

# Asian Mythology

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Grade

## The Crow The Philippines

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Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

## Aladdin Middle East

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in his place!



## Found Fear Nepal



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*Certificate of Completion*

## The Dog and the Crow

THERE ONCE WAS A CROW who wished that he was more beautiful and colorful, like other birds, and that he had a more musical voice. But his feathers were black, and he could only squawk. While the villagers admired other birds, they stayed away from the crow, thinking he was a sign of bad luck.

One day, a villager hung meat outside his home to let it dry in the sun. Hungry, the crow swooped down and took it in his beak. A stray dog walked over to the crow.

"I have heard it said that sunbirds are the most beautiful birds of them all, or that the fruit dove has the most lovely voice. But it isn't true. Of all the birds, the crow is the most magnificent! What other bird's feathers gleam so marvelously in the sunlight, and what other makes more dulcet music? The crow is unmatched!"

When the crow heard this, he opened his beak to laugh with delight. As he did, the piece of meat fell from his mouth to the ground. The dog rushed to it and gobbled it down.

The crow learned from that day on that flattery can be a form of trickery, and never let praise fluster him again.



### THINK ABOUT IT

This story is a fable, meaning it is meant to teach a lesson. Rewrite it as a fairytale, using typical fairytale elements like magic, princes and princesses, and faraway lands.

*Once upon a time...*

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## The Silver on the Hearth

A POOR FARMER WITH AN HONEST HEART toiled in his fields from sunrise to sunset. Though he'd worked hard all his life, he barely had enough money to get by. It seemed to him that he would never be wealthy unless riches simply appeared in his home, so every morning he made a wish that he would find treasure on his hearth.

One day, while he was digging in his field, the farmer discovered a heavy jar buried there. When he opened it, he saw that it was filled with silver coins. For a moment, he rejoiced, thinking his wish had been granted. But then he thought, "If these coins were buried in this field instead of appearing in my hearth, they must not be meant for me, and I cannot take this gift from another." So he put the jar back in the ground.

That evening, when he told his wife about what had happened, she was furious. "You fool!" she said, "You found a jar full of money and did not take it?" Still, the farmer refused to claim what was not his. When he fell asleep, his wife visited their neighbor and told him about the jar, and where to find it. "Bring back the jar, and we will split the riches."

The neighbor found the jar in the field and opened it, but instead of silver coins, there were dozens of poisonous snakes! He quickly shut the jar, and believing that the farmer's wife was trying to kill him, thought he would take his vengeance by throwing the jar of snakes down the farmer's chimney. When the farmer woke the next day, a mound of silver coins lay on his hearth, and he knew that the riches were meant for him.

### THINK ABOUT IT

**What would you do if you found a jar of coins buried in your yard? Would you have taken it, or would you have put it back like the farmer? Write a paragraph explaining your decision below.**

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## The Rabbit and the Crocodile

**A** LONG TIME AGO, the rabbit used to have a long, bushy tail like the squirrel. The crocodile used to have a long tongue. One day, as the rabbit drank from the river, the crocodile crept up and trapped him in his mouth. The rabbit was terrified, but as the crocodile growled with satisfaction and prepared to swallow him, the rabbit had an idea.

“Ha! You pitiful crocodile. Even while I sit in your mouth, I’m not afraid of you. All you can do is growl with your mouth closed, like a kitten purring,” the rabbit said boldly.

The crocodile wanted to prove that he was fearsome, so he opened his mouth wide to let out a ferocious roar. As soon as he did, the rabbit jumped out, and used his sharp claws to snatch away the crocodile’s tongue. As the crocodile’s mouth snapped shut again, he severed most of the rabbit’s tail, leaving only a little pouf.

The rabbit got away, but lost his lovely, long tail, and the crocodile lost his lunch and his tongue. Both of them learned that day that if you provoke someone, he may try to get revenge.

### THINK ABOUT IT

**How would this story be different if the rabbit had not lost his tail, and the crocodile not lost his tongue? How would he have done it? Write a new ending to the story below.**

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**How would the moral of the story be different with your new ending?**

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## The Blue Jackal

THERE ONCE WAS A JACKAL, who scavenged for food in the village near his jungle home. The villagers kept dogs to keep the jackal away. One evening, while he searched for something to eat, the dogs began to chase him. As the jackal was running away, he tripped and fell into a bucket of blue dye that the village weaver had left outside.

The jackal climbed out of the bucket and escaped the dogs. As he made his way through the trees, he ran into the lion, who was the king of the jungle. The lion did not recognize him because of the blue dye, and asked who he was. The jackal was tired of being treated like a pest, so instead of telling the truth, he responded, "I am Chandru, the protector of all the animals in the jungle." He went on, saying that he could only continue protecting the jungle animals if he had food and shelter.

When word spread that "Chandru the Protector" was among them, the jungle animals began to pay respect and lavish him with gifts. But all too soon, monsoon season came, and the jackal could not stop the rain from washing the blue dye out of his fur. The animals saw that they had been fooled, and chased him far away.

### THINK ABOUT IT

**Jackals are a kind of dog that are common in India, and monsoons are big storms that happen during the late summer and fall. How would this tale be different if it were set in another country? Choose a new location and, using what you know about local wildlife and weather, rewrite it on the lines below.**

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## Sparrow's Lost Bean

ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE SPARROW. This sparrow was always on the hunt for something to eat, and one day it happened upon a big, huge bean. Excited at his good fortune, he snatched up the bean and flew away with it. But before he could eat it, he had to wash his hands. He set the bean down on a bridge and flew down to the river below to clean up.

"I just can't wait for my wonderful breakfast," the sparrow said to himself as he made his way back up to the bridge. "I won't have to forage for a week!" but when he got back to his hiding place, the bean was gone!

As the sparrow scurried around looking for his lost treasure, he spied a carpenter coming over the bridge. "Excuse me, can you help me find my bean?" the sparrow asked. "Please, do I look like I have time to find a tiny bean? Find it yourself," said the carpenter as he stomped away.

Next, the sparrow saw a soldier coming over the bridge. He asked the soldier the same question. "Please, little bird, I don't have time for you," he said and marched on. A captain followed him, but he wouldn't help, either. Then a minister came walking by, but before the sparrow could even ask, he laughed and walked away.

The little bird had almost given up hope, when the king came up the bridge, riding on an elephant. The sparrow recited his plea once again, but the king ignored him. The sparrow sat on the bridge, sad and hungry.

An ant came crawling by. "What's wrong, friend?" it asked. The sparrow told the ant his story. "I think I have an idea..." said the ant, and he scurried up to the elephant, up its leg, over its back, and into its ear. "Tell the king to find that poor bird's food, or I will go inside your ear and bite you!" The elephant stopped, turned to the king and said, "Go help that sparrow, or I will throw you off."

The king was scared. He called the minister over and said, "Go and help that poor bird or I'll fire you!" The minister then went to the captain and said, "Do everything that sparrow asks you or I'll report you to the king." The captain said to the soldier: "Help that sparrow and that's an order!" The soldier then went over to the carpenter: "Find that bird's bean or I'll kick you off this bridge!" The carpenter searched all day and as the sun was setting, he finally found the bean. The sparrow was thankful, and he ate well for the next week.



## THINK ABOUT IT

What is the theme of the story?

- a. Helping others when you can.
- b. Always telling the truth.
- c. Playing fairly.

How do you know what the theme is? Write down three characters and the actions they take in the story that support the theme.

### CHARACTER

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### ACTION

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## The Boy Who Found Fear

THERE ONCE WAS A WOMAN WHO LIVED WITH HER SON. One evening, during a terrible storm, she ordered him to go shut the door after it had blown open. "But why, mother?" the child asked brightly.

"Because I'm scared."

"What does that mean?"

"Scared? Well, scared is when...it's...um..." she thought hard, but she couldn't figure out how to explain fear in a way that he would understand. Still curious the next day, he ventured out into the world to find out what fear was.

On his walk, he ran into some robbers who were gathered around a fire. "What are you doing out here, young man?" they asked.

"I'm trying to find out what fear is," he said.

"That's a tough one," said one. "Here," he said, handing him some flour and water.

"Go to the graveyard and cook up a cake for us."

The little boy made his way to the graveyard. As he walked, a hand popped out from a grave and grabbed at his food! Unmoved, the boy chased it away with his spoon. "Come on now," he said. "You know we humans don't give our food to the dead."

He returned to the robbers with the cooked cake. They were impressed. "You've done well, son. Now, go down to the pool at the end of the road."

He did as he was told. When he got to the pool, there was a swing hanging over it and a child playing on it. A young woman nearby said it was her brother, and asked to climb on the boy's shoulders so she could pull her brother to safety. When she did, she stumbled. The boy nearly drowned! He tossed her off his shoulders, catching the bracelet that fell from her wrist.

He continued on back to the robbers' camp. On the way, he ran into a great green ogre. "That bracelet looks mighty fine," he said. "Give it to me."

"You can't have it! It's mine," said the boy.

"We'll see about that," said the ogre, who summoned a judge to make a ruling.

The judge decided it belonged to neither and took it away.

He continued on, and soon found a sinking ship. Seeing that the sailors needed help, he dove into the water and found a mermaid, who was pulling the ship to its doom. He tied her up with seaweed and freed the ship.

He then came across a garden, where he decided to rest for a spell. While he sat, three doves flew in, and changed into fair maidens. "Who are you, and why have you joined me here?" he asked.

"I am the hand you hit in the graveyard," one replied.

"And I am the woman whose bracelet you stole," said the other.

"And I am the mermaid you defeated," said the third. "We have come to celebrate your bravery. Hear hear!" she cried, and the second maiden presented him with the

bracelet he prized.

He continued on for days, finding more and more scenarios. Each was more terrifying than the one before, but never once did he feel fear! Finally, one day, he came into a town. A man came rushing out at him. "The king—he's gone!" he exclaimed. "We need a new one right away."

He then joined the town for their ritual. An assistant released a pigeon into the air—whomever the pigeon landed on would be crowned king. The pigeon was released...and landed right on him!

Suddenly, he was nervous. He thought of his future as king, of deciding the fate of so many people. How could he, as brave as he was, be a true and just ruler for so many strangers? He was...scared.

The assistant then released ten more pigeons, all of which landed right on him. Having finally known fear, he agreed to be king, and ruled for many years.

## THINK ABOUT IT

1. What message does this story send about being royal?
  - a. Being royal is easy.
  - b. Being royal is fun.
  - c. Being royal is harder than people think.
2. How does the author think leaders should act?
  - a. They should be selfish and should be able to do whatever they want.
  - b. They should worry about the good of their subjects.
  - c. They should let others make decisions for them.
3. Pick a subtitle for this story.
  - a. The Good King
  - b. How to Make Friends
  - c. All About Pigeons



## The Monkey King

ON A DISTANT MOUNTAINOUS ISLAND there was once a magic stone. This magic stone was watched over by the Sun, Moon, and Wind, and one day, the Wind blew gently over the stone. Over time, the wind shaped it, and it began to resemble a monkey. The stone monkey began to come to life, and lived among the other animals of the island, eating, drinking, running, and swimming.

It became clear that this monkey was no ordinary monkey. This monkey was so clever and brave that the other monkeys on the island made him their king. He then named himself Sun Wukong, which means the Handsome Monkey King, and made himself a great stone throne. Sun Wukong went on quests for magical tools and garments to make him more powerful—so powerful that he was able to escape Death when it came to take him.

All the while, the gods watched Sun Wukong. The gods grew worried that Sun Wukong's thirst for power was getting out of control, so they called him to the Heavens for a meeting. "This is great!" thought Sun Wukong. "I'm certain they have called me to proclaim me a god. How could they not? I am Sun Wukong, the greatest, cleverest being that ever lived!"

However, when he got there, he found that The Jade Emperor, the ruler of the Heavens, had something else in mind. "I hereby proclaim you Protector of Horses," he said. "It will forever more be your duty to watch over our heavenly stables."

"Pah!" cried the Monkey King. "I am no farmer. I demand to be a god!" To get back at the Emperor, he let the horses loose, and they ran wild across the kingdom.

The Jade Emperor could see that the Monkey King wasn't going to be easy to tame. He approached him later with a new request. "How about being the Guardian of the Royal Garden?"

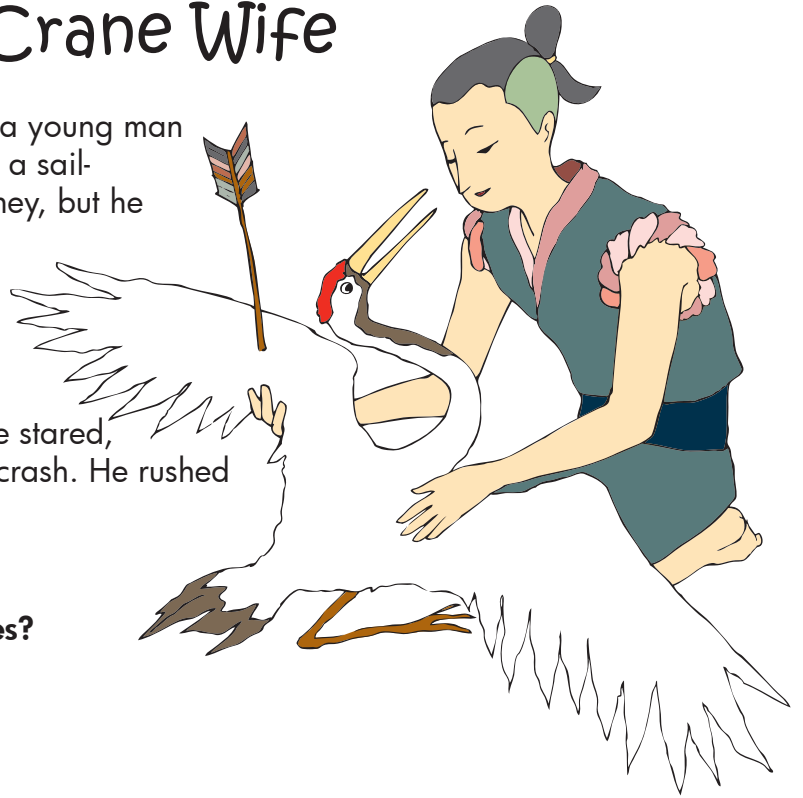
Sun Wukong accepted the job, hoping he could work his way up to god one day. Then, one day, there was a royal banquet honoring all the most important gods. He was not invited—as the groundskeeper, he had to watch from the side. "That's enough," fumed the Monkey King. "I declare war!" The gods sent all their best warriors to fight Sun Wukong, but he defeated them all with his wits and trickery. The war went on until the Jade Emperor called on Buddha himself to imprison the Monkey King in the palm of his golden hand.

### THINK ABOUT IT

**The Monkey King is a character that shows up in several folktales in China. Using what you know about his personality, write a new story starring the Monkey King on a separate sheet of paper.**

## The Crane Wife

A LONG TIME AGO, there lived a young man in a small home in the mountains. He was a sail-maker, which did not make him much money, but he had enough to get by, and that was all he needed. One day, while walking home, a beautiful white crane appeared overhead. It swerved wildly through the sky, to and fro, and the man knew something was wrong. It picked up speed as he stared, and suddenly hit the ground with a great crash. He rushed toward it to make sure it was OK.



### STOP

1. Where do you think the young man lives?

- a. In a small village
- b. In a big city.
- c. With his parents

When he approached it, he saw that it had an arrow lodged in one of its wings—a hunting accident. Feeling sorry for the poor thing, he scooped it up in his arms and took it back to his home, where he cleaned the wound and nursed the beautiful bird back to health. A few days later, he sent the crane back out. As it flew away, he warned it to stay away from hunters. The next evening, he came home to his small house, the way he always did. When he opened the door, he was shocked to find a lovely young woman sitting at his kitchen table. “Welcome home, husband,” she said.

“Husband? I cannot be your husband!” the sailmaker said, astonished. “I don’t know you at all, and even if I were your husband, I cannot support you. I barely make enough money to get by on my own.”

“Oh, do not worry about me,” she said, motioning to a small sack on the floor. “I can take care of myself. I brought rice with me to eat, and a loom to work on.” She got up and began to boil a pot of water for the rice. Unsure of what else to do, the young man sat down as his new wife prepared dinner.

### STOP

2. Why didn’t the sailmaker want the woman to be his wife? (2 answers!)

- a. He didn’t know her.
- b. He had gotten to know her and didn’t get along with her.
- c. He couldn’t support her.

Over time, they began to warm up to each other. She was kind and caring, and he was a good, honest man. They treated each other with respect, which slowly turned into love. One day, the wife asked her husband if she could have the room in the back of the house to weave in. "I would like to begin weaving so that I can make us some more money," she said, and her husband agreed. "I have only one condition," she warned. "You must never look inside."

She closed the door, and he heard the loom start up. For seven days and nights, the loom clicked and clacked. Finally, she emerged with a beautiful cloth; the most beautiful he had ever seen. "Take this into town and sell it. It will no doubt command a high price," she said. He did as she asked and, as she predicted, he sold it for a tidy sum. Content, he returned home.

## STOP

**3. Based on what you have read so far, whom do you think this woman might be?**

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**4. Why do you think she will not let him look in her room?**

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His wife continued to weave. After several weeks of weaving and selling, the sailmaker's curiosity began to eat away at him. As far as he knew, all she had was a loom—no thread. Finally, he couldn't stand it anymore. He slowly pushed the door open and peeked inside. To his surprise, she was gone.

Instead, he found a crane sitting next to a pile of finished cloth, the elegant bird plucking its own feathers for thread. He gasped, and she heard him. She hung her head in sadness and walked over. "Remember me? I am the crane that you brought back to health. I wanted to repay you for your kindness, but now that you have seen my real self, I must go." She nudged the finished cloth toward him with her beak. "Take this to town and sell it. It should make you enough money to keep you comfortable for the rest of your life."

She turned to face the front door. She was sad, for she had loved him, too, but off she went into the dark sky, never to be seen again.



## Aladdin

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was an evil sorcerer. This evil sorcerer had one thing in the world that he wanted, and that was a magical lamp. Everyone had heard of this lamp, but few knew if it really existed—it was the stuff of legend in the town. Supposedly, the lamp contained a genie that could grant the owner three wishes.

According to the legend, the lamp was in a magic cave on the outskirts of town. However, this cave was said to be full of traps designed to stop anyone from stealing the lamp. The sorcerer had an idea: he needed to find someone younger, more daring, and most of all, less rich than he to steal it for him.

He found a young beggar named Aladdin, wandering through the market. "Perfect," thought the sorcerer. "If he becomes trapped in the cave, no one is likely to come looking for him."

The sorcerer walked through the market and bought some new clothes for a disguise. Then, he walked over to Aladdin. "Excuse me, young man," he said in a funny voice. "I am your uncle. Your father and I haven't spoken in years, and I'd like to get to know you better."

"But I don't think I have an uncle—"

"Just come with me," said the sorcerer, and he took him to the cave.

"Here, take this magic ring for protection," said the sorcerer, slipping a jeweled ring onto Aladdin's finger. "Now go inside and find me the lamp," commanded the sorcerer as he stepped into the cave with Aladdin.

"The magic lamp of myth? Everyone knows that's a dangerous mission! I won't do it!" said Aladdin. The sorcerer pleaded with him, but he refused.

"Fine. Stay here forever!" said the sorcerer, and with a whoosh of his arm, he snapped the entrance shut.

Aladdin was terrified. What could he do now? There was only one way to get out: find the magic lamp and ask the genie to take him home.

After searching the cave for hours and stepping carefully over traps, he found it, hidden away in a little room. He hurried to it and rubbed it, for he knew that was the way to release the genie. Sure enough, a genie appeared in a puff of smoke. For his first wish, Aladdin asked the genie to take him back home, and the genie obliged.

However, the genie was bound to Aladdin until the boy used his three wishes. One day, while he was cleaning house, he knocked over the lamp and the genie once again appeared. "Well, since you're here," said Aladdin, "I've always wondered what it would be like to be a man of some means." The genie transformed Aladdin into a wealthy merchant. He strode into town in his finery, and attracted the attention of the beautiful Princess Badroulbadoor. The two were married in a short time.

Soon, the sorcerer returned to town. He tracked down the new couple—the princess didn't know that Aladdin was a poor boy, nor did she know what the lamp was capable of—and, dressed in his disguise, knocked on the door of their home. Princess Badroulbadoor answered.



"Excuse me," said the sorcerer. "I'm Aladdin's long-lost uncle. Surely you have heard of me. I've come to reclaim my prized lamp," he said as he peered into the house. "Ah, there. That one, over the mantel."

"The lamp? But why would you want that old lamp?" the princess asked as the sorcerer made his way into the house. The sorcerer snatched it off the hearth and awakened the genie. Princess Badroulbador backed up in awe.

"Genie, I command you to return this prince back to his true self—a lowly beggar!"

The princess gasped. Could it be true? She turned around to find her husband transformed back to what he was before they had met—a poor boy.

"Excellent. Now, take all their riches and transport them to my palace!" In a flash, their huge castle was reduced to a little shack.

For days, Aladdin was sick with worry. What to do? Then, while rifling through the house, he found the magic ring the sorcerer had given him. "Hm," he thought to himself. "If that lamp holds great powers, I wonder what makes this so magical?"

The next day, he traveled to the sorcerer's palace and knocked on the door. "Pleased to see you, uncle," he said. "You know who else is pleased to see you?" He rubbed the ring, and another genie appeared.

"Genie," Aladdin said powerfully. "Strip this trickster of his wealth and return it all to me!" The genie did so, and the sorcerer was brought to ruin. The town was so happy to be free of the sorcerer's wickedness, they made Aladdin emperor of the land.

## THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine you found a magic lamp. What would you ask the genie for?

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**THINK ABOUT IT**

Using the magic ring was just one way Aladdin could have defeated the evil sorcerer. How would you have done it? Write three steps you would take to put the evil sorcerer back in his place!



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## Momotaro

LONG AGO, there was an old couple who didn't have any children. Their days passed quietly: The old man cut grass for a living, and his wife kept the house clean and the garden neat. They were happy to have a roof over their heads and enough food on the table, but they were always a little sad because they never had a child.

One day while the old woman was washing clothes in the river, a big peach came floating towards her. "What luck!" she cried. "I'm so tired of eating plain rice for dinner. With this peach I can make the most delicious dessert!" Looking around to make sure no one saw her, she buried the peach in her apron and took it home to surprise her husband for dinner.

"Say, what you got there in that apron?" said the husband when she walked in the door. The peach was huge, and hard to hide. "You'll find out once dinner is done," she said slyly.

She went into the kitchen and closed the door. She got out a big knife, the biggest she could find, to cut the large peach. Slowly, she sawed at the skin. When she broke the surface, she heard a strange crying from inside!

She put down the knife and stepped back. With her hands, she tore at the flesh of the peach until she saw what was inside—a baby boy!

"Husband, quick! Come here!"

"But you told me not to peek until dinner—"

"Forget what I said and come in here!"

The husband rushed into the kitchen to find his wife of fifty years, stunned and silent, cradling a squirming pink newborn in her frail arms. The husband stopped in his tracks.

"I...I..." started the wife. The husband reached out for the child and began to cry. "I don't know how you got here, little one, but I'm glad you did," he said. "Little Momotaro...Peach Boy..."

Years passed, and Momotaro grew up strong; stronger than all the other boys his age. Still, like any teenager, he was curious. He spent his afternoons exploring the mountains and caves around his home. Each time he went farther away from his parents' house than the last, but always returned in time for dinner.

One day, he happened upon a shore he had never seen before. Off in the distance, he could see a little island. He swam out to it, and found it to be full of monsters! He crept along the shore, and overheard a group of them talking about launching an attack on his village. Shocked, he hurried back home.

"Father," he said as he entered his home. "You must know by now how thankful I am for you and mother."

"Of course," replied his father. "It has been no trouble at all to raise you, even at our age. You have been a joy to our lives, and for that we are thankful for you."

"That is why, I'm afraid, I must leave for a while," he said with a heavy sigh.

His father gasped. "Whatever for?"

Momotaro then told him what he had seen that afternoon. "I must go and

defeat them," he said. "I can't bear the thought of what could happen to you and Mother if they carry out their plans."

His father was shocked, but he could hear the conviction in his son's voice. He thought it was best to let him go, for he knew stopping him would only make him more determined.

The next morning, Momotaro set out for the island, carrying a sack of food and supplies. His parents stood in the doorway and sent him off. "Be well, my son," said his father, fighting back tears.

He bravely kissed them goodbye, but he couldn't get rid of the dread in his stomach. It hurt to leave his parents undefended—what if he didn't make it to the island in time? Or worse, what if the monsters won? He was full of worry, but instead he smiled and reassured his parents. "I'll be back before you know it. And when I return, we will feast in victory!"

Momotaro set off down the road, retracing his path from the day before. As midday approached, he began to get hungry. He sat down in the shade of a tree and pulled a rice cake his mother had made out of his sack. As he was eating, a large dog came wandering up to him.

"Gee, those cakes look good. Might I have one?" the dog pleaded.

"Sure. Here, have a bite," he said, breaking off a piece to give to the dog, who lapped it up with great joy. "I'm Momotaro, by the way."

The dog stopped and looked up. "Momotaro? *The* Momotaro? Why, everyone around here has heard of you! What are you doing out here today?"

"I'm on my way to fight the island

monsters. I was out there yesterday, and heard of their evil plan."

"It's true, those monsters are no good," agreed the dog. "Take me with you. With your smarts and my size, we'll be unstoppable."

The two continued on to the shore. Many more miles down the road, a monkey crossed their path. "Why, you're the famous Momotaro!" he said. "Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to the island of monsters to stop them from invading my village."

"Oh, please let me come with you. I'm small and wily. I can be of great use!"

"Another helping hand couldn't hurt. Come along with us."

More hours passed, and they came to a field where they met a bird.

"Why, if it isn't Momotaro," he exclaimed. "You're off to fight those monsters on the island, aren't you? I flew over it yesterday and heard their plan. I thought of you and your family."

"Yes, that's exactly where we are headed."

"Take me with you, please. I'm a great scout—I can see things from up here that you three cannot."

"Sure, come on."

They walked and walked, and at last they came to the sea. Momotaro and the bird were ready, but the dog and monkey hesitated. They had never seen the ocean before, and were afraid to cross it.

"Come on, you two. If you can't handle a little water, how do you expect to take on monsters?"

"But it's so unpredictable. We could get hurt," cried the dog.

"That's true," said Momotaro calmly. "But you know what? Sometimes you just have to be brave and face the things you're scared of."

The dog knew he was right, and the monkey did too. The two closed their eyes and stepped into the water.

They arrived at the island in a short time. When they climbed ashore, a large castle loomed in front of them. "Bird, fly overhead and see what's going on there," Momotaro said. The bird did as he was told. He perched on the edge of a parapet and shouted, "Listen up, you vile things! The great fighter Momotaro has come. I strongly advise you surrender, or face his wrath."

The monsters, scared at first, began to laugh when they saw it was just a tiny bird. "Please! You wouldn't stand a chance against us." They charged at the little bird, but he was too fast for them. He evaded them all, and pecked them in the eyes when he could.

Meanwhile, Momotaro, the dog, and the monkey looked for a way to enter the castle. It was surrounded on all sides by high walls and twisting iron gates, and it was beginning to look like there was no safe entrance. But as they snuck along the perimeter of the castle, they ran into two young women washing clothes in a stream, weeping as they worked.

"Excuse me," inquired Momotaro. "What's wrong? Can I help?"

"We are captives here," one of them said through sobs. "We were stolen away from our homes and made slaves to these terrible ogres. It seems unlikely we will ever leave!"

"Fear not. I'll do what I can to rescue you both," he said reassuringly. "Just tell me how to get into the castle."

The two women led him to an opening in the castle wall. Momotaro wiggled inside and attacked. Caught off guard, the monsters were easily defeated. By the time they had finished, the only one left to take down was the king, who had been hiding in his chambers. He was prepared to surrender.

"Please don't hurt me," he said, kneeling at Momotaro's feet. "You can have all the treasure in the castle if you leave me be!"

"Oh, what's this? Big, scary monster isn't so scary after all!" mocked Momotaro. "You're all bark and no bite. Still, you don't deserve my mercy." He tied up the king, took the treasure, and went back to the two women to send them home. Then, he proudly marched back home with his new friends. "Nice work back there," he said as they made their way back to the village. "Thanks for all your help. I couldn't have done it without you."

Momotaro, the monkey, the dog, and the bird received a hero's welcome upon their return. There was much rejoicing and feasting for days. Best of all, though, his parents rushed to embrace him when they saw him coming down the road. "We're so proud of you," his mother whispered. "Baking a dessert that night was the best decision of my life." The treasure he brought home kept his family comfortable for the rest of their days.

**THINK ABOUT IT**

Momotaro is clearly the hero of this story. How does Momotaro act like a hero?

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How is he different from other heroes you have read about or seen?

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What does this story say about bravery?

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Find a quote from the story that supports your answer and rewrite it below.

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## The Golden Fish

**“The Golden Fish” is a story that is told in several countries and cultures, most commonly across Asia. Read this story and the two after it.**

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was an old man who lived in a small cottage with his wife on the bay. They didn't have much money, so the man would catch fish from the ocean for them to eat and sell. Every day, he sailed out with his huge fishing nets, hoping to catch lots of fish.

One day, he went out to sea. As he sat there, his net cast, there was suddenly a pull. He'd never felt a pull this hard before! He strained and struggled to pull the net out of the water. When he finally did, he was shocked to see it empty except for one tiny fish.

The fish was gold, and sparkled in the sunlight. Stranger still, it looked up at him and said: “Please, do not eat me! Put me back in the ocean and I will do whatever you wish.”

He thought for a minute, but he couldn't say no to the helpless creature. He returned the fish to the sea and went home. When he got home, he told his wife what had happened. “You fool!” she shouted. “That fish could have helped us! Think about how hard we work every day to make ends meet! Go find the fish and ask it for food to eat.”

The next day, he went back to the beach and stared out at the sea. He called out to the waves: “Little fish, little fish, please come to me.”

To his amazement, the golden fish swam up to the shore. “What do you need?” the fish asked. “My wife has sent me to ask

you for food to eat.”

“Go home,” the fish said. When you return you will find food in plenty.”

He went home to find food spilling out of the pantry! “Is that enough food?” he asked her.

“Yes, but we have more troubles,” she replied. “The roof is leaking, and the windows shake every time a storm passes overhead. Go back to the fish and ask it to give us a new home.”

Again, he returned to the sea. “Little fish, little fish, please come to me,” he called again. The fish appeared. “What do you need?” he asked.

“My wife is still unhappy. She doesn't want to live in our old hut anymore. She wants a big, beautiful house.”

“Don't worry,” said the fish. “Go back home. When you get there, you will see that her wish has come true.”

He went back home. A big, beautiful house stood where their hut used to be. He was delighted to now own such a grand home, but as soon as he got to the door, his wife came rushing out. “Go back to the fish and tell him I don't want to be just a peasant anymore. I want to be queen of the island!”

Yet again he returned to the shore and called out for the fish, who again swam up to meet him.

“My wife is still unhappy. She says she wants to be queen.”

“Go home. By the time you are there, her wish will have come true.”

He arrived home to see not a house, but a huge palace! Guards marched around the garden and servants scurried to and fro inside the house. He found his wife in the parlor, wearing an elegant gown and sitting on a golden throne.

A few days later, she had another request. "I have grown tired of being queen," she said. "Go back to the fish and tell him I want something bigger—I want to be the Empress of the Seven Seas!"

"But your majesty..." he started to protest.

"Do not argue with me! Go to the fish," she said. "Or I will have you banished from my kingdom forever."

The fisherman trudged back to the shore. "Little fish, little fish, please come to me," he pleaded.

He waited and waited and waited. Minutes passed, but the fish did not appear. He called again, but still it did not come.

On his third try, he suddenly heard a great rumble as the sea swelled up and spat out the little fish onto the shore. "What else could you possibly need?" said the fish. "My wife wants to be the Empress of the Seven Seas," he said.

The fish said nothing, then slowly turned away and swam off into the sea. The man walked home, afraid of what his wife would say. When he walked up to his house, he was sad, but not surprised, to see that the palace had vanished—in its place stood the same small hut he was used to. His wife sat inside in a plain dress. She looked up at him, but did not say a word.

The next day, the man went out to fish, just as he always had. He called out for the golden fish, but he did not arrive. Thought he fished every morning for the rest of his life, he never found the golden fish again.



## Tam and Cam

A LONG TIME AGO, a father lived with his daughter, Tam. He loved his daughter, but soon fell in love with a woman who became Tam's stepmother. Tam's stepmother was wicked, always ordering Tam around and making her do work she was too small to do on her own. She constantly made up stories about Tam's bad behavior, when in truth Tam had done nothing wrong.

When the father and stepmother were wed, they had a child of their own, whom they named Cam. Things got even worse for Tam when Cam was brought home. Her stepmother could see no wrong in Cam, and in contrast to her own perfect child, saw Tam as terrible and naughty.

Cam was going to need a bedroom, so she let Cam move into Tam's bedroom. She made Tam sleep in a dirty corner of the kitchen, with nothing but a pile of grass and a torn sheet for comfort. During the day, the evil stepmother made Tam sweep the floors, feed the animals, cook every meal, and clean up after completing each task. Her hands were sore and blistered from her endless work, but never once did she complain. Sometimes, when she went to the well to fetch water, she saw in the reflection her dirty face and tangled hair. But when she splashed some of the water on herself, she thought she was the prettiest girl in the village.

One day, Tam's stepmother asked Tam to take Cam fishing in the local pond. "Catch as many fish as you can," she ordered. "If you come back with less than ten, you'll be sent to bed without supper." It sounded like she meant the both of them,

but Tam knew she only meant her.

Tam spent all day fishing at the pond, while Cam played and basked in the sun. But when the time came to head home, Cam looked in her basket and saw that it was empty. "Sister," she said. "You're so dirty from days of work. Take a few minutes to bathe in the pond before you go home. You know mother will be angry if you come home looking the way you do now."

She was insulted, but she knew Cam was right. She stepped into the pond to wash the dirt out of her hair and scrub her face. As she was bathing, Cam took Tam's fish and ran home as quickly as she could. When Tam came out and saw what had happened, she began to cry. Surely, this would be the worst punishment she had ever endured!

As she sobbed, a soft wind blew, and the clouds broke. She looked up, and a beautiful woman, sparkling in the late afternoon sun, appeared in front of her. "What is wrong, child?" she asked.

Tam told her the story of her cruel stepmother, and what her sister had done with her fish. "There, there," said the woman. "I can help you. Go, take a look in your basket." She did as she was told. In the basket she found a small red fish with golden eyes. "What's this for?"

"Put it in the well and feed it three times a day, and this fish will grant you whatever wish you have."

Tam did as she was told. Her family wondered why she was going to the well so often, but if anyone else approached the well, the fish would hide.

Days passed, and the fish grew fatter and fatter. When it reached full size, Tam wished for gold, jewelry, and finery she had never had before, but was careful not to let her family see it.

Spring turned to fall, and soon the Autumn Festival came. Of course, the night of the festival, Tam's stepmother ordered Tam to stay home and sort beans for the night. "Once you're done with that, then you may join us." Tam watched as her stepmother and stepsister put on their finest gowns and left.

When they were out of earshot, Tam ran outside and asked her fish for help. "Little fish, please send me help! If I do not finish this chore, I'll never be able to go to the festival, and stepmother will be terribly angry."

Just then, two birds swooped down and hovered over her. "We are here to help you," they said. They followed her inside and helped her sort all the beans, every last one! She had plenty of time left to get to the festival. She washed her face, combed her hair, and dressed herself in a beautiful gown and glittering jewelry. As she passed the well on her way into town, she saw that she looked as lovely as a princess.

When she arrived, the villagers could not stop staring. She was the most elegant woman they had ever seen! Even her stepmother and Cam took notice. "My, doesn't that woman look like Tam? How strange. Look at her gown; her jewels! She must be a queen."

Tam heard them whispering as she walked by, and was suddenly afraid that they would recognize her. In her panic, she

ran away. She ran so fast that, on the way back home, one of her slippers fell off and landed in a stream. It floated down the stream to the grounds of the royal palace, where a guard picked it up and brought it inside. "Your Majesty, I have found this in the garden," he said. "Look at that stitching, that silk! This must belong to someone royal."

The king lived alone, and had wanted to find a queen for quite some time. "See if you can find its owner," he ordered his guard. "I would certainly like to meet her."

The guard started with the ladies at the palace, but it did not fit any of them. He then went all around the kingdom, visiting women of noble birth. They all tried it, but it was too small for them all, too.

Having exhausted all his other options, the guard began knocking on doors of the villagers. In his search, he came to the house of Tam and Cam. The stepmother tried it on first, but it was too small. Then, Cam tried it on, but it was too big. He was just about to leave, when Tam spoke up for herself. "Excuse me, may I try?"

He was confused—this perfect slipper couldn't possibly belong to this ragged girl—but he wasn't going to turn her away. He slipped the shoe on her foot, and to his surprise, it fit just right. He rushed her to the palace where she met with the king. The two got on well, and were married the next year.

## Vasilisa the Beautiful

MANY YEARS AGO, there lived a girl named Vasilisa. When she was young, her mother died, leaving her a small wooden doll as a token of remembrance. "Keep it close," her mother said. "As long as you feed it every day, it will help you in times of need."

Vasilisa grew up, and fed the doll every day. Her father remarried, but her new stepmother and stepsisters did not like her. The stepmother made her work very hard, but with the help of the doll, Vasilisa was able to complete every task her stepmother gave her. Friends would often come by to visit Vasilisa, and as she grew older, suitors came to the house to ask for her hand in marriage. Her stepmother turned them all away.

One day, her father had to leave on a business trip. Weeks passed, and Vasilisa's father had not sent any money. "Oh! He has forgotten about us," lamented the stepmother. "Without his income, we cannot afford to live here anymore. We'll have to find a new place." The house was sold, and Vasilisa and her step-family moved into a small hut in the forest. In this forest lived a witch named Baba Yaga, whom all the villagers feared.

One evening, the stepmother decided to play a trick on Vasilisa. While Vasilisa was working, she blew out all the candles except for one. "You can't work in darkness!" she said. "Our nearest neighbor is Baba Yaga. Go to her and ask to borrow a light."

Vasilisa went out into the forest. She was afraid, so she fed her doll and asked

her for advice. "Don't worry," her doll said. "Have I ever let you down? I can keep you safe."

She walked all day until at last she came to Baba Yaga's hut. It was hard to miss: It stood on two spindly chicken legs, and the fence was made of bones and skulls. The gate was made of sharp teeth that locked together. She was very afraid, but she took a deep breath and walked inside. As night fell behind her, the eyes of the skulls outside began to glow.

She entered to find Baba Yaga inside. "Who's there?" the witch said, turning around.

Vasilisa gulped. "It is I, Vasilisa. My stepmother has sent me to ask you for a light."

"Ah, yes. I have heard of her," she said solemnly, and stepped into the dim light. Vasilisa could make out her wrinkled, oily face. "I will give you a light, but you must work for it. Stay here the night and help me do some chores." Behind Vasilisa, the gates gnashed shut.

First, Baba Yaga asked Vasilisa to bring her dinner. When she got to the stove, there was enough food to feed the whole town! Baba Yaga ate it all, leaving Vasilisa only scraps.

"Alright, I'm going to bed," said Baba Yaga as she dropped the last bone, licked clean, on her plate with a clatter. "In the barn, there is a barrel of corn kernels. In the morning, you shall pick out all the rotten ones. After that, you must clean the house, cook my meals, and wash the linens and clothing. If you do not complete these tasks, right down to every rotten kernel, I will keep

you here forever.”

When she heard Baba Yaga sleeping, she pulled her doll out of her pocket. “How can I possibly finish all those chores? Oh, I will never see my father again!”

“Don’t worry,” assured the doll. “I’ll help you. Get some rest, and we’ll start our work in the morning.”

When she awoke the next day, Baba Yaga was already awake and gone. Vasilisa trod out to the barn to start her work. To her surprise, she found the corn already sorted—the doll had done it! “All you need to do is prepare supper. I will help with the rest,” whispered the doll. All day, Vasilisa and the doll worked side by side. When Baba Yaga returned, she was shocked to find a spotless house, with a hot meal waiting on the table!

“Very well,” she said, though she was suspicious. “Tomorrow, you must do the same, and also separate the poppy seeds from the dirt.”

“No problem,” said Vasilisa.

The next morning, Baba Yaga rode off, and when she returned, Vasilisa had again exceeded her expectations. “Come, sit with me,” she said as she ate the meal Vasilisa had prepared. She was beginning to see that Vasilisa had courage and confidence. Everyone else in the village was

afraid of her, but Vasilisa was not.

They sat in silence, until Baba Yaga broke it. “Let me ask you a question. How have you been able to finish the tremendous amount of work I have given you?”

Shyly, Vasilisa responded: “Before she died, my mother gave me a charm. The magic of this charm helps me accomplish the impossible.”

“I knew it!” cried Baba Yaga, leaping out of her chair in anger. “You had help. I won’t have any charms or sorcery in this house. Leave at once,” she said, pointing toward the snarled gate. Vasilisa gathered her things and went.

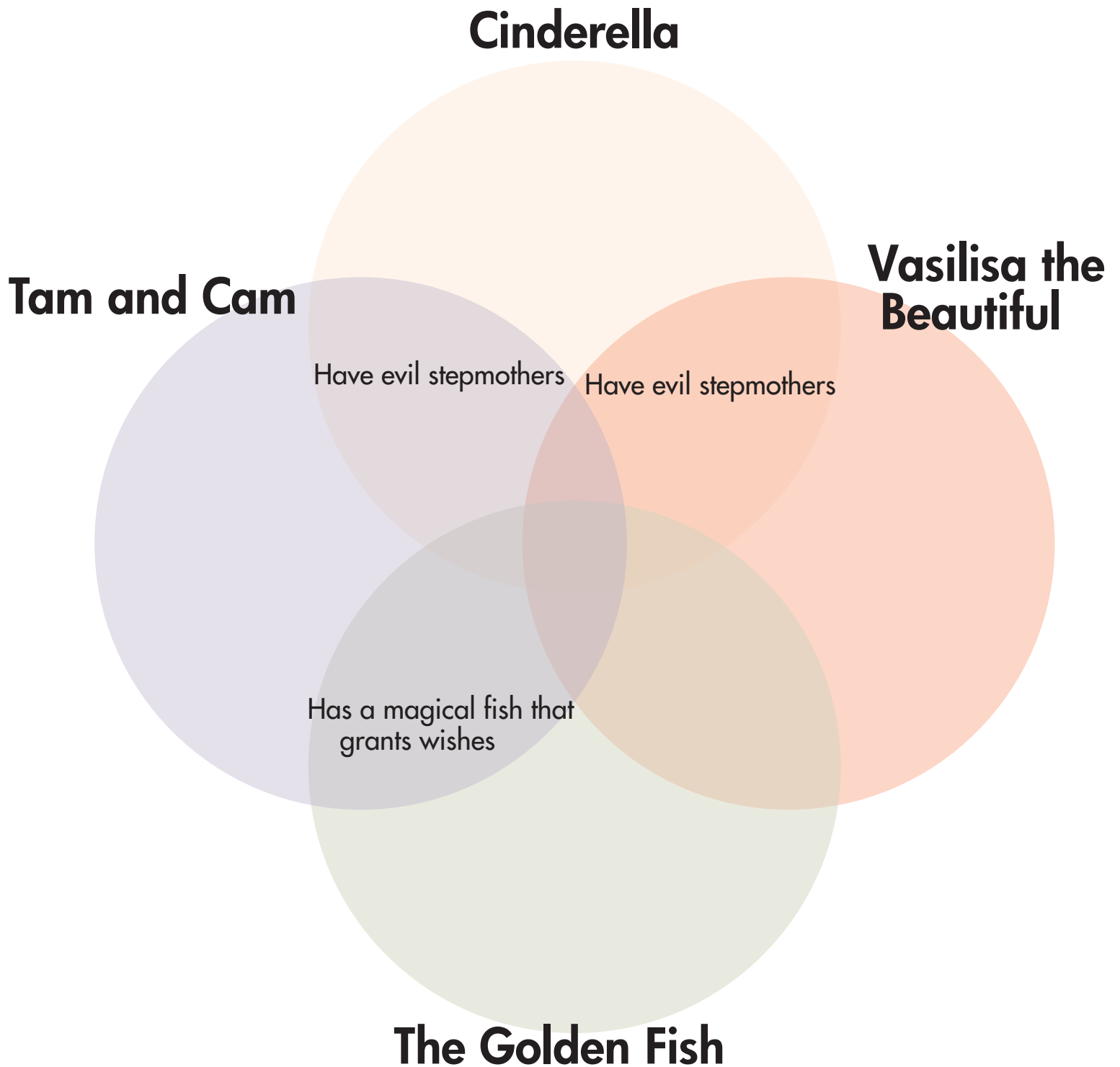
“Here,” she said, handing Vasilisa a skull from the fence. “A light to guide you home. That’s what you came for, right?”


All night and day she walked, and by the next evening, she had reached her home again. She was just starting to throw out the skull when she heard it speak: “Better keep me, dear. Your stepmother still needs light.”

When she entered, the skull fixed its gaze on her stepmother and stepsisters. All night, it held them in its grasp—try as they might, they could not leave its sight. When Vasilisa awoke in the morning, she could not find her stepmother and stepsisters at all, just piles of dust where they had been the night before.

## Directions

Cam and Tam, Vasilisa the Brave, The Golden Fish and the story of Cinderella all have many plot elements in common. Use this Venn diagram to compare the parts of each story's plot that are shared, and those that are different. Some elements have been filled in to get you started.





**Great job!**

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