

Brer Possum's Dilemma

African-American Folk Tale Retold by Jackie Torrence

Waters of Gold

Chinese Folk Tale Retold by Laurence Yep

What can we **LEARN** from stories?

COMMON CORE

RL 2 Determine a theme of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective summary of the text.

You've probably been lectured to many times about things you should and shouldn't do. The problem is, it's easy to forget what you hear in a lecture. But what if you happen to learn lessons while being entertained by interesting, even unforgettable, characters? Those lessons may be the ones you carry with you for the rest of your life.

LIST IT On a sheet of notebook paper, list three or four of your favorite stories of all time. What lessons did they teach? Add the lessons to your list, and compare the list to those of your classmates.



Title	Lesson
The Giver	Knowledge comes from experience.

Meet the Authors

● TEXT ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF FOLK TALES

Folk tales are stories that have been handed down through generations by being told out loud. Every culture has its own folk tales, but the stories often share certain characteristics.

- Each character usually represents a specific trait, or quality.
- The plot often centers on events that occur in a set of three.
- Many folk tales teach a lesson, or **moral**.

As you read the selections, pay attention to the way the characters and plot work together to teach a lesson.

● READING STRATEGY: SUMMARIZE

When you **summarize**, you briefly retell the story's main points in your own words. To help you summarize, use a graphic organizer to record key information as you read each selection.

<i>Title and Culture:</i>	<i>Author:</i>	<i>Setting:</i>
<i>Characters:</i>		
<i>Events:</i>		
<i>Lesson or Moral:</i>		

Review: Predict

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Choose the word that completes each sentence.

WORD	commence	jostling	prime
LIST	humor	perilously	smugly

1. Don't get ahead in life by _____ others out of the way.
2. Sometimes it's better to _____ someone than to argue with him.
3. For the best results, _____ each day with a good attitude.
4. By wanting it all, she came _____ close to losing what she had.
5. Safety should be a _____ concern for all parents.
6. If you accept praise _____, you won't see much of it.

Jackie Torrence

1944–2004

The Story Lady

Jackie Torrence was working as a librarian when one day her boss came looking for help: the library's storyteller hadn't shown up, and children were waiting. Torrence reluctantly took over. She became famous for retelling African-American folk tales, many of which were handed down by her grandfather. Torrence said that "long before TV or radio, all cultures used storytelling to instill values and heritage."

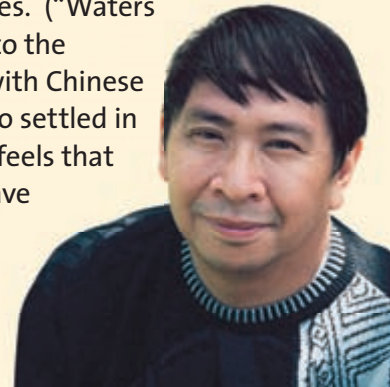


Laurence Yep

born 1948

Folk Tale Collector

In addition to being an award-winning writer of books for young people, Laurence Yep researches and collects Chinese folk tales. ("Waters of Gold" came to the United States with Chinese immigrants who settled in California.) He feels that these stories have a "raw power" and mystery that appeal to all ages.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Authors Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML7-717

Brer Possum's Dilemma

Retold by
Jackie Torrence

Back in the days when the animals could talk, there lived ol' Brer Possum. He was a fine feller. Why, he never liked to see no critters in trouble. He was always helpin' out, a-doin' somethin' for others.

Ever' night, ol' Brer Possum climbed into a persimmon tree, hung by his tail, and slept all night long. And each mornin', he climbed outa the tree and walked down the road to sun 'imself.

One mornin', as he walked, he come to a big hole in the middle of the road. Now, ol' Brer Possum was kind and gentle, but he was also nosy, so he went over to the hole and looked in. All at once, he stepped
10 back, 'cause layin' in the bottom of that hole was ol' Brer Snake with a brick on his back.

Brer Possum said to 'imself, "I best git on outa here, 'cause ol' Brer Snake is mean and evil and lowdown, and if I git to stayin' around 'im, he jist might git to bitin' me."

So Brer Possum went on down the road.

But Brer Snake had seen Brer Possum, and he commenced to callin' for 'im.

"Help me, Brer Possum."

Brer Possum stopped and turned around. He said to 'imself, "That's ol'
20 Brer Snake a-callin' me. What do you reckon he wants?"

Well, ol' Brer Possum was kindhearted, so he went back down the road to the hole, stood at the edge, and looked down at Brer Snake.

"Was that you a-callin' me? What do you want?" **A**

Analyze Visuals ▶

What human **traits** do the animals in this image suggest? Tell how the artist creates this impression.

commence (kə-měns') v.
to start or begin

A FOLK TALES

The characters in folk tales may be humans or animals with human characteristics. What human characteristics does Brer Possum have?



Brer Snake looked up and said, “I’ve been down here in this hole for a mighty long time with this brick on my back. Won’t you help git it offa me?”

Brer Possum thought.

“Now listen here, Brer Snake. I knows you. You’s mean and evil and lowdown, and if’n I was to git down in that hole and git to liftin’ that
30 brick offa your back, you wouldn’t do nothin’ but bite me.”

Ol’ Brer Snake just hissed.

“Maybe not. Maybe not. Maaaaaaaybe not.” **B**

Brer Possum said, “I ain’t sure ’bout you at all. I jist don’t know. You’re a-goin’ to have to let me think about it.”

So ol’ Brer Possum thought—he thought high, and he thought low—and jist as he was thinkin’, he looked up into a tree and saw a dead limb a-hangin’ down. He climbed into the tree, broke off the limb, and with that ol’ stick, pushed that brick offa Brer Snake’s back. Then he took off down the road.

40 Brer Possum thought he was away from ol’ Brer Snake when all at once he heard somethin’.

“Help me, Brer Possum.”

Brer Possum said, “Oh, no, that’s him agin’.”

But bein’ so kindhearted, Brer Possum turned around, went back to the hole, and stood at the edge.

“Brer Snake, was that you a-callin’ me? What do you want now?”

Ol’ Brer Snake looked up outa the hole and hissed.

“I’ve been down here for a mighty long time, and I’ve gotten a little weak, and the sides of this ol’ hole are too slick for me to climb. Do you
50 think you can lift me outa here?”

Brer Possum thought.

“Now, you jist wait a minute. If’n I was to git down into that hole and lift you outa there, you wouldn’t do nothin’ but bite me.”

Brer Snake hissed.

“Maybe not. Maybe not. Maaaaaaaybe not.”

Brer Possum said, “I jist don’t know. You’re a-goin’ to have to give me time to think about this.”

So ol’ Brer Possum thought.

And as he thought, he jist happened to look down there in that hole
60 and see that ol’ dead limb. So he pushed the limb underneath ol’ Brer Snake and he lifted ’im outa the hole, way up into the air, and throwed ’im into the high grass.

Brer Possum took off a-runnin’ down the road. **C**

Well, he thought he was away from ol’ Brer Snake when all at once he heard somethin’.

B PREDICT

The characters disagree about what will happen if Brer Possum helps Brer Snake. From what you know about the characters so far, what do you predict will happen?

Language Coach

Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings. In line 49, the word *weak*, which means “frail, not strong,” is a homophone of *week*, which means “seven days,” and *hole* is a homophone of *whole*, which means “all, entire.”

C SUMMARIZE

In your graphic organizer, briefly note the events described so far.

“Help me, Brer Possum.”

Brer Possum thought, “That’s him agin.”

But bein’ so kindhearted, he turned around, went back to the hole, and stood there a-lookin’ for Brer Snake. Brer Snake crawled outa the high grass just as slow as he could, stretched ’imself out across the road, rared up, and looked at ol’ Brer Possum.

Then he hissed. “I’ve been down there in that ol’ hole for a mighty long time, and I’ve gotten a little cold ’cause the sun didn’t shine. Do you think you could put me in your pocket and git me warm?”

Brer Possum said, “Now you listen here, Brer Snake. I knows you. You’s mean and evil and lowdown, and if’n I put you in my pocket you wouldn’t do nothin’ but bite me.”

Brer Snake hissed.

“Maybe not. Maybe not. Maaaaaaaybe not.”

“No, sireee, Brer Snake. I knows you. I jist ain’t a-goin’ to do it.”

But jist as Brer Possum was talkin’ to Brer Snake, he happened to git a real good look at ’im. He was a-layin’ there lookin’ so pitiful, and Brer Possum’s great big heart began to feel sorry for ol’ Brer Snake.

“All right,” said Brer Possum. “You must be cold. So jist this once I’m a-goin’ to put you in my pocket.”

So ol’ Brer Snake coiled up jist as little as he could, and Brer Possum picked ’im up and put ’im in his pocket.


Brer Snake laid quiet and still—so quiet and still that Brer Possum even forgot that he was a-carryin’ ’im around. But all of a sudden, Brer Snake commenced to crawlin’ out, and he turned and faced Brer Possum and hissed.

“I’m a-goin’ to bite you.”

But Brer Possum said, “Now wait a minute. Why are you a-goin’ to bite me? I done took that brick offa your back, I got you outa that hole, and I put you in my pocket to git you warm. Why are you a-goin’ to bite me?”

Brer Snake hissed.

“You knowed I was a snake before you put me in your pocket.”

*And when you’re mindin’ your own business and you spot trouble,
100 don’t never trouble trouble ’til trouble troubles you.*  **E**

 COMMON CORE RL 2

D FOLK TALES

Some folk tales, like some myths, are also circle stories. The plot in a **circle story** is developed by using a particular sequence or pattern over and over. The story often ends at the same place it started. What patterns are developing in this folk tale?

E FOLK TALES

Reread lines 99–100. Sometimes you may have to infer the **moral** of a folk tale, but in this case the moral is stated directly. Rephrase it in your own words.

Waters of Gold

Retold by Laurence Yep

Many years ago, there lived a woman whom everyone called Auntie Lily. She was Auntie by blood to half the county and Auntie to the other half by friendship. As she liked to say, “There’s a bit of Heaven in each of us.” As a result, she was always helping people out.

Because of her many kind acts, she knew so many people that she couldn’t go ten steps without meeting someone who wanted to chat. So it would take her half the day to go to the village well and back to her home. **F**

Eventually, though, she helped so many people that she had no more money. She had to sell her fields and even her house to her neighbor, a rich old woman. “If you’d helped yourself instead of others, you wouldn’t have to do this,” the neighbor said **smugly**. “Where are all those other people when you need them?”

“That isn’t why I helped them,” Auntie Lily said firmly. She wound up having to pay rent for the house she had once owned. She supported herself by her embroidery; but since her eyes were going bad, she could not do very much.

One day an old beggar entered the village. He was a ragbag of a man—a trash heap, a walking pig wallow. It was impossible to tell what color or what shape his clothes had once been, and his hair was as muddy and matted as a bird’s nest. As he shuffled through the village gates, he called out, “Water for my feet. Please, water for my feet. One little bowl of water—that’s all I ask.”

F FOLK TALES

What **trait** do you think Auntie Lily represents?

smugly (smŭg’lĕ) *adv.*
in a self-satisfied way

Analyze Visuals ▶

Compare the village in this picture to the village described in the story. In what ways are they similar?



Everyone ignored him, pretending to concentrate on their chores instead. One man went on replacing the shaft of his hoe. A woman swept her courtyard. Another woman fed her hens.

The beggar went to each in turn, but they all showed their backs to him.

After calling out a little while longer, the beggar went to the nearest
30 home, which happened to belong to the rich old woman. When he
banged at her door, he left the dirty outline of his knuckles on the clean
wood. And when the rich woman opened her door, his smell nearly took
her breath away.

Now it so happened that she had been chopping vegetables when the
beggar had knocked. When the beggar repeated his request, she raised her
cleaver menacingly. “What good would one bowl of water be? You’d need
a whole river to wash you clean. Go away.”

“A thousand pardons,” the old beggar said, and shambled on to
the next house.

40 Though Auntie Lily had to hold her nose, she asked politely, “Yes?”

“I’d like a bowl of water to wash my feet.” And the beggar pointed
one grimy finger toward them.

Her rich neighbor had stayed in her doorway to watch the beggar.
She scolded Auntie Lily now. “It’s all your fault those beggars come
into the village. They know they can count on a free meal.”

It was an old debate between them, so Auntie Lily simply said, “Any of
us can have bad luck.”

“Garbage,” the rich old woman declared, “is garbage. They must have
done something bad, or Heaven wouldn’t have let them become beggars.”

50 Auntie Lily turned to the beggar. “I may be joining you on the road
someday. Wait here.”

Much to the neighbor’s distress, Auntie Lily went inside and poured
water from a large jar in her kitchen into a bucket. Carrying it in both
hands, she brought it outside to the beggar and set it down.

The beggar stood on one leg, just like a crane, while he washed one
callused, leathery sole over the bucket. “You can put mud on any other
part of me, but if my feet are clean, then I feel clean.”

As he fussily continued to cleanse his feet, Auntie Lily asked kindly,
“Are you hungry? I don’t have much, but what I have I’m willing to
60 share.” **G**

The beggar shook his head. “I’ve stayed longer in this village than I
have in any other. Heaven is my roof, and the whole world my house.”

Auntie Lily stared at him, wondering what she would look like after
a few years on the road. “Are you very tired? Have you been on the road
for very long?”

G SUMMARIZE

What happens when Auntie Lily and the rich woman encounter the beggar? Record the events in your graphic organizer.

“No, the road is on me,” the beggar said, and held up his hands from his dirty sides. “But thank you. You’re the first person to ask. And you’re the first person to give me some water. So place the bucket of water by your bed tonight and do not look into it till tomorrow morning.” **H**

70 As the beggar shuffled out of the village again, Auntie Lily stared down doubtfully at the bucket of what was now muddy water. Then, even though she felt foolish, she picked it up again.

“You’re not really going to take that scummy water inside?” laughed the rich neighbor. “It’ll probably breed mosquitoes.”

“It seemed important to him,” she answered. “I’ll **humor** him.”

“Humoring people,” snapped the neighbor, “has got you one step from begging yourself.”

However, Auntie Lily carried the bucket inside anyway. Setting it down near her sleeping mat, she covered the mouth of the bucket with an old, 80 cracked plate so she wouldn’t peek into it by mistake, and then she got so caught up in embroidering a pair of slippers that she forgot all about the beggar and his bucket of water.

She sewed until twilight, when it was too dark to use her needle. Then, because she had no money for oil or candles, she went to sleep.

The next morning Auntie Lily rose and stretched the aches out of her back. She sighed. “The older I get, the harder it is to get up in the morning.”

H PREDICT

Reread lines 66–69. From what the beggar has said about Auntie Lily, what kind of thing do you predict will happen if she follows his instructions?

humor (hyōō’mēr) v. to give in to the wishes of

Detail from *Spring in the Old Village* (2001), Chen Jia Qi. Watercolor. Red Lantern Folk Art, Mukashi Collection. © The Mukashi Collection/SuperStock.



She was always saying something like that, but she had never stayed on her sleeping mat—even when she was sick. Thinking of all that day’s chores, she decided to water the herbs she had growing on one side of her house.

Her eyes fell upon the beggar’s bucket with its covering plate. “No sense using fresh water when that will do as well. After all, dirt’s dirt to a plant.”

Squatting down, she picked up the bucket and was surprised at how heavy it was. “I must have filled it fuller than I thought,” she grunted.

She staggered out of the house and over to the side where rows of little green herbs grew. “Here you go,” she said to her plants. “Drink deep.”

Taking off the plate, she upended the bucket; but instead of muddy brown water, there was a flash of reflected light and a clinking sound as gold coins rained down upon her plants.

Auntie Lily set the bucket down hastily and crouched, not trusting her weak eyes. However, where some of her herbs had been, there was now a small mound of gold coins. She squinted in disbelief and rubbed her aching eyes and stared again; but the gold was still there.

She turned to the bucket. There was even more gold inside. Scooping up coins by the handful, she freed her little plants and made sure that the stalks weren’t too bent.

Then she sat gazing at her bucket full of gold until a farmer walked by. “Tell me I’m not dreaming,” she called to him.

The farmer yawned and came over with his hoe over his shoulder.

“I wish I were dreaming, because that would mean I’m still in bed instead of having to go off to work.”

Auntie Lily gathered up a handful of gold coins and let it fall in a tinkling, golden shower back into the bucket. “And this is real?”

The farmer’s jaw dropped. He picked up one coin with his free hand and bit into it.¹ He flipped it back in with the other coins. “It’s as real as me, Auntie. But where did you ever get that?”

So Auntie Lily told him. And as others woke up and stepped outside, Auntie told them as well, for she still could not believe her luck and wanted them to confirm that the gold was truly gold. In no time at all, there was a small crowd around her. **1**

If the bucket had been filled with ordinary copper cash, that would have been more money than any of them had ever seen. In their wildest dreams, they had never expected to see that much gold. Auntie Lily stared at the bucket uncomfortably. “I keep thinking it’s going to disappear the next moment.”

Language Coach

Suffixes A word part added to the end of a word is called a suffix. Reread lines 119–121 and 125–126. The words *truly* and *uncomfortably* both end with the suffix *-ly*, which means “in a certain way.” How would you define each word?

1 SUMMARIZE

In your own words, explain what happens to Auntie Lily.

1. **bit into it:** Gold is soft, so biting it is a way of testing its authenticity.

The farmer, who had been standing there all this time, shook his head. “If it hasn’t disappeared by now, I don’t think it will. What are you going
130 to do with it, Auntie?”

Auntie Lily stared at the bucket, and suddenly she came to a decision. Stretching out a hand, she picked up a gold coin. “I’m going to buy back my house, and I’m going to get back my land.”

The farmer knew the fields. “Those old things? You could buy a valley full of **prime** land with half that bucket. And a palace with the other half.”

“I want what I sweated for.” Asking the farmer to guard her bucket, Auntie Lily closed her hand around the gold coin. Then, as the crowd parted before her, she made her way over to her neighbor. **J**

140 Now the rich old woman liked to sleep late; but all the noise had woken her up, so she was just getting dressed when Auntie knocked. The old woman yanked her door open as she buttoned the last button of her coat. “Who started the riot? Can’t a person get a good night’s sleep?”

With some satisfaction, Auntie Lily held up the gold coin. “Will this buy back my house and land?”

“Where did you get that?” the old woman demanded.

“Will it buy them back?” Auntie Lily repeated.

The rich old woman snatched the coin out of Auntie Lily’s hand and bit into it just as the farmer had. “It’s real,” the old woman said
150 in astonishment.

“Will it?” Auntie asked again.

“Yes, yes, yes,” the old woman said crabbily. “But where did you ever get that much gold?”

When Auntie Lily told her the story and showed her the bucket of gold, the rich old woman stood moving her mouth like a fish out of water. Clasping her hands together, she shut her eyes and moaned in genuine pain. “And I sent him away. What a fool I am. What a fool.” And the old woman beat her head with her fists.

That very afternoon, the beggar—the ragbag, the trash heap, the
160 walking pig wallow—shuffled once more through the village gates with feet as dirty as before. As he went, he croaked, “Water for my feet. Please, water for my feet. One little bowl of water—that’s all I ask.” **K**

This time, people dropped whatever they were doing when they heard his plea. Hoes, brooms, and pots were flung down, hens and pigs were kicked out of the way as everyone hurried to fill a bucket with water. There was a small riot by the village well as everyone fought to get water at the same time. Still others rushed out with buckets filled from the jars in their houses.

prime (prīm) *adj.* first in quality or value

J FOLK TALES

Reread lines 131–139. What does Auntie Lily’s decision about how to spend her money say about her?

K PREDICT

How do you predict the townspeople will behave now that the beggar has returned?

“Here, use my water,” one man shouted, holding up a tub.
170 A woman shoved in front of him with a bucket in her arms. “No, no, use mine. It’s purer.”

They surrounded the old beggar, pleading with him to use their water, and in the process of **jostling** one another, they splashed a good deal of water on one another and came **perilously** close to drowning the beggar. The rich old woman, Auntie Lily’s neighbor, charged to the rescue.

“Out of the way, you vultures,” the rich old woman roared. “You’re going to trample him.” Using her elbows, her feet, and in one case even her teeth, the old woman fought her way through the mob.

No longer caring if she soiled her hands, the old woman seized the
180 beggar by the arm. “This way, you poor, misunderstood creature.”

Fighting off her neighbors with one hand and keeping her grip on the beggar with the other, the old woman hauled him inside her house. Barring the door against the rest of the village, she ignored all the fists and feet thumping on her door and all the shouts.

“I really wasn’t myself yesterday, because I had been up the night before tending a sick friend. This is what I meant to do.” She fetched a fresh new towel and an even newer bucket and forced the beggar to wash his feet.

When he was done, he handed her the now filthy towel. “Dirt’s dirt,
190 and garbage is garbage,” he said.

However, the greedy old woman didn’t recognize her own words. She was too busy trying to remember what else Auntie Lily had done. “Won’t you have something to eat? Have you traveled very far? Are you tired?” she asked, all in the same breath.

The old beggar went to the door and waited patiently while she unbarred it. As he shuffled outside, he instructed her to leave the bucket of water by her bed but not to look into it until the morning.

That night, the greedy old woman couldn’t sleep as she imagined the heap of shiny gold that would be waiting for her tomorrow. She waited
200 impatiently for the sun to rise and got up as soon as she heard the first rooster crow.

Hurrying to the bucket, she plunged her hands inside expecting to bring up handfuls of gold. Instead, she gave a cry as dozens of little things bit her, for the bucket was filled not with gold but with snakes, lizards, and ants. **L**

The greedy old woman fell sick—some said from her bites, some claimed from sheer frustration. Auntie Lily herself came to nurse her neighbor. “Take this to heart: Kindness comes with no price.”

The old woman was so ashamed that she did, indeed, take the lesson to
210 heart. Though she remained sick, she was kind to whoever came to her door.

jostling (jɒsˈtɪŋ) *n.*
roughly bumping,
pushing, or shoving
jostle *v.*

perilously (pəˈrɪləsli) *adv.*
dangerously

L FOLK TALES

Why do you think the old woman gets this result when she tries to behave like Auntie Lily?



Detail from *Sunny Spring* (1999), Zhang Min. Watercolor. Red Lantern Folk Art, Mukashi Collection.
© The Mukashi Collection/SuperStock.

One day, a leper² came into the village. Everyone hid for fear of the terrible disease. Doors slammed and shutters banged down over windows, and soon the village seemed deserted.

Only Auntie Lily and her neighbor stepped out of their houses. “Are you hungry?” Auntie Lily asked.



“Are you thirsty?” the neighbor asked. “I’ll make you a cup of tea.”


The leper thanked Auntie Lily and then turned to the neighbor as if to express his gratitude as well; but he stopped and studied her.

“You’re looking poorly, my dear woman. Can I help?”

220 With a tired smile, the rich old woman explained what had happened. When she was finished, the leper stood thoughtfully for a moment.

“You’re not the same woman as before: You’re as kind as Auntie Lily, and you aren’t greedy anymore. So take this humble gift from my brother, the old beggar.”

With that, the leper limped out of the village; and as he left, the illness fell away from the old woman like an old, discarded cloak. But though the old woman was healthy again, she stayed as kind as Auntie Lily and used her own money as well and wisely as Auntie Lily used the waters of gold.  

 **FOLK TALES**
What moral does this story convey?

2. **leper**: a person suffering from the infectious disease of leprosy, which can result in bodily deformities.

Comprehension

- Recall** Where does Brer Possum meet Brer Snake?
- Clarify** Why doesn't Brer Possum want to help Brer Snake at first?
- Recall** At the beginning of "Waters of Gold," why does the old woman own Auntie Lily's land?



RL.2 Determine a theme of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective summary of the text.

Text Analysis

- Summarize** Review the graphic organizer you created for each tale. Then summarize one of the folk tales in your own words.

- Identify Characteristics of Folk Tales**

Use a chart like the one shown to identify how each selection demonstrates the main characteristics of a folk tale.

	"Brer Possum"	"Waters of Gold"
<i>Characters Who Represent a Trait</i>	<i>Brer Snake: Sneaky</i>	
<i>Events That Occur in Sets of Three</i>		
<i>A Moral</i>		

- Compare and Contrast Characters**

The characters in folk tales are often thought of as standing for good or evil. Consider the "good" characters in these two tales. Explain how they are alike and how they differ.

- Make Judgments** Which story's lesson is more useful in your everyday life? Explain your choice.

Extension and Challenge

- Reader's Circle** Jackie Torrence inherited "Brer Possum's Dilemma" from her great-grandfather, who had been enslaved. "Waters of Gold" was told by Chinese immigrant communities during the Great Depression. In a group, choose one of the stories and discuss how it might reflect the culture that created it. Questions to consider include the following:
 - What do you think life was like for the original tellers of the tale?
 - What traits does the story suggest are valuable?
 - What traits does the story seem to warn readers about?
 - Why might these traits have been significant to the original storytellers and their audiences? Why are they significant to you?

What can we LEARN from stories?

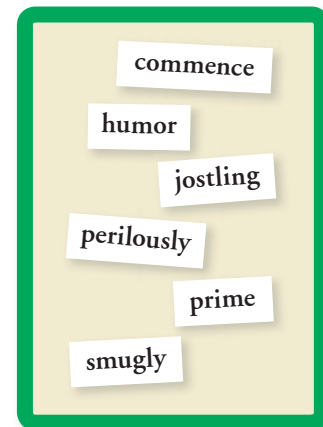
What lesson from a story has had the greatest impact on you?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Choose the letter of the item you would associate with each vocabulary word as it is used in these selections.

1. **smugly**: (a) carrying a heavy load, (b) looking pleased with oneself, (c) riding an old bike
2. **prime**: (a) an excellent meal, (b) a small family, (c) a necessary decision
3. **commence**: (a) the opening scene, (b) a large rectangle, (c) a long meeting
4. **jostling**: (a) children laughing, (b) dogs barking, (c) crowds pushing
5. **perilously**: (a) singing in a choir, (b) walking on a tightrope, (c) having lunch
6. **humor**: (a) give in, (b) get angry, (c) get better



ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• attribute • conduct • physical • status • task

Would you have reacted negatively to the **physical** characteristics of the beggar in “Waters of Gold”? Discuss your ideas with a small group. Use the Academic Vocabulary words in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: GENERAL CONTEXT CLUES

Context clues can appear in surrounding words, sentences, and even paragraphs. In the following example, the second sentence is a clue to the word *shambled*. From the second sentence, you can tell that *shambled* means “walk in a shuffling manner.”

The beggar slowly *shambled* from house to house asking for food. His feet hurt, so he walked in a shuffling manner.

PRACTICE Read the following pairs of sentences. Use context clues to determine the definition of each boldfaced word. Then write its definition.

1. Samantha was the only one in her class to receive an award of **distinction**. At the awards ceremony, the principal mentioned Samantha’s outstanding academic achievements and her performance on the soccer team.
2. Harry had an expression of extreme **anguish** on his face. “Something horrible has happened!” he gasped.
3. Shane just can’t make up his mind. He often **wavers** between choices for hours without ever making a decision.

COMMON CORE

L 4a Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph) as a clue to the meaning of a word. **L 6** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic words.

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