did the man think he was going to drown?
(Give at least three reasons.)
4. Why did the people drag the man closer to the water?
5. Would the people surrounding the man drown too and why?
6. What does it mean "to go crazy"?

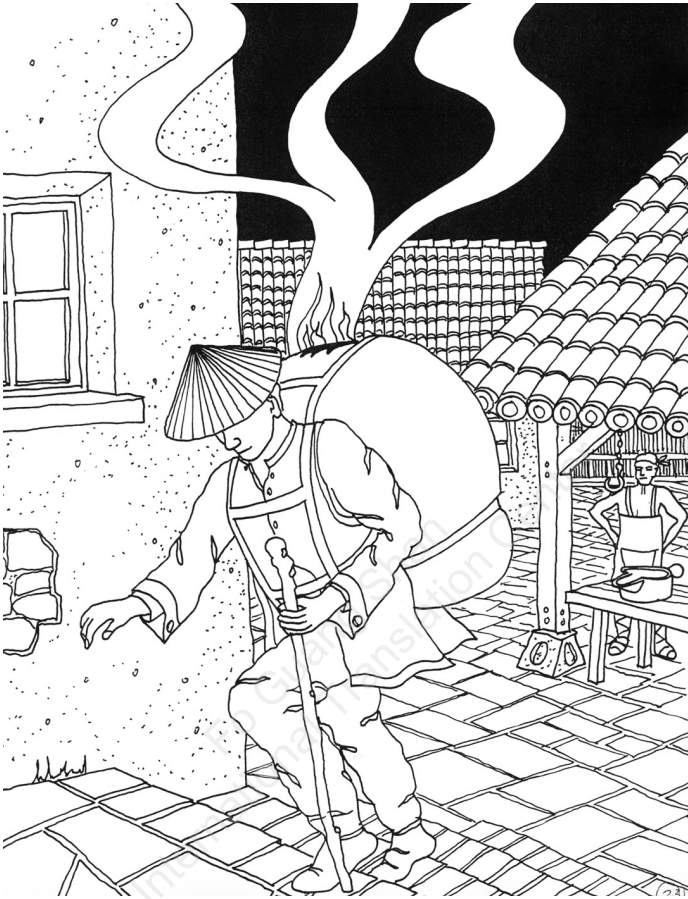
Cotton and Gold

A farmer grew a field of cotton. He took very good care of his plants knowing that he could earn a lot of money from them. City people loved cotton clothes. They were fashionable as well as comfortable. Early in the morning, he would pull the weeds, water his plants, and watch them grow.

After the farmer had grown a big crop and picked all the plants, he went to the town with a bag of cotton to sell. On the street, he saw a smelter working. The man was melting down gold. The farmer admired the beauty of the gold and knew its high value. He dreamed of having some. He could build a new house and buy a new tractor for his farm if he had gold. He could even buy his wife a green jade necklace for all his neighbors to admire.

When the farmer saw the smelter walk away in the direction of a rest room, he stole a small piece of very hot gold. Within minutes, the smelter returned. The farmer quickly put the gold into his bag of cotton. All of a sudden, he smelled something burning and saw his bag of cotton go up in flames.

The smelter laughed. He then asked the farmer to return the piece of gold.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why was the farmer carrying a bag of cotton?*
2. *What was the smelter doing?*
3. *Why did the farmer desire the gold?*
4. *Why did the smelter laugh?*
5. *What is the trap that the farmer fell into, and what were its consequences?*
6. *What kind of trap have you fallen into in your life?*

Two Young Monks

There were two young monks, Don and Min. Don lived on Eastern Mountain, and Min lived on Western Mountain.

One day they both went down to the same town to shop. On the way they met, and Min asked Don, "Where are you going?"

Don replied, "I am heading where the wind blows."

Min was confused by his answer and went looking for the help of his teacher. The teacher suggested that he ask Don, "If there is no wind, where will you go?"

The next day Min began his trip to the town with confidence and a big smile. At the base of the mountain, he met Don again and asked, "Where are you going?"

Don said, "I will go where my feet take me."

Min was left speechless. He was surprised by Don's answer and felt even more confused and embarrassed.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Where were Don and Min going?*
2. *What did Don mean when he said, "I'm heading where the wind blows"?*
3. *Why did Min not understand Don's answer to his first question?*
4. *When Don said, "I will go where my feet take me," what did he mean?*
5. *Why was Don so clever?*
6. *In the end, why was Min left speechless?*

Man without Arms and Legs

A quadriplegic lived in a home for handicapped people in the countryside. He had no arms and no legs. He was called "tumbler" by everyone who knew him.

The quadriplegic always whistled happily day and night while sitting in his wheel chair. He even had a job. He used his mouth to hold a knife and carved beautiful wooden statues of Buddha. While he was whittling the wood, he would hum and think to himself, "I love to work. Working sets me free."

The carver was very sympathetic to a house cleaner who was a mute. She could not speak, not one word. One of his customers, who bought a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha, asked him, "Why do you feel so close to this woman?"

The sculptor answered, "When she smells flowers and sees sunsets, she cannot admire them with words nor song. She cannot even say the name of her son, speak to him, nor praise his good behavior. Compared to her, I am so lucky. I can speak, sing, and carve little Buddhas with my mouth."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

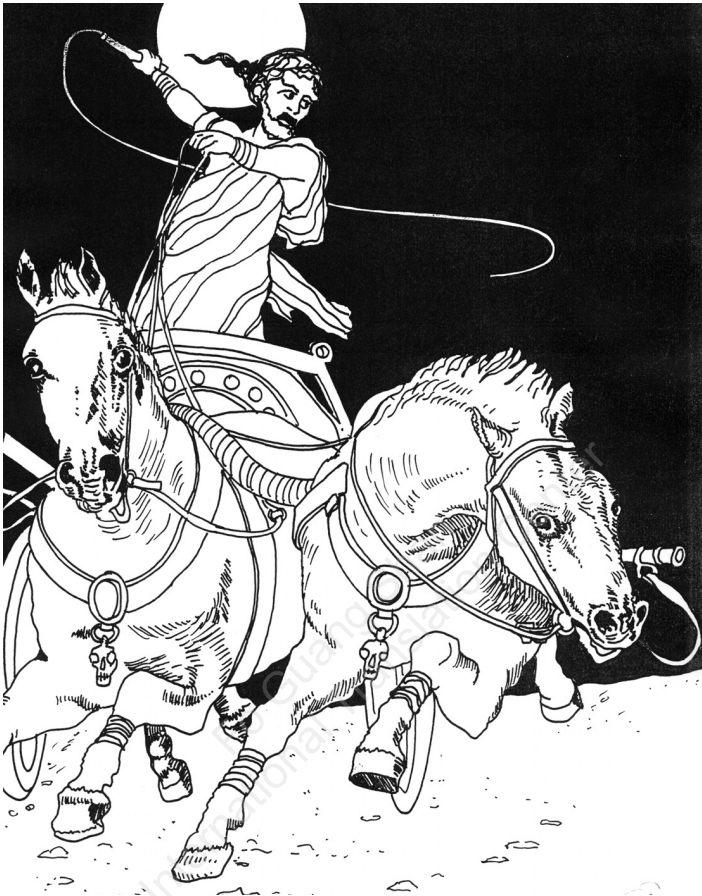
- 1. How was the sculptor different from other people?*
- 2. How did the sculptor work?*
- 3. Why did the sculptor like working so much?*
- 4. Why was the sculptor sympathetic to the house cleaner?*
- 5. How did the sculptor feel most of the time, and why did he feel this way?*
- 6. If you lost your sight, how would you feel, and how could you find happiness?*

The King and the Horse Trainer

A king loved to ride horses as well as drive a horse-pulled carriage. He learned his skills from the most famous horse trainer in his country. When a new carriage was delivered to the palace, the king was anxious to try it out and compete with the trainer.

The next day the trainer and the king raced. No matter how much effort the king made, he still was far behind the trainer. The king got very angry and complained to the trainer, "Why didn't you teach me all the skills of racing?"

The trainer replied, "Your majesty, I taught you everything I know. You didn't win because you were too nervous and tried too hard. You only thought about winning and had no patience. When you were far behind me, you became anxious and frustrated. You forgot everything I taught you. Instead, you whipped your horse again and again to make her go faster. You never thought about her safety and feelings. A horse trainer always looks at the physical condition and feelings of the horse before and during the ride. He tries to act with the horse, not against it. That's why a horse trainer always wins a race.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

- 1. How did the king learn how to ride horses and carriages?*
- 2. How did the king feel when he was not winning the horse race?*
- 3. Why did the king complain to the horse trainer?*
- 4. Why did the king lose the horse race?*
- 5. What advice did the horse trainer give the king?*
- 6. How could you use the horse trainer's advice in your own life dealing with your pets, school work, job, family members, etc.?*

The Girl and the Tourist

A tourist took a trip to Bangkok, Thailand. He stopped at a roadside shop to buy some souvenirs from a girl. He found three things and asked her the prices. She answered, "100 bahts each."

The tourist tried to barter with her. "I'll give you 60 bahts for each item."

She rejected his price, but he kept on insisting that her price was too high and his was reasonable. She said, "If I sell a souvenir for 100 bahts, my boss will only give me 10 bahts. If I sell you each one for 60, I won't get any money for myself."

After listening to the girl, the tourist suggested, "Okay, you sell me each one for 60 bahts, and I'll give you 20 bahts extra for each one. You will earn more from me, and I will save some money too. Both of us will benefit." He was convinced that now she would accept his offer.

Instead, she shook her head and was silent for a few minutes. The tourist, understanding that she was not convinced, pressed on. "Don't worry, your boss will never find out. It will be our little secret."

The girl looked at the man and shook her head in disagreement and said, "Buddha will know."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why did a tourist stop at a roadside shop?
2. How much money would the girl receive from her boss for each souvenir?
3. What was the tourist's first offer to the girl?
4. Why did the girl reject the tourist's first offer?
5. What was the tourist's second offer and why did the girl once again reject it?
6. What did the girl mean when she said, "Buddha will know"?

The Interview

A young man lived alone with his sister in Singapore. Their parents died in a car accident a year ago. The man's sister was a student studying medicine in the local university. They depended a lot on each other. In order to pay their rent and buy food, he decided to get a job to help his sister finish medical school.

The young man looked at the help wanted advertisements in the newspaper. He applied for a job as a nurse's aide in a hospital and was called for an interview. During the interview, the employer asked the young man what his religion was. He was silent thinking about what to say. After a few minutes, he replied, "None. I am not a Buddhist, a Taoist, a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, nor a Hindu."

In reply, the employer said, "I cannot offer you this job. If you do not have a religion, how will you have the compassion to care for sick and dying people?"

The young man again was quiet. Finally, he spoke without fear, "Although I don't believe in God or Buddha, my mother lives in my heart all the time. When my mother was still alive but close to death, I promised her to help other people and not do bad things like lying, stealing, killing, cheating on my girl friend, taking drugs, and thinking only of myself. I have not broken this promise yet."

The employer was moved by the young man's honesty and good morals. He admired his courage. He offered him the job right away. The young man was very happy to accept it.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the young man need a job?*
2. *What kind of job did the young man apply for?*
3. *Why didn't the young man get the job at first?*
4. *Why did the employer ask the young man what his religion was?*
5. *What promise did the young man make to his mother?*
6. *Why did the employer change his mind and decide to hire the young man?*

The Professor

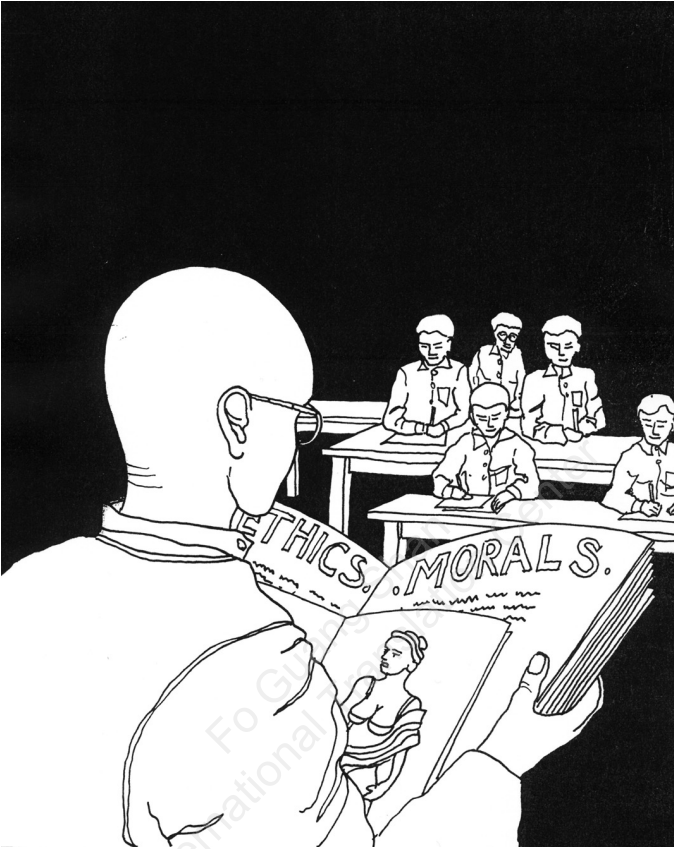
A well-known professor was married with two children. He was respected and known by all for his supernatural powers. He had the power to see sickness in people and know when any kind of natural disaster, such as an earthquake, would happen. Whenever he dreamed about something, it would always come true. One night in his dream, his neighbor, who was a healthy woman, died. The next day, her husband found her dead. People even visited him to get a winning lottery number. When they won, they shared their money with him, too.

One day a beautiful young woman came to ask the professor for his help. Her figure was like a model's, and she was well-dressed. She had not been feeling good for many months. The doctors could never tell her what her problem was. She felt so much pain in her body.

When the professor saw this young woman, he could not speak. He was very attracted to her. He began to sweat, and his heart beat faster. Slowly his eyes examined her lovely body from the top of her head down to her toes. Suddenly, he felt weak. He told the young woman that he would help her, but he needed more time. He asked her to return in one week.

During the following days, he could not stop thinking about her. When he was lying in bed with his wife, he was thinking of this young woman. His dreams were full of her face and body instead of natural disasters and lottery numbers.

The day of the young woman's appointment, the professor was very nervous. His wife prepared breakfast, but he could not eat anything. When the young woman arrived, he was so happy to see her. She asked him if he knew now what her sickness was. But he could not say anything. Instead, he pulled her close to him and kissed her lips. Angrily, she pushed him away and ran out the door. He tried to call to her, but no words came out of his mouth. Since that day, he never spoke again and lost his power to foresee events. Also, he lost his wife and the respect of the people.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *What kinds of supernatural powers did the professor have?*
2. *Why did the young woman go to see the professor?*
3. *Why did the professor want to help the young woman?*
4. *How did the professor feel when he saw the young woman?*
5. *Why did the professor lose his supernatural powers, his wife, and his respect?*
6. *How can a person prevent a physical attraction from destroying his/her close relationships?*

The Monk and the Mara

There was an old monk who practiced meditation daily and studied very hard. He had attained deep samadhi (concentration). He not only focused on his own practice but also served the people. They came to him for help, so he knew well their problems with relationships, school, money, work, and family.

One day a mara (demon) came to disturb him. The mara transformed himself into a demon without a mouth in order to scare the monk. Not afraid, the monk said, "Not having a mouth is good. Without a mouth, you won't be able to eat too much, smoke cigarettes, and gossip about people in your community."

The mara got angry because he could not frighten the monk. Therefore, he decided to transform himself this time into a demon without eyes. Once again the old monk confidently responded, "Not having eyes is good too. Now your eyes won't wander and be fooled by all the distractions around you. You will be able to think more clearly about your life."

The mara got angrier and immediately changed into a demon without legs. This time the monk told him, "Not having legs is good. You can sit still and won't be able to walk to your neighborhood bar to drink wine, stay out late with your friends leaving your family alone, or waste money gambling."

In the end the mara could not scare the old monk at all and in frustration left.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why couldn't the mara scare the monk?*
2. *What does the mara symbolize?*
3. *What does the old monk symbolize?*
4. *What is the wisdom that the old monk has?*
5. *What demons or bad influences are trying to mislead you?*
6. *How can you resist your own demons or bad influences?*

The Stick and the Servant

A rich man gave a walking stick to his servant Stoney. He then ordered Stoney to give it to the stupidest person in the world.

The servant traveled through many towns and cities. He spoke to many people, but he could not give the stick away to any one.

One day when the rich man was dying of cancer, all his relatives and servants gathered around him. Stoney entered his bedroom with the walking stick. He asked the rich man, "Where are you going?"

The rich man answered, "I don't know."

Stoney asked another question, "And for how long will you go?"

Again, the rich man replied, "I don't know."

The servant continued, "Did you pack your suitcase?"

The dying man said, "I didn't pack anything."

In a loud voice, Stoney replied, "I never heard of a traveler who did not have a packed suitcase, know where he was going, or plan for how long he would be gone. So you, master, deserve this walking stick."



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did the rich man give his servant a walking stick?*
2. *Why didn't the servant give away the walking stick when he was traveling?*
3. *Why couldn't the rich man answer the servant's questions?*
4. *What does it mean for a dying man to "pack his suitcase"?*
5. *Why did the rich man deserve the walking stick?*
6. *Who was the wise person in this story and why?*

The Suitcase

Ton Yi suffered a lot in his life. He was poor and often could not find work. He and his three children lived in a wooden hut. His wife died giving birth to their youngest child.

Ton Yi admired his rich neighbor who lived in a 12-room house and had a new car. He also envied another neighbor who was a professor. This man was happily married and was respected by everyone for his knowledge. Ton Yi used to pray that he would become rich and joyous like his two neighbors. He wished for his suffering to end.

One night Ton Yi dreamed that a sage told him to pack all of his suffering in a suitcase and walk ten miles to the east. There he would find thousands of other suitcases. He could take his time to choose a new one for himself and leave his old suffering behind. The sage instructed him not to open the suitcase until he reached his home. Ton was so excited and immediately packed his bag. He ran with his suitcase to the east.

When Ton Yi arrived at the location, he started to pick up the suitcases one by one until he found the lightest one. By this time, his arms were tired. He hurried to go home with the lightest suitcase in his hand.

On his way home, Ton Yi was so excited that he forgot the sage's instructions. He quickly opened the suitcase. He was surprised. The suitcase held everything he had packed before. He sat down and cried.



Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. *Why did Ton Yi suffer so much?*
2. *Who did Ton Yi admire and why?*
3. *What did Ton Yi dream?*
4. *What did Ton Yi find when he walked ten miles to the East?*
5. *Why did Ton Yi feel so sad at the end of the story?*
6. *What advice could you give Ton Yi to help him deal with his suffering?*

Fo Guang Shan

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