

Fire on the Mountain

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HONESTY

Ethiopia
Folktale
Reading Time: 11 minutes

CONCEPTS

Honesty
Trust
Courage
Loyalty
Justice

SUMMARY

Challenged by his master to spend the night alone in the bitter cold air of the mountains, Alemayu wagers his future. But when the master claims a false victory, Alemayu and his sister must confront the rich man's dishonesty. E.B. Lewis' richly expressive earth-hued watercolors enhance this memorable tale.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss honesty, trust, courage, loyalty, and justice as they apply to the story. The student will learn about the importance of honesty related to trust in his or her life.

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. The author wrote *Fire on the Mountain* based on a retelling of a story she had heard many times. Write and illustrate a retelling of one of your favorite childhood stories. Read it to younger children in your school.
2. Explain this saying from the story, "Do not bite unless you are prepared to swallow." Find other Ethiopian proverbs to interpret. (Keyword: Ethiopian proverbs)

ART

On the Internet, look at art by famous Ethiopian artists such as Alemzewd Alemu. (Keyword: Ethiopian art)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Make a bulletin board titled, "All About Ethiopia." In small groups, choose a topic from the following list to investigate, write about, and present to the class in a creative way. (Each topic may be used as a keyword.)

Ethiopian wildlife
Ethiopia Ethnographic Museum
Addis Ababa
Ethiopian food
Ethiopia culture, customs, traditions
Simien Mountains, Bale Mountains
Ethiopia national parks

SCIENCE

Investigate to find out about "Lucy," the oldest hominoid fossil. (Keyword: Lucy Ethiopia) Write a paragraph about your findings, share with the class, and post your writing on the "All About Ethiopia" bulletin board.

MATH

Find out about the Ethiopian calendar. (Keyword: Ethiopian calendar) Report findings to the class and post information on the "All About Ethiopia" bulletin board.

After the Story

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DISCUSSION

1. What difficulties does Alemayu face? How do his hopes and imagination help him in hard times?
2. How are Alemayu and his sister loyal to one another? How are you loyal to family and/or friends?
3. Talk about Alemayu's character traits, such as honesty and courage. How do honesty and courage go hand in hand? Think of situations when a person needs courage in order to be honest. Share.
4. Would you want to be friends with someone like Alemayu? Explain. Is he someone you would trust? Why is trust an important part of friendship?
5. The rich man is dishonest when he decides not to grant the boy his reward. How do the servants help the master to see his dishonesty?
6. Although he is angry, the rich man does keep his word at the end of the story. Is keeping your word a way of being honest? Explain.
7. How is there justice in the ending of the story? What kind of leader does Alemayu become? Discuss qualities you would like to see in leaders of your community and country.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate Ethiopia on the world map. On a map of Africa find countries bordering Ethiopia, the capital city, Addis Ababa, and the city of Gonder. (Keyword: map Africa political)
2. On a Venn diagram (see *Teacher's Guide*), compare and contrast Alemayu with the rich man. Use information on your Venn diagram to write a paper comparing and contrasting these two characters. Give examples of Heartwood attributes shown.
3. Together list characters in history or literature who displayed courage by speaking out when they saw a need for honesty and/or justice. Investigate to find quotes, photographs, and examples of good deeds and post on a chart titled, "Models of Good Character."

EXTENSION

1. At home, ask about times when someone spoke up when he or she observed dishonest situations. With permission, share with the class.
2. With family members, talk about how to handle situations when total honesty might be hurtful to another person.

WRAP-UP

1. In small groups, make character trait maps to describe Alemayu's character.*
2. Together discuss this Ethiopian proverb: "When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion." In *My Heartwood Journal* explain how it relates to the story. Include examples of Heartwood attributes in your entry.

VOCABULARY

ibis
shemma
injera

wat
krar
mesob