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A one-act dramatic play

THE KING WITHOUT A TRADE

by Idries Shah



KashfisChildren.org

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CAST

(This story is mostly told by narrators. Narrators 1-3 in the script can be read by more than three students so that many will get a chance to perform.)

Narrators 1 - 3

The King & The Princess (2-3 actors for the princess: one for her younger years and one as a grown-up)

Fishermen, Carpet Weaver, Sheep Farmer, Townspeople

The Sultan and his envoy

The Script

(The story takes place over several years. The King is first in his palace chambers. Then, after a shipwreck, he is with fishermen, traveling from place to place. Then he stays on a sheep farm before eventually returning to his palace.)

Narrator 1: There was once a king so decadent that even the palace peacocks were fed by hand from tables piled high with delicacies.

Narrator 2: Everyone at the palace was overfed, under-occupied, and bored. *(Suggested action: The king and many of the palace occupants can yawn, stretch, and lie about.)*

Narrator 3: Hoping to relieve the tedium, the king took a voyage to inspect his vast lands. *(Suggested action: Have an area in the staging area or a prop depicting ships on the ocean.)*

Narrator 1: On the way back, a storm blew up, and the royal ship became separated from its escort. Having been blown off course, the ship foundered in the storm and eventually sank without a trace.

(Suggested action: The cast can make wind and storm sound effects. If props for ships are used, move the king's ship to indicate its sinking. The king and his young daughter are lying on a raft.)

Narrator 2: The only survivors of the catastrophe were the king and his young daughter. Their raft finally washed ashore in a distant and unknown land. *(Fishermen enter the stage.)*

Narrator 3: Luckily for them, fishermen took them in and slowly nursed them back to health. Used to being looked after, the king and the princess took the fishermen's aid for granted.

Narrator 1: After months of caring for them, the fishermen explained that they couldn't afford to keep feeding the pair unless they were prepared to work.

Narrator 2: So, the now homeless royals set off, hoping to make their way back to their kingdom. Wandering from village to village and town to town, the king and the princess begged for food and shelter. *(Suggested action: The king and his young daughter can be seen begging townspeople for food.)*

Narrator 3: Sometimes people gave them a few scraps to eat. But mostly people said,

Townsperson 1: We work hard for what we have.

Townsperson 2: You aren't working.

Townsperson 3: Why should we give what little we have to you?

Narrator 1: Each time people asked why he didn't work for his living, the king reluctantly admitted to having no skill that made him employable. So, the king and the princess had no choice but to keep moving from town to town in search of people willing to give them something for nothing.

(The farmer enters the stage with his sheep.)

Narrator 2: After years on the road, they finally came across a farm where the farmer agreed to lend them a simple cottage in return for tending his sheep. The king watched the sheep from morning to night and learned to weave carpets from their wool in his spare time. Finally, the king realized that being a shepherd or a weaver was far more useful than being a king.

(The grown-up princess, the hunter/sultan enter the stage.)

Narrator 3: And in the years that passed, the princess grew into a beautiful young woman. She was so captivating that a passing hunter caught one glimpse of her and instantly fell in love.

Narrator 1: As luck would have it, the hunter was the richest man in the land. In fact, he was a sultan who was even wealthier than the king had ever been. But, like the king, he was also untrained in any pursuit other than being a ruler. *(An envoy of the Sultan enters the stage.)*

Narrator 2: He sent an envoy to ask for the princess's hand in marriage (without knowing she was a princess). *(The envoy leaves then returns.)*

Narrator 3: The envoy returned to the palace with the astounding news that the shepherd had declined to consent to the match unless the sultan learned a trade. Quickly recovering from his astonishment, the sultan realized that the father of the girl he desperately wished to marry wasn't going to change his mind. He, the sultan, would have to learn a skill.

Narrator 1: So, he left his empire in the hands of his advisors and apprenticed himself to a carpet weaver. *(The carpet weaver and a loom come to the stage. Suggested action: The carpet weaver can be seen teaching the Sultan how to weave.)*

Narrator 2: Day after day, month after month, he practiced his craft. Finally, after what felt like an age, he could expertly weave. *(The shepherd/king re-enters the stage.)*

Narrator 3: And scooping up the proceeds of his carpet sales, he hurried off to see the shepherd, saying,

The Sultan: I am the sultan of this land who some time ago took one look at your daughter and fell deeply in love. My messenger told me that you wouldn't agree to our marriage unless I learned a trade. So, I have become a master carpet weaver and am bringing you these gold coins as proof of my ability to earn a living.

Narrator 1: Having checked that his daughter wanted to marry the sultan, the shepherd king agreed to the match. And the couple were married the very next day.

Narrator 2: After the wedding, the princess explained to her new husband that rather than being the daughter of a shepherd, she was in fact the daughter of a king. Wanting to help, the sultan lent the king enough money to return to his kingdom and retake his throne.

Narrator 3: But although he was on the throne once again, the king didn't go back to his decadent, greedy, and lazy ways. He preferred to keep busy weaving and thinking about the experiences which had brought him back to the palace a changed man.

Narrator 1: And seated beside the loom ...

Narrator 2: the royal peacocks mused on how much better things were now ...

Narrator 3: that the king had mastered a useful trade.

The End

TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR THEATER

Teachers may want to use this script as an excellent way to allow students to learn the story, while promoting reading fluency. Students learn to read with expression and to practice such attributes of fluency as pausing, inflection and intonation. Reading the scripts aloud to students promote listening skills as they follow along silently and listen for spoken cues. Having students take on character roles helps them understand literary elements, such as motivation and characterization. The scripts provide a great opportunity for student cooperation as they work together on the performance.

1. Using the Script

- a. Use the script as you would any reading material and make sure students are familiar with the story and the vocabulary before they engage in this activity.
- b. Tell students that different combinations of readers will take turns reading the “play.”
- c. Assign the first set of readers and give them time to practice their roles and feel confident. Encourage them to read with expression. Tell the readers that the “Suggested Action” comments in the script are given only as examples of actions and are not part of the spoken script, and that they should feel free to choose their own actions during the reading.
- d. When the first readers are ready, you may want to have them stand where all students can see them. They may also read from their seats. Coach the readers to look up occasionally from their scripts and to make eye contact with the audience and other characters/readers as they read their lines.
- e. Have other sets of readers take turns at reading the script.
- f. If you have the resources, make a copy of the two-page script for each of the characters in the cast and mark the parts for that character. If this is not possible, have the student actors read their lines from the books, without marking, of course.

RETELL OPTION: Children might also use this script as a guide to retell the story in their own words or act out the story in their own way.

2. Staging the Play

- a. When students have become familiar with the script from several readings, you may want to create a full stage performance with costumes, props, and an audience of students, parents, and teachers. It is always a good idea to allow more rehearsal time when applying extra touches such as costumes or movement.
- b. In planning a performance, encourage students to think about the expressions and movements characters might make. For example, have students think about how people look and move when they are happy, angry, or nervous.
- c. Have students practice facial expressions. If the character is the bored king, have students practice looking bored by yawning and looking sleepy. You might have a mirror around for the students to practice making their “faces.”
- d. Encourage them to create a “voice” for their character.
- e. Encourage students to act creatively (even to “ham it up”) with the script to increase the entertainment value of the performance.
- f. Establish a “stage” area in the classroom, moving and using tables, desks, and chairs and using the floor as needed and as safety allows.
- g. Use these simple tips to keep the performance smooth and entertaining:
 - ❖ Make sure readers are positioned within view of all members of the audience. It is important that the audience can hear lines and see movements and expressions. If you choose to place all the readers in

front of the audience at once, it is helpful to have them stand in a semicircle so that each reader can be seen by all the other readers and by the audience.

- ❖ Suggest where readers should stand so that they do not block the audience's view of other readers.
- ❖ Remind students that they should be looking at, talking to, and reacting to the other readers/characters. However, the narrators may face and speak to the audience.
- ❖ As an alternative to having all the readers stand together in the performance area, you may want to direct the performance by having readers enter and exit off to the side before and after delivering their lines. Having readers move in and out of the performance area will require more rehearsal time.

3. Ideas for Props

Props are optional and can all be constructed out of cardboard, construction paper, pieces of cloth, and other common items. (See **Extras: Costumes & Props** below for more ideas.)

- 1. King's palace and bed:** Have the students use desks, chairs, cushions to fashion a king's bed. They can draw or paint a mural of the decadent palace using the book's illustrations as examples.
- 2. Peacocks:** Cardboard cutouts that can be painted to be peacocks. Glue on feathers for added effect.
- 3. King's ships:** Cardboard cutouts can be painted and used with motions to show their sailing, being caught in a storm, and sinking. Another idea is to construct "shadow puppets" for the ships. (See **Other Ideas for Activities** below for ideas on shadow puppet shows.)
- 4. Fishermen tools:** Sticks with strings to use as fishing poles, some netting with plastic or cardboard fishes inside.
- 5. Food carts:** Cut out shapes of various vegetables and fruit which belong to the townspeople and place in boxes for when the king has to beg for food.
- 6. Sheep & Farmhouse:** Cut out sheep from cardboard, glue on cotton balls, or white cloth, and draw noses and eyes. The farmhouse can be constructed using a large cardboard box, or by taping a painting of a farmhouse onto the side of a table.
- 7. Loom:** Cut out looms from cardboard. Hang wool cloth over the cutout and prop up or tape to the wall. Have yarn as another prop for the loom. Ask the children if they know someone who could lend them a small loom for the play.

Extras: Costumes, Cast and Props

The face and head command the most attention, so a hat, mask, or makeup can work as an entire costume. Make sure that students obtain permission before borrowing items from other people. It's best not to let them cut, paint, or modify any clothing items unless you bring in articles of clothing specifically for that purpose.

Students will have their scripts in hand while performing. So, when choosing props, keep in mind that objects which require two hands may not be practical. Encourage students to use their imagination as they transform everyday objects into props.

For the Wedding Party: Make paper flowers, use streamers, confetti, etc., and decorate an area of the staging area. Have plastic glasses and plates and depictions of food to denote a wedding feast.

Young Princess and the Grown-up Princess: Have 1-2 actors portray the princess as a young girl during her travels with her father. Another actor can be the grown-up princess when she meets the Sultan. Have the children use their own ideas on how to help show what "grown-up" looks like.

Art Materials: water (washable) paints, paint brushes, foam brushes, sponges, plastic cups, plastic bottles and jars, paint cups & trays, art paper roll, pencils, markers, glue, scissors, chalk, rulers, finger paints, construction paper or other heavy paper, plastic sheeting to cover work areas

Students may wish to use their art and other drawings from previous lessons.

Making a Mural or Murals: Allow enough space in the room for several students to work at once on the large art roll (the mural can be as long as your “staging” area) that is taped to the wall (or laid out on the floor). Or, you may want to section off parts of the larger roll of art paper for several students or groups to work on at once. Or, cut sections of the paper roll for each student or group of students to work with at their desks or on the floor.

Depending on your staging space, you may want to do several murals: One for the beginning scenes, one for the middle scenes, and one for the ending scenes. Allowing time during the performances for changing scenes is another possibility, but this takes coordination and rehearsal, so make sure your rehearsals include this activity.

THIS WILL TAKE MORE THAN ONE DAY TO COMPLETE. YOU MAY WISH TO DECIDE WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO KEEP THE MURAL SO THAT IT REMAINS INTACT AND CAN DRY BETWEEN CLASSES.

Here are some suggestions on making a mural:

1. Discuss some possible ideas for the mural they will be creating. Here are some suggested ideas:

The illustrations in the book include many designs and illustrations of the palace, the sea and ships sailing, the fishermen’s hut, the towns and villages with shops and carts of produce, the farmhouse and sheep pasture, the weaver’s shop – perhaps the students want to emphasize these elements in the mural. They may want to use their own drawings for ideas for scenes of the story.

The elements of the story take place mostly in the sheep pasture and weaver’s shop, yet other areas, such as the palace, villages and farmhouses, can be depicted. Perhaps the students want to create a mural that includes all of the places in which the story occurs. Ask them to envision where they think the palace should be placed in relation to the rest of the scenes.

2. You may want to organize students into three groups: one group for scenes or designs from the first part of the story; one for the middle part; and one for the ending of the story. Each group can brainstorm ideas for a mural.

3. Once they have decided on the idea for the mural, students or groups of students can lightly sketch their designs onto drawing paper at their desks. Using these sketches, ask student or group to show their designs to the class and have the class discuss the elements and where to add them to the mural. Let this be a cooperative effort. Make sure that all students have a part in the design of the mural, whether it’s sketching, painting, planning.

4. Allow 4-6 students at a time to take turns coming to the mural to sketch the design and later to paint. Older students may direct younger students.

5. Some painting can be done with sponges, others with paint brushes. Let the students make these choices. One idea using sponges is having students dip them into one or more colors of paint and press them onto the paper, creating a different texture than brushstrokes. Students may want to create “stencils” by drawing a design (such as a bottle) on thick paper, cutting out the design, and use sponges to stencil the design onto the mural.

6. Ten minutes before class ends, have students help with the clean-up.

Clean-Up

1. Assign students to wash brushes and sponges.

2. Assign students to collect the newsprint or plastic sheeting (re-use if possible).

3. Assign students to cover paints, rinse out plastic cups or trays.

4. Store mural or individual pieces of it so that it will dry without disturbing other classroom activities.

Other Ideas for Activities

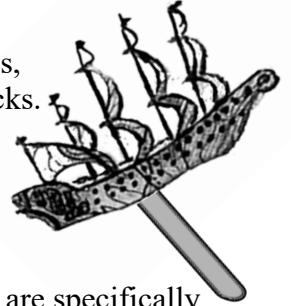
Some suggestions for making the set:

Architecture/Furniture: Have the students look at the architecture, furniture and other elements, such as windows, doors, roofs, which are depicted in the illustrations to get ideas for their murals.

Depiction of Time Passing: This story takes place over years. The young princess grows up, for instance, and the king learns new skills and works hard. They are bound to change in appearance during that time, so have the children discuss ways to show how time has passed.

Shadow Puppet Show: Construct a simple shadow puppet theater using old cereal boxes, white paper or cloth, flashlights or small lamps, and cut-out figures glued or taped to sticks. Search the internet for ideas, such as this website:

<https://wehavekids.com/education/shadow-puppet-theater>. Allow the children to design and decorate their own shadow boxes and puppets, and let them retell the story using their puppets.



Costumes: Students may want to make up several costumes using items of clothing that are specifically designated for this use. Have them discuss the dress as depicted in the story, by explaining some of the clothing is those worn by people from Afghanistan and other Central Asian areas. These include items such as hajibs and turbans (head coverings) and kaffiyehs (large scarves) and decorated tunics. Then have the students make up the costumes for their parts in the play. They can take turns explaining them to the classroom.

Follow-Up

There will be opportunities to recall and use the story with your students. For example, whenever you notice students hesitant about learning a new task, remind them about the shepherd-king in *The King Without a Trade* who didn't think he would ever need to learn a task. You may want to say:

“When I heard you just now, it reminded me of the story we read called *The King Without a Trade*. Can you guess why I thought that?”

Go back to the story from time to time, weeks or months later, to see what your students can learn from the story. Encourage them to share what they remember or perhaps retell the story in their own words or act out the story in their own way. You and your students may find more meanings, concepts and insights from it as time goes on. Remember, these stories can be enjoyed and be useful for people of all ages.