

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Rich Man and the Bundle of Wood

By Maude Barrows Dutton
1908

Maude Barrow Dutton's book The Tortoise and the Geese includes fables and folktales originally from India. Included in her book is "The Rich Man and the Bundle of Wood." In this folktale, a Rich Man doesn't pay a Poor Man enough for a bundle of wood. As you read, take notes on how the narrator describes the Rich Man.

There was once a man, who, although he was very rich, was also very stingy.[1] In the winter when the peasants[2] brought him wood to buy, he would give them only half their price.

One day, as he was purchasing a large bundle of wood from a Poor Man, a Priest came by. He saw the few pennies that the Rich Man had thrown at the Poor Man's feet, and he could not help saying, —

"My Rich Brother, can you not be more generous than this? Do you not see that this Poor Woodsman has brought you a large bundle of wood, and you are sending him away with only a penny or two? How can he buy bread enough to keep himself and his family from starving with such small wages?"



["256/365: Pile of wood"](#) by Marcin Bajer is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

But the Rich Man was greatly vexed[3] at the Priest's words. "What is it to me that the man is poor?" he cried, and he drove both the Poor Man and the Priest from his door.

That very night, this same bundle of sticks caught fire and the Rich Man's house and barn burned to the ground. Thus he awoke the next morning to find himself as poor as the poorest wood-chopper from whom he had ever bought wood.

"The Rich Man and the Bundle of Wood" from The Tortoise and the Geese by Maude Barrows Dutton (1908) is in the public domain.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement expresses a theme of the folktale?
 - A. People with money are often less kind to others.
 - B. Show kindness to people with less, as that could easily be you.
 - C. It can be difficult for people to accept being told they're wrong.
 - D. When you're kind to people, they're more likely to be kind to you.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "In the winter when the peasants brought him wood to buy, he would give them only half their price." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "'How can he buy bread enough to keep himself and his family from starving with such small wages?'" (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "But the Rich Man was greatly vexed at the Priest's words. 'What is it to me that the man is poor?'" (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "Thus he awoke the next morning to find himself as poor as the poorest wood-chopper from whom he had ever bought wood." (Paragraph 5)

3. PART A: What is the main difference between the Priest and the Rich Man?
 - A. how much money they have
 - B. how they think the poor man should be treated
 - C. how they choose to make their money
 - D. what they decide to do with their money

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "He saw the few pennies that the Rich Man had thrown at the Poor Man's feet," (Paragraph 3)
 - B. "'My Rich Brother, can you not be more generous than this? Do you not see that this Poor Woodsman has brought you a large bundle of wood,'" (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "But the Rich Man was greatly vexed at the Priest's words. 'What is it to me that the man is poor?'" (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "That very night, this same bundle of sticks caught fire and the Rich Man's house and barn burned to the ground." (Paragraph 5)

5. What does paragraph 3 reveal about the Priest and the Rich Man? Use details from the folktale in your response.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the folktale, the Rich Man is unkind to the Priest and the Poor Man. How should he have treated the two men? Why might the Rich Man need others to show him kindness in the future? Describe a time when you needed someone to show you generosity.
2. The Rich Man is described as very stingy in the beginning of the folktale. Do you think the Rich Man is happy in the beginning of the folktale? Why or why not? How might giving the Poor Man money have made the Rich Man happier? Describe a time that you did something nice for someone and how it felt.