

The Monkey and the Crocodile

Monkey loved to play and swing in the forest canopy. It was not only his home, but it was his stage as well. He could move quickly through and around it like the cheetah that raced on the savannah. But Monkey showed his speed and agility not on the land like swift Cheetah, but rather, high above it. It is in leafy trees that Monkey lived, ate, and played. He traveled by running along the branches and gracefully leaping from tree to tree. Monkey provided entertainment for the animals who watched his show from beneath. They marveled at how he used his long tail as a rudder to steer in mid-air. They were in awe of Monkey's ability to land safely and smoothly by grasping the tree branches with his fingers and toes. These land-loving animals often laughed at Monkey's antics in his towering playground. They were grateful, too, for the bits of fruit and nectar-filled flowers that Monkey dropped. For all his grace in the trees, Monkey was a messy eater. Often half-eaten scraps would provide tasty refreshment for the crowd below.

One fine day, the animal audience knew it was in for quite a show. At the river, Monkey's friend, Crocodile, awakened with a nasty gleam in his eyes. "I am tired of always crawling along on the land, sliding my belly, dragging my tail, pushing my short legs so I can visit Monkey who does nothing but swing and twitter high in the trees. It is time we met at my home - the river." Crocodile opened his enormous snout and swiped sideways at the air. He snapped his

jaws several times until the frightened frogs hopped off to tell Monkey.

When the amphibians arrived with Crocodile's command, Monkey merely laughed. "My friend Crocodile knows I do not swim. Besides, Crocodile enjoys the trek from that water-filled home of his. He does nothing but bask in the sun all day anyway. Tell him I will not go near his river. He must visit me here." With that, the fretting frogs returned to the river.

Upon hearing Monkey's message, Crocodile grew angrier. Now he was convinced he must carry out the plot on his once beloved friend. He snapped his jaws harder and louder than before. He warned the frogs of their sorry fate if Monkey did not accompany them.

"Please, sir, Monkey," begged the frogs. "We know Crocodile will dine on our family if you do not visit him. Please come with us to the river. You can stand on the bank and talk with Crocodile from there. You do not have to touch even your smallest toe into the river. Crocodile just wants you to see the beautiful scenery of his river abode."

Monkey finally agreed to the request and set off toward Crocodile's home swinging gracefully in the tree branches of his familiar stage until he reached the music of the river. Crocodile lumbered out of the waters as Monkey came into sight. His eyes gleamed and his belly rumbled. "This is the day of your last performance, my friend. For I want to feast on your heart."

Monkey's mind worked as quickly as the arms and legs that carried him through the trees. His actor's face fell. "Oh, I am sorry

my friend. My heart is in the tree where I live. I will go and fetch it for you. Then you can have it and eat it,” he replied using all his cleverness.

Crocodile grinned, happy with his trick and glad to know he would soon be rid of that playful character who cared nothing for him. He rolled his tongue along his crocodile lips in anticipation of the tasty morsel he would enjoy. But, his mouth quickly soured as Monkey scampered up the nearest tree and called to him.

“You absurd creature,” laughed the trickster. “My heart is in the tree. My heart is in the tree. My heart is in the tree,” he taunted at his hunter. He snickered louder, “You silly Crocodile, my heart is in me!” Monkey chortled all the way back to his treetop home. He had fooled the mighty crocodile!

Activities to Extend Your Thinking...

Expressive Language...

Do one of the following:

- Find a sentence in this folktale containing words that paint a particularly vivid word picture. Draw or paint the picture that this sentence makes you see.
- Find the words that are used in place of said. Make a word search using these words. Give it to a friend to solve.
- Circle the words in this folktale that you think a younger child might have difficulty understanding. Make a dictionary of these words. Illustrate your entries.

Creature Characteristics...

- Imagine you are the crocodile. Retell the story from his point of view. Tape “your” story.
- Imagine you are the crocodile. You are sorry for your evil plans. Write a letter of apology to the monkey.

Life Lessons...

Write a journal entry explaining the traits of the monkey in this story.

Tell what traits would be helpful to you and why. Which characteristics would you have to improve?