

ANIMATED TALES — OF THE — WORLD™

Armenia: The Shoemaker's Son



Background

We all make mistakes sometimes. This is a theme of many folktales around the world. Sometimes, these mistakes are due to preconceived notions, lack of trust in others or the desire to be perfect. Most often, the protagonist is humbled by the lesson and is able to proceed with newfound wisdom. In this tale from Armenia, a king learns this lesson as a result of his interactions with a carefree, young boy and his friends. Folk literature terms relevant to this tale are provided below:

folk literature/folklore — Traditional tales, knowledge and beliefs handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

folktale — A type of folk literature that has grown from the lives and imaginations of people. Folktales often tell of the adventures of human or animal characters and sometimes attempt to explain the physical or spiritual world. Folktales can be organized into several different categories.

moral tale — A story in which a lesson is learned or a message is conveyed. Sometimes, the moral is left for listeners or readers to determine for themselves, while at other times it is explicitly stated.

Program Summary

Young Aram and his friends live a happy and simple life. By day, they mend shoes and perform odd jobs to earn money. In the evening, the fun begins. Games and a small feast are all they need to fill the night with joy and laughter. The king, however, is puzzled by their joy because the grand feasts he hosts lack the merriment of those of Aram and his friends. Desperate to know their secret, the king approaches them in disguise. When he suspects that they may be keeping their secret from him, he seeks to deprive them of their livelihoods and the things that he thinks brings them happiness, including shoemaking! Even so, Aram and his friends are never discouraged. They find other ways to make a living and continue to enjoy each other's company in the evening. The king even tries to host feasts like Aram's, with simple food and simple amusements, but the king's gatherings are still quiet and unexciting. Frustrated, the king forces Aram to work as a guard during the day so that he cannot earn any money at all. That evening the king is surprised to see Aram providing his friends with a feast of many delicious foods, but learns that Aram has sold the sword he was given and has replaced it with a wooden replica. The king soon learns that he was mistaken in his thinking. The happiness and joy that Aram and his friends feel has nothing to do with what they have or do not have. Instead, it is based on the companionship they share and the joy that they bring each other. When the king sees this, he invites everyone in the kingdom, including Aram and his friends, to join him in a feast.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- "Happiness is..." Invite students to complete this sentence. A class collage of words and pictures can even be made to show what brings joy to the students in the classroom.
- Locate Armenia on a map. Discuss its location in Asia and nearby countries. Use the map and other geographical information to make inferences about the landscape and people of that place. How might this information be relevant to a story set in this location?
- Review some of the different types of folktales so that students can classify this tale after viewing.

Follow-Up Discussion

- Describe the valuable lesson that the king learns from Aram and his friends.
- Motifs are recurring elements found in many folktales. They include everything from stock characters, such as tricksters, to magical objects, such as flying carpets. Recall the events, characters and details of this tale. What motifs can be found in this tale from Armenia?
- Discuss the cultural elements of the characters, setting and plot by asking students which aspects of the tale appear to be unique to Armenia and which ones are more universal in nature.

Follow-up Activities

- There are no dragons, giants or other mysterious creatures in this tale. Additionally, no magic is used nor spells are cast. This tale is an example of a realistic tale in that it consists of a reasonable plot and characters that could have existed. Discuss why storytellers might choose to share realistic tales. Consider watching *Poland: The Story of Flax* — another tale in which the plot and characters are realistic. Encourage students to get creative and come up with their own realistic tales. They may even wish to cast themselves as characters! Students can write and illustrate their stories or prepare for a dramatic storytelling.
- Throughout this tale, young Aram is savvy, quick and creative. The king is baffled, cunning and sneaky. Invite students to select a leading character from this tale, generate a list of words and phrases to describe the character and then use their brainstorm to write poetry about their selected character. It could be a simple acrostic poem or a more detailed biopoem. Some students may even prefer to write rhyming poems! Host a poetry reading for students to share what they wrote.
- Hear ye! Hear ye! After the king learns his lesson, he declares that shoemaking is no longer outlawed. Students can help spread the word by writing royal declarations sharing this news. They may wish to write them onto scrolls, use calligraphic handwriting and even design a royal seal of the king. Students can take turns sharing their declarations with the class using their most official-sounding voices.
- At the end of the tale, the king invites the entire kingdom to a grand banquet of fine foods. Students can extend the ending of the tale by writing about the banquet. Consider how it might differ from the earlier feasts hosted by the king. Will it be the party of the year or just another quiet dinner? What will happen at the feast? Students can draw colorful pictures to illustrate their endings and then share their writings and drawings in small groups. How were the endings similar or different?
- What exactly does a shoemaker, or cobbler, do? With an increased reliance upon machines for manufacturing, the occupation of a shoemaker is much less widespread. Engage students in an investigation of what a shoemaker does, the tools that are used and how the job has changed over time. Share excerpts of other stories in which a shoemaker is a character. The Brothers Grimm's "The Elves and the Shoemaker" is an often-shared tale. Then, have students use what they have learned to write a job description for a shoemaker.

(Continued)

- Before folktales were written or turned into films, they were passed down orally, from one generation to the next. Introduce students to the art of storytelling. Discuss different ways in which the storyteller can engage listeners (e.g., using sound and gestures, giving vivid sensory details). Practice storytelling techniques by having each student retell a portion of this tale.
- Compare Armenia today with the setting and people portrayed in the folktale. Organize these similarities and differences using a Venn diagram.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.armenianhistory.info/
This site features a detailed Armenian glossary in addition to a comprehensive review of Armenian history.
- www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5275.htm
This site, assembled by the U.S. Department of State, presents information on the geography, history, people, culture, government and economy of Armenia.
- www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/
This archive of folk and fairy tales from around the world presents a sampling of the many stories that make up our world's oral tradition.

Suggested Print Resources

To learn more about the land and people of Armenia:

- Hintz, Martin. *Armenia*. Children's press, Danbury, CT; 2004.
- Mason, Anthony. *People Around the World*. Kingfisher, London, England; 2002.

If you are interested in tales from Armenia, you might also enjoy:

- Hogrogian, Nonny. *The Contest*. Greenwillow, New York, NY; 1976. A Caldecott Honor book.
- Hogrogian, Nonny. *One Fine Day*. Aladdin, London, England; 2005. A Caldecott Medal book.
- San Souci, Robert D. *A Weave of Words*. Scholastic, New York, NY; 1998.

Teacher's Guide written by Megan Carnate, M.Ed., Curriculum Specialist,
Schlessinger Media

Teacher's Guides for titles in this series are available at www.LibraryVideo.com

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| • Alaska: Raven Steals the Daylight | • Denmark: The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep | • Ireland: The Boy Who Had No Story | • Scotland: The Green Man of Knowledge |
| • Arabia: The Crown and the Sceptre | • England: Cap O' Rushes | • Israel: King Solomon and the Bee | • Scotland: The Loch Ness Kelpie |
| • Armenia: The Shoemaker's Son | • Finland: The Raspberry Worm | • Japan: Crossing the Snow | • Singapore: Redhill |
| • Australia: Bad Baby Amy | • France: Ewenn Congar | • Mongolia: Shepherd Boy Tumur | • South Africa: How Tortoise Won Respect |
| • Burkina Faso: The Tyrant and the Child | • Germany: Frau Holle | • Namibia: Omuninyan | • South Africa: Ummemo |
| • Canada: Timoon and the Narwhal | • Germany: The Enchanted Lion | • Norway: The Three Sisters Who Fell Into the Mountain | • Taiwan: Aunt Tiger |
| • Caribbean: The Chief and the Carpenter | • Greece: The Myth of Persephone | • Pakistan: Podna & Podni | • U.S.A.: John Henry: Steel-Driving Man |
| • Catalonia: The Manairons | • Holland: The Tree with the Golden Apples | • Poland: The Flower of Fern | • Wales: King March |
| • China: The Magic Gourd | • India: The Multi-Coloured Jackal | • Poland: The Story of Flax | • Wales: Merlin and the Dragons |
| • China: The Magic Paintbrush | • Ireland: Fionn | • Russia: The Two Brothers | |



Teacher's Guide Copyright 2007 by Schlessinger Media, a division of Library Video Company
P.O. Box 580, Wynnewood, PA 19096 • 800-843-3620
Programs © 2005 S4C International All Rights Reserved