

The Russian's Secret Treasure

(Adapted from a Moldavian folktale)

Long ago in Russia, there lived a man who worked extremely hard. He took care of his home and garden. He planted crops in his field, and when the crops were ready, he harvested them. The man worked diligently all day and sometimes into the night.

This man had three sons. They were tall and strong, but they were lazy. They refused to work. They preferred to let their father provide for them. As time went by, the man became tired and weak. He couldn't work as he did before. His sons had grown into young men, but they were still lazy. They wouldn't help their father. With no one taking care of the fields, the crops began to die. Large weeds grew up in the garden, and the house fell into disrepair. The man became weaker until finally he knew he was going to die. His sons were very upset. Not only would they miss their father, but also there would be no one to take care of them.

Just before he died, the man told his sons a secret. He said that long ago he had buried a pot of gold in the yard. The sons thought that if they found the gold,

they would be rich. Each son took a shovel and began digging in the yard. They dug all day without stopping, but they didn't find the gold. They dug up all the weeds in the garden and the dead crops in the field. Still they found only mud.

The oldest brother looked at the mud and suggested that they plant some vines. So the three brothers planted grapevines. Soon they had a whole vineyard of ripe grapes. When the grapes were ready, the sons harvested them and sold them for money. The oldest brother smiled and said, "I think we have found our father's secret treasure."



Main Idea

1. The story tells about
 - a. a farmer and his sons.
 - b. Russia.
 - c. a large family.

Significant Details

2. The old Russian's sons were
 - a. stupid.
 - b. weak.
 - c. lazy.

Context Clues

3. In *vineyards*, people raise
 - a. vines.
 - b. grapes.
 - c. corn.

Inference

4. The father's secret treasure was really
 - a. gold and jewels.
 - b. barrels of wine.
 - c. the rewards of hard work.

Drawing Conclusions

5. Do you think the old Russian did a good job rearing his sons? Why or why not? _____

Following Through

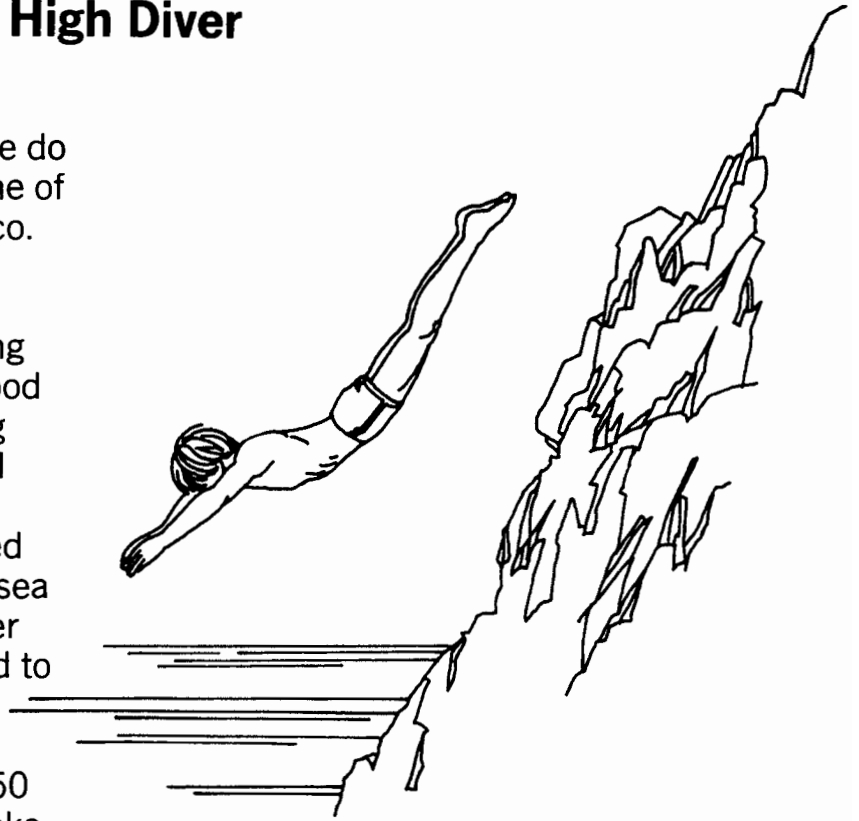
6. Think about folktales from other countries. Write about one that teaches the same lesson as that of the Russian story.

High Diver

Miguel lives in a small house in the hills of Acapulco, Mexico. Most people do not even know his name. Yet, he is one of the most famous young men in Mexico. He is an Acapulco cliff diver.

Diving off a high cliff into a sea of boiling waves is not the same as diving off the springboard at the neighborhood swimming pool. It is far more exciting and dangerous. From the time Miguel was about ten years old, he knew he wanted to be a cliff diver. He practiced every day he could. He dove into the sea from small rocks. Then he tried higher places. Many, many times he climbed to the high cliffs of La Quelbrada and looked down into the sea. From this famous point, divers have plunged 150 feet into a small channel between rocks for many years.

It takes good judgment as well as expert diving skills to make the plunge. The water in the narrow channel is shallow. Only when the tide is washing into the channel are the waves deep enough to be safe for a diver. Miguel must watch each wave as it comes in. Is



this one high enough? Or will he miss it and crash among the rocks? People line up along the opposite side of the cliff. Quietly they wait for the big moment. Miguel lets one wave go by. Then another. Then. . .olé! Miguel makes a perfect dive. He comes up waving and smiling.

Main Idea

1. This story is mainly about
 - a. Acapulco.
 - b. La Quelbrada.
 - c. Miguel.

Significant Details

2. Miguel has been diving since he was
 - a. ten.
 - b. fifteen.
 - c. twenty.

Context Clues

3. *Narrow* is the opposite of
 - a. high.
 - b. wide.
 - c. famous.

Inference

4. It is important for Miguel to have
 - a. a friendly smile.
 - b. good eyesight.
 - c. good hearing.

Drawing Conclusions

5. From the story, you can conclude that the work of a cliff diver can be
 - a. tiresome.
 - b. done only on holidays.
 - c. dangerous.

Following Through

6. Find out what kind of weather Acapulco has. Estimate how many days each year a diver could perform.

The Pinch-Bug

(Adapted from *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain)

Each Sunday morning, Aunt Polly made sure that Tom sat as far away from the church's open windows as possible. This was so Tom would pay attention to the minister instead of to the birds and trees outside. But Tom always had a spare idea. One day, when the sermon lasted a bit too long, Tom pulled out a small box. Inside was a big, black beetle, which he called a pinch-bug. The bug immediately pinched Tom's finger and he let it drop. The bug lay on its back just out of Tom's reach. Other people began to notice.

A poodle wandered into the church and also noticed the bug. The dog lay down beside it and sniffed. It pawed and pushed. Then, looking bored, the dog ignored the bug and lay down for a nap. Suddenly there was a terrible yelp! The dog leaped up and raced down the middle aisle of the church. It crossed in front of the minister and flew down the other aisle. Faster and faster went the poor dog, yelping all the time.

Tom thought the dog looked like a woolly comet moving with the speed of light. He saw that the pinch-bug was fastened onto the dog's rear leg and was holding on tightly. At last the suffering dog bounded into its owner's lap, then out the window and away to the woods. There was not much more to the sermon that day. Soon Tom was free to enjoy the outdoors again. He did wonder, though, if he would ever see the pinch-bug again. It had worked better than a stopwatch for timing sermons!



Main Idea

1. This story tells about
 - a. a dog.
 - b. a boy.
 - c. a funny event.

Significant Details

2. In a box, Tom had a
 - a. dog.
 - b. bug.
 - c. comet.

Context Clues

3. A *spare* idea is like a spare tire. It is
 - a. long.
 - b. funny.
 - c. extra.

Inference

4. The dog came into the church because
 - a. it liked Tom.
 - b. its owner was there.
 - c. it was hot outside.

Drawing Conclusions

5. Tom will probably
 - a. try to find another pinch-bug.
 - b. chase the dog.
 - c. search the woods for his bug.

Following Through

6. Find a book on insects. In the section about beetles, pick the one you think is Tom's pinch-bug. What else can you learn about it? Get a copy of *Tom Sawyer* and read the whole chapter about this event.

The Story of Achilles

(Adapted from Greek mythology)

Achilles was the most famous of all the warriors of ancient Greece. His father was a mortal. But his mother was one of the sea nymphs. Because Achilles was part mortal, he would someday have to die. His mother was very unhappy about this. She decided to dip her baby into the magic River Styx. The touch of its water would make her son live forever. But his mother held Achilles by his heel. That part of him was not touched by the water. The heel was Achilles' weak spot forever.

Achilles had another weakness—a quick temper. When he was very angry, he became wild. Achilles fought many battles as a young man. He fought bravely in the long Trojan War between Greece and Troy. Many of the enemy fell before Achilles' sword.

One day the head of the Greek army took Achilles' slave girl. He would not give her back. Achilles sat in his tent and would not fight. His best friend, Patroclus, led the Greeks into battle in his place. Patroclus was not as good a warrior as Achilles. In a very short time, he was killed by Hector, son of the Trojan king. When Achilles heard this, he was very angry. He put on new armor and went to find Hector. Hector met Achilles outside the city gates of Troy. They fought fiercely. Achilles was the better warrior and soon Hector lay dead.

But that was not enough for Achilles. He was still angry about his

continued . . .



friend's death. Achilles sent for his fastest chariot. He tied Hector's body behind the chariot. Then he dragged him three times around the city walls of Troy. He finally let Hector's father take his son's body for a proper funeral.

Paris, one of Hector's brothers, discovered the secret of Achilles' heel. Paris took careful aim and shot a poison arrow straight into that heel. Achilles fell to the ground. His friends carried him to his tent. They tried to remove the poison. But it was too late. Achilles, the greatest of all the Greek warriors, died from a tiny wound in his heel.



Main Idea

1. This story is mainly about
 - a. a famous battle.
 - b. a famous warrior.
 - c. a famous river.

Significant Details

2. Achilles' mother wanted him
 - a. to learn to swim.
 - b. to be unhappy.
 - c. to live forever.
3. Who killed Achilles?
 - a. Paris
 - b. Hector
 - c. Patroclus

Context Clues

4. A *warrior* is a
 - a. friend.
 - b. baby.
 - c. soldier.
5. A *mortal* is a
 - a. dead person.
 - b. human.
 - c. mythical god.

6. A *chariot* is a
 - a. helpful organization.
 - b. great wall.
 - c. horse-drawn battle cart.

Drawing Conclusions

7. Paris, Hector's brother, was a
 - a. great warrior.
 - b. poor shot.
 - c. clever man.

Following Through

8. Look up the term "Achilles' heel." What does it mean today? Where did it get its name? Write a paragraph and include your answers to these questions. _____
