



LESSON PACK

Language Arts Lesson Pack » Reading & Literature

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## Folktales from Around the World

**Recall facts; make inferences; use vocabulary; draw conclusions**

**Skills Addressed** Recall facts, make inferences, draw conclusions and expand vocabulary

**Learning Notes** This Reading Comprehension lesson pack contains three passages on folktales: Japanese, Welsh and African. The passages and comprehension questions are related to one theme at the same reading level.

**Teaching Tip** After students read folktales, have them brainstorm story elements of a folktale. Then use a graphic organizer that include elements shared by students. Have students write their own folktale. **(Visual, Tactile, Verbal, Auditory)**

**Modifications and/or Extensions** To modify these exercises, students read the passages with a peer. Vocabulary words and their meanings are recorded on note cards. Students work together to understand the meanings of unfamiliar words.

### Recommended Exercises

*Introductory:* Fictional Passage ('The Beginning of the World')  
*Follow-up:* Writing Exercise ('Rewrite a Fairy Tale')

**Lesson Packs** are selections from popular EPS series, grouped together by skill. They include teaching tips, alignment with standards and extensions for use in the classroom. They are just one component of Lesson Logic, an online service of EPS. Visit [www.lessonlogic.com](http://www.lessonlogic.com) for more information.

**The Lessons included in this pack are as follows:**

**Tokoyo and the Sea Monster Passage**

Read a Japanese folktale about a heroic young pearl diver

From the EPS book *Wordly Wise 3000 1*

**Tokoyo & Sea Monster Questions**

Answer questions that refer to Japanese folktale

*Wordly Wise 3000 1*

**How Water Lilies Began Passage**

Read a Welsh folktale about a farmboy and magical cows

*Wordly Wise 3000 1*

**Water Lilies Questions**

Answer recall and inference questions on Welsh folktale

*Wordly Wise 3000 1*

**An African Folk Tale Passage**

Read an African folktale about the poor defeating the rich

*Wordly Wise 3000 1*

**African Folk Tale Questions**

Answer recall and inference questions about African folktale

*Wordly Wise 3000 1*

To learn more about these books, please visit  
[www.epsbooks.com/html/catsearch.asp](http://www.epsbooks.com/html/catsearch.asp)  
and type in the name of the book in the search box

## Narrative

Read the narrative below; then complete the exercise that follows.

### TOKOYO AND THE SEA MONSTER

Folktales are stories passed on from adults to children without ever being written down. Every country has its folktales, and this one comes from Japan. It is the story of a young pearl diver named Tokoyo.

The people of Tokoyo's village made their **livelihood** diving for pearls. Tokoyo was the youngest of the divers. She could stay underwater longer and collect more oysters than anyone, searching for the one oyster in a thousand that contained a precious pearl. The sea was like a second home to her, and she swam easily through its **depths**, cutting oysters from the rocks with her razor-sharp pearling knife.

The other pearl divers were all the family Tokoyo had. Her mother had died when she was a baby, and while she was still a child **misfortune** struck again. Her father, whose sense of humor had gotten him into trouble before, had made a joke about the fact that the emperor was always sick. Because making fun of the emperor was a crime, Tokoyo's father was **banished** to the island of Oki, far from the Japanese mainland. To make matters worse, **communication** between Tokoyo and her father was forbidden. Her friends tried to **console** the young girl, but they could not lift her spirits. She felt like an **orphan**, and the house that had once been filled with laughter was now filled with sorrow.

Tokoyo's one **desire** was to see her father. On her fifteenth birthday, she left her village and set off for Oki. Soon after landing on the island, Tokoyo saw a group of people standing on the edge of a cliff with a girl about her own age who was dressed all in white. People explained to Tokoyo that the evil sea god that made its home in the waters off the island demanded the life of a young girl once a year. They told her that the girl **cowering** before them had been chosen as the sea god's victim and was about to be thrown into the sea. Then they said that the sea god had also cast a spell on the emperor, causing his many **ailments**. When she heard this, Tokoyo saw a chance to help her father. She begged people to let her take the girl's place. They began to **deliberate** among themselves while Tokoyo waited anxiously. Finally, to her great relief, they agreed.

Tokoyo walked to the edge of the **precipice**, took a deep breath, and leaped into the water. She swam deeper and deeper until, at the bottom of the sea, she found herself face to face with the evil sea god. Tokoyo drew her pearling knife, **slaying** the evil sea god and thus ending the spell he had cast on the emperor. In an instant, all the emperor's **symptoms** disappeared. He was delighted to be rid of the doctors who had attended him, and when he learned of Tokoyo's brave deed, he promised the young girl whatever she wanted. As a result of Tokoyo's wish, her father **regained** his freedom and was happily reunited with his daughter.

## TOKOYO AND THE SEA MONSTER

Answer each of the following questions in a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word, use a vocabulary word in your answer. Use each word only once.

1. Explain why the story of Tokoyo and the evil sea god has a happy ending?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Was Tokoyo an orphan?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does “**misfortune struck**” mean as it is used in the narrative?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why did the emperor need doctors?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How does the narrative make clear that Tokoyo’s friends were kind to her?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where did the evil sea god live?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Explain why Tokoyo’s fight with the sea god was a **deliberate** act.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Why didn’t Tokoyo’s father write to her?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Why was Tokoyo’s father living on the island of Oki?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Why did Tokoyo go to the island of Oki?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Why had the girl in white been taken to the **precipice**?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How can you tell that the girl in white was afraid?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Why did Tokoyo want to take the girl's place?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. How did the emperor know that the spell had been broken?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Why did the people of Tokoyo's village dive for oysters?

\_\_\_\_\_

### WORDLY WISE

One of the world's oldest languages is Sanskrit. It was spoken in India thousands of years ago and is the special language of the Hindu religion. Very few people speak it today, but some words in European lan-

guages are connected to Sanskrit. **Orphan** is one of them. An *orphan* is a child without parents who therefore can be in a weak and helpless state. The word comes from the Sanskrit *arbha*, which means "weak; helpless."

## Narrative

*Read the narrative below; then complete the exercise that follows.*

### HOW WATER LILIES BEGAN

This is a folktale from Wales, a small country west of England. It tells how water lilies came to grow in a lake in the Welsh mountains. It was all because of Huw, a farmer's son who loved to play the harp and never went to school. Huw lived with his mother in a **humble** cottage by the side of a mountain. Every morning, he drove his mother's black and white cows up the mountain, where they spent the day in a **meadow** by the side of the lake.

One day, Huw took his harp and played a few **chords** as he watched over the herd. To his astonishment, six silver cows rose out of the water, drawn by the music. Their coats gleamed in the sunlight as they gathered around Huw and listened to him play. They stayed with the herd all day, following the rest of the cows back to the farm that evening. Huw's mother felt very **fortunate** to have such fine new cows. She **boasted** to her neighbors that they gave twice as much milk as the black and white ones. And, she added, the milk was of **exceptional** quality.

All went well until one of the silver cows stopped giving milk. After waiting a few days, Huw's mother told the butcher to come the next day and take the cow away. Huw **pleaded** with his mother to spare the animal, but she wouldn't **relent**. She told Huw that they couldn't **afford** to have even one cow eating grass and giving nothing in return. The boy knew how **obstinate** his mother could be once her mind was made up, but he argued with her for as long as he dared. When his mother told him to be quiet, he knew he had no choice but to **submit** to her will.

The next morning, as he **trudged** up the mountain, Huw could think of nothing but the beautiful silver cow that was going to be sold. The music he played on his harp that day became increasingly **melancholy** until at last, his eyes filled with tears, he could play no more. He stood up and threw his harp into the lake. At once a strange thing happened. The six silver cows ran to the edge of the lake and **plunged** in. They were never seen again.

Soon masses of silver water lilies began to grow all along the **fringes** of the lake where the silver cows had jumped in. They still grow there today. Huw's mother died long ago, and Huw is now an old man. If you should meet him and tell him you don't believe this story, he will be happy to take you up the mountain and show you the beautiful silver water lilies.

## HOW WATER LILIES BEGAN

Answer each of the following questions in a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word, use a vocabulary word in your answer. Use each word only once.

1. Why might it be easy to pick the water lilies that grew in the lake?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How did the music Huw played match his mood?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the meaning of **afford** as it is used in the narrative?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How can you tell that Huw's family was not wealthy?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How can you tell from the narrative that Huw's mother was not a shy person?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where did Huw and the cows go every day?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What did the silver cows seem to be responding to?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Why was milk from the silver cows worth more than milk from the other cows?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Why did Huw's mother feel **fortunate** to have the silver cows?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How can you tell from the narrative that Huw was unwilling to defy his mother?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What did Huw do when his mother said the butcher would take the cow?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Did Huw's mother agree to do what he asked?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. What does the word **trudged** suggest about Huw's feelings as he went up the mountain?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Why was it a waste of time for Huw to argue with his mother?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. What was the last glimpse that Huw had of the silver cows?

\_\_\_\_\_

### WORDLY WISE

**Chord** has another meaning in addition to the one given. In geometry, a *chord* is a straight line joining any two points on a circle.

*Chord* and *cord* are homonyms. *Cord* is thick string or twine. It is also a unit of measurement; a *cord* of firewood is a stack that measures eight feet by four feet by four feet.



In the Middle Ages, over five hundred years ago, people believed that the human body contained four different kinds of fluids, called *humors*. The four humors were blood,

phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. When these were in balance, a person was said to be in good humor; when they were out of balance, a person's mood was affected. Too much blood made a person *sanguine*, or cheerful (the Latin word for blood is *sanguis*). Too much phlegm made a person *phlegmatic*, or slow to respond. Too much yellow bile, called *cholera*, made a person *choleric*, or angry. Too much black bile, called *melancholia* made a person **melancholy**, or unhappy.



## Narrative

Read the narrative below; then complete the exercise that follows.

### AN AFRICAN FOLK TALE

Some folk tales tell of **valiant** deeds performed by great heroes; an example is the Japanese story of Tokoyo and the sea monster. Others, like the Welsh tale of the silver cows and the water lilies, explain how things came to be. A third group tells how the weak and helpless defeat the strong and powerful. This does not always happen in real life, but it does happen in folk tales, as in this East African story of the *maskini* and the *tajiri*.

Every evening, the *tajiri*, or rich man, sat down to a **heartly** meal prepared for him in his own kitchen. The food that was left over would have been enough to feed a whole family, but the *tajiri* was extremely **stingy**. The leftovers from his table went to fatten his pigs so that he would have the benefit of them later.

The *maskini*, or poor man, lived on simple **fare**. He owned a goat that gave him milk and cheese, but his evening meal was usually nothing more than a bowl of porridge. However, he had found a way to make it more enjoyable. He would eat his meal while hidden outside the *tajiri*'s kitchen, where wonderful smells came **wafting** through the open window. They made the *maskini*'s mouth water, and the porridge seemed like a feast.

One evening, the *tajiri* decided to take a walk in his garden in order to work up an appetite for dinner. He saw the *maskini* sitting outside the kitchen window. As the *tajiri* watched, he saw the *maskini* **inhale** deeply, and a blissful look come over his face. How dare he help himself to my smells, thought the *tajiri*, and he ordered his servants to seize the *maskini* and **escort** him to the village jail.

A few days later, the *maskini* was **summoned** before the court that met weekly in the village center, where the case would be decided on its **merits**. The *tajiri* explained that the smells from the kitchen belonged to him, and the *maskini* was **depriving** him of them. As payment, he demanded the *maskini*'s goat, which was the only thing he owned. When asked to respond, the *maskini*, looking very **forlorn**, could only stare at the ground and shuffle his feet, afraid to speak. The village **elders**, who had been hearing the case, now withdrew to the shade of a nearby baobab tree. After a brief discussion, the village chief came forward and **addressed** the crowd.

"The *maskini* did help himself to the smells from the *tajiri*'s kitchen," she said. "However, he did not receive any food from him. We have **concluded**, therefore, that the *tajiri* should not be given the goat. However, in fairness to him we believe he should have the right to smell the *maskini*'s goat whenever he wants."

The *tajiri* was furious and left without saying a word. But the people of the village **approved** the court's decision. They felt that justice had been done.

## AN AFRICAN FOLK TALE

Answer each of the following questions in a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word, use a vocabulary word in your answer. Use each word only once.

1. Did the *maskini* put up a **valiant** defense in the court?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the meaning of **hearty** as it is used in the narrative?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The story says the *tajiri* was **stingy**. How does it show this?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did the *tajiri* fare when he went to court?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What would have happened if the kitchen window had been closed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How did the *tajiri* know that the *maskini* was enjoying the smells from the kitchen?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Why did the *maskini* need an **escort**?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Did the *maskini* have to go to court?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What does it mean to say the case would be decided on its **merits**?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Had the *maskini* taken anything from the *tajiri*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Why do you think the *maskini* looked **forlorn**?  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What sort of person might become one of the village **elders**?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. To whom did the chief direct her remarks?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. What is the meaning of **concluded** as it is used in the narrative?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. How might the crowd have shown that it **approved** of the court's decision?

\_\_\_\_\_

### WORDLY WISE

President Lincoln gave a famous speech at Gettysburg in 1863 that begins, "Four score and seven years ago . . ." Why do we refer to it as the Gettysburg **Address** rather than the Gettysburg Speech? One reason is that *address* suggests something grander and more important than a speech. Anyone can make a speech, but you have to be someone important and the occasion a special one for it to be called an address.



As an adjective, **elder** means "greater than another in age or seniority." If we refer to someone *greatest* in age or seniority, we use *eldest*. (I have an *elder* brother named Mark.

He is not the *eldest*.) (Sheila is the *eldest* of seven children.) Note that *elder* and *eldest* are used only when referring to persons, but *older* and *oldest* can refer either to persons or things.



We turn many words into their opposites simply by changing the prefix. **Inhale** means "to breathe in." It is made up of the prefix *in-*, meaning "in" and the root formed from the Latin verb *halare*, meaning "to breathe." By knowing that the prefix *ex-* means "out," you can turn *inhale* into its opposite and make a word that means "to breathe out." What is that word?