

The Emperor's New Clothes: The Beginning

by Hans Christian Andersen

This passage is the beginning of the story "The Emperor's New Clothes."

Many years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes, that he spent all his money in dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "he is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colors and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

Questions

1. What did the emperor spend all his money on?
2. The dishonest weavers said their clothes were _____ to those who were unfit for their office.
3. How much cloth did the dishonest weavers make?
4. What did the dishonest weavers do with the silk and gold thread?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. excessively
2. accustomed
3. rogues
4. elaborate
5. affected

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "an Emperor, who was so **excessively** fond of new clothes"

a. recently b. very; extremely c. quickly d. nicely; with kindness

2) "one is **accustomed** to say, 'he is sitting in council,'"

a. nervous b. taught; instructed c. used to; familiar with d. unlikely

3) "two **rogues**, calling themselves weavers"

a. cheaters or crooks b. travelers c. rough farmers d. tailors

4) "the most beautiful colors and **elaborate** patterns"

a. old; traditional b. fancy; complex c. modern; new d. pleasing; nice

5) "and **affected** to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all"

a. began b. pretended c. asked; pleaded d. promised