

Why Dogs, Cats, and Mice Are Enemies

This may surprise you, but long ago, dogs, cats, and mice were friends. The problem between them started when the dogs thought they were being too heavily taxed. They did not want so much of their money going to the animal commissioners. The dogs knew they would have to travel a great distance to meet with the commissioners about their concerns.

Finally, the burden of the taxes became so severe that the dogs knew they must make the long and dangerous trip. They packed their belongings and began the arduous journey. This wasn't an easy expedition. The dogs had to cross the scorching savannah. Here they must dodge dangerous lion prides and packs of snarling hyenas. Rivers full of hungry crocodiles lay in their path. The dogs needed to stay away from the riverbanks where these ravenous reptiles always kept one watchful eye out for a tasty meal.

You can imagine how happy the dogs were that this tiresome trip was not in vain. The commissioners listened to the dogs' request and decided they would no longer have to pay taxes. They gave the dogs a letter stating they were now exempt from this burden.

During their journey home, heavy rains poured down from the sky. But, this pelting rain did not bother the dogs. No, they were happy because of their letter. They knew this precious paper would improve their lives.

The problem started when the dogs reached the river that lay between them and their homeland. The rain had caused this river to rise far beyond its banks. The waters rushed downstream at great speed.

“What will we do?” asked the dogs. “We must keep our letter safe. When we cross the high waters of the river, this letter may be destroyed.” The dogs all looked at one another in dismay.

Finally, the Chow Dog spoke up. “I am able to carry my tail high. Let us tie the letter to my tail. I will raise it above the rushing currents as we swim across this river. When we reach the other side, we will untie the letter. It will be safe and dry.”

The dogs all thought this was a good plan so they tied the letter to the Chow’s tail and swam across the river. But, when they reached the opposite side, the letter was gone! They stared at the rushing river that had stolen their precious letter. They hunted along the bank for any sign of it. Not even a piece of it could be found. The dogs returned sadly to their home, devastated that the letter was lost.

The following day the dogs visited the home of their friends, the cats. They sat together in the warm sun and told the sad tale of the lost letter.

“Oh, our dear friends. Do not despair. We went walking in the night after the rains stopped. We discovered your letter along the riverbank. We’ll go into the house and fetch it for you.”

There was much rejoicing among the dogs as the cats went into the house to retrieve the letter. They even began making plans for a party to honor the rescuers of the important letter.

Soon, however, the cats reappeared carrying bits of paper. “We are quite sorry, our friends,” apologized the cats. “It seems that the mouse who lives with us found your letter. Look, she has chewed it into bits!”

The dogs became very angry! They chased the cats, howling, “From this day forward, we are no longer friends!”

The cats ran to the nearest tree for refuge. They raced up it and stayed in its branches until the dogs went away. Then the cats cautiously returned to their home.

“Why did you chew our friends’ letter into bits?” demanded the cats when they saw the mouse. “Now the dogs are no longer our friends. We must run up the nearest tree when they come along. Because of your destruction, YOU are no longer OUR friend!” With that, the cats chased the mouse. She scurried into a nearby hole to hide until the cats left.

This is why, to this day, a cat runs up a tree when it sees a dog and a mouse runs to a hole when a cat is close!

Activities to Extend Your Thinking...

Expressive Language...

Alliteration is the repetition of beginning letters in a phrase. There are many examples of alliteration in the first part of this folktale. You will see many descriptive words such as adjectives and adverbs along with the nouns and verbs. They begin with the same letter. Find as many examples of alliteration as you can and make a list. Look for alliteration in other places on the Maggie website.

Creature Characteristics...

- Perform a skit based on this play for a class of younger children. Hold a discussion with them about forgiveness after your skit.
- Read this folktale to younger children. Help them make masks of the different animals in this tale. Direct them as they play act a skit based on this folktale.

Life Lessons...

Choose one of the following topics and react to it in your journal.

- What does this folktale teach you about forgiveness?
- What did you learn about getting along with others from this folktale?