

The Three Wishes

by Katharine Pyle *from Mother's Nursery Tales*

Once upon a time a poor man took his ax and went out into the forest to cut wood. He was a lazy fellow, so as soon as he was in the forest he began to look about to see which tree would be the easiest to cut down. At last he found one that was hollow inside, as he could tell by knocking upon it with his ax. "It ought not to take long to cut this down," said he to himself. He raised his ax and struck the tree such a blow that the splinters flew.

At once the bark opened and a little old fairy with a long beard came running out of the tree.

"What do you mean by chopping into my house?" he cried; and his eyes shone like red hot sparks, he was so angry.

"I did not know it was your house," said the man.

"Well, it is my house, and I'll thank you to let it alone," cried the fairy.

"Very well," said the man. "I'd just as soon cut down some other tree. I'll chop down the one over yonder."

"That is well," said the fairy. "I see that you are an obliging fellow, after all. I have it in my mind to reward you for sparing my house, so the next three wishes you and your wife make shall come true, whatever they are; and that is your reward."

Then the fairy went back into the tree again and pulled the bark together behind him.

The man stood looking at the tree and scratching his head. "Now that is a curious thing," said he. Then he sat down and began to wonder what he should wish for. He thought and he thought, but he could decide on nothing. "I'll just go home and talk it over with my wife," said he; so he shouldered his ax, and set off for home. As soon as he came in at the door he began to bawl for his wife, and she came in a hurry, for she did not know what had happened to him.

He told his story and his wife listened. "This is a fine thing to have happen to us," said she. "Now we must be very careful what we wish for."

They sat down one on each side of the fire to talk it over. They thought of ever so many things they would like to have—a bag of gold, and a coach and four, and a fine house to live in, and fine clothes to wear, but nothing seemed just the right thing to choose.

They talked so long that they grew hungry. "Well, here we sit," said the man, "and not a thing cooked for dinner. I wish we had one of those fine black puddings you used to make."

No sooner had he spoken than there was a great thumping and bumping in the chimney and a great black pudding fell down on the hearth before him.

“What is this?” cried the man staring.

“Oh, you oaf! you stupid!” shrieked his wife. “It’s the pudding you wished for. There’s one of our wishes wasted. I wish the pudding were stuck on the end of your nose! It would serve you right!”

The moment she said this the pudding flew up and stuck to the man’s nose, and there it was and he couldn’t get it off; the man pulled and tugged, and his wife pulled and tugged, but it was all of no use.

“Well, there’s no help for it,” said the husband; “we’ll have to wish it off again.”

His wife begun to cry and bawl. “No, no,” she cried. “We only have one wish left, and we can’t waste it that way. Let’s wish ourselves the richest people in the world.”

But to this the man would not agree. He wanted the pudding off his nose whatever it cost. So at last the wife was obliged to let him have his own way. “I wish the pudding was off my nose again,” said the man, and that was the third of their wishes. So all the good they had of the fairy’s gift was a black pudding for dinner; but then it was the best black pudding they had ever eaten. “And after all,” said the man, “there’s nothing much better in the world to wish for than a full stomach.”

Questions

1. Why did the fairy give the man three wishes?
2. What does *bawl* mean here: "he began to bawl for his wife"?
3. What do you think is the lesson of this story?
4. If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

This passage includes words that students should learn to recognize on sight. We've highlighted 12 of these words below, from the Dolch sight word list for Pre-K through 1st, 2nd and/or 3rd grade. Tip: Read through the passage once with your student. Read a second time, but pause on the sight word and ask your student to say the word.

Sight Word List

1. help
2. red
3. run
4. said
5. you
6. want
7. well
8. think
9. sit
10. wish
11. long
12. door

Print and cut-out the flash cards below. Show each sight word to your student and ask them to say the word.

help

red

run

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you

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long

door