



Learn English Through Stories

Panchatantra Tales

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The Clever Snake and the Lazy Frogs – Version 2

Once upon a time, there lived an elderly snake who had seen better days. Age had taken its toll; he no longer possessed the strength or speed to hunt as he had in his youth. Climbing trees to raid birds' nests was now impossible, and even catching quick lizards or frogs required effort he simply did not have. Having gone without proper meals for weeks, he had become frail and ill. Lying in the shade one afternoon, he thought to himself, "If I don't find food soon, my days are numbered. But how can an old snake like me survive when I can no longer chase prey?"

Suddenly, a cunning idea struck him. "Why hunt," he mused, "when I can make the food come to me?" He smiled slyly at the thought, convinced this plan would turn the tables in his favour.

The following morning, he dragged his weary body to a nearby pond where a large community of frogs lived. These frogs were ruled by a pompous king who surrounded himself with obedient ministers and helpers. Life was easy for them: they spent their days leaping and playing, feasting on insects that floated on the water. Most of them had grown plump and idle. Swimming across the pond, even a short distance, seemed too much trouble. They preferred to stay in one spot, croaking lazily in the sun. The snake had observed their behaviour many times and knew their laziness would be his greatest advantage.

He settled quietly on the muddy bank and lay perfectly still, pretending to be harmless. At first, the frogs panicked. They froze, then plunged into the deeper water, keeping a safe distance. They watched him with wide, fearful eyes. Hours passed, and the snake did not move a muscle. He neither hissed nor lunged. Gradually, curiosity overcame fear.

Eventually, the king frog, perched on a lily pad across the pond, called out boldly, "Stranger! What brings you here? We have never seen you before. Have you come to devour us?"

The snake lifted his head slowly and spoke in a weak, trembling voice. "No, Your Majesty. I mean no harm. I am too feeble to hunt anyone these days. Let me explain. Two days ago, desperate for food, I entered a nearby village. A Brahmin's young son saw me and tried to crush me under his foot. In self-defence, I bit him.

The boy survived, but his father – a powerful priest – was furious. He laid a terrible curse upon me. From that day forward, I am forbidden to hunt or kill for food. Instead, I must spend the rest of my life serving frogs.”

The king looked puzzled. “Serve us? You are a mighty snake, and we are merely small frogs. How could you possibly serve us?”

The snake sighed dramatically. “I have noticed how reluctant you all are to swim. The effort tires you out. Allow me to offer my back as a ferry. Whenever you wish to cross the pond or move to another spot, simply hop on, and I will carry you smoothly and swiftly to your destination.”

The lazy king’s eyes lit up. His ministers whispered excitedly. No more tiring swims! No more effort! They could travel in comfort and style. That very day, the king climbed aboard first, followed by his ministers and many ordinary frogs. The snake transported them back and forth across the pond countless times. Though he was exhausted and starving, he showed no sign of anger. Patience was essential; he knew his plan would succeed only if he earned their complete trust.

The next day, he returned looking even paler and weaker. The king noticed immediately. “You seem unwell today,” he said with concern. “How will you manage to carry us if you have no strength left?”

The snake replied sadly, “Alas, the curse prevents me from hunting. I have eaten almost nothing since it was cast. Hunger is draining my energy.”

The king huddled with his ministers. They did not want to lose their convenient transport. After some discussion, they announced their decision. “To keep you strong enough to serve us, we will sacrifice one frog each day for your meal. In return, you will continue to give us unlimited rides.”

The snake bowed his head, hiding his secret delight. This was exactly what he had hoped for. From that day on, life became effortless for him. Every morning he arrived at the pond, carried the frogs wherever they wished, and at the end of the day, one frog willingly offered itself as his dinner. With regular meals, the snake rapidly regained his strength and began to grow sleek and fat.

But success made him greedy. When the king and ministers were not watching, he would swiftly swallow an extra frog or two. “Better safe than sorry,” he told himself. Months rolled by, and the frog population dwindled alarmingly. Many had vanished without trace, yet the king and his inner circle remained blissfully unaware. They were too busy enjoying their luxurious rides to notice that their friends and subjects were disappearing one by one.

One evening, as the snake slithered home feeling particularly satisfied, he encountered an old acquaintance – another snake who had also grown thin from lack of food. The friend stared in astonishment. “You look remarkably healthy! How on earth have you managed to find so much to eat in these hard times?”

Proud of his cleverness, the snake boasted about his scheme. He explained every detail – the pretended curse, the rides, and the daily meals. Unfortunately, a sharp-eared stork happened to be flying overhead and overheard the entire confession. Without delay, she swooped down to the pond and revealed the truth to the frog king.

The king was overcome with shame. His laziness had blinded him to the danger. He and his remaining ministers immediately fled to the deepest part of the pond and hid among the reeds.

The next morning, when the snake arrived expecting his usual welcome, the pond was silent and empty. Not a single frog remained in sight. His clever trick had been exposed, and his easy meals were gone forever.

Moral: Laziness may seem comfortable at first, but it often leaves you vulnerable to those who are cunning and patient.

Comprehension Questions

Question 1: Why could the elderly snake no longer hunt effectively?

Question 2: What does the idiom "seen better days" mean in the context of the snake?

Question 3: How did the snake plan to "turn the tables" on the frogs?

Question 4: Why were the frogs described as plump and idle?

Question 5: What lie did the snake tell about the curse to gain the frogs' trust?

Question 6: What service did the snake offer that appealed to the frogs' laziness?

Question 7: Why did the king and his ministers decide to sacrifice one frog each day?

Question 8: What does the idiom "better safe than sorry" reveal about the snake's later behaviour?

Question 9: Why were the king and his ministers "blissfully unaware" of the disappearing frogs?

Question 10: How was the snake's deception finally exposed?

Answers

Answer 1: Age had taken its toll; he had become too frail and slow to climb trees, chase lizards, or catch frogs.

Answer 2: It means the snake was in much better condition in the past (when he was younger and stronger).

Answer 3: Instead of hunting, he planned to trick the lazy frogs into coming to him willingly for food.

Answer 4: They spent their days playing and eating without much effort, and they were reluctant to swim because it tired them.

Answer 5: He claimed a Brahmin had cursed him after he bit the man's son, forbidding him to hunt and forcing him to serve frogs instead.

Answer 6: He offered to carry them on his back across the pond, acting as a ferry so they would not have to swim.

Answer 7: They wanted to keep the snake strong enough to continue giving them unlimited rides, as losing him would end their convenient transport.

Answer 8: It shows the snake's greedy caution; he ate extra frogs secretly to ensure he had more food than agreed.

Answer 9: They were too busy enjoying their luxurious rides to notice that their friends and subjects were gradually dwindling.

Answer 10: A stork overheard the snake boasting about his trick to another snake and immediately flew to tell the frog king the truth.

