

The Boy Who Held Back the Sea

Retold by Lenny Hurt
1987
New York: Dial Books

COURAGE

The Netherlands
Folktale
Reading Time: 7 minutes

CONCEPTS

Courage
Loyalty
Fortitude

SUMMARY

Jan, a young boy known as a troublemaker, is an unlikely hero who single-handedly saves his town from the angry sea. This heroic act changes his life. Thomas Locker's oil paintings in the style of great Dutch masters enrich this version of an old Dutch tale.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to define and discuss courage, loyalty, and fortitude as they apply to this story. The student will explore different types of courage.

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

With a partner, create an updated version of the story. Discuss how Jan might have handled a local emergency, such as a flood, today. Think about details in the story that still apply, such as his parents worrying. Retell your version to the class.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Make a class booklet titled, "Facts about the Kingdom of the Netherlands." Together list topics such as geography, symbols, highlights, or holidays. With a partner, choose one of the topics to investigate. (Keyword: topic Netherlands) Create a fact sheet, compile pages, make a cover, and display in your classroom library.

SCIENCE

1. In small groups investigate dikes (dykes) and how they are constructed to keep water from flooding lowlands. (Keywords: dykes construction or Zuiderzee Works) Share findings with the class.
2. With a partner, investigate flood control or other disaster prevention programs in your area. (Keyword: flood protection programs) Report information to the class.

* Visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Teaching Heartwood, Activities, Primary for the Heartwood Attribute Word Map.

ART

1. In books or online find some landscape paintings by old Dutch masters such as Vermeer (Keyword: Vermeer "View of the Delft") or Van Ruisdael (Keyword: Ruisdael paintings landscapes). Compare their works with Thomas Locker's. Which elements are the same? Which are different?
2. Make a diorama containing windmills and dikes. (Keyword: windmills dykes images)

After the Story

The Boy Who Held Back the Sea

DISCUSSION

1. Grandmother thinks a story might cheer Pieter up. Why do you think she chooses to tell him *The Boy Who Held Back the Sea*?
2. When you think of all the mischievous acts that Jan does at the beginning of the story, are you surprised that he stays all night at the dike? Why or why not?
3. Why does Jan do this courageous deed? What makes a boy who is usually irresponsible choose to be responsible?
4. Do you know ahead of time when you will be called on to perform an act of courage? Have you ever been in a situation where you or someone you know showed spur-of-the-moment courage? If so, tell about it.
5. Discuss loyalty in the story. Who is loyal to Pieter? To Jan? How does Jan show loyalty? How do you show loyalty to your family and friends?
6. How do you think Jan had the fortitude or strength to stay at the dike all night? Tell about a time you displayed fortitude by staying with a task that was difficult.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate the Netherlands on the world map. Find the sea and the countries that border it.
2. Discuss the many kinds of courage, such as courage to stand up for beliefs, to say "I'm sorry," to explore the unknown, or to face danger or illness. Together record information on a Heartwood Attribute Word Map.*
3. Conduct a television interview with Jan and the other story characters for an on-the-scene report of the incident. Together write a script with questions for the reporter to ask and answers for the characters. Work in small groups with copies of the script. Choose parts, practice the interview, and present it to the class.
4. Invite someone to class from your local Emergency Medical System (EMS) to talk about using 911. Or, in small groups, investigate to find information about 911. (Keyword: 9-1-1 for kids) Take notes and make posters to display around your school.

EXTENSION

1. Complete Home Connection pages and take home to share with families.
2. Talk with your family about decisions that took courage. Ask if anyone has a special story of courage you could share with your class.

WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal*, write about a time you or someone you know showed one of the kinds of courage from Activity #2. Make a copy of your story, draw an illustration, and post on a bulletin board titled "Many Kinds of Courage."
2. With a partner, investigate local heroes. (Keyword: young heroes, *your city, your state*) Read one story and share it with the class. Write a brief summary to post on the "Many Kinds of Courage" bulletin board.

VOCABULARY

fortitude
dike
mischief

brewer
rhubarb
constable