

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Two Travelers

By Maude Barrows Dutton
1908

Maude Barrows Dutton's book The Tortoise and the Geese includes fables and folktales originally from India. In the following folktale included in her book, two travelers must decide whether or not to complete a series of tasks to receive a reward. As you read, take notes on the tasks the travelers must complete.

[1] Two friends, Ganem and Salem, were journeying together when they came to a broad stream at the foot of a hill. The woods were near at hand, and the shade was so welcome after the heat of the desert that they halted¹ here to rest. After they had eaten and slept, they arose to go on, when they discovered near at hand a white stone, upon which was written in curious lettering this inscription:² —



"Yellowstone River Upper Rim (Yellowstone National Park)" by Ken Lane is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Travelers, we have prepared an excellent banquet³ for your refreshment; but you must be bold and deserve it before you can obtain⁴ it. What you are to do is this: throw yourselves bravely into the stream and swim to the other side. You will find there a lion carved from marble. This statue you must lift upon your shoulders and, with one run, carry to the top of yonder mountain, never heeding⁵ the thorns which prick your feet nor the wild beasts that may be lurking in the bushes to devour⁶ you. When once you have gained the top of the mountain, you will find yourselves in possession of great happiness.

Ganem was truly delighted when he read these words. "See, Salem," he cried, "here lies the road which will lead us to the end of all our travels and labor. Let us start at once, and see if what the stone says be true."

Salem, however, was of another mind. "Perhaps," he made answer, "this writing is but the jest⁷ of some idle⁸ beggar. Perhaps the current of the stream runs too swiftly for any man to swim it. Perhaps the lion is too heavy to carry, even if it be there. It is almost impossible that anyone could reach the top of yonder mountain in one run. Take my word, it is not worthwhile to attempt any such mad venture.⁹ I for one will have no part in it."

1. **Halt (verb):** to come to a sudden stop
2. words that are written or cut into a surface
3. a formal evening meal for many people
4. **Obtain (verb):** to get something
5. to take notice of
6. **Devour (verb):** to consume something quickly and eagerly
7. **Jest (noun):** a joke
8. **Idle (adjective):** without purpose; pointless
9. a risky or dangerous journey

- [5] Nevertheless, Ganem was not to be discouraged. "My mind is fully made up to try it," he replied, "and if you will not go with me, I must go alone." So the two friends embraced, and Salem rode off on his camel.

He was scarcely out of sight before Ganem had stripped off his clothes and thrown himself into the stream. He soon found that he was in the midst of a whirlpool, but he kept bravely on, and at last reached the other side in safety. When he had rested a few moments on the beach, he lifted the marble lion with one mighty effort, and with one run reached the top of the mountain. Here he saw to his great surprise that he was standing before the gates of a beautiful city. He was gazing at it in admiration, when strange roars came from the inside of the lion on his shoulder. The roaring grew louder and louder, until finally the turrets¹⁰ of the city were trembling and the mountain-sides reechoing with the tumult.¹¹ Then Ganem saw to his astonishment that great crowds of people were pouring out of the city gates. They did not seem afraid of the noise, for they all wore smiling faces. As they came nearer, Ganem saw that they were led by a group of young noblemen, who held by the rein a prancing black charger.¹² Slowly they advanced and knelt before Ganem, saying, —

"Brave stranger, we beseech¹³ thee to put on these regal robes which we are bringing, and, mounted upon this charger, ride back with thy subjects to the city."

Ganem, who could scarcely believe his ears, begged them to explain to him the meaning of these honors, and the noble youths replied, —

"Whenever our king dies, we place upon the stone by the river the inscription which you have read. Then we wait patiently until a traveler passes by who is brave enough to undertake the bold venture. Thus we are always assured that our king is a man who is fearless of heart and dauntless¹⁴ of purpose. We crown you to-day as King over our city."

"The Two Travelers" from The Tortoise and the Geese by Maude Barrows Dutton (1908) is in the public domain.

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10. a small tower on top of a larger tower or at the corner of a building or wall
11. **Tumult (noun):** a loud, confused noise
12. a battle horse
13. to ask someone urgently to do something
14. **Dauntless (adjective):** showing fearlessness and determination

Text-Dependent Questions

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

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the main theme of the folktale?
 - A. Not all risks are worth taking.
 - B. Brave actions are often rewarded.
 - C. Friends come and go in life.
 - D. It's important to think before you act.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to part A?
 - A. "Two friends, Ganem and Salem, were journeying together, when they came to a broad stream at the foot of a hill." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "'here lies the road which will lead us to the end of all our travels and labor. Let us start at once, and see if what the stone says be true.'" (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "'this writing is but the jest of some idle beggar. Perhaps the current of the stream runs too swiftly for any man to swim it.'" (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "'Brave stranger, we beseech thee to put on these regal robes which we are bringing, and, mounted upon this charger, ride back with thy subjects to the city.'" (Paragraph 7)

3. How is Ganem's view about the inscription different than Salem's in the story?
 - A. Ganem is eager to complete the inscription's tasks, while Salem believes the inscription might be a joke.
 - B. Ganem is too greedy to care about the consequences of the inscription, while Salem is distrustful of the inscription.
 - C. Ganem doesn't trust the inscription, why Salem is eager to complete the tasks and gain the rewards.
 - D. Ganem is more interested in proving himself by completing the inscription's tasks, while Salem is more interested in the rewards.

4. How does paragraph 6 contribute to the overall structure of the story?
 - A. It reveals how close Ganem comes to not completing the tasks.
 - B. It provides the conclusion of the story, as Ganem completes the tasks.
 - C. It describes Ganem overcoming the tasks outlined in the inscription.
 - D. It emphasizes how scared Ganem was while completing the tasks.

5. How do the inscription's instructions in paragraph 2 contribute to the theme of the story?

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, Ganem is made a king because of his boldness and bravery. What other traits do you think a leader would need to rule over other people? What qualities would you want to see in your leader?
2. In the folktale, Ganem is considered brave because he completes the inscription's tasks. Do you think he was brave? Why or why not? Describe a time when you were brave.