

# STORIES ALIVE!

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# Stories Alive!

A photocopiable resource book of story based language learning activities for young learners.

by **Nick Bilbrough**

With illustrations by Gary Ross, Cathy Simpson, James Risebero, Mike Bilbrough and Morgan Kendrick-Ayres.

# Contents

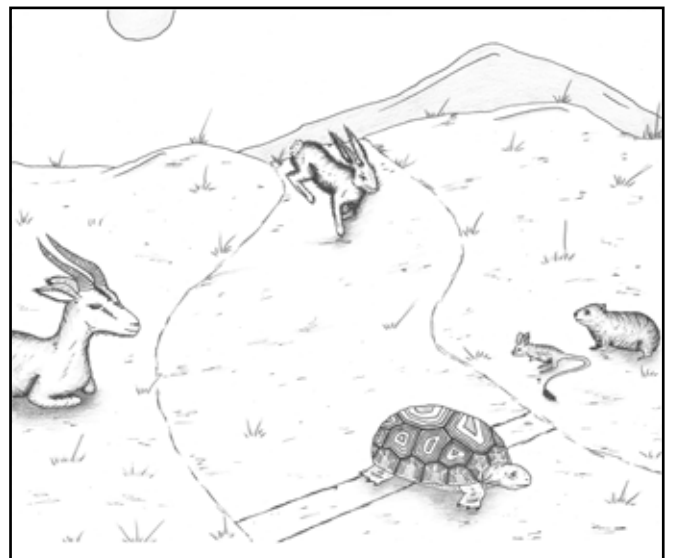
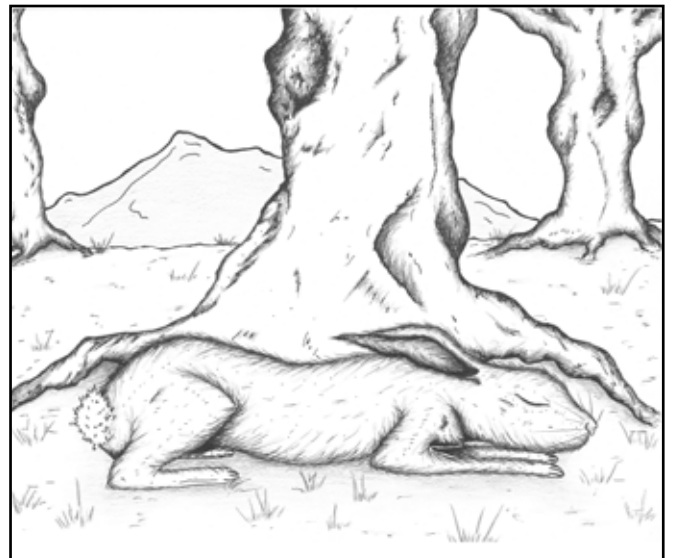
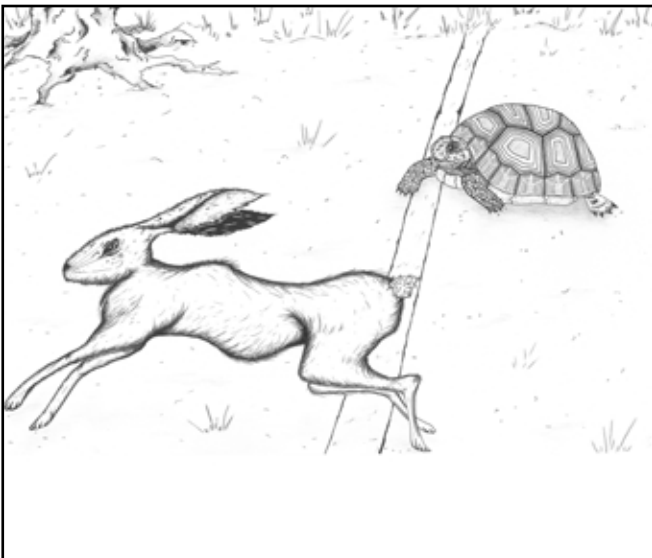
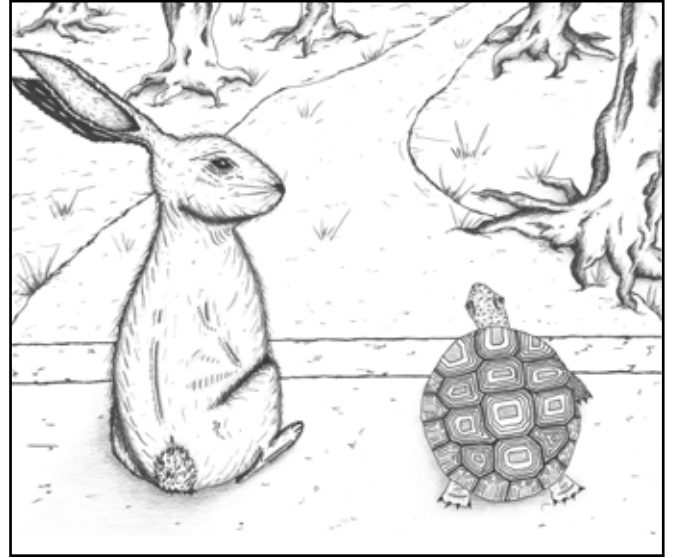
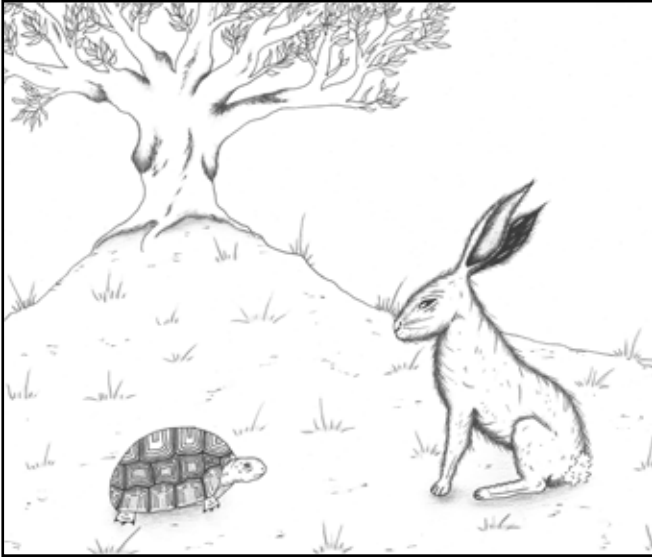
This book consists of ten stories. You will find these four components for each story from pages 2 to 61:

- **Picture stories:** 6 or 8 pictures which can be photocopied and cut into individual images.
- **Story summaries** – each with 6 or 8 main events, separated by dotted lines for copying and cutting up.
- **Chants**
- **Readers' theatre scripts**

Teachers' notes in the second section of the book provide a rationale for the material, and outline a large range of different ways in which it may be used. Your book should also come with a set of pictures for each story on cards, and a USB stick with soft copies of the materials.

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# The tortoise and the hare - picture story



## The tortoise and the hare - story summary

*c) The hare said to the tortoise, 'I am the fastest animal in the world.'*

*f) The tortoise and the hare decided to have a race.*

*a) The hare started very quickly and left the tortoise behind.*

*e) The hare decided to go to sleep under a tree.*

*d) The tortoise overtook the hare.*

*b) The tortoise won the race.*

## The tortoise and the hare - chant

**Tortoise:** I'm small and I'm slow  
My legs are quite short  
I can't run or jump  
And I'm not good at sport

But I'll give you a race  
And I'll come in first place  
I'll come in first place  
I'll come in first place  
But I'll give you a race  
And I'll come in first place  
I'll come in first place  
I'll come in first place

**Hare:** You're crazy. You're wrong.  
You know I'm a hare?  
I'm bigger than you.  
So the race won't be fair.

I'm faster. I'm stronger.  
My legs are much longer.  
My legs are much longer.  
My legs are much longer.  
I'm faster. I'm stronger.  
My legs are much longer.  
My legs are much longer.  
My legs are much longer.

---

## The tortoise and the hare - readers' theatre script

**Narrator 1:** There was once a hare who was very fast at running.

**Narrator 2:** The problem was that he liked to tell everyone how fast he was all the time!

**Hare:** I'm faster than you snake. I'm faster than you rabbit. I'm faster than you mouse.

**Narrator 1:** One day he was running along when he saw a tortoise eating some grass under a tree.

**Tortoise:** Hello. Nice to meet you.

**Narrator 2:** ..said the tortoise, politely.

**Hare:** Do you know....?

**Narrator 1:** ...said the hare

**Hare:** I'm faster than snake. I'm faster than rabbit. I'm faster than mouse. I'm the fastest animal in the world.

**Narrator 2:** The hare looked down at the tortoise under the tree.

**Hare:** You look very very slow. I'm much much faster than you.

**Narrator 1:** The tortoise looked up at the hare. He knew he wasn't very fast but he wanted to teach the hare a lesson.

**Tortoise:** Would you like to have a race with me?

**Narrator 2:** ..said the tortoise

**Tortoise:** So we can see who is the fastest.

**Hare:** You???

**Narrator 1:** ...said the hare.

**Hare:** You're so small. You have very short legs. You can't run!

**Narrator 2:** The hare showed the tortoise his muscles.

**Hare:** I'm big and strong. I have long legs. I'm the fastest animal in the world. You will lose the race for sure!

**Tortoise:** No problem. Let's meet tomorrow here and we'll see who is the fastest.

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**Narrator 1:** The next day they met under the olive trees for the start of the race.

**Narrator 2:** Come on tortoise!

**Narrator 1:** Come on hare!

**Narrator 2:** Ready, steady, go!

**Narrator 1:** The hare started running very quickly.

**Narrator 2:** The tortoise started running very slowly.

**Hare:** This is very, very easy.

**Narrator 1:** ...said the hare and he lay down to sleep under a tree.

**Hare:** I can sleep for a bit and still win the race.

**Narrator 2:** So he slept

**Narrator 1:** And he slept.

**Narrator 2:** And he slept.

**Narrator 1:** And he slept.

**Narrator 2:** He slept for so long that the tortoise slowly overtook him.

**Narrator 1:** Suddenly he woke up!

**Hare:** Where am I? What am I doing? Oh no! The race! Where's the tortoise?

**Narrator 2:** The hare ran and ran as fast as he could.

**Narrator 1:** But when he got to the finishing line the tortoise was already there.

**Tortoise:** Bad luck!

**Narrator 2:** ....said the tortoise.

**Tortoise:** You didn't win but you are very fast. I only won because I didn't go to sleep and I kept on going all the time.

**Hare:** You're right.

**Narrator 1:** ....said the hare and they shook hands and sat down together to eat the delicious grass.

**Narrator 2:** And they both lived happily ever after.

## **Notes on the story**

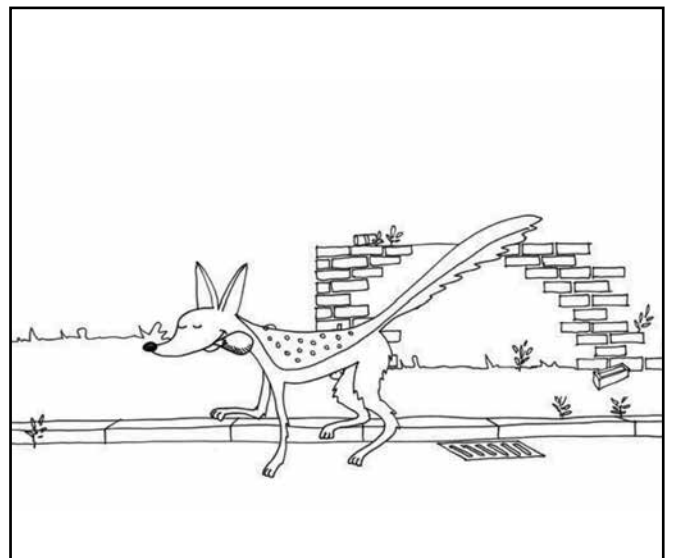
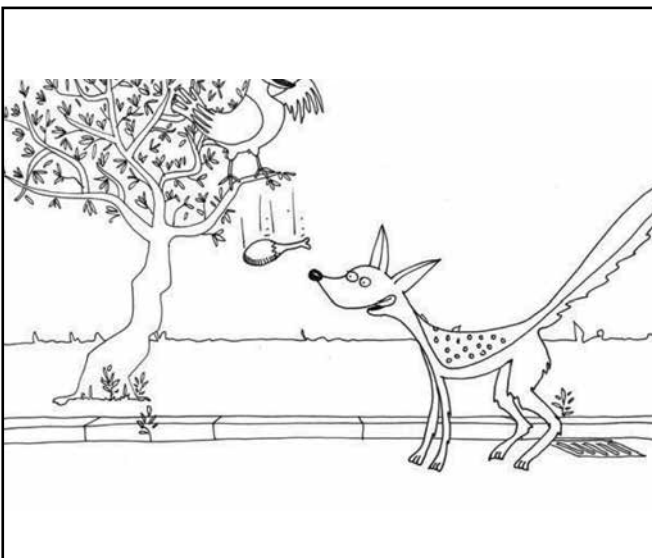
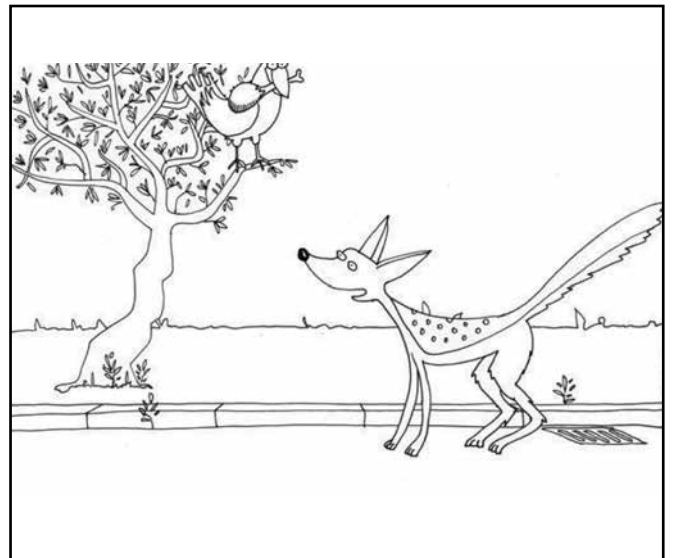
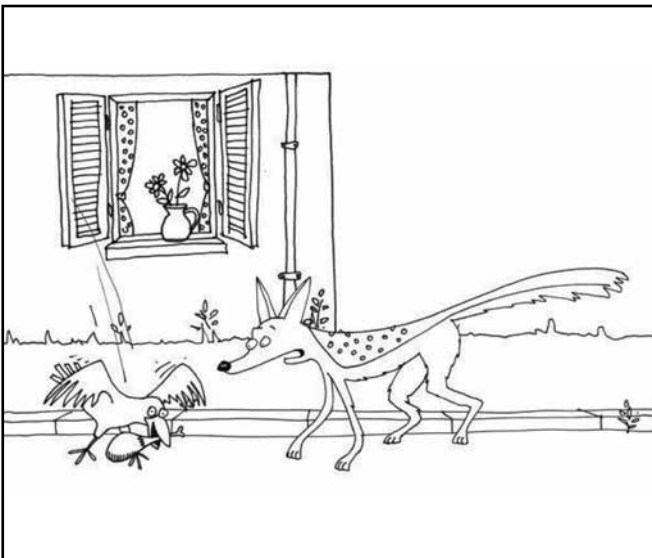
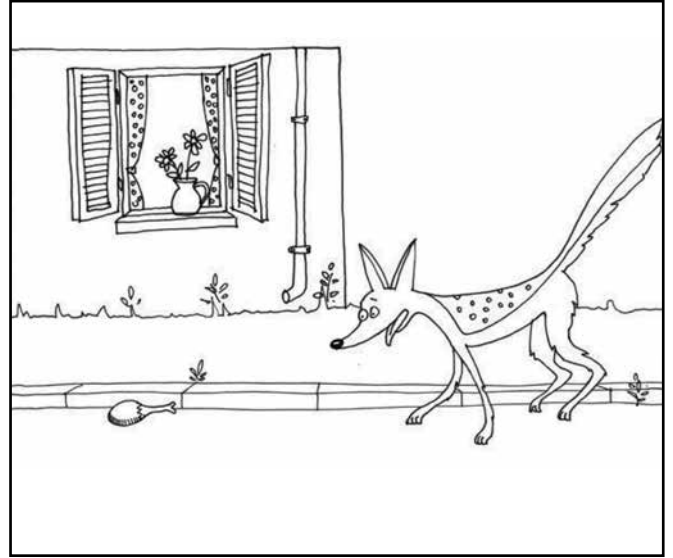
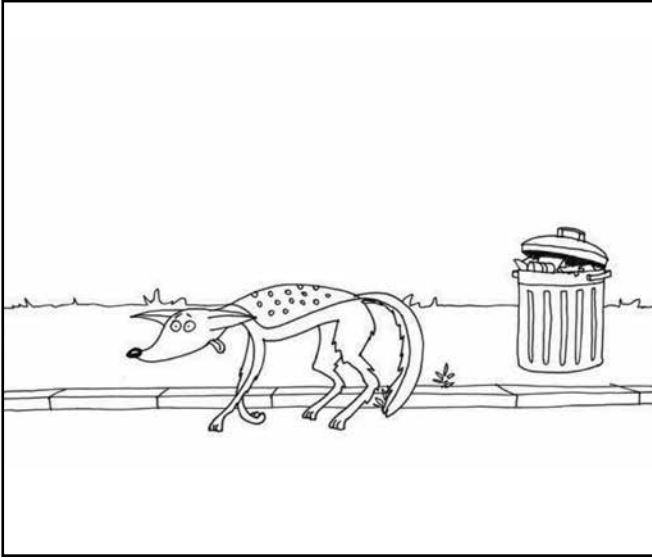
The tortoise and the hare is one of Aesop's fables, told since as far back as 560 BC to teach moral behavior. It first appeared in print in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. There are two possible morals to the story: firstly that it is not good to boast or be overconfident, and secondly, that hard work is more important than ability.

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# The jackal and the crow - picture story



## The jackal and the crow - story summary

c) *A jackal was looking for food. He was very hungry.*

b) *He saw something to eat on the ground.*

d) *A crow flew down and took the food.*

e) *The bird sat in a tree and the jackal said, 'Can I hear you sing?'*

f) *The crow started to sing and dropped the food.*

a) *The jackal ate the food.*

## The Jackal and the crow - chant

**Jackal:** The crow's so beautiful

The crow's so wise

With beautiful wings

And beautiful eyes

The crow's so beautiful

The crow's so wise

With beautiful wings

And beautiful eyes

**Crow:** The jackal's so bad

The jackal's so rude

He wants my dinner

He wants my food

The jackal's so bad

The jackal's so rude

He wants my dinner

He wants my food

**Jackal:** The most beautiful thing

Is the way that she can sing

The way that she can sing

The way that she can sing

The most beautiful thing

Is the way that she can sing

The way that she can sing

The way that she can sing

And maybe I'm wrong

But I'd like to hear a song

I'd like to hear a song

I'd like to hear a song

And maybe I'm wrong

But I'd like to hear a song

I'd like to hear a song

I'd like to hear a song

**Crow:** The jackal's so bad

The jackal's so rude

He's taken my dinner

He's taken my food

The jackal's so bad

The jackal's so rude

He's taken my dinner

He's taken my food

## **The jackal and the crow - readers' theatre script**

**Narrator 1:** There was once a jackal who was looking for food.

**Narrator 2:** There wasn't much to eat and he was very hungry

**Jackal:** I'm so hungry!

**Narrator 1:** ....He said, sadly

**Jackal:** I haven't eaten for days. I haven't eaten for weeks! What can I do?

**Narrator 2:** Suddenly he saw a piece of chicken on the ground in front of him.

**Jackal:** Delicious!

**Narrator 1:** ...said the jackal

**Jackal:** That's just what I want!

**Narrator 2:** He was just about to eat it when a big black crow flew down and picked up the meat in its beak.

**Narrator 1:** The crow flew up to a tree with the food.

**Narrator 2:** She didn't want to drop any of the food.

**Narrator 1:** So she waited for the jackal to go away so that she could eat. But the jackal didn't go away.

**Jackal:** Oh what a beautiful bird!

**Narrator 2:** ...said the jackal

**Jackal:** Your wings are so wonderful!

**Narrator 1:** The crow didn't want to drop the food so she just nodded.

**Jackal:** Your eyes are so elegant!

**Narrator 2:** The crow nodded again.

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**Jackal:** Your feathers are so fantastic!

**Narrator 1:** The crow nodded again.

**Jackal:** Your beak is so beautiful!

**Narrator 2:** The crow nodded again.

**Jackal:** And is it true?

**Jackal:** Is it true that you have a beautiful voice? The most beautiful voice in the whole world?

**Narrator 1:** The crow nodded again.

**Jackal:** I don't think it is true!

**Narrator 2:** ...said the jackal and he licked his lips.

**Jackal:** I don't think you can sing. I can't hear you!

**Narrator 1:** The crow was very angry. She couldn't wait any more.

**Narrator 2:** She opened her beak and started to sing.

**Narrator 1:** And her voice was very beautiful, but when she opened her beak she dropped the piece of chicken. It fell down, down, down to the jackal under the tree.

**Narrator 2:** The jackal was licking his lips and waiting under the tree.

**Jackal:** Thank you very much

**Narrator 1:** .....said the jackal

**Jackal:** It is true that your voice is very beautiful. But this food is mine. And it's even more beautiful than your voice.

**Narrator 2:** And the jackal licked his lips and sat down to enjoy his food.

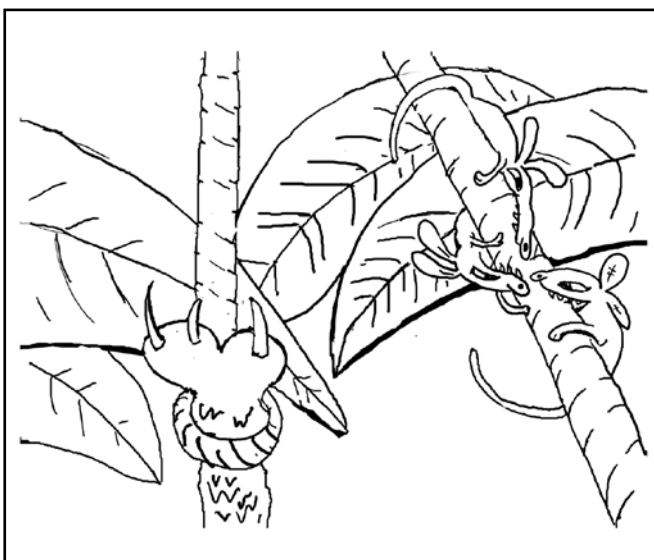
## **Notes on the story**

This is also one of Aesop's fables. It is usually told about a fox rather than a jackal. The story has been used to teach the idea that people may say nice things about you just because they want something from you.





# The lion and the mouse - picture story



## The lion and the mouse - story summary

d) A mouse saw some meat next to a sleeping lion. He was hungry so he climbed over the lion's back to get to the meat.

c) The lion woke up and saw the mouse. He was very angry.

f) The lion decided to let the mouse go. The mouse was happy and thanked the lion.

b) The mouse saw the lion caught in a trap.

e) The mouse and his friends ate through the rope.

a) The lion was free and thanked the mouse and his friends for helping him

## The lion and the mouse - chant

**Lion:** Why did you just wake me?  
Did you try to rob me?  
Go away and leave me  
Leave me to be free.  
Why did you just wake me?  
Did you try to rob me?  
Go away and leave me  
Leave me to be free.

**Mouse:** Sorry to disturb you.  
I didn't mean to wake you.  
Now I want to thank you.  
For letting me go free.  
Sorry to disturb you.  
I didn't mean to wake you.  
Now I want to thank you.  
For letting me go free.

**Lion:** Somebody has trapped me  
Who on earth could that be?  
Will somebody help me?  
Help me to be free.  
Somebody has trapped me  
Who on earth could that be?  
Will somebody help me?  
Help me to be free.

**Mouse:** I can try to help you  
Bite the ropes around you.  
Aren't you glad I found you?  
Now you can be free.  
I can try to help you  
Bite the ropes around you.  
Aren't you glad I found you?  
Now you can be free.

## The lion and the mouse - readers' theatre script

**Narrator 1:** Usually we become friends with people who are similar to us.

**Narrator 2:** But we can also be friends with people who are very different.

**Narrator 1:** In this story a lion and a mouse become friends. Can you believe it?

**Lion:** No! I can't be friends with a mouse!

**Mouse:** No! I can't be friends with a lion!

**Narrator 2:** Stop arguing and let us tell the story!

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time there was a lion who lived in the middle of the jungle.

**Narrator 2:** Every day he ate lots and lots of meat.

**Narrator 1:** He needed to eat a lot because he was big, he was strong and he was brave.

**Narrator 2:** But today he was tired.

**Narrator 1:** Eating was very hard work!

**Lion:** I am so tired! I can't eat all my meat. I'll eat it later.

**Narrator 1:** He lay down on the floor of the jungle and went to sleep.

**Narrator 2:** A mouse was running around the jungle looking for food.

**Narrator 1:** The mouse was small and he wasn't very brave.

**Narrator 2:** But today he was hungry

**Mouse:** I'm so hungry!

**Narrator 1:** Suddenly he saw the meat on the floor in front of the lion.

**Mouse:** Wow! That meat looks so delicious.

**Narrator 2:** He climbed over the lion's back to get to the meat but....

**Narrator 1:** The lion suddenly woke up.

**Lion:** What are you doing? That's my meat! Are you stealing my meat?

**Mouse:** I'm sorry. I was so hungry. Please don't kill me. If you let me go I will help you one day.



**Lion:** You? Help me? How could you help me? You are so small. Not big and strong like me.

**Narrator 2:** And the lion started to laugh.

**Lion:** You've made me laugh and that's good. I won't kill you little mouse. You can go free – but don't come back.

**Mouse:** Thank you. Thank you so much.

**Narrator 1:** And the mouse ran back to his house.

**Narrator 2:** The next day the lion was walking in the jungle, looking for more food.

**Narrator 1:** Suddenly he felt a rope around his leg and he was hanging from a tree.

**Lion:** Oh no! I'm in a trap. Somebody help me please!

**Narrator 2:** The mouse heard the lion and ran to see what the problem was.

**Mouse:** Don't worry. I'll help you.

**Narrator 1:** The mouse ran to get all his friends.

**Mouse:** We're going to help a lion.

**Mouse friend 1:** We're going to help a lion????

**Mouse:** We're going to help a lion.

**Mouse friend 2:** We're going to help a lion????!!!!!!

**Narrator 2:** The mice bit through the rope in no time.

**Narrator 1:** And the lion was free!

**Lion:** Thank you so much. Now I am free again.

**Narrator 2:** The lion and the mice became good friends.

**Mouse:** I'm friends with a lion.

**Lion:** I'm friends with a mouse.

**Mouse friend 1:** I'm friends with a lion???

**Mouse friend 2:** I'm friends with a lion????!!!

**Narrator 1:** And they all lived happily ever after.

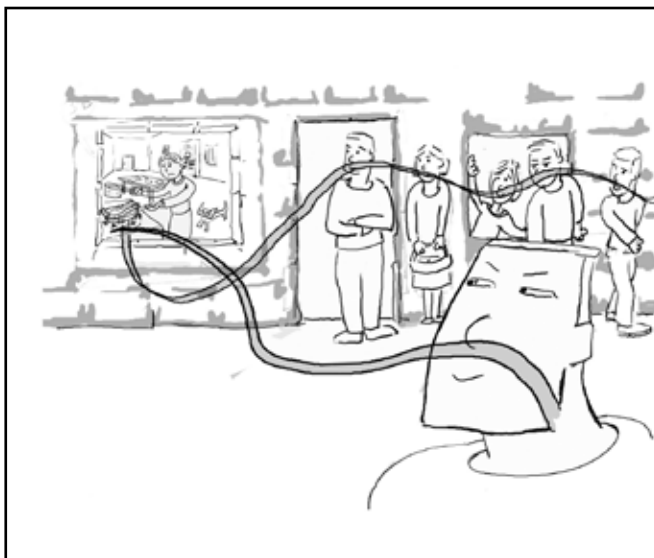
## **Notes on the story**

This is the third of Aesop's fables in this collection. It has been used for thousands of years to teach the moral of, 'One good turn deserves another' or that everybody, no matter how small or apparently insignificant, can do important things.





## Juha and the meat - picture story



## **Juha and the meat - story summary**

*d) Juha bought three kilos of meat.*

*b) He gave the meat to his wife and went out.*

*a) Juha's wife cooked the meat.*

*e) The neighbours came round and ate all the meat.*

*f) When Juha came back they said, 'The cat ate the meat!'*

*c) Juha weighed the cat. It weighed three kilos!*

## Juha and the meat - chant

**Juha's wife:** Poor old Juha!  
 What are you going to do?  
 You bought the meat and brought it home.  
 But nothing's left for you.

Poor old Juha!  
 What are you going to do?  
 You bought the meat and brought it home.  
 But nothing's left for you.

**Juha:** But that is very rude  
 When it's me who bought the food  
 It's me who bought the food  
 It's me who bought the food

But that is very rude  
 When it's me who bought the food  
 It's me who bought the food  
 It's me who bought the food

**Juha's wife:** We're so sorry Juha!  
 We don't know what to do!  
 The cat came in and ate the meat  
 And nothing's left for you.

We're so sorry Juha!  
 We don't know what to do!  
 The cat came in and ate the meat  
 And nothing's left for you.

**Juha:** Well, if the cat did that?  
 Then, why's it not fat?  
 Why's it not fat?  
 Why's it not fat?

Well, if the cat did that?  
 Then, why's it not fat?  
 Why's it not fat?  
 Why's it not fat?

## **Juha and the meat - readers' theatre script**

**Narrator 1:** Juha was happy. He had lots of money in his pocket. He was feeling hungry so he went to the market to buy some meat.

**Shopkeeper:** Good morning. How can I help you?

**Juha:** I'd like some nice meat. Can I have that piece please?

**Narrator 2:** The shopkeeper weighed the piece of meat. It was exactly three kilos.

**Narrator 1:** Juha paid for the meat, put it in his bag and took it home to his wife, Amna.

**Juha:** Hello Amna. Would you please cook this meat for dinner? I have to go to work now but I'll be back later to eat it with you.

**Amna:** OK.

**Narrator 2:** Amna fried the meat. She added some sumac. It smelt delicious.

**Narrator 1:** The smell of the meat went out of the window and into the street outside.

**Neighbour 1 (Maryam) :** That smells amazing!

**Neighbour 2 (Abdullah):** That smells fantastic!

**Cat:** Miaow! That smells wonderful! Miaow!

**Maryiam:** I think I'll go to visit Amna today.

**Abdullah:** I think I'll go to visit Amna today too.

**Narrator 2:** One by one, the neighbours came and knocked on Amna's front door. First came Maryam.

**Amna:** Hello Maryam. How are you? It's lovely to see you. Please come in.

**Maryam:** I'm fine thank you Amna. That meat smells delicious.

**Amna:** Would you like to try some? Juha will be home from work soon. Let's eat it together.



**Narrator 1:** Maryam sat down at the table. Then came Abdullah.

**Amna:** Hello Abdullah. How are you? It's lovely to see you. Please come in.

**Abdullah:** I'm fine thank you Amna. That meat smells delicious.

**Amna:** Would you like to try some? Juha will be home from work soon. Let's eat it together.

**Narrator 1:** Abdullah sat down at the table. All the neighbours came round in this way and they sat and waited for Juha.

**Narrator 2:** But Juha was late. They waited and they waited but he didn't come and the meat smelt so fantastic.

**Amna:** Let's just try a little of the meat and we'll save some for Juha when he comes home.

**Narrator 1:** So everyone had a little bit of meat.

**Narrator 2:** But the meat tasted so fantastic that everyone forgot about Juha and before they knew it the meat was all gone.

**Narrator 1:** At that moment Juha arrived home!

**Juha:** Sorry I'm late Amna. Hello Maryam. Hello Abdullah. Are you going to have dinner with us? Amna has cooked some delicious meat. It smells wonderful. But where is it?

**Narrator 2:** Juha looked at the empty plate.

**Juha:** What happened?!

**Amna:** I'm so sorry Juha. We were waiting for you and we were talking. While we weren't looking the cat came in and took the meat. It ate it all and there's nothing left. It's terrible!

**Narrator 1:** Juha looked at the cat and he looked at the empty plate. He picked up the cat and he put it on the kitchen scales.

**Juha:** The cat weighs three kilos. The meat weighed three kilos. So if this is the cat where's the meat? And if this is the meat, where's the cat?

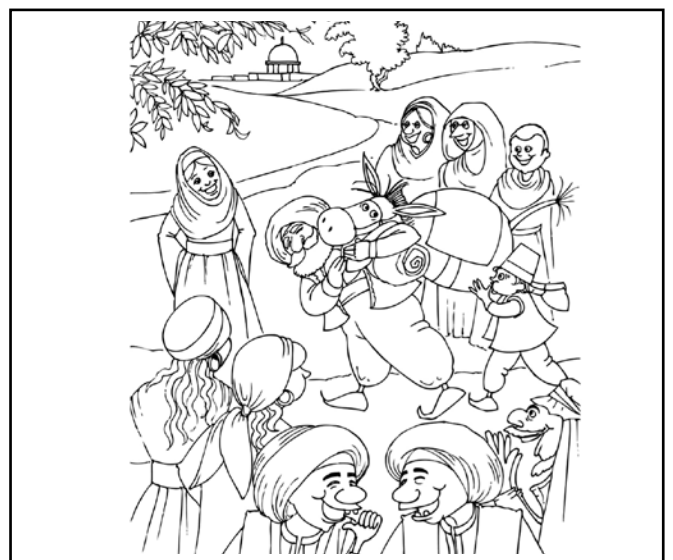
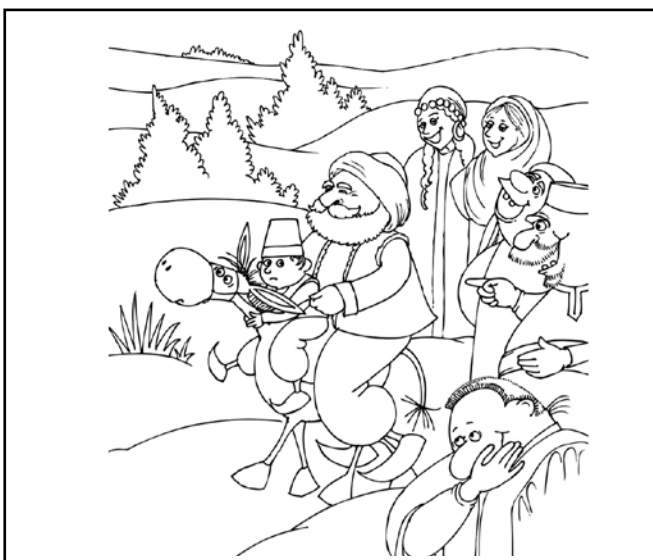
## **Notes on the story**

This is one of two Juha stories found in this collection. Juha stories are told in many parts of the Arab world and date back to Arabic literature from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. They come from the oral tradition however and are probably much older. This one was told to me by a Palestinian teacher of English, Mr. Khader Odeh. He also devised the line 'If the cat did that then why's it not fat?' in the accompanying chant.





# Juha and the donkey - picture story



## **Juha and the donkey - story summary**

d) *Juha said to his son, 'Don't worry about what people think.'*

a) *The woman said to Juha, 'Your son shouldn't ride the donkey!'*

f) *The man said to Juha, 'You should walk!'*

b) *The woman said to Juha, 'You should ride the donkey!'*

e) *The man said to Juha, 'You should give the donkey a rest!'*

c) *The woman said to Juha, 'You shouldn't carry the donkey!'*

## **Juha and the donkey - chant**

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

This is really crazy! Your boy is really lazy!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

This is really crazy! Your boy is really lazy!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Everybody's talking Why are you not walking?

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Everybody's talking Why are you not walking?

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Walking by the side? Don't you want to ride?

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Walking by the side? Don't you want to ride?

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Both of you on top? Now you'll have to stop!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Both of you on top? Now you'll have to stop!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Carrying a donkey? Now your legs are wonky!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!

Carrying a donkey? Now your legs are wonky!

Juha! Juha! You shouldn't do that!!!

## **Juha and the donkey - readers' theatre script**

**Narrator 1:** One day Juha and his son were getting ready to go on a journey to Jerusalem with their donkey.

**Narrator 2:** The son was looking into the fire. He was worried.

**Son:** I don't know what to do Dad. People are always telling me to do different things. My teacher tells me I should study more at home. My mother tells me I should do more work in the house. My grandmother tells me I should just enjoy myself. I can't make everybody happy. What should I do?

**Juha:** Don't listen to anyone! Everybody has different ideas. If you take everyone's advice you'll go crazy. Just watch what happens on our journey to Jerusalem now.

**Narrator 1:** They packed up their things and started their journey.

**Narrator 2:** The son rode on the donkey and Juha walked in front.

**Narrator 1:** After a while they walked past 2 women by the side of the path.

**Woman 1:** What are you doing you crazy old man? Your son is young and strong and you are an old man. You should ride the donkey and your son should walk!

**Juha:** OK. I will do as you say.

**Narrator 2:** So Juha got onto the donkey and his son walked in front.

**Narrator 1:** After a while they walked past three men by the side of the path.

**Man 1:** What are you doing you crazy old man? Your poor son is just a small boy but he has to walk while you ride the donkey. You shouldn't do that!

**Juha:** OK. I will do as you say.

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**Narrator 2:** So Juha's son got off the donkey and they both walked by its side.

**Narrator 1:** After a while they walked past a small group of people by the side of the path.

**Woman 2:** What are you doing you crazy old man? You have a good strong donkey and you're both walking by its side. You should ride the donkey!

**Juha:** OK. I will do as you say.

**Narrator 2:** So they both got onto the donkey and rode it together.

**Narrator 1:** After a while they rode past a bigger group of people by the side of the path.

**Man 2:** What are you doing you crazy old man? You're both riding? You're too heavy for the poor donkey. You'll kill it! You should give the donkey a rest.

**Juha:** OK. I will do as you say.

**Narrator 2:** So Juha took the front legs of the donkey and his son took the back legs. Together they picked up the donkey and carried it between them.

**Narrator 1:** After a while they could see Jerusalem in front of them. Suddenly there were lots of people all around them. Everyone was laughing and pointing at them.

**Woman 3:** What are you doing you crazy old man? You shouldn't carry a donkey!

**Juha:** OK. I will do as you say.

**Narrator 2:** Juha and his son put down the donkey. They sat down together and rested.

**Juha:** You see. If you listen to everyone's advice you won't be able to do anything. You shouldn't worry about what other people think. It's what you think that is important.

## **Notes on the story**

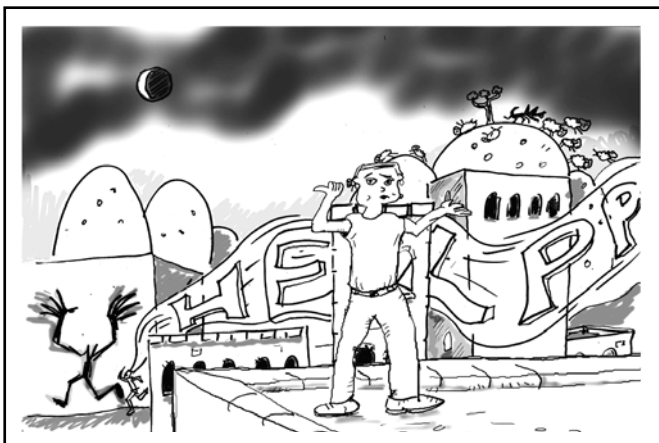
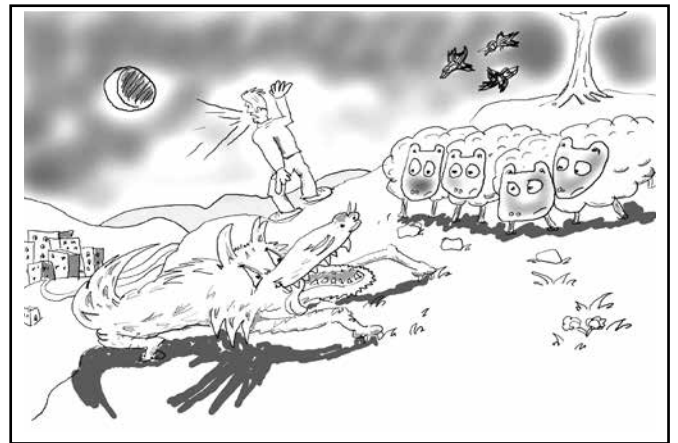
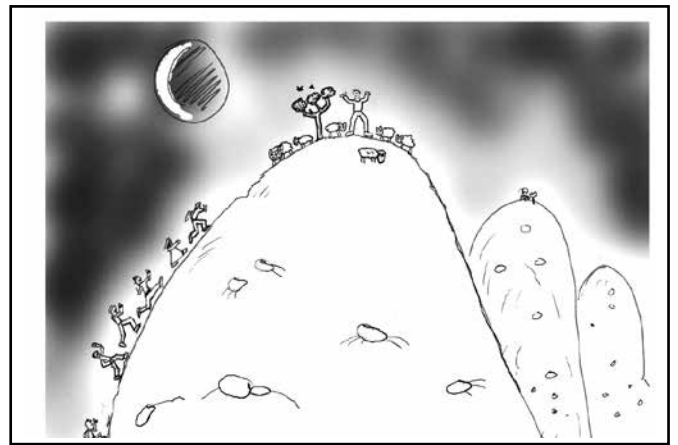
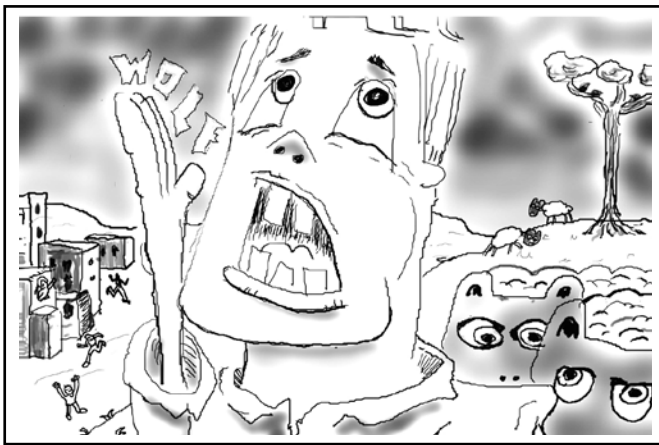
This is another very popular Juha story. It was told to me by different teachers of English from Ramallah, Bethlehem, Qalqilya and Nablus.







# The boy who cried wolf - picture story



## The boy who cried wolf - story summary

d) A boy was sent to the hills to look after the sheep

g) He started to feel very bored and lonely.

c) He pretended he saw a wolf and shouted for help.

h) Everyone from the village came to help him.

f) They couldn't see a wolf anywhere, so they all went back to the village again.

b) The next day a wolf really came to the hills so he shouted for help again.

e) Nobody believed him, so they didn't go to help him.

a) The wolf killed all the sheep.

## The boy who cried wolf - chant

- Boy: I'm bored and I'm lonely. There's nobody here.  
What can I do? I need an idea.  
I'm bored and I'm lonely. There's nobody here.  
What can I do? I need an idea.
- Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!  
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!
- Villagers: But the wolf isn't here and the sheep aren't dead.  
Well..Thank you for coming. You can go back to bed.  
But the wolf isn't here and the sheep aren't dead.  
Well..Thank you for coming. You can go back to bed.
- Boy: Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!  
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!
- Villagers: But the wolf isn't here and the sheep aren't dead.  
Well..thank you for coming. You can go back to bed.  
But the wolf isn't here and the sheep aren't dead.  
Well..thank you for coming. You can go back to bed.
- Boy: Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!  
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Don't sleep!  
Come quick! Come quick! There's a wolf killing sheep!
- Villagers: But the wolf wasn't there and the sheep weren't dead.  
So shout if you want but we'll just stay in bed!  
But the wolf wasn't there and the sheep weren't dead.  
So shout if you want but we'll just stay in bed!

## The boy who cried wolf - reader's theatre script

**Characters:** Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Sheep 1, Sheep 2, Sheep 3, Man, Boy, Villager 1, Villager 2, Villager 3

**Actors needed:** 5-10 (One person could read all the narration and the actors who play the man and the son could also play the parts of the sheep and the villagers.)

**Notes:** No props are really necessary. It may be nice for the villagers to each have a stick or something similar to act as a weapon when they arrive in the hills. A funny way to perform this script is for everyone who isn't speaking to make sheep or wolf noises every time the word 'sheep' or 'wolf' is used.

**Narrator 1:** There was once a village where there were more sheep than people. Everyone in the village was a farmer and every farmer had sheep.

**Sheep 1:** Baa

**Sheep 2:** Baa

**Sheep 3:** Baa!

**Narrator 2:** The people lived in the houses and the sheep lived in the hills around the village.

**Sheep 1:** Baa

**Sheep 2:** Baa

**Sheep 3:** Baa!

**Narrator 1:** One day a man told his son to go up into the hills to look after the sheep.

**Man:** Look after the sheep my son. If you see a wolf, shout to us and we will come to help you.

**Boy:** But it's so boring! Just sheep, sheep, sheep, sheep, sheep! No one to talk to but sheep! Sheep are so boring!

**Narrator 2:** The boy walked up into the hills. After about an hour looking after the sheep he started to feel very bored.

**Narrator 1:** He was so bored that he started to talk to the sheep.

**Boy:** Hello. What's your name?

**Sheep 1:** Baa!

**Boy:** Where are you from?

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**Sheep 2:** Baa!

**Boy:** How old are you?

**Sheep 3:** Baa!

**Narrator 2:** Then he had an idea. He shouted down to the people in the village.

**Boy:** Come quick everybody! There's a wolf here and it's killing all the sheep!

**Narrator 1:** All the people from the village ran up to the hills to help him.

**Narrator 2:** When they got there they couldn't see a wolf anywhere.

**Man:** Where's the wolf? We can't see a wolf! We don't believe there really was a wolf!

**Boy:** I'm sorry. I was bored! It's boring just talking to sheep all day long!

**Narrator 1:** All the people were very angry. They went back to the village and continued with their work.

**Narrator 2:** The next day a wolf really did come to the hills.

**Narrator 1:** It started to run after all the sheep.

**Sheep 1:** Baa!

**Sheep 2:** Baa!

**Sheep 3:** Baa!

**Narrator 2:** The boy was very worried. He shouted down to the people in the village again.

**Boy:** Come quick everybody! There's a wolf here and it's killing all the sheep!

**Narrator 1:** No one in the village believed him.

**Villager 1:** I don't believe there is a wolf.

**Villager 2:** I don't believe there is a wolf.

**Villager 3:** I think he's just bored of talking to the sheep.

**Narrator 2:** Nobody from the village came to help him.

**Narrator 1:** And the wolf killed all the sheep.

**Sheep 1:** Baa!

**Sheep 2:** Baa!

**Sheep 3:** Baa!

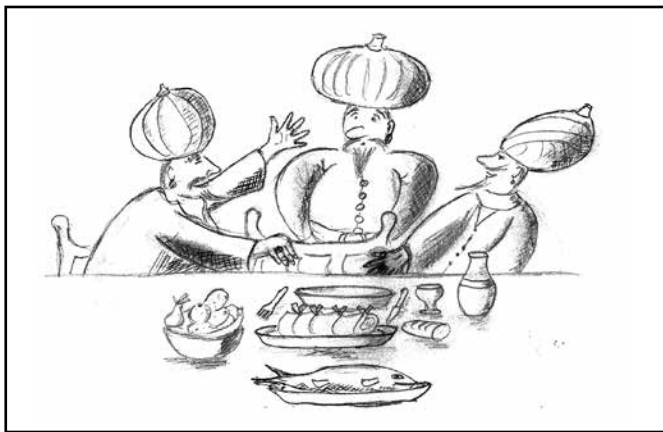
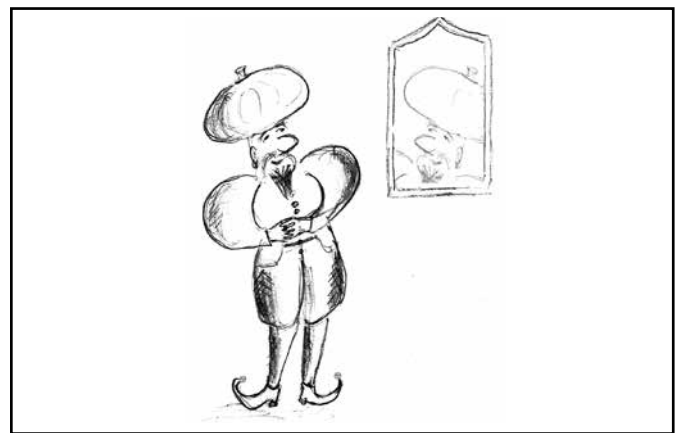
## **Notes on the story**

This is one of Aesop's most popular fables, used worldwide for thousands of years to teach children about the importance of telling the truth. When I was telling it to a group of Chinese students in the UK, one student stood up and said that it wasn't really an Aesop's fable for in reality it was a traditional Chinese story. As with most stories that come from the oral tradition, it is impossible to know exactly where the story started.





# Nasreddin and the dinner party -picture story



## Nasreddin and the dinner party - story summary

*(d) Nasreddin was working hard in the fields.*

*(a) He arrived at the dinner party wearing his old dirty clothes.*

*(c) Everyone ignored him at the party. They didn't offer him anything to eat or a place to sit at the table.*

*(f) Nasreddin was very angry. He went home and changed into his best clothes.*

*(b) When he came back everyone was suddenly very polite to him. They gave him the best seat at the table and all the best food.*

*(h) Nasreddin started to pour the soup into his pockets. He put the fish on his shoulder.*

*(e) 'What are you doing??' the other guests asked him angrily. 'You're making a mess'*

*(g) 'I'm giving the food to my clothes' said Nasreddin. 'I think you invited my clothes to the party – not me!'*

## Nasreddin and the dinner party - chant

Nasreddin: I'm tired and I'm hungry. I'd like to eat.  
I'd like some salad. I'd like some meat.  
I'm tired and I'm hungry. I'd like to eat.  
I'd like some salad. I'd like some meat.

The host: But Nasreddin, where have you been?  
Come back when your clothes are clean.  
You can't eat that, and you can't sit there.  
You have dirty clothes. You have dirty hair.

Nasreddin: But, this isn't right! This isn't fair!  
I can change my clothes and I can wash my hair.  
But, this isn't right! This isn't fair!  
I can change my clothes and I can wash my hair.

The host: So now you're back and your clothes look nice.  
Would you like some chicken? Would you like some rice?  
So now you're back and your clothes look nice.  
Would you like some chicken? Would you like some rice?

Nasreddin: I'll put the rice in my shoes and the chicken on my head  
I'm giving the food to my clothes instead.  
I'll put the rice in my shoes and the chicken on my head  
I'm giving the food to my clothes instead.

## Nasreddin and the dinner party - readers' theatre script

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time, a long time ago, Nasreddin was working hard in the fields.

**Narrator 2:** It was a hot day and he was tired and hungry and thirsty.

**Nasreddin:** My back hurts. My feet hurt. My head hurts. My eyes hurt. Everything hurts!

**Narrator 1:** Then he remembered about the party.

**Nasreddin:** Fantastic! Great! Today I'm going to a party at the best house in the village. There's going to be nice things to eat and drink. And I'm going to meet all my friends.

**Narrator 2:** He continued working, but now nothing hurt any more. He was thinking about the party.

**Narrator 1:** Meanwhile the woman who was having the party was getting ready.

**Narrator 2:** She was cleaning the house

**Narrator 1:** She was washing the floor

**Narrator 2:** She was cutting up vegetables for the salad.

**Narrator 1:** She was cooking.

**Narrator 2:** She was setting the table

**Narrator 1:** She was making everything in her house look very beautiful.

**Woman:** Now my house is clean and tidy. I hope my guests will be clean and tidy too.

**Narrator 2:** After working in the hot sun all day, Nasreddin's clothes were very dirty. He didn't have time to go home and change so he went wearing his old dirty clothes.

**Narrator 1:** He knocked at the door.

**Narrator 2:** The woman opened the door.

**Woman:** Nasreddin!!! Your hair is very dirty. Your clothes are very dirty. You can't come in! You can't have any food!

**Narrator 1:** Nasreddin was very angry. He went back to his house.

**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** He had a shower.

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**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** He washed his hair

**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** He combed his hair

**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** He ironed his shirt

**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** He put on his best clothes

**Narrator 2:** Angrily!

**Narrator 1:** And he went back to the party!

**Narrator 2:** Very angrily!

**Narrator 1:** The woman was pleased to see him.

**Woman:** Nasreddin! It's so nice to see you. Please come in. Please sit down. Please have some food.

**Narrator 2:** Nasreddin took the soup and he poured it into his pockets. He took the butter and he put it on his shirt. He took the rice and he put it into his shoes.

**Woman:** Nasreddin! What are you doing? You're making a mess.

**Narrator 1:** Said the woman..

**Narrator 2:** ..Angrily

**Nasreddin:** Well I think you invited my clothes to the party so I'm giving the food to my clothes!

**Narrator 1:** The woman realised her mistake and suddenly started to laugh.

**Woman:** I'm so sorry. Let's sit down and enjoy the party together.

**Narrator 2:** And that is exactly what they did.

**Narrator 1:** Happily ever after.

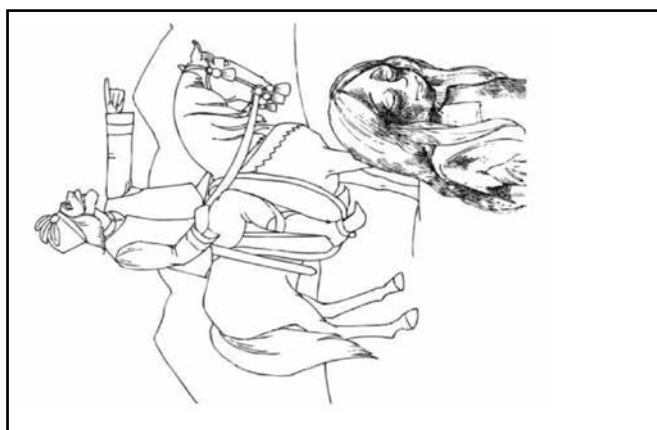
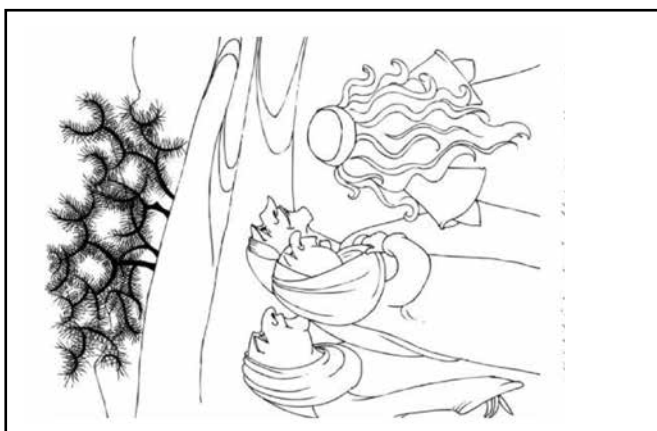
## **Notes on the story**

In many parts of the Arabic speaking world there are many short, humorous stories about a character called Nasreddin who in many ways is similar to Juha. The first published story of Nasreddin appeared in Turkey in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century but they are probably much older than this.





## Jbene - picture story



## **Jbene - story summary**

*d) There was once a couple who had a daughter called Jbene. They loved her very much.*

*h) Jbene grew up to be a very beautiful young woman. Other women were jealous of her.*

*a) The other women asked Jbene to pick fruit from the Christ-thorn tree with them.*

*c) They lit a fire under the tree so Jbene couldn't get down.*

*b) She covered herself with soot from the fire to make herself look ugly.*

*g) The owner of the land thought she was a servant and told her to go and look after the sheep.*

*f) She started to cry and the sheep and the sky started crying too. The rain washed her clean.*

*e) The rich landowner came back and fell in love with her.*

**Jbene - chant**

Jbéne! Jbéne! As white as cheese!  
Come with us to the Christ-thorn trees.

Jbéne! Jbéne! Stuck in the tree!  
You can't get down. You can't get free.

Jbéne! Jbéne! As black as night!  
Stay with the sheep till the morning light.

Jbéne! Jbéne! As white as cheese  
Marry me! Marry me! Marry me please!

Jbéne! Jbéne! As white as the moon.  
Marry me! Marry me! Marry me soon!

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## **Jbene - readers' theatre script**

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time there lived a married couple who had almost everything they wanted in life.

**Narrator 2:** The only thing they didn't have was a child, and they wanted one more than anything.

**Narrator 1:** And then one day their lives became perfect and a beautiful baby girl was born.

**Narrator 2:** Her skin was as white as cheese so they called her Jbene.

**Narrator 1:** Jbene was loved by everyone who knew her and she grew up into a beautiful young woman.

**Narrator 2:** Many of the young men in the village wanted to marry her.

**Young man 1:** Jbene, would you like to drink tea with me?

**Young man 2:** Jbene, would you like to come to my house for dinner?

**Young man 3:** Jbene, would you like to go for a walk with me?

**Narrator 1:** The other young women in the village became jealous of Jbene.

**Young woman 1:** Why does everyone like Jbene so much?

**Young woman 2:** What does she have that we don't have?

**Young woman 3:** I think we should teach her a lesson.

**Narrator 2:** The young women of the village asked Jbene to come to pick fruit from the Christ-thorn trees with them.

**Narrator 1:** The Christ-thorn trees were a long way away and it was a difficult journey to get there.

**Narrator 2:** But Jbene was the kind of person who always wanted to help people, and so she agreed to go with them.

**Jbene:** Of course I will help you.

**Narrator 1:** They walked for many hours. When they finally got to the place where the Christ-thorn trees were, they asked Jbene to climb one of the trees.

**Young woman 1:** Go on Jbene! Climb to the top where the best fruit is!

**Young woman 2:** Higher! Higher Jbene!

**Young woman 3:** Keep going Jbene! Don't stop until you get to the top!



**Narrator 2:** When Jbene got to the top of the tree her body was scratched from the thorns and she was crying in pain.

**Narrator 1:** The three women didn't care. They lit a fire at the bottom so that Jbene couldn't get down and started to walk home, leaving Jbene in the tree.

**Young woman 1:** You're not so beautiful now, Jbene, are you?

**Narrator 2:** Jbene waited in the tree for many hours before the fire went out and she could get down.

**Narrator 1:** But now she was all alone, and she didn't know her way home. She started to cry again.

**Jibene:** I don't want to be beautiful anymore. Being beautiful only gives me problems.

**Narrator 2:** Jibene took some soot from the fire and she rubbed it into her face and arms.

**Narrator 1:** At that moment the owner of the land rode by on his horse. He looked down at Jbene and thought she was his servant. He spoke angrily to her.

**Landowner:** What are you doing here? You should be looking after the sheep. Go and look after the sheep now.

**Narrator 2:** Jbene didn't know what to do. The landowner pointed to the sheep in the next field and Jbene slowly walked over to them.

**Narrator 1:** She sat down between them and started to cry.

**Jbene:** What can I do? I don't know how to get home. I don't know if I will ever see my parents again.

**Narrator 2:** The sheep seemed to be really listening to her and when she told her sad story they also started to cry.

**Narrator 1:** And then the sky started to cry too and the rain fell down on poor Jbene.

**Narrator 2:** But the rain washed her face and body clean. At that point the rich landowner came back. He looked down at Jbene and he saw that she was not his servant. He also saw that she was very beautiful.

**Landowner:** I am so sorry. I thought you were my servant. Will you forgive me?

**Narrator 1:** Jbene told him the whole story of what had happened to her, and as she did so the landowner fell more and more in love with her. He got down on his knees and looked up into her eyes.

**Landowner:** Do you think that one day you could marry me?

**Narrator:** And what do you think she said? \_

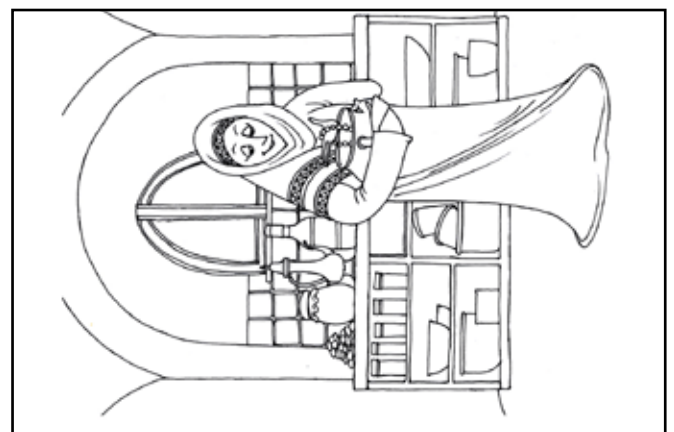
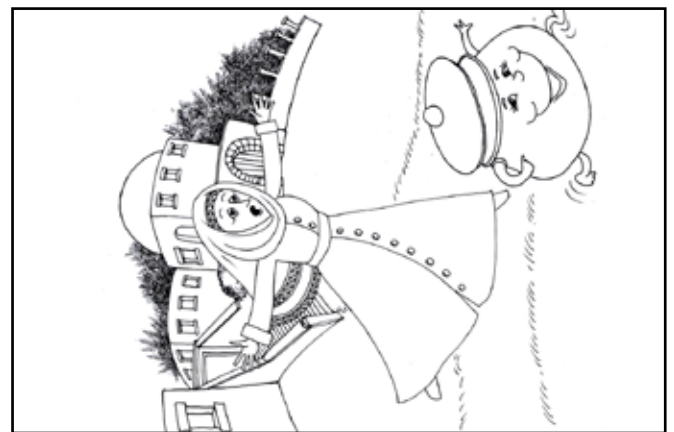
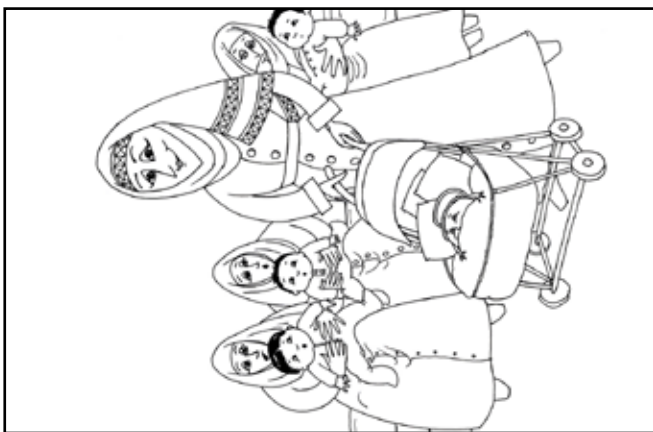
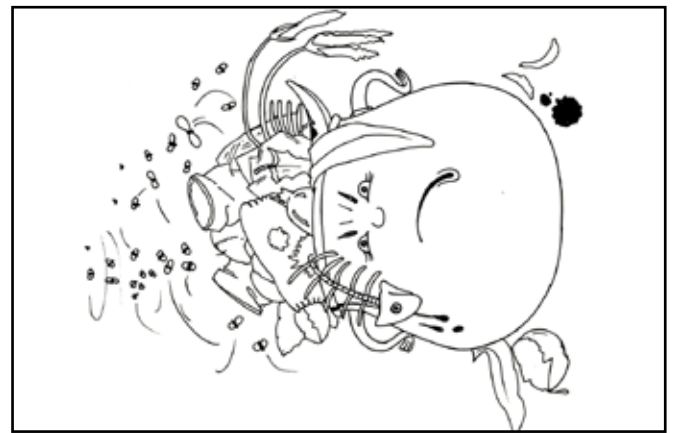
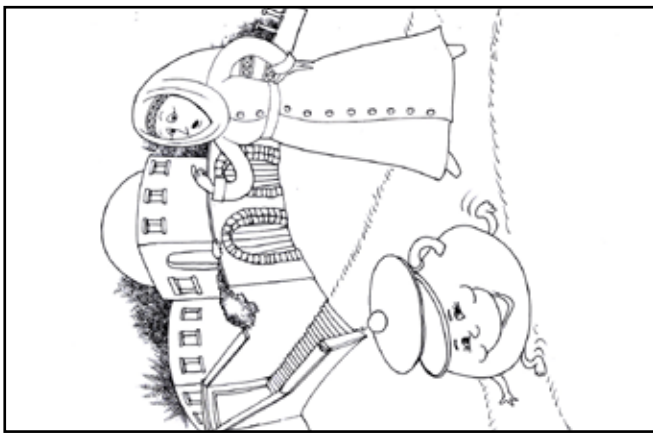
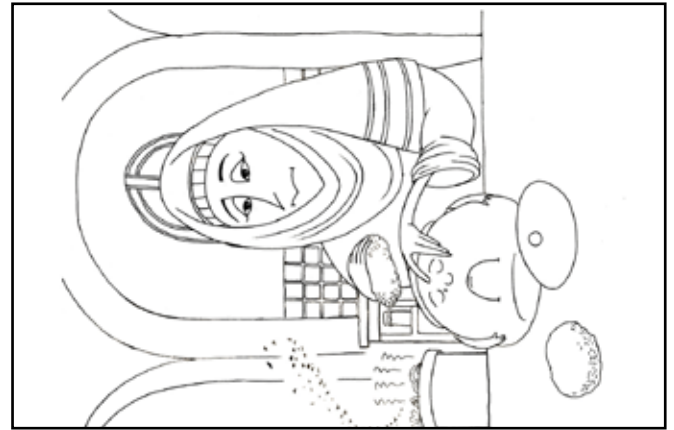
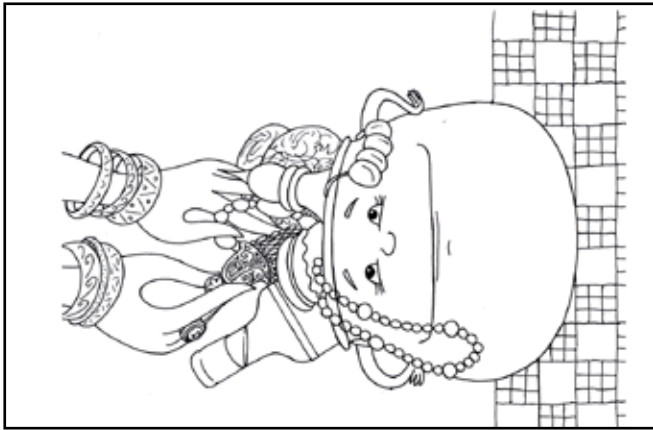
## **Notes on the story**

This story was recommended to me by many teachers of English throughout Palestine. It is a traditional Palestinian story and there is a version of it in the very detailed and comprehensive collection, 'Speak Bird, Speak Again' by Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana.





# Tunjur - picture story



## Tunjur - story summary

d) There was once a woman was very sad. She wanted to have a baby but she didn't have one. Everyone else seemed to have a baby.

h) The woman gave birth to a cooking pot. She called it Tunjur and looked after it like it was a normal baby.

e) Tunjur grew up and started to be naughty. She ran away from her mother.

b) A rich woman found Tunjur. She thought it was a very beautiful pot and put her nice things inside it.

g) Tunjur ran back to her mother with all the things inside. Her mother was pleased with all the nice things.

f) Tunjur ran away from her mother again.

a) The rich woman found Tunjur again. She filled it up with rubbish.

c) Tunjur ran back to her mother with all the rubbish inside. Her mother put the rubbish in the bin and cleaned her up.

## Tunjur - chant

Mother: Tunjur! Tunjur!  
You're in danger!  
Don't go out and talk to a stranger!  
Stay with me  
And have some tea.  
And we can have our own adventure.

Tunjur: But mother, I'm here  
And I won't disappear.  
I've got honey and money and gold.  
There are things I must see.  
And I want to be free.  
And I'm not going to do as I'm told.

## Tunjur! Tunjur! - readers' theatre script

**Narrator 1:** The story we are going to tell you is a traditional Palestinian story.

**Narrator 2:** It's a story about the importance of family.

**Narrator 1:** There was once a woman who had no children.

**Narrator 2:** All of her brothers and sisters and friends had children but she had none. This made her very sad.

**Narrator 1:** One day she looked up, sadly and said....

**Woman:** Please, please let me have a baby. Even if I have to give birth to a cooking pot, please let me have a baby.

**Narrator 2:** The woman became pregnant and she gave birth to.....

**Woman:** A cooking pot!? A baby cooking pot? What am I going to do with you?

**Narrator 1:** Everyone was very surprised to see the woman with her baby cooking pot.

**Narrator 2:** But the woman loved her new daughter and looked after her like she was a little girl. She gave her milk from a bottle, she took her for walks in her pram, she changed her nappy.

**Narrator 1:** As the little cooking pot grew bigger, she loved to be outside rolling along the ground. Her mother decided to call her Tunjur, because of the sound that she made when she was rolling along.

**Narrator 2:** And as she grew bigger she also got more and more naughty. One day Tunjur decided to run away from her mother.

**Tunjur:** I have to go mum. I want some adventure.

**Woman:** Tunjur! Tunjur! Where are you going? Don't run away! Stay here with me.

**Narrator 1:** Tunjur didn't listen to her mother and she ran and ran and ran until she couldn't run any more.

**Narrator 2:** She stopped outside the house of a rich woman.

**Rich woman:** What a beautiful cooking pot. I can use this pot to put all my favourite things inside.

**Narrator 1:** The woman took the cooking pot into her house and filled it with money and gold and jewellery and honey and the best olive oil from all over the country.

**Rich woman:** My things look so nice inside this beautiful cooking pot.

**Narrator 2:** But as soon as the rich woman was asleep, Tunjur ran out of the house and back to her mother's house.



**Narrator 1:** Her mother was very happy to see her again.

**Woman:** It's so good to see you. And thank you for buying me all these nice things! But please don't go away again. We have everything we need here.

**Narrator 2:** For a while they lived happily, but after a while Tunjur wanted to go away again.

**Tunjur:** I have to go mum. I want some adventure.

**Woman:** Please don't go away. Stay here with me. I'm worried something bad will happen to you.

**Narrator 1:** Tunjur didn't listen to her mother and she ran and ran and ran until she couldn't run any more.

**Narrator 2:** The rich woman found her again.

**Rich woman:** Hey, you're that cooking pot that stole all my treasure. I'm going to make you pay for what you did.

**Narrator 1:** And the rich woman took Tunjur back into her house.

**Rich woman:** I thought you were beautiful before and so I filled you with all my beautiful things. But now I can see that you are just a thief, and I'm going to fill you with rubbish.

**Narrator 2:** And the rich woman threw all the rubbish she could find in her kitchen inside the cooking pot.

**Rich woman:** Now I have a good place to keep all my rubbish.

**Tunjur:** Yuck!

**Narrator 2:** But as soon as the rich woman was asleep again, Tunjur ran out of the house and back to her mother's house, still with the rubbish inside her.

**Narrator 1:** Her mother was very happy to see her again. And Tunjur told her mother the truth about how she had taken the things from the rich woman.

**Woman:** It's so good to see you. I'm so glad you came back. You're my daughter and whatever you do, even if you do bad things, I will always love you.

**Narrator 2:** The woman took all the rubbish and she put it in the bin. Then she cleaned Tunjur up.

**Woman:** Wherever you go in life, there will be people who are good to you and people who are bad to you. But I will always be here to help you when you need me. The first stage of growing up is to go away from your mother. The second stage is to come back to her.

**Narrator 1:** And Tunjur never ran away again and they both lived happily ever after.

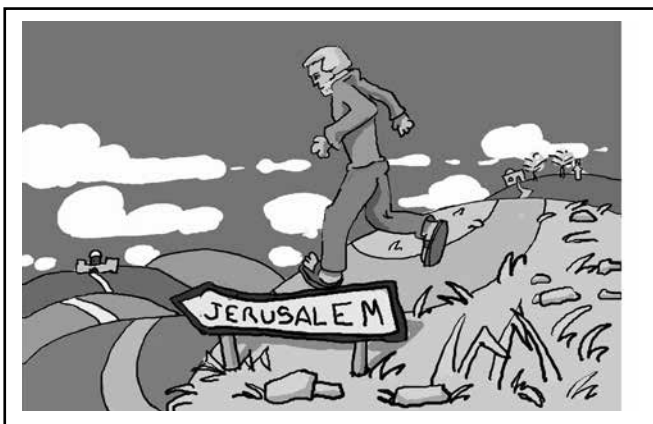
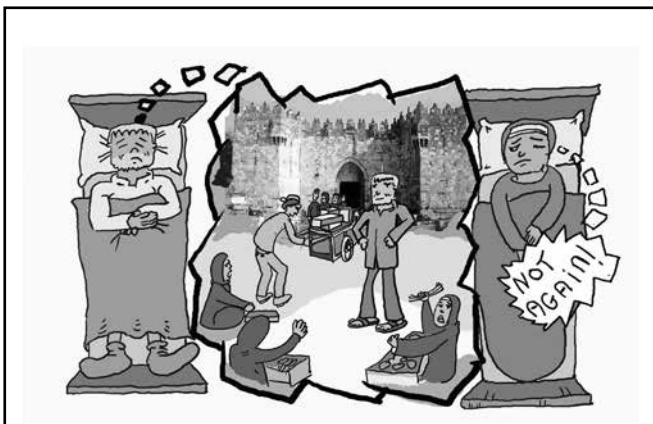
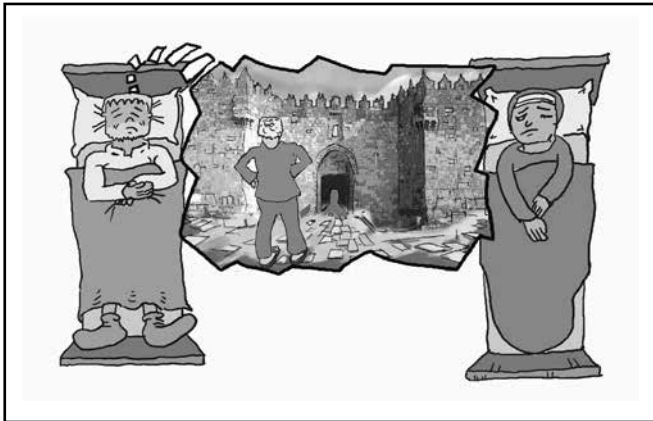
## **Notes on the story**

This is another traditional Palestinian story, from the oral tradition, of which there are many different versions. For a published version see 'Speak Bird, Speak Again' by Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana.





# The farmer who followed his dream - picture story



## The farmer who followed his dream - story summary

d) *One night a farmer dreamt that he was waiting for something at Damascus Gate in Jerusalem.*

g) *The next morning he told his wife about the dream.*

c) *That night he had the same dream again.*

h) *The next morning he decided to go to Damascus Gate.*

f) *He walked all the way to Jerusalem.*

b) *He waited at Damascus Gate (just like in his dream) for three days.*

e) *On the third day a man said, 'I dreamt there is treasure between 2 lemon trees in a farmer's garden.'*

a) *The farmer went home quickly and dug up the treasure.*

## The farmer who followed his dream - chant

Farmer: Last night when I lay there asleep in my bed  
The strangest dream came into my head  
I dreamed that I went to Damascus Gate  
And when I got there I just had to wait.

Farmer's wife: But it's just a dream. It's just a dream!  
Things aren't always what they seem.  
Go to Jerusalem and have some fun  
And leave me here in the burning sun!

Farmer: Last night when I lay there asleep in my bed  
The strangest dream came into my head  
I dreamed that I went to Damascus Gate  
And when I got there I just had to wait.

Farmer's wife: But it's just a dream. It's just a dream!  
Things aren't always what they seem.  
Go to Jerusalem and have some fun  
And leave me here in the burning sun!

Farmer: Well now I'm back from Damascus Gate  
And I have some news that is really great.  
The dream came true. We can both be free.  
There's a box of treasure and it's under our tree.

## The farmer who followed his dream – reader's theatre script

**Narrator 1:** There was once a poor farmer who lived with his wife and seven children in a village called Sirees.

**Narrator 2:** Their farm had a small garden with vegetables and herbs, and two lemon trees in front of their house. They worked hard every day but still they had very little money.

**Narrator 1:** One morning the farmer looked very worried when he came down to breakfast.

**Farmer's wife:** What's the matter? Why do you look so worried?

**Farmer:** Last night I had a strange dream. I dreamt that I went to Damascus gate in Jerusalem and when I got there I had to wait.

**Farmer's wife:** Wait for what?

**Farmer:** I don't know. I just had to wait.

**Farmer's wife:** Well it's just a dream. Don't worry about it.

**Narrator 2:** But that night when the farmer went to bed he had the same dream again. And the next night it happened again.

**Narrator 1:** On the third morning he decided he had to go to Jerusalem.

**Farmer's wife:** But why? It's just a dream. It will take you four days to walk there.

**Farmer:** I must go. I have to find out what I'm waiting for.

**Farmer's wife:** But you need to stay here and work and help me look after the children.

**Farmer:** I'm sorry. I have to go.

**Narrator 2:** So the farmer took a small bag with some bread and olives and water and he started to walk to Jerusalem.

**Narrator 1:** After 4 days he arrived and he found Damascus Gate and stood there and waited.

**Narrator 2:** Jerusalem was full of people selling things but the farmer had no money.

**Man 1:** Hot coffee!

**Farmer:** No thanks!

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**Man 2:** Flowers!

**Farmer:** No thanks!

**Man 3:** Bananas, oranges, avocados!

**Farmer:** No thanks!!

**Narrator 1:** After three days of waiting he was just about to give up and go home when an old man walked over to him.

**Old man:** I've been watching you for three days. Just standing there, not buying anything, waiting. Can I ask you? Why are you here?

**Narrator 2:** When the farmer told him about his dream the old man started to laugh.

**Old man:** You're crazy. Dreams aren't real. You shouldn't listen to your dreams! You know I had a crazy dream every night for a week. In my dream there was a farmer's house in a place called Sirees. It was a four day walk from here. Outside the house there were two lemon trees and between the lemon trees there was a box of treasure buried. In my dream I saw myself digging up the treasure and becoming rich. But it's just a crazy dream. Dreams aren't real. If I were you, I'd go back home to your family.

**Farmer:** Thanks for the advice. I will go home.

**Narrator 1:** The farmer walked back to his house.

**Narrator 2:** Actually the farmer ran back to his house! When he got there he found his spade and he started digging between the two lemon trees. And soon he found a big box and when he opened the box he found.....

**Farmer:**...Treasure!

**Farmers' wife:** Treasure!

**Farmer:** We're rich!

**Farmer's wife:** We're rich!

**Narrator 1:** And the farmer and his wife and their seven children lived happily ever after.

**Narrator 2:** So the dream wasn't crazy?

**Narrator 1:** Yes, it was real. Maybe we should listen to our dreams sometimes? What do you think?

## **Notes on the story**

There are many different versions of this story including one in England called 'The Pedlar of Swatham'. It's widely believed that the original version is from 'The Arabian nights'. This version is loosely based on 'The farmer who followed his dream' in 'Ghaddar the Ghoul and other Palestinian stories' by Sonia Nimr.





## Teachers' Notes

*Long ago in ancient Persia a wise old King received a present of three china dolls. The dolls were beautifully crafted and appeared identical in every way, but the teacher who had presented them to the king assured him that they were not. 'My challenge to you,' he said, "is to work out how they are different." The king enjoyed a challenge and he lifted them up to the light, inspected them, measured them, weighed them and even smelt them, but, try as he might, he could not find any differences. As quick as a flash, the teacher pulled out a hair from the King's beard and started pushing it into the left ear of the first doll. The hair disappeared but then began to come out of the right ear. 'Look!' said the teacher. "Just like our students when we don't teach them in motivating ways. It goes in one ear and out of the other!" Suddenly the teacher pulled out another hair from the King's beard and started pushing it into the left ear of the second doll. This time the hair just disappeared inside the dolls head. "So" said the teacher. "This is like our students when we manage to engage them and motivate them. They absorb everything that they are told." Before the King could stop him, the teacher had pulled out another hair from his beard and was pushing this one into the left ear of the third doll. This time the hair disappeared for a while before coming out of the doll's mouth. And there was a change; the hair had been straight when it went in but now it was curly. "This," said the teacher, "Is what happens when what we are doing as teachers is really working. The students learn what we teach them, and then it comes out of their own mouths, but in their own personal way"*

As human beings we are programmed to make sense of the world around us through stories. In some format or other, telling or listening to stories is a principle component of the way we interact with others on a daily basis. In homes and more formal educational settings alike, stories have been used to teach things to children since the beginnings of human speech, and all of the major religions of the world have used stories and storytelling as a way to put complex ideas into a format, which is simple, accessible and inherently memorable. But it's not only the message which may be learnt, it is also the medium.

In terms of second language development in classrooms, stories are one of the most powerful tools at our disposal for exposing learners to natural language, and for modeling the kind of language that we'd like the learners to use themselves. There are many advantages in putting storytelling at the centre of what we do, and in organizing our teaching around it.

## Contextualisation and Exposure

According to the Greek philosopher, Epictetus (55-135 AD) 'We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we can speak'. As far as second language development is concerned, the importance of listening, particularly at lower levels, cannot be overestimated. Regular opportunities to listen to English being used enables learners to notice how language works in context, increases vocabulary range and grammatical knowledge, and raises awareness about features of pronunciation in

natural, connected speech. The more learners listen in class, the better they become at it, allowing them to make better use of the English they may hear outside of class.

A good coursebook provides learners with plenty of opportunities to learn the meanings of lots of new words and grammatical structures. It also encourages them to use the new terms in speech and in writing. What coursebooks can't do so well however, is provide learners with exposure to how the forms that they are learning are used naturally, by real people. Along with presenting language and providing practice activities, provision of natural exposure is one of the key roles of the teacher. By telling stories to students using the structures and vocabulary that they're learning in their course book, we show them that language is a living thing which is used to communicate, to make people think and to laugh, and not just something they have to learn for the test.

## Memorability

It is a well known fact, exploited by educators throughout history, that material presented to us in the form of a story is much easier to remember than if it was presented as a series of facts in a list. If we think back on classes or lectures we have attended, it is often the stories that the presenter told which stick out most of all in our minds: it's as if our predisposition towards stories is one of the things which makes us human. As Pinker (2003) has noted, 'A computer finds it more difficult to remember the gist of *Little Red Riding Hood* than to remember a twenty digit number: you find it more difficult to remember the number than the gist.' Chip and Dan Heath, two brothers from marketing and educational psychology backgrounds, In their groundbreaking book 'Made to Stick' (2008) list stories as one of the six most effective ways of making new material memorable. The others factors in their list are *simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility* and *emotions* – all of which, interestingly, are also components of a good story.

Other recent research (for example Folse 2004) has suggested that vocabulary presented through a broad general theme, as in the way words occur in a story, is more memorable than vocabulary presented in meaning related sets (such as *jobs* or *colours*). This is because when words with similar meanings are presented together an extra, and unnecessary, burden is placed on our memories in keeping the concepts separate. We are far less likely to confuse two unrelated items such as *tie* and *newspaper* for example.

One of the oldest memory techniques in existence involves taking a list of things to be remembered and then creating a story linking all of the items together. Suppose we want to remember the following randomly chosen 10 items – *egg, angry, doctor, wall, tree, look for, ruler, shop, rabbit, headache*. By creating a story like the one below we can help the items to stick in our minds.

*One day a **doctor** wants an **egg** for her breakfast. She **looks for** one under the **tree** in her garden but there aren't any. In the **shop** they only sell **rabbits** and **rulers**. She feels **angry** and hits her head on the **wall**. Now she has a **headache**.*

You will probably find that just by reading the above story through a couple

of times you are able to remember what the 10 items were without looking at the list again. In order to do this you go back and reimagine the images that you created in your mind (the doctor looking for an egg under a tree in her garden, the shop which only sells rabbits and rulers etc.) when you read it.

The same principle applies the other way around of course, when the story is the starting point. So when a story like *The Jackal and the Crow* is told, its key vocabulary items (such as *hungry, bird, pick up, fly, tree, beautiful, sing, open, drop, eat* etc.) become memorable because of the images that learners create in their minds when they hear the story.

## Repetition

Repetition of encounter is generally regarded as the single most important factor in determining whether new material enters long-term memory (see for instance Nation 2001). Many stories contain repetitive elements, where key events happen again and again, sometimes with different consequences. This allows learners to get repeated exposure to the same areas of language within the same story. Some stories also lend themselves to certain parts being repeated by the learners – a kind of contextualized drilling. Learners also have multiple encounters with the language as they work through the different tasks associated with the story. They may first be challenged to come up with the words, or at least recognize the need for them, through looking at and talking about the pictures. They then get aural exposure through the telling of the story and written exposure through ordering the summary. This can be followed up by explicit noticing activities, where learners identify particular words with particular meanings, and eventually with activation and performance through talking about the pictures again, telling the story, performing the chants, or working with the readers' theatre scripts. Of course all of these activities do not necessarily need to take place in a single lesson. In fact research suggests (for example Baddeley 1990) that spaced repetitions, i.e. with time intervals in between, is more effective in terms of storage into long term memory, than cramming all the activities one after another. This means that it may be appropriate to spread some of the activities over a number of lessons, or even use some of them as reviewing tasks when a considerable amount of time has passed.

It may well also be the case, of course, that some or all of the learners are already familiar with the story or have heard a version in Arabic. In this situation the learners' first encounter with any of the material may even be a repetition of a sort, albeit in a different language. Although to a certain extent this will diminish the novelty value of the story, there are also advantages to this scenario. Having some familiarity with the sequence of events helps the learners to activate their existing knowledge, which is another factor that is useful in terms of retention of new language. It also reduces the pressure of having to follow every detail in order to understand the story as a whole, and consequently they may have more attention available to make observations about the language being used.

## **Adaptability and Comprehensibility**

As we've said earlier, in order to get enough exposure to contextualised language, as well as practice in understanding extended speech, learners need lots of opportunities to hear the language they are learning being used in natural ways. The traditional way to do this in a language class has been through listening to authentic or semi-authentic recordings of conversations and monologues, and answering comprehension questions to check understanding.

There are several advantages to an approach which also incorporates live listening material -such as storytelling - alongside pre-recorded material. When we tell a story to a class we are able to make eye contact with the learners and gauge how well they are following what we are saying. If we feel that there are issues with comprehension, we have the option to either repeat a section, to paraphrase using simpler language, or to incorporate more gestures or mime in order to make meanings clearer. If all else fails, and we really want the learners to understand something which is essential to the overall meaning of the story, we could of course simply translate the occasional key word or phrase into Arabic.

Storytelling is also an interactive process: the teacher can ask questions to the class about certain elements of the story, and even incorporate their suggestions into the telling. The learners can also interrupt the teacher to ask questions about content or to ask for clarification. Without stopping the recording and breaking the flow of the story, none of these things are possible with pre-recorded material. Because of all these factors, learners are often able to understand live storytelling pitched at a higher level than would normally be possible with prerecorded material.

## **Activities**

Of course learning a language is not just about listening – it's also about focusing on the form of language, and even more importantly, about how the words and phrases are really used . Storytelling is a technique which naturally leads on to other skills like reading, speaking or writing, and also to an explicit focus on grammar and vocabulary. In the next five sections there is a huge range of ideas for ways in which the material can be used with a class of children to maximise its learning potential. Some of the activities are for low level, absolute beginners in English, and others require a certain level in order for them to work effectively. It's up to the teacher to decide which will be the most appropriate activities for his or her style of teaching, and to adapt them for use with a particular class. Hopefully there are enough ideas here so that everyone, irrespective of teaching style or learning context, will have something to work with. In an ideal world we would use English, rather than Arabic to set up the activities that we ask the learners to do in class, since this is also a useful way of exposing the students to natural English. However, depending on the activity and the level of the learners, this may not always be possible. We would recommend that you use English



where you can, but that you also translate what you're saying into Arabic, if you feel that you're not being understood. The most important thing is that the learners get lots of opportunities to think about, and to use English in the activity itself.

## Working with the pictures

*'Images speak to us. They give rise to outbursts of emotion, thought and curiosity. They bring back memories and remind us of the experiences we have had. Image refreshes the parts of the brain that words alone cannot reach'*

Keddie, J (2009) *Images*; Oxford University Press

'Every picture tells a story' goes the old adage, and it is certainly true that pictures have a unique value in the language classroom since all learners can infer meaning from them, regardless of their language level. The activities outlined below use the images contained in the book in three main ways;

- 1) As a tool for presenting and eliciting vocabulary. This can be done either with the whole class working together and the teacher leading the activity, or between the learners themselves in pairs or small groups.
- 2) As a way of creating interest, or reviewing a story, for instance by trying to put the pictures in order, or discussing the event of the story which each picture represents.
- 3) As a stimulus for talk. The pictures deliberately do not contain a lot of detail. This way they may become a 'lexical resource' and encourage discussion about what is happening and why.

## Class activities using the images from *Stories Alive*

### Elicitation of key language

Look at the pictures, one by one but not necessarily in the correct order, with the whole class together – either as large blown up flash cards, or using a data projector. Elicit vocabulary from the class about what they can see in the picture. You could ask the children to call out suggestions for what they can see, or alternatively ask them to put their hands up and take suggestions one by one. Whichever way you do it, it is really important to make sure that everyone is clear about which element of the picture is being referred to so that they can learn vocabulary from their peers. A good way to do this is to point at the part of the picture they are talking about as the learners say the words.

The questions that we ask during elicitation can provide a lot of support for learners. So we could ask for example, 'What's this person doing?' to get the response 'Running' but with lower level learners we could provide even more support when it's needed by

using a closed question, like 'Is he walking or running?'

For example:

*Teacher: What can you see in this picture?*

*Student: Man.*

*Teacher: A man or some men*

*Student: Some men*

*Teacher: What are they doing?*

*(Silence)*

*Teacher: Are they walking or running?*

*Students: Running etc...*

We also have the option of writing words up on the board as they come up. This could be done by the teacher, or by a confident learner. This has the advantage of allowing everyone to see (and hopefully learn) the written form of the word but it may also slow things down quite considerably. Where time is limited simply conducting this stage orally will be sufficient, especially since the learners will have a chance to see many of the written forms later on in other activities.

## **Flash**

Show each picture to the class very quickly (for a maximum of a few seconds only) before putting it face down on the table again, or removing the slide. Then ask the students to say what they think they saw. Alternatively cover the picture with a blank sheet and slowly pull it down, revealing more and more of the picture as you go. Ask the class to say what they think the whole picture is going to show. These activities are good for encouraging visualization and predicting skills. They could usefully be followed up by elicitation with the whole picture visible (as above).

## **Picture dictation**

Choose one of the pictures from the story and look at it but don't reveal it to the class. Slowly describe it to them in as much detail as appropriate and ask them to try to draw the picture that you are describing. Allow them to see each other's work so that if learners don't understand something they can get help from their neighbour. If it's absolutely clear that no one understands one of the words or phrases that you use, you could mime it or even repeat it in Arabic. When they have finished show them the original picture to compare with their own ones. Students could now think of and/or write sentences to compare the picture they have drawn with the original. (*My sheep is fatter than the teacher's sheep. In my picture the boy has short hair etc*)

This activity can be followed up by group work on the same activity. Each group of students gets one picture. One learner looks at the picture without showing it to the others. She describes the picture to the rest of the people in her group who have to draw what she is describing. A small prize could be awarded afterwards to the person in each group whose picture is most like the original.

## Vocabulary Race 1

Stick four of the large pictures from one story up the board at the front of the class. Divide the class into two halves. Each half of the class appoints one person to do the racing and this person comes to the front of the class. You slowly read out a list of vocabulary items that can be seen in the pictures (*a sheep, a rock, a bored boy, somebody pointing* etc) The first person to run up to the board and touch the vocabulary item after you say it gets a point for their team.

## Vocabulary race 2

Divide the class into six or eight groups. Give each group one of the pictures from a story. Read out a list of vocabulary items related to the pictures. If a group thinks that a vocabulary item relates to their picture they should hold up their picture as quickly as they can. The first team to do this has to point to the part of their picture which shows it. If they're right they get a point for their group. If they're not correct they lose a point.

## Picture Visualisation 1

Turn the picture towards you so that only you can see it. Slowly and clearly describe it in as much detail as you can so that only you can see it. Try to make this description within their level but also include words which will be challenging for them. It might go something like this..

*In this picture there's a boy and he's sitting on a rock. He doesn't look happy at all. In fact he looks very bored. Maybe he's bored because there isn't anybody to talk to.... Etc*

Now turn over the picture and show it to them. Point to different elements of the picture and see if they can describe them in English.

## Picture Visualisation 2

This is similar to the previous activity but involves more interaction with the class.

Choose one picture which shows one of the key moments in the story. Look at it yourself but keep it hidden from the students. Describe one element of the picture and then try to engage the students in dialogue to get more information about it. For example...

*Teacher: There's a boy sitting. He's not sitting on a chair. Where do you think he's sitting?*

*Student: ....Table..... Sofa*

*Teacher: No not a table or a sofa. He's not inside. He's .....*

*Student: ...Outside*

*Teacher: Yes. He's outside. He's sitting outside on .....*

*Student: شو يعني أرض بالإنجليزي؟*

*Teacher: No actually he's not sitting on the ground he's sitting on a rock (mimes rock)*

*؟صح He's sitting on a rock. He doesn't looks happy. He looks sad. Why? Why does he look sad?*

In this kind of dialogue with the class you are trying to provide a safe 'scaffold' in which the students can notice and experiment with new language. You want them to understand what you are saying but at the same time you're trying to push them a little to work at the limits of their abilities and to engage with new language. There is potentially a lot of learning that can happen in such a situation.

## Remembering detail

Choose one of the pictures from a story and display it so that everyone can see it clearly. Tell the class that they should look at it for a minute and try to remember as much detail as they can. Now take the picture away and start to ask questions about the detail to see how much they can remember. For example

*There are two people in the picture. True or false?*

*The boy is next to the sheep. True or False?*

*Is there an apple in the picture?*

*How many chairs are there in the picture?*

*Where is the fish? etc*

You could do this as a memory competition with one side of the class competing against the other.

With a low level class it's a good idea to write some of these question types mentioned above on the board to use as a model. You could now do the same activity the other way around. That is, the class can see another picture from the same story but it is hidden from your view. They ask questions to you to see how much you can remember. You score a point for each question you answer correctly. They score a point for each question you answer incorrectly. Finally the same activity can be done in groups with the remaining pictures from a story. After studying their picture, one learner from each group asks questions to the other people in her group to test their memories. They can swap pictures with a different group if they finish quickly.

## Something beginning with...

Display all of the large pictures at the front of the class by sticking them to the board, or use a projector if one is available. Think of something that can be seen in one of the pictures. Tell the class the first letter of the object and see if they can guess what it is. You could use the line 'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with...' to introduce each word that they have to guess. When you've done a few examples the students can do the same activity in groups. This activity works well as a follow up to elicitation. For an extra challenge you can play the game using two words instead of one. So it would be 'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with h w (hungry wolf)' or 'I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with b s (boy shouting)'.

## True/False dictation

Choose one picture and show it to the class for a brief period of time. Ask the students to remember as much detail as possible. Now dictate a series of sentences about it to the class – some true and some false (for example *the boy is sitting on a chair, the boy isn't happy* etc.) Students write down the correct ones and have to change the sentences that they think are not true so that they are.

This can be followed up by groupwork with each group having a different picture from the same story. Each group writes a list of true and false sentences for their picture. They then show their picture to the rest of the class and read out their sentences. The other students have to say whether the sentences are true or false and change the false sentences to make them true.

## What's next?

Show the pictures to the whole class, one at a time and in the correct order. As each picture is shown, ask the class to predict and discuss what they think will happen in the next picture, before revealing it. Try to get a range of different suggestions and accept everything that comes up. Provide a safe scaffold in which learners are able to take risks and experiment with new language. With 'The boy who cried wolf' the interaction might go something like this:-

*Teacher: So what do you think happens next?*

*Student: Boy go بيت بالدينجليزي؟ عالبيت*

*Teacher: He goes home. You think he goes home? Why do you think he goes home?*

*Student: Because he boring..*

*Teacher: Because he's bored? You think he goes home because he's bored. And what happens next? His father will be angry?*

*Student: What means 'angry'? etc..*

With a very strong class this activity could also be done in groups with one learner taking the role of the person revealing the pictures.

## Whole class sequencing of the pictures

Six or eight different learners come to the front of the class and each is given one of the large pictures from the story in a jumbled order. They hold the pictures up in a line so that everyone can see them. The teacher now discusses with the rest of the class what the order of the pictures could be. The students at the front change their position according to the order that is agreed. For example..

*Teacher: So which picture do you think goes first? Faten?*

*Student: Khadija picture*

*Teacher: Why do you think it's Khadija's picture that goes first Faten?*

*Student: Because man and boy looking to mountain.*

*Teacher: Because the man and the boy are looking at the mountain? Do you agree everyone?*

*Students: Yes*

*Teacher: OK Khadija. Can you please move to the front of the line? Now which one is next? Etc..*

This activity could either be done before listening to the story (as a way to generate ideas and vocabulary, and make the listening process easier) or after listening to the story (as a way of checking that they understood it). By doing it with the whole class together you are providing a very useful model of the kind of language that students can use if they do the same sequencing activity in groups (see below).

### **Sequencing of the story in small groups**

Each group of learners receives a set of the smaller pictures which have been cut up and put in a jumbled order. They discuss how they could order them to make a coherent story. When they have finished, each group could send one of their members to a new group so that different groups can compare and discuss how they ordered the story. For more capable learners, they could also write their story up, or prepare to tell it in front of the whole class. As with the activity above, small group sequencing could either be done before or after listening to the original story.

### **Sequencing of the story through description**

Learners work in groups. Each pair or individual in the group gets two of the pictures cut off as a strip in order (either the first two, the second two etc). They don't show their pictures to the rest of their group. Each pair then describes their pictures to the rest of their group in turn. When everyone has done this they decide as a group what they think the correct order should be. Only when they have agreed on this do they reveal their pictures to each other and check whether they are correct.

When done after listening to the story this activity is a good way for learners to activate some of the language that they heard. When done before listening it is much more challenging, but a good way to encourage them to predict what the story might be about.

### **Story retelling**

Divide the class into groups of up to 10 students and give each group a part of the story. With a large class of up to 80 students each group may just get one of the pictures from the story. With a small class of 20 students, one half of the class could get the pictures for the first half of the story, and the other half could get the pictures for the second half. Whichever way you do it, each group should be told which part of the story they have been given. Within their groups they should write the part of the story which goes with the picture(s) that they have. This could be done either individually or collaboratively (with one learner writing the group's story on a big piece of paper). When they finish, their stories can be displayed on the classroom walls and/or read out to the rest of the class. For an extra challenge more confident students

could be asked to retell their part of the story without looking at what they wrote. This activity is simpler (but less creative) when done as a follow up to listening to the story. It is much more challenging when done before listening to the original story.

### **Multiple story retelling**

Give each group of students a set of pictures for a different story to put into sequence. When they have agreed on this they practise telling it amongst themselves. When they have finished one person from each group goes to a new group and they retell the story to the members of that group. This is a good way to review a range of stories that you have already worked with in class.

### **Picture dominoes**

Each group of 4 or 5 learners gets a set of the pictures and they share them out so that everyone has one or two pictures. One learner puts down one of the pictures and tells the beginning of a story using the picture as a stimulus. The next learner continues the story saying the next part, placing down another picture. This can either be done as a way of reviewing a story that they have already heard, or, for more capable learners, as an exercise in creativity with a new story (in which case there is no correct answer).

### **Writing summary sentences**

As a follow up to listening to the story, learners work in groups and write one sentence on the back of each picture to describe what happened. You need to monitor these carefully for accuracy. In the next class, they test each other by looking at the pictures and trying to recall what they wrote for each one. When they have tried to do this they turn over the paper to check.

### **Reformulated story**

Each group of learners receives a set of the cut up pictures for a story. They agree on an order between them. Ask one group to come to the front of the class. They should share the telling of the story between them by taking it in turns to talk about what happens in each picture. As each person says what they want to say for each picture (they can do this entirely in Arabic if they prefer) you reformulate it into a simple but accurate way of saying it in English. They practise the English version until they feel comfortable with it, and then record it onto a hand held recorder or mobile phone. Bit by bit the story is built up onto the recorder in this way. The entire story can be then be played back. This can be orally translated back into Arabic sentence by sentence, and then transcribed onto the board in English and used for language analysis work.

## Telling the story

As already noted, a story which is performed live, as opposed to one that has been pre-recorded and then replayed, has a number of particular advantages in terms of language learning (see notes above on adaptability and comprehensibility). Video recordings of all the stories can also be accessed however at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3pWIDb1E63K6QeJhe0p5Uw>. There are two main purposes for the inclusion of this. Firstly it may serve as a model which teachers can use to familiarize themselves with both the *who*, *the where* and the *what* of the story, and with some possible areas of language to use in their own telling of the story. Secondly it may be played to learners, accompanied by one or some of the tasks below as a way of revisiting and reviewing the story. In some circumstances it may be advisable to do this with the sound alone (without the images) so that learners are provided with an increased level of challenge in interpreting the story without visual clues.

We would strongly recommend however that the learners' first hearing of the story would normally be through listening to the teacher's telling of it. This does not necessarily require any special skills on the part of the teacher – although of course the more engaging the telling, the more likely learners are to take something from it. Telling stories is something that most of us do, in some format or other, whenever we interact with others, so there is no reason why we need to make this process unnecessarily staged and unnatural when it occurs in a language class. There are however a few important points to bear in mind in order to make the telling of the story as useful as possible.

- Familiarize yourself with the key events of the story beforehand (the story summaries are useful for this) so that you can tell the story without reading or looking at notes later. As long as these elements are present in your telling, the specific words and grammar that you use don't matter too much.
- Make sure you project your voice sufficiently so that the people at the back of the room can hear you clearly. At the same time don't make too much of a performance out of it. You want the learners to feel that you are talking directly to them.
- Think about which parts of the story the learners may find challenging to understand. Which strategies could you use to help them with these?
- With some stories a few simple props may aid comprehension. Make sure you get these ready beforehand.
- Think of some ways in which you can use gesture and movement to help learners comprehend what you are saying.
- Try to make eye contact with as many of the people as possible during the telling. Not only does this help the learners to feel more involved but it also allows you to gauge how well they are following what you are saying.
- Be as spontaneous as possible in the way that you tell it. If you feel you need to speak more slowly, to repeat a section, or to paraphrase or translate something, then do so.



## Class Activities related to telling the story

### Kamishibai

This is a storytelling technique which originates in ancient Japan. Have the large pictures arranged in the correct order or use the correct order version on the Powerpoint slides. Tell the story in English and as you move on to each new part, show the class the picture which goes with that part. This way, even if the level of understanding of the class is very low, they will still be able to follow something of the story from the pictures. They will also start to make links between what they can see in the pictures and the words you are using.

### Sandwich technique

For lower level learners, or those who are not used to hearing extended speech in English, listening to a whole story can be a little bit daunting. Of course many of the strategies outlined above (such as physicalizing as much as possible in your telling) will help with this, but you can also use Arabic occasionally to aid comprehension. One effective way of doing this is to tell the story in both languages. Each time a word comes up which you think the students wouldn't know, and which you think they wouldn't be able to guess from the context, you could feed in an Arabic gloss of it. It's important to keep exposing them to as much English as possible though, and to repeat the English version of the word you glossed straight afterwards. It might work something like this....

*Once upon a time كان يا ما كان Once upon a time there was a boy who liked to watch television every day. بحضر تلفزيون ? He watched television in the morning. He watched television in the afternoon. He watched television in the evening. He watched television at night. His father was angry with him (mimes angry) 'Stop watching television!' بكفي 'Stop watching television and go to the hills and look after the sheep!' تحضر تلفزيون he said. So the boy walked up to the hills, هضبة اه؟ and started to look after the sheep يعني يدير باله عالغنمات. The boy looked after the sheep in the hills all morning, and all afternoon, and all evening and he started to feel very bored (mimes bored) etc etc...*

### Hot seating

After telling the story, invite one of the learners to come up to the front and to sit on a chair facing the class. Discuss with the class which character in the story the person at the front could be. When you have agreed on this, invite the class to ask questions to the person at the front. She should answer as if she is that person. Accept questions in inaccurate English or in Arabic and reformulate them to make them more 'English' if you can. Using the boy from the boy who cried wolf as an example, here are some possible questions that could be asked. They could be simple and fairly factual like the following...

*What's your name?*

*Where do you live?*

*Do you have any brothers and sisters?  
What's your favourite television programme? Etc.*

Or they could be more complex and require more creativity and interpretation on the part of the learners, like these...

*How many sheep do you have to look after?  
Why don't you like sheep?  
What do you want to do when you grow up?  
Why doesn't your father look after the sheep himself? Etc.*

## **How did you see it?**

After telling the story write the names of some of the key characters and components up on the whiteboard. For 'The boy who cried wolf' these could include *the boy, the father, the villagers, the village, the hills* etc. Ask the students to discuss in groups how they imagined each of these components. What do they look like? What were they wearing? Was it set in modern times or sometime in the past? What season did it happen in? etc. This discussion could take place in Arabic at the group stage, but it would be useful to follow it up with whole group discussion where they share their ideas in English as much as possible. You will need to scaffold what they say and if necessary reformulate their ideas into English.

You could make this activity more structured by dictating to them a series of known words and asking them to write the words next to the character that they think they most apply to. For example *bored, angry, quickly, dishonest, running, shout, point, worried, hungry, kill* etc. Learners can now compare where they wrote the words, and tell each other why they chose certain words for the different characters.

## **Checking the sequence**

Having worked in groups to sequence the pictures of the story, the learners listen to you telling the story (or the recording) and check whether the order that they agreed on is the same.

## **Cooperative telling**

Before telling the story invite some learners to come to the front of the class to act as each of the main characters. When you begin to tell the story, the learner playing each part does some simple actions to reflect what you're saying. When the character is supposed to say something, you say the line and then the learner playing that character repeats it. For example...

*Teacher: Once upon a time there was a boy who liked to watch television and play computer games all day long (the learner being the boy mimes playing computer games and watching television). His father was angry with him (the learner being the father mimes being angry). One day the father said to the boy. Stop watching television!*

*Father: Stop watching television!*

*Teacher: Stop playing computer games!*

*Father: Stop playing computer games!*

*Teacher: Go to the hills and look after the sheep.*

*Father: Go to the hills and look after the sheep.*

*Teacher: The boy walked sadly up the hill (the boy mimes this) etc....*

## **Mime reviews**

After you have told a story think of a few parts of the story which could be mimed, or shown through gestures (the father pointed at the hills, the boy was very bored, the boy shouted 'Help' etc. Mime them one by one to the class and ask them to say what they think your mime represents. Try to get them to say the exact phrase that you're thinking of where possible. As a follow up, learners can be asked to do the same activity in small groups. This process can be made easier by writing a list of the things to mime on the board.

## **What happens next?**

At various points in your telling of the story, stop and ask the class what they think is going to happen next. Try to get as many suggestions as possible and discuss with them the merits of each before moving on with your telling of the story. For example

*Teacher: What's going to happen next?*

*Learner: Boy go house*

*Teacher: You think the boy is going to go home? Why do you think that?*

*Learner: Because bored.*

*Teacher: OK any other ideas? أفكار تانية? Any other ideas?*

*Learner: الولد طلب المساعدة*

*Teacher: How do we say that in English?*

*Silence*

*Teacher: The boy shouts for help. You think he's going to shout for help? ..... etc*

## **Still Images**

Choose a moment from the story which could be represented through a still image. An example of this from 'The boy who cried wolf' could be the moment when the boy is shouting for help and the villagers don't believe him. Ask for some volunteers to come to the front of the class – one for each of the characters that will be represented in the image. Ask them to move into position (or physically move them yourself!), until you feel that the moment of the story is represented as accurately as possible. Ask the learners at the front to hold their position still whilst the rest of the class say which moment the image represents.

Now ask each group of students to plan their own still image of a key moment from the same story. When they are ready each group comes up to the front and shows their image to the rest of the class, who try to interpret what they see. You can now

ask questions about the image to activate as much language as possible. For example...

*What is Ahmed doing?*

*How does Mohammed feel?*

*What is Said going to do next?*

*What has just happened? etc*

## **Who said it?**

After telling the story, write the names of all the characters on the board. Repeat some of the lines of dialogue from the story and ask the class to say which character in the story said it. Using 'The boy who cried wolf' as an example, these could include:-

*There's nobody to talk to. (the boy)*

*I don't believe him. (the villagers)*

*This is so boring. (the boy)*

*You need to look after the sheep. (the father)*

*Stop playing computer games! (the father)*

*Help! There's a wolf (the boy)*

*Baa! (the sheep)*

Learners could now do the same activity in pairs or groups with one learner saying the utterance and the others deciding who said it.

## **Dialogue writing and dramatization**

After telling the story, assign a different part of the story to each group of learners – depending on the story, this could be one picture for each group. Ask them to write a short dialogue for their section. Go round and monitor this carefully, checking for accuracy. Ask them to assign people to play each of the characters in their section, and to practice it so that they can say their lines without looking at the paper. Each group can now perform their section in front of the class.

## Working with the story summaries

There are, of course, also advantages in terms of learning potential in incorporating activities which use the written versions of the stories. Unlike spoken language, which has its own time frame, written material exists in the time frame chosen by its audience. The reader therefore has time to stop to fully savour what she is reading, to really notice aspects of the language like spellings and collocations, or to consult her peers, the teacher, or a dictionary when comprehension is an issue.

Some of the activities outlined below require each group of students to have a set of the sentences which have been cut up and jumbled. Others require them to have all the sentences in order -or for the teacher to have this, but not the learners.

## Classroom activities using the story summaries

### Sequencing the text

Learners work in groups to put the sentences from the story summary in order. This activity involves reading the text carefully and challenges the learners to notice the written forms of the language which, until now they may not have seen. This will usually be done after listening as a way of checking their understanding of the story but, with a strong group, it could also be done before listening. In this case students would listen to the story as a way to check whether their order is the same.

It is best done in groups (maximum 5 people), so that some discussion may happen and learners can help each other out with meanings of unknown words. You need to make yourself available to help them where necessary too.

As with the picture sequencing activity above, the first time you do this with a class it may be more appropriate to do it with everyone together, with very large copies of the sentences stuck to the board at the front of the class. By doing this you are providing a very useful model of the kind of language that the learners can use themselves when they do the activity in groups later. The conversation might go something like this..

*Teacher: So which one do you think goes first? الدولى؟ Which goes first?*

*Pause while students read*

*Student: I think "d"*

*Teacher: Good. Why do you think it is "d"*

*Student: Because 'sent to the hills'*

*Teacher: Yes good. The boy was sent to the hills. That's the first thing, isn't it?*

*Also because it's 'a boy'. هذه اول مرة بنشوفه. Etc...*

### Creating flash cards

Working in groups, learners write translations of the sentences into Arabic on the reverse of each slip. You will need to go around and check that people have done this correctly. They can now test each other using the slips. One person in the group holds

up the slips one by one – just showing the English version to the others. The other people have to try to say the Arabic version. The person holding the slip corrects them if necessary. Now they can do it the other way around – that is, showing the Arabic version and trying to recall the English version. This way is more challenging and pushes the learners to say things in English.

Instead of writing translations of the other side learners can write first letter prompts. So the first sentence from 'The boy who cried wolf' which is...

*A boy was sent to the hills to look after the sheep*

Would be written as the following on the other side....

*a b w s t t h t l a t s*

In this way, learners look at the first letter prompts and try to remember the sentence. Alternatively you could ask the students to draw simple pictures on the back of each slip to represent each sentence. They then try to recall the sentences by looking at the pictures.

## **The memory game**

For this activity each group of learners needs a set of the pictures and a set of the summary sentences. They turn them all over face down, mix them up and spread them out over the table in front of them. One learner turns over two cards. If they go together (i.e. the summary sentence describes what is happening in the picture) she gets to keep them and have another go. If they don't go together she turns them back face down again, and leaves them in the same position. It is now the next person's turn. The person with the most pieces of paper at the end is the winner.

## **Dictation**

Show learners the complete text from the story (not cut up) and ask them to underline any words which they think they will find difficult to spell. Ask them to practice these words. Now take the text away from them or ask them to turn it over. Now read out the complete text and ask them to write down what you say. Read it in as natural a way as possible, pausing between chunks of language rather than between individual words. At the end, you could ask learners to predict how many mistakes they think they made in the dictation and write this number down. Now ask them to turn over the sheet, or give it back to them so that they can check their own work. Award a small prize to anyone who accurately predicted the number of mistakes they would make. It's important to keep learners on their toes whilst dictating and to make sure everyone is being challenged to think about meaning as well as form. One way to do this is to stop in mid flow sometimes and ask learners to say what they think the next word could be. For example...

*Teacher: The boy was sent to the ... .. what's next? شو بيحي بعدين What's next?*

*Student: Hills*

Teacher: شو كمان ممكن نقول *The boy was sent to the ...*

Student: Bedroom

Student: School

Etc...

## Dictate and Sequence

Give six or eight blank slips of paper to each pair of students. Dictate the sentences to them but in a random order. They should write one sentence on each piece of paper. They could take it in turns to do this. Now get a definitive version of all the sentences up on the board so that they can check their work. You could do this yourself or ask a competent student to do it. Now ask them to work in pairs to put the sentences in the correct order to make a story. This activity could be followed up by one of the flashcard activities mentioned earlier.

## Unjumbling sentences

Give each group a large sheet of paper or a mini-whiteboard. Tell the class that you are going to write a sentence from the story in a jumbled order on the board. Their task is to look at the sentence, unjumble it as a group, and to write it on their piece of paper as quickly as they can. When they have done this they hold up their piece of paper for checking. The first team to do it correctly gets a point for their team. This activity can be done more smoothly by having the jumbled up sentences written on large pieces of paper that you can hold up at the front of the class, or by using a data projector.

## Word hunt

Write a list of words or chunks of language in Arabic on the board all of which have an equivalent in the story summary. Ask the learners to go through the text and find the English equivalent for each word. Check these with the whole class together at the end and award a small prize for the group which finishes first. Clean the board and ask them to turn over all their papers. The students can now test each other in groups with one learner saying the Arabic and the others saying the English equivalent.

For instance with 'the Boy who cried wolf' these could include

- ١) كمان مرة
- ٢) اي محل
- ٣) الكل
- ٤) مساعدة او ساعدوني
- ٥) هضبة
- ٦) قتل
- ٧) وحيد
- ٨) يدير باله
- ٩) ولا حدا
- ١٠) يتظاهر

- ١١) صرّخ
- ١٢) بدا
- ١٣) ثاني يوم
- ١٤) القرية
- ١٥) رجع

### Answer key

1. Again مرة
2. Anywhere اي محل
3. Everyone الكل
4. Help مساعدة او ساعدوني
5. Hills هضبة
6. Killed قتل
7. Lonely وحيد
8. look after يدير باله
9. nobody ولا حدا
10. Pretended يتظاهر
11. shouted صرّخ
12. Started بدا
13. the next day ثاني يوم
14. the village القرية
15. went back رجع

### **Being a prompt**

When the students have already done at least one activity with the story summaries ask them to turn over everything so that they can't see the text. Now start to read it out from the beginning to them but stop at certain points and ask the class to supply the next word. For example.

*Teacher: A boy was sent to the...*

*Silence*

*Teacher: A boy was sent to the h...*

*Student: hills*

*Teacher: A boy was sent to the hills to look .....*

*Student: After*

*Teacher: To look after the....*

*Silence:*

*Teacher: (makes sheep noise)*

*Student: sheep*

*Teacher: To look after the sheep. He started to feel very b..*

*Etc....*

The students can now do the same activity in groups with one learner looking at the text and reading it out and the others trying to supply the next word.



## Learning by heart

Ask everyone to learn the text of the story by heart for homework. In the next class they can either be asked to write out the text as well as they can remember it or to recite it to each other in pairs. When they have done this they can check it against the original text. This activity is a useful follow up to the previous one.

## Where are the pauses?

Write the complete text of a story on the board in the correct order. Read it aloud to them a couple of times in a natural clear voice. Ask the students to identify the places where you paused when you were reading it. Elicit the answer from the class and write -- on the board to represent them. It might look something like this:-

A boy was sent to the hills -- to look after the sheep. -- He started to feel very bored -- and lonely.

He pretended he saw a wolf -- and shouted for help. -- Everyone from the village -- came to help him.

They couldn't see a wolf anywhere, -- so they all went back to the village again.

The next day -- a wolf really came to the hills -- so he shouted for help again.

Nobody believed him, -- so they didn't go to help him. -- The wolf killed all the sheep.

Now ask a few people to read out the text trying to pause only in the places that have been agreed on. The students can now practice this in groups. As homework the students can be asked to learn the text by heart and then to recite it, or write it from memory, in the next class.

## Adding dialogue

Write the complete text of a story on the board in the correct order but with gaps between each of the lines. Elicit from the class some ideas for a line or two of dialogue in each space. Write this up in the space between the lines. You may need to reformulate what they say into a more accurate version before writing it, or even translate from Arabic if necessary. The conversation might go something like this:-

Teacher: What could the father say here? (pointing to the space between the first two lines on the board)

Student: ولد كسول، روح دير بالك عالغنمات

Teacher: How can we say this in English?

Student: Go look sheep بالإنجليزي كسول يعني

Teacher: كسول in English is lazy. Yes? So.. "You lazy boy! Go and look after the sheep" said the father. (Teacher writes this up on the board in the space)

So you would end up with something like this on the board.

A boy was sent to the hills to look after the sheep.

“You lazy boy! Go and look after the sheep” said the father.  
He started to feel very bored and lonely.  
etc...

Instead of dialogue, the summaries could also be expanded in other ways, such as by adding descriptive language or more action. For example...

*A boy was sent to the hills to look after the sheep. **It was a long way to the hills and he didn't want to go.***

*He started to feel very bored and lonely. **Then he had an idea.***

*He pretended he saw a wolf and shouted for help. **His father and all the other villagers were very worried.** Everyone from the village came to help him. **But when they got there they were very angry.***

*Etc.*

These activities provide a useful balance between control and creativity. Once the students get used to the idea they can be asked to do the same activity in small groups with one person writing up their story.

## **Disappearing text**

Write the whole text of the story on the board. Ask one learner to say one of the words that is in the text. Rub out all the examples of this word in the text. Now ask that learner to read aloud the whole text including the missing words. Now repeat this process with a different learner and a different word. Keep going until there is almost nothing left on the board. This is a good activity for developing concentration and, if continued to the end, leads to the students knowing the whole text by heart.

## **Long repetition**

The students work in groups. One learner holds all the sentences on strips – not necessarily in the correct order – but so that the other students can't see them. She reads them out one by one. Each time she does this, the other students in the group take it in turns to try to repeat what she says. They should only start repeating when she gets to the end of what is written. If they don't succeed, the model is provided again. This can be quite a challenging activity because some of the utterances are quite long. However, doing it means that the learners are required to process the language using working memory, which ultimately leads to more learning.

## **Physical drills**

Say the sentences out loud and ask the class to repeat them after you. You can make this process more interesting and memorable by incorporating simple gestures. For instance for the sentence 'A boy was sent to the hills to look after the sheep' you could move your arm out to the right and point into the distance. When the class

repeat the sentence they also repeat the gesture. It helps if everyone is standing up for this. After you've done a few of these you could try just doing the gesture and seeing if the class can remember the sentence.

### **Walking dictation**

Stick multiple copies of the complete text on the walls, spread out around the room – one copy for each group of four or five students. One student from each group needs to walk up to the text and read the first part of it and try to hold it in memory. She then walks back to her group, and says what she's remembered out loud. The others in the group try to write it down. The student then goes back to the text and tries to remember the next part. She keeps going in this way until the complete text has been transcribed into their notebooks. Now give out the original text and ask them to compare it with what they have written. If you have the space (and can stand the chaos!) you could also get the students to do this on an individual basis. They go up to the text, remember what they can and then go back to their desks and write down themselves what they've remembered. This process continues until they have individually transcribed the complete texts.

Both of these versions can be quite noisy and difficult to manage – especially if you have a large number of students. However they are very rich in terms of language processing, involving a focus on the four skills, as well as accuracy and memory.

### **Multiple story ordering**

Different groups are given different story summaries to put into order. When they have done this and the teacher has checked to make sure they have made a coherent story they can prepare to retell it to the whole class using their own words. A spokesperson from each group then does this. The class can then vote on which story they think is the most interesting.

### **Two story jumble**

Learners receive two jumbled up summaries which they have to sort into two different stories in the right order. This is obviously much more challenging than doing the same activity with a single story.

### **Dictogloss**

The teacher dictates the entire text at faster than normal dictation speed. The learners listen only. The teacher dictates again at the same speed. This time the learners write down as many key words as they can during the dictation stage. The learners pool what they have written in pairs or small groups and use this to try to reconstruct a text which is as close as possible to the original. One group can be asked to write their version up on the board. This can then be compared to the original.

## Kamishibai for learners

Choose a story that the learners already know well in Arabic. Divide the class into either 6 or 8 groups (depending on how many sentences in the summary there are) Give each group one of the sentences from the summary and a large piece of A3 paper. Tell them that their group should draw a picture to represent their part of the story on the paper. They then prepare to tell their part of the story to the rest of the class. You need to provide language support for this where necessary and allow plenty of time for practice. When they are ready each group tells their part of the story at the front of the class whilst holding up the picture. (See *Kamishibai* on page 16)

Each group of students can also be asked to create their own Kamishibai pictures to go with stories that they know or create. These can then be performed for others with one person holding a picture and telling their relevant part of the story. This is an activity that might take place over several classes, as a project rather than an individual lesson.

## Working with the Chants

Once the learners have done a number of activities which help them to understand the stories and to recognize and to notice the language they contain, it may be appropriate to ask them to perform tasks which require more activation of language. Chants are a good way of doing this for a number of reasons. Firstly because they contain strong rhyme patterns, they are highly memorable: learners often end up learning the entire chant by heart almost effortlessly. Secondly, the rhythm that is built into them allows learners to naturally acquire the rhythms of the target language -the way that words flow into each other and the fact that certain sounds are given more emphasis than others. Thirdly as they are dialogic in form (ie they are constructed as a conversation between two or more people) they are easy to follow and are useful models for speech.

A basic procedure to follow when working with a chant is as follows;

- 1) Distribute copies of the chant, project it onto a screen, or write it on the board
- 2) Teacher reads out the whole chant, using natural pronunciation and rhythm, and the class follow the written version. It may help to clap or stamp feet at the same time to establish the rhythm. Avoid making the clapping so loud that it drowns out the words though!
- 3) The teacher reads it out again line by line. The whole class repeats each line after the teacher. This works better if the class are standing up.
- 4) The teacher reads one character's lines only (eg those lines spoken by the boy) and the class read the other character's lines.
- 5) Swap over so that the class now read the other character's lines.

- 6) The class is divided into two halves. One half read one character's lines and the other half read the other character's. This stage can become more meaningful if each side turns to face the other, and uses gestures when they are saying the lines.
- 7) The students can be asked to learn the chant by heart for homework and then recite it in a later class. It could also be developed into a performance, perhaps using simple props and costumes, to be shown to other students or parents. They can also be incorporated into performances of the Readers' theatre scripts (see below)

## Working with the Readers' theatre scripts

Like the chants, the Readers' theatre scripts provide an opportunity for the learners to activate the language that they have previously only encountered passively. In fact, this is an opportunity for learners to really make the language their own by dramatizing the story and bringing something of themselves into the way in which they say the lines.

Readers' theatre is a kind of half-way house between storytelling and theatre. Unlike more complex forms of theatre it doesn't require lots of space and can easily be done in large classes. When using a readers' theatre script the learners normally work in small groups with each person taking on the role of at least one character in the story. The scripts tend to be flexible so that different people can play more than one role depending on the size of the group.

When performing, the actors are not expected to have learnt their lines off by heart (although with sufficient practice this can happen) and may have their scripts to read from in front of them. They tend to stand in a line, usually with the narrators standing at each end. Actions are hinted at rather than expressed naturalistically. For instance if the narrator says that a character 'runs up the hill', the actor would perhaps run a few steps on the spot, whilst still facing out towards the audience. Readers' theatre works best when actions happen after they have been narrated, rather than at the same time. Here's an example from 'The boy who cried wolf'

*Narrator 2: The boy walked up into the hills.*

*The boy mimes walking up the hill*

*Narrator 2: After about an hour looking after the sheep he started to feel very bored.*

*The boy mimes being bored.*

This means that those who are watching are challenged to process and understand the language first, before seeing it confirmed through the actions. In some cases it can also be interesting if the narrator herself does the actions after speaking, or even if everyone in the cast performs them simultaneously.

The first time you use a Readers' theatre script with a class it's probably best to pick some more confident individuals to come up to the front to be the performers. Give them the script and arrange them in a line so that they are facing the rest of the class. Now assign who will be playing each part with one narrator positioned at each end of the line. Let them go through it in front of everyone, asking them to speak in a loud clear voice and correcting their pronunciation where appropriate (but not so much that they lose confidence!). Be clear about getting them to include gestures and simple movements where they are needed. After you've gone through the whole text like this, ask them to do it again but this time as a performance without stopping. This process will serve as a model for how learners could use the scripts themselves later on. Now the students could be divided into groups and asked to practice the same story. One or two of these could then be performed in front of the others. After doing this, the students could be asked to learn their lines off by heart for homework for performance at the beginning of the next class.

Alternatively the Reader's theatre scripts can be used with the whole class together, sitting in their usual places, and done as a choral reading. Individuals or small groups of students are assigned different roles. When each role says their line they try to say it in unison and also follow this up with simple actions if they are needed. For clarity, it's better if the narrator parts are read by individual students with loud clear voices. Another way of working with the Readers' theatre scripts is to delay their use until several different stories have been worked with in class. Then the class can be divided into different groups and each group given a different script to work with. They can practice them in class, possibly learning them by heart for homework, and then perform them for each other. They could also be developed into a performance for other classes, parents, or even other schools.

## Staging lessons around stories

It could be that you find one of the stories included here works very well as a follow up or a lead in to a theme or an area of language that is part of your course syllabus, and this is one very effective way of working with the material. It could also be that you want to plan a lesson around a story, which incorporates a range of different activities. If we want our students to practice the four skills, and to develop their grammatical awareness and vocabulary then we need to think carefully about how we stage lessons and put these activities together. There are many ways of doing this of course but, as a way in, here is one possible way of working with the material for a low level class, using by way of example the story of 'The boy who cried wolf'

### The boy who cried wolf – sample lesson plan

The activities below could take place over a whole day, or alternatively over several classes during a much longer period of time. This is only one possible way of organizing the activities of course. Please see the preceding sections for alternative activities which may be more appropriate for the context in which you teach.

- 1) Flash the pictures from the story to the class in a random order. This could be done either with a data projector or using the enlarged A3 pictures. After showing each one for just a few seconds, ask the learners to call out words for things that they think they saw. Then show the picture again and elicit/present any words that they may not know and/or that will be useful for the activities that follow.
- 2) Learners work in pairs or small groups. Each group gets a set of the pictures which have been cut up. Their task is to order them into a coherent story.
- 3) Tell the story to the class in English, making it as physical as possible to make meaning clear where necessary. If you feel there are some important words in the story which they still don't understand you could translate these into Arabic. If you have the powerpoint slides, or the large versions of the pictures available then show these in the right order as you move on to each new part.
- 4) The learners quickly check that they have the same order. Each group is then given the summary of the story which has been cut up into slips. They work together to put this into order too.
- 5) Read out the summary in the correct order so that the class can check their work and revisit the pronunciation of the text.
- 6) Ask the learners to write Arabic translations of each line of the summary on the backs of their slips. When they have done this they test each other in

pairs by looking at the L1 version and trying to recall the English equivalent. This can be saved and reused at a later date.

- 7) Practice and perform the chant which goes with the story.
- 8) Assign different roles to different learners in the class and do a read through of the Readers' theatre script with the whole class together.
- 9) Now organize the class into groups of between 3 and 6. Learners decide on who will take on each role and they practice a dramatized reading of the script. Each group then performs for the rest of the class.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading through the material presented in *Stories Alive!* and that you can relate it to your own young learner classes. Above all we hope that you enjoy trying out the stories and activities with your students and that it inspires you to come up with your own ways of working with storytelling in language teaching.

**Nick Bilbrough**

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