

## **The Pot of Gold**

A long time ago there lived an old man who had three sons. The old man was a hard worker and labored on his land from morning till night. Unfortunately, the three sons did not take after their father. Although they were strong and healthy boys, they were very lazy and did not like to do anything at all.

As the father worked in the fields, the garden, and the house all day long, his sons sat in the shade of the trees and chatted or fished as they watched their father toil.

“Why do you never help your father?” their neighbors asked.

“Why should we!” the sons replied. “Father takes good care of us and does all the work very well by himself.”

And so it went from year to year. As the sons grew into young men, their father aged, and could not work as hard in the fields as he had before. The garden around their house ran wild, and the fields were overrun with weeds. The sons saw this happening, but they were still so lazy, they did nothing about it.

“Why do you just sit there my sons, doing nothing all day?” their father asked. “I have worked hard for many years, now your turn has come to take over the tasks.”

But no matter what their father said, the sons still sat around all day, doing nothing. The old man was so troubled by his sons' laziness that he took ill and went to bed.

With the father able to do no fieldwork anymore, the nettles and bushes grew so thick around the house, it was hardly visible to the neighbors anymore.

Finally the day came where the old man called his sons to his bedside. "The time has come for me to go now, my sons," he said. "How are you going to live without me, the loafers that you are?"

The sons were very upset. "Give us your last counsel," begged the eldest. "Tell us what we are to do!"

"Very well!" their father replied. "I will tell you a secret. You know that your mother and I worked very hard over the years. We saved bit by bit, until finally we could fill a large pot with the gold we had earned. I buried this pot near the house, though I don't remember where. If you can find it, you will be rich, and never be in need of anything ever again."

With this, the father said good-bye to his sons, and fell into his final sleep.

The sons grieved and mourned their father for many days. Finally, a day came where the eldest son said, "My brothers, we are

very poor indeed. We don't even have enough money to purchase a loaf of bread. Let us do as father said, and dig up the pot of gold."

The sons took out shovels and spades. They dug all day long, from morning to night, not even stopping to eat or rest. But they could not find the pot of gold. So they dug up all the ground surrounding their little hut, but still found nothing.

"Let us keep digging, brothers," said the youngest. "Perhaps father buried the gold very deep."

So the brothers dug deeper into the earth. The eldest brother's spade finally hit something solid. He shouted with joy and called his brothers over. But what they dug up turned out to be a very large stone, and not the pot of gold they were seeking.

"What shall we do with this stone?" asked the youngest. "It is too big to leave here. Let us carry it away and throw it in the gully."

The brothers, working together, managed to lift the heavy stone. They carried it through the fields and to the gully where they left it.

The brothers returned to their hut and continued digging. They dug for days until they had dug up all the earth around their hut. The soil beneath their spades was now very soft and rich, but they still had no pot of gold.

“Well now that we have dug up all this soil, let us plant grapevines here. It is no use leaving things as they are!” said the eldest.

The brothers all agreed. At least all their hours of labor would not be wasted. So they planted many grapevines in the soft, rich soil, and tended to them carefully. After a short time, the brothers had a large grapevine, which grew the biggest, juiciest grapes anywhere.

The brothers gathered a rich harvest. They kept what they needed, and sold the rest of their grapes at a profit.

“It was not in vain, after all, that we dug up our garden. For we did find the treasure of which our father spoke of before he died,” mused the eldest.

For the rest of their years, the brothers had the best grapevines in all the land, and they were never in need of anything again.

## Thinking About It

1. Get together with a friend. Imagine that you are the father talking to someone about your plan to make your lazy sons work. Write a play about this. Perform your play for the class.
2. Make up a game for younger children about digging in the garden. You could base your game on *Duck, Duck, Goose*, *Mother May I?* or another game you know. Teach your game to a younger class of students.
3. Paint a picture of the way the house and fields looked a few weeks after the father died. Then paint a picture of the way the house and fields looked after the brothers worked together. Be prepared to explain why the paintings are so different.