

THE LEGEND OF SEDNA

Sedna was a beautiful Inuit girl who didn't want to get married. Many hunters wanted to marry her, but she refused their offers. Her father scolded her, saying, "I am getting older, and soon you will need a good husband who can provide you with food and furs. You must marry the next hunter who asks for you." Sedna still wasn't interested.

Soon a young hunter from a distant place came to her father's camp. He was dressed in warm furs, and spoke in a soft voice. He promised to provide a good home and plenty of animals for food and clothing. Although he kept his face hidden under his hood, Sedna was very impressed with him, so she agreed to marry him.

Sedna got into her husband's kayak and travelled with him to her new home. When they arrived at his island, she saw that her home was nothing but some sticks and bits of moss and feathers clinging to a large rock. Her husband took off his hood, and she realized that he was not a man, but an evil raven. He never hunted, he only caught fish. Sedna was cold, lonely, hungry, and very unhappy. Every day she cried for her father to come and save her.

Her father heard her cries and decided to rescue her. He paddled his kayak to the island where she was living. On their way home, Sedna looked back and saw that the raven was following them. He was gaining on them quickly. As the raven came close, her father took his paddle and struck the bird, who had to fall back. Then the raven flapped his powerful wings at the ocean and caused a huge storm to blow up. When her father saw that their lives were in danger, he became afraid for his own life. He threw Sedna over the side of the kayak. Sedna tried to save herself. She grabbed onto the kayak with her fingers, but her father took his paddle and beat at her fingers until they broke off. As they sank into the ocean, her fingers turned into seals and fish. Again, Sedna grabbed the kayak with her hands, but her father took his paddle and beat her hands until they also fell into the water. As they sank into the ocean, her hands turned into whales and walrus. Sedna also sank into the ocean.

Sedna lives at the bottom of the ocean. She is the goddess of the sea. She is the one who provides animals for the hunters, but only when she feels generous. When she is angry, and this is often, the hunters can't find food; and the people go hungry.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What did her father want Sedna to do?

1. get married
2. hunt for food
3. make clothing from animal skins

How did Sedna react to the hunters' proposals of marriage?

1. She refused their offers.
2. She said, "Maybe later."
3. She was interested.

Why did Sedna agree to marry the young hunter?

1. He was the best-dressed hunter.
2. He promised to look after her.
3. He made a good impression.

What did Sedna find out when she got to her new home?

1. Her husband was a fisherman, not a hunter.
2. Her husband was a raven, not a man.
3. There were no warm clothes for her.

Why did her husband keep his face hidden?

1. He didn't want her to know he wasn't human.
2. It was a sign of respect.
3. So the animals couldn't recognise him.

Because Sedna was so unhappy, what did she do?

1. She had to eat fish every day.
2. Every day she cried for her father to come.
3. She had to hunt.

Why did the raven fly after Sedna and her father?

1. He wanted to kill her father.
2. He wanted to eat their food.
3. He wanted to get his wife back.

How did the raven cause the dangerous storm?

1. By calling on the water gods to make a storm.
2. By flapping his wings at the ocean.
3. By calling on other ravens to help him.

What did her father do when their lives were in danger?

1. He beat the kayak with his paddle.
2. He threw Sedna out of the kayak.
3. He called on the gods to help them.

Why did her father throw Sedna out of the kayak?

1. He wanted to give her to the raven.
2. He wanted to make the kayak lighter.
3. He wanted to save his own life.

How did Sedna try to save herself?

1. She asked the raven to help her.
2. She gave animals to the hunters.
3. She grabbed the kayak with her fingers.

How did the sea animals come into the world?

1. Sedna's fingers became the seals and fish, and her hands became the whales and walrus.
2. The raven created the sea animals.
3. Her father found them in the sea.

THE MAGIC PAINTBRUSH

A long time ago in China there lived a poor boy called Liang. He had no family, so he made his living by doing odd jobs for other people in his village, such as cutting wood and tending cattle. His life was difficult, but Liang was a generous boy and always willing to help people who needed it. In his heart he had a dream. He wanted to paint pictures and become a great artist. He practised drawing all the time. When he was in the forest cutting wood, he drew birds and animals with a stick. If he was looking after a farmers' cows he drew on the sides of the barn. Whatever he was doing he drew – plants, animals, birds and people. He thought of nothing else except drawing, and soon he became very good at it. One night Liang dreamed that an old man gave him a paintbrush. The man said it was a magic paintbrush and Liang should use it to help people. When Liang woke up the next morning, he was surprised to see that he had a beautiful paintbrush in his hand. Liang was hungry, so he painted a bowl of rice. Suddenly the rice became real, and he ate it. Now he felt happy, so he drew a bird. The bird came to life and flew away.

When Liang went into the village he met an old farmer carrying water from the river to his field. It was a long walk and the man was very tired. Liang painted a river beside the field and the river came to life. Now the farmer could easily bring the water to his crops. Soon Liang met another villager who was crying because his cow had died in the night, and there was no milk for his children. Liang drew a cow, and it came to life. The villager was overjoyed and happily began to milk his cow. From that day Liang used his paintbrush to help the people in his village. Whenever they needed something, Liang would paint it. Soon the villagers began to prosper, and word of Liang's magic paintbrush began to travel beyond the village. People asked him, "Why don't you use your magic paintbrush to become rich?" "What else do I need?" replied Liang. "I feel rich because I can help."

It wasn't long before a rich man who lived near the village heard about Liang's magic paintbrush, and thought he would use it to make himself richer than the emperor. This man decided to steal Liang's paintbrush. He sent some of his men to Liang's home, where they captured Liang and put him in prison. The rich man took the paintbrush.

The rich man wanted to show off his power so he invited some friends to his house. He drew a lot of pictures, but not one picture became real. The rich man figured there must be some special secret that he didn't know about, so he sent for Liang. When Liang stood before him he said, "If you draw some pictures for me and they become real, I will let you go free." Liang knew that this rich man was not a good man. He didn't want to help, but he wanted to be free. "Paint me a golden mountain," said the rich man. "I want to go there and get lots of gold." What he didn't say out loud was, "And then I will be the richest man in the kingdom, richer even than the emperor himself!" Liang had an idea: he drew a picture of the sea. "Why did you draw the sea?" said the rich man, "I told you to draw the mountain. I want gold, not fish!" "The mountain is on the other side of the sea." replied Liang. "I'll show you." Liang drew the golden mountain on the other side of the sea. When the rich man saw the mountain shining in gold his eyes lit up like two yellow suns. "Yes!" he said, "That's much better! But the mountain is far from here. How will I get there?" "I'll draw you a boat to get to the mountain," said Liang. And he drew a golden dragon boat that was even bigger and more beautiful than the emperor's boat. The rich man climbed aboard the boat and stood in the bow facing the golden mountain. He said to Liang, "Now draw me a wind to take the boat to the mountain." Liang began to draw a wind, and the boat set sail. The rich man stretched his arms out to grab the golden mountain. "Make the wind stronger so I can get there faster," he said to Liang. Liang kept drawing and the wind got stronger. Soon the wind became a terrible gale and the rich man's beautiful boat sank beneath the sea and took him down with it.

Liang married a beautiful girl from his village and had a big family, and they were happy all their days.

NOW ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Why was Liang's life difficult? (Select two)

1. He liked to help people
2. He was an orphan
3. He was poor.

What was Liang's dream?

1. He wanted to help people.
2. He wanted to be an artist.
3. He wanted to draw all the time.

Which statement shows that Liang was generous?

1. He worked for other people.
2. He loved to draw.
3. He was willing to help others.

Why was Liang surprised when he woke up after his dream?

1. There was a beautiful paintbrush in his hand.
2. He could eat rice.
3. He could use the paintbrush to help people.

What was special about Liang's new paintbrush?

1. It was beautiful.
2. It drew magical objects.
3. Whatever it drew became real.

What does it mean when we say that someone "prosper?" (Select all answers that apply.)

1. They are rich.
2. They are happy.
3. They are healthy

How did Liang help the villagers prosper?

1. He was helpful to everyone.
2. He painted the things they needed, and those things became real.
3. He drew gold for the villagers.

What news began to travel beyond the village?

1. The news that the villagers were rich.
2. The news that Liang always helped people.
3. The news of Liang's magic paintbrush.

Why did the rich man want to get the magic paintbrush?

1. So he could help the villagers.
2. So he could make himself richer.
3. So he could learn to draw like Liang.

How did the rich man get the magic paintbrush?

1. He bought it.
2. He politely asked for it.
3. He stole it.

Why did the rich man invite some friends to his house?

1. So he could show off his power.

2. So he could make them rich.
3. So he could introduce them to Liang.

What happened when the rich man drew pictures for his friends?

1. The pictures became real.
2. The pictures didn't become real.
3. The pictures were beautiful.

How did the rich man try to make the magic paintbrush work for him?

1. He looked for a secret.
2. He tried to bribe Liang.
3. He drew more pictures.

What do you think was the rich man's dream?

1. To own the magic paintbrush.
2. To become richer than the emperor.
3. To be famous.

Why did Liang paint the sea between the rich man's house and the golden mountain?

1. He had a clever plan to get rid of the rich man.
2. He wanted the rich man to go far away from the village.
3. He wanted to be free.

Who/What do you think really killed the rich man?

1. The gale
2. Liang.
3. His greed.

THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW

A long time ago in Japan there lived an old farmer and his wife. The old man was kind and gentle and always had a smile for everyone he met, but his wife was cold and very bad-tempered. They had no children to help them, so as they got older, they had to work even harder just to survive. The old man found and tamed a little sparrow, and taught it many kinds of tricks. When he came in from the fields at the end of each day, the sparrow would welcome him home, and sing and dance for him; so in spite of his hardships the old man went to bed happy each night.

One day the old man had to go far into the forest to cut wood. It was laundry day, and for this reason his wife was in a bad mood as she also had to cook the rice for dinner. While she was washing the clothes, the sparrow flew down to the rice and, as the old man had taught it to, pecked at it until it was gone. When the old woman saw that the sparrow had eaten it, she went into a rage. She grabbed the bird in one hand and with the other she picked up her scissors and cut off the tip of its tongue. Then she threw the sparrow out the door, and it flew away as fast as it could go.

That night when the old man came home there was no sparrow to greet him and warm his heart. When he questioned his wife, she admitted what she had done, adding, "And good riddance! That bird has always caused more work for me." The poor man was devastated. Before dawn the next morning he took off to look for his little sparrow. He wandered through fields and forests, calling his name aloud.

After a long time searching he came to a large bamboo wood, where he finally met the sparrow again. The old man ran forward to greet his little pet. They talked for a while, and the old man could see that the sparrow no longer suffered from any injury, because it was a magic being. The sparrow invited the old man home. He introduced his family and asked his wife to prepare a delicious feast. During the meal the sparrow's daughters danced and sang for the old man. It was the best hospitality the old man had ever experienced! When it was time for the old man to return home, the sparrow brought out two wicker baskets, one large and one small. He said, "Here is a parting gift for you. Choose the one you want."

"Thank you." said the old man, "Since I'm not as strong as I used to be, and I have a long way to go, I'll take the smaller one." So he strapped the smaller one to his back and returned home.

Immediately his wife began to scold him for being away so long, and didn't stop until he opened the basket and onto their floor spilled gold and silver and all kinds of precious jewels. With the sparrow's gift, they had enough to be comfortable in their old age. But the woman didn't stay happy for long. "Why didn't you choose the bigger basket?" she scolded. "Then we could be very rich indeed and live in a bigger house and have servants. How could you be so stupid?"

The old woman decided to visit the sparrow. She went into the forest and walked and walked until she found the sparrow's house in the bamboo wood. The sparrow and his family were not pleased to see her, but they were kinder than she, so they invited her in. She ate quickly and then asked for her gift. When the two baskets were set out before her she chose the larger one. Without even thanking them she strapped it to her back and returned home. When she opened the basket a horde of demons sprang out and tormented her to death. The old man was comfortable and happy for the rest of his days.

NOW ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

What was the old couple's life like?

1. It was difficult.
2. It was easy.

Why was their life so difficult? (Choose all the answers that apply)

1. They had no children to help them.
2. It was winter
3. They were poor.
4. They were old.

What did the old man teach the sparrow to do?

1. The laundry.
2. Sing and do tricks.
3. Cut wood

Why did the old man go to bed happy?

1. He was well-fed.
2. The sparrow was his friend.
3. He liked to work hard.

Why was the old woman in a bad mood?

1. The old man was away and she was alone.
2. The sparrow didn't help her.
3. Doing laundry was a long, hard job.

Why did the old woman go into a rage?

1. The sparrow ate the rice.
2. She had no one to help her.
3. She had no soap.

What did the old woman NOT do to the sparrow?

1. She told the sparrow to go away.
2. She cut the sparrow's tongue.
3. She threw the sparrow out the door.

The old woman never liked the sparrow because...

1. The sparrow wasn't her friend.
2. The sparrow always caused her more work.
3. The sparrow was hungry.

The old man was devastated. This means he felt...

1. excited.
2. curious.
3. shocked and upset.

What did the old man want to do next?

1. Find his little friend
2. Punish his wife.
3. Go to sleep

When did the old man meet the sparrow again?

1. After a long time searching.
2. The next night.
3. Before dawn.

When the old man met the sparrow again, he saw that the sparrow was ...

1. happy and healthy again.
2. unhappy.
3. still suffering.

Choose the three answers that tell us that the sparrow was generous.

1. The sparrow invited the old man home.
2. The sparrow gave a gift for the old man's wife.
3. The sparrow fed the old man a delicious meal
4. The sparrow gave the old man a gift.

Why did the old man choose the smaller basket? (Choose two answers.)

1. He wasn't strong anymore
2. He didn't want to share with his wife.
3. He had to walk a long distance.

Choose the answers that show the old woman was bad-tempered.

1. She wanted to be rich
2. She often scolded the old man.
3. She didn't like her husband's pet.
4. She wasn't happy with the sparrow's gift

How do we know that the sparrow was kinder than the old woman?

1. He invited her into his home
2. He gave her a gift.
3. He didn't like her.
4. Answers 1 and 2 together