

ANIMATED TALES — OF THE — WORLD™

Israel: King Solomon and the Bee



Background

King Solomon, who ruled around the 10th century B.C.E., is often regarded as the greatest king of Israel. Much of what is known about this king has come from the Bible. He is credited with building a great temple in Jerusalem and was regarded for his wealth, power and wisdom. In fact, it is said that people from surrounding nations came to hear Solomon's wisdom. One of the most celebrated stories about King Solomon is of a visit with the Queen of Sheba. As the story goes, the queen came to Solomon with spices, gold and precious stones. She asked him questions and riddles and was impressed with his wisdom. This tale revisits that encounter. 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.

Program Summary

All the animals and people of the kingdom consider King Solomon to be the "wisest of the wise." When the Queen of Sheba hears of this, she sends a message that she wishes to visit King Solomon to test his wisdom. On the morning of her expected arrival, a sting on the nose wakes King Solomon from his sleep. He summons all the stinging insects of the kingdom to find out who the culprit is. A timid bee admits fault but promises that it was an accident. He mistook the king's big, beautiful nose for a flower. The bee is forgiven and promises to help the king in return one day. The Queen of Sheba arrives later that day and, after describing the difficult journey, arranges to meet with King Solomon the next day to present a challenge that will prove if he is really as clever as it is believed. The next day, the queen reveals eight flowers that look and smell exactly the same, but only one is real. The king's challenge is to find the real flower. The king examines each flower closely but is baffled. However, his new friend the bee comes to the rescue and flies straight to the real flower. As a result, the king selects the right flower and the Queen of Sheba is impressed by his wisdom.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- What does wisdom mean to you? Invite students to write and share their own definitions for this term. Students can share anecdotes of times when they have seen special people in their lives exhibit wisdom. In addition, students can look for acts of wisdom as they watch this tale.

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- Find the location of the tale's origin on a map. 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?

Follow-Up Discussion

- At the end of the tale, the Queen of Sheba is truly impressed by King Solomon's wisdom. Poll students to see if they think King Solomon proves his wisdom. Consider the queen's challenge as well as how he resolves the old woman's problem with the wind stealing her food.
- Discuss the cultural elements of the characters, setting and plot by asking students which aspects of the tale appear to be unique to Israel and which ones are more universal in nature.

Follow-up Activities

- Act it out! Recreate this tale in your classroom. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. In preparation for the production, examine and critically think about the story's elements of characters, setting and plot. Consider how the story might change if the setting was a different time and place.
- King Solomon is the subject of many tales told throughout the Middle East region. One of the most famous incidents of his cleverness was when two women came to his court with a baby whom each woman claimed as her own. Solomon threatened to split the baby in half. While one woman was prepared to accept the decision, the other begged the king to give the baby to the other woman. Solomon then knew the second woman was the mother. Share this tale as well as others. Consider reading Neil Waldman's *The Two Brothers: A Legend of Jerusalem* (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1997). Encourage students to get creative and cast King Solomon in their own folktales. Students can write and illustrate their stories or prepare for a dramatic storytelling.
- After successfully completing the Queen of Sheba's challenge, King Solomon is very grateful to the bee for his help. Have students write thank you letters to the bee from the perspective of King Solomon.
- King Solomon is a wise king respected by his people. The Queen of Sheba is revered as well, often regarded for her puzzles and riddles. Encourage students to get creative and write biopoems about a character from this tale. For a biopoem template and example, visit hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/phillie/webquest/ibiopoem.htm.
- The land that comprises Israel has been inhabited for thousands of years, from before the time of King Solomon to the present. Engage students in a deeper exploration of this region and its history. Using a jigsaw approach, students can work in small groups on a time line of a historic period of Israel's history. When all groups have completed their time lines, piece them together into one long time line and post it in the classroom.
- Before folk and fairy tales 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 Israel today with the setting and people portrayed in the folktale. Organize these similarities and differences using a Venn diagram.

Suggested Internet Resources

- embassyofisrael.org/kids/index.html
Discover Israel and what it is like to live there! Assembled by the embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C., this children's site provides information on the culture, history, language, politics and geography of Israel.
- www.worldalmanacforkids.com/
The World Almanac for Kids site features comprehensive information about the country of Israel as well as many other nations of the world.
- 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 Israel:

- Burstein, Chaya. *A Kid's Catalog of Israel*. Jewish Publications Society of America, Philadelphia, PA; 1998.
- Grossman, Laurie. *Children of Israel*. Lerner Publishing Group, Minneapolis, MN; 2001.
- Hintz, Martin. *Israel*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2006.
- Sherman, Josepha. *Your Travel Guide to Ancient Israel*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, MN; 2003.

If you are interested in tales from the Middle East, you might also enjoy:

- Ehud, ben-Ezer. *Hosni the Dreamer: An Arabian Tale*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, NY; 2007.
- Kimmel, Eric A. *The Three Princes: A Tale from the Middle East*. Holiday House, New York, NY; 2000.
- Shepard, Aaron. *Forty Fortunes: A Tale from Iran*. Clarion Books, Boston, MA; 1999.

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