

Sharing SE Asian Folktales for Character Education

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Stories are passed on for a reason. They entertain, or they speak to issues we want to think about. Usually both. For centuries tales have been used to teach morals to our children, and to help us remember these moral imperatives ourselves. This paper examines the way moral education is passed on via folktales in some SE Asian texts.

When collecting stories for my collection *Peace Tales: World Folktales to talk About*, I was alarmed to realize how few of the folktales we share speak of kindness and compassion. Indeed, the whole concept of “peace” in stories often revolved around achieving your own peace by defeating an enemy. And the concept of “freedom” implied a freedom to do whatever you wanted regardless of the impact on others. The much quoted statement of American frontiersman Daniel Boone seems to have been ignored, “Your right to swing your arm ends where your neighbor’s elbow begins.” [according to several web sources, this quote is actually from Oliver Wendell Holmes, maybe they both said it] Folktales tell us of heroes who defeat in battles, of heroes who win princesses and princesses who pass tests. They tell of tricksters and jokesters. But seldom do they speak of caring for your neighbor. So for this paper, I chose to present some SE Asian tales which do show caring aspects, and tales which can be used to point up morals. Of course the body of Panchatantra and Jataka tales, which have emigrated to SE Asia from India, house much useful moral material. But I will not treat those here. They are easily found and should be examined by anyone looking for moral tales to share.

Kind and Unkind Girls: Let’s look at some motifs which do deal with kindness. The Stith Thompson *Motif Q2.1 Kind and Unkind Girls* (Aarne-Thompson *Type 480*) appears throughout the world. Warren E. Roberts examined over **900 versions** of this story in *The Tale of the Kind and the Unkind Girls: AA-TH 480 and Related Titles* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994; De Gruyter 1958) He discusses versions from Burma (4), Vietnam (1), Indonesia (7), Borneo (2), the Philippines (5).

In this story a kind girl travels, meets an unsavory character and aids this person kindly. She is sent home with a reward. Her sister makes the same journey but treats the person badly and is sent home with a box of vermin.

SE Asian variations on this theme take the story in fantastic directions. My favorite is the Brunei story “The King of the Mosquitoes”, which I read in *ASEAN Folk Literature* by Damiana L. Eugenio (Manila: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, 1995) 408-411, and retold in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008). In this tale a girl asks to be taken to the King of the Mosquitoes. She wants to ask him to allow her family to work in peace. The Mosquito King is horrifying in appearance and asks her to prepare his food. The rice turns out to be a bag of worms, the water is blood, and she is given a skull to cook in. She hides her revulsion and politely prepares his food. In return she is given a small black box to open at home. She is warned to set up many nets before she opens it. Gold and diamonds fly out and are trapped by the nets. Her unkind sister imitates but shows disgust and refuses to cook. She is given a large black box and told to set up nets to catch the contents. It is full of poisonous snakes.

In a Burmese story collected by MaungHtinAung the kind girl is offered a golden box by a crow. She chooses a more modest box and it contains treasure. Her unkind sister chooses a golden box and finds snakes inside.

A Balinese version, *Bawang and Kesuna: Onion and Garlic* was set down by the storyteller Made Taro and evocatively illustrated by the Balinese artist I Ketut Nama (Jakarta: PT Balai Pustaka). A girl mistreated and cast out by her family flees to the forest. She sadly asks a yellow bird to peck her to death, but when the bird pecks at her neck a golden necklace appears. The bird pecks jewelry all over her body. In an unusual twist of the story, the parents refuse to accept the kind girl when she comes home. Only her grandmother takes her in. Later the unkind sister visits the grandmother's house and discovers her beautifully be-jeweled sister. The unkind girl rushes into the forest and asks the bird to peck jewels for her, but instead the birds peck her until she dies.

Most contemporary children's versions of this tale soften the ending, but in Charles Perrault's French version, "Toads and Diamonds," the unkind girl also dies in the end.

In addition to cruelty, traditional tales often include scatological details which are usually eliminated in contemporary children's versions. An unusual variant of Q2.1 is found in *Treasury of Stories* by Arsenio Manual, with Gilda Codero-Fernando (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1995). This tale comes from the Manuvu of Mindanao. The storyteller seems to have been imagining more and more kind-unkind girl episodes to add! A kind girl spreads her mosquito net to dry after washing it in the river. A hen asks if it can defecate on the net and she kindly agrees. The hen lays many eggs instead. The unkind sister imitates and her net is covered with chicken dung. The kind girl goes to the stream to wash her hair and a little fish asks if it can pull her pubic hair. She kindly agrees, and the fish pulls the hair on her head instead, making it long and beautiful. The unkind sister imitates with unpleasant results. The kind girl babysits for a crocodile and is given many fish. Her unkind sister sings a nasty lullaby and gets just one fish. The kind girl meets a deer who asks her to pare off a bit of its flesh as it is too fat. She goes home with venison to share. The unkind girl cuts off too much and is even going to cut the heart out of the deer. The deer jumps up and gores her to death.

There is often confusion between Aarne-Thompson Type 480 *The Spinning-Woman by the Spring. The Kind and Unkind Girls*, [Motif Q2.1 *Kind and Unkind Girls*] and Type 510 *Cinderella and Cap o' Rushes* [usually including Motif R221 *Heroine's three-fold flight from the ball*]. Note that folktales are classified by type number and motif number. Type numbers were assigned by Finnish scholar Antti Aarne to most known European folktales. Motif numbers were assigned later by Stith Thompson to the many motifs *within* a folktale. Since type numbers were given to a limited number of mainly European tales, motif numbers are useful in discussing the wider body of world folklore.

The confusion arises because both Type 510 and Type 480 feature a kind girl and an unkind sister. However Type 480 involves a journey and an encounter with a frightening or demanding creature which requires tasks, and imitation of this by the unkind sister. Type 510 involves a kind magical helper who provides raiment or advice, a dance, and a prince.

Adults can handily use *Motif Q2.1 Kind and Unkind Girls* to encourage young girls to behave in a more kindly manner.

Q2 Kind and Unkind: Another set of folktales *Q2 Kind and Unkind* includes tales of kind and unkind men and couples. This motif is very popular in Japan where tales of the kind old man and woman and the unkind old man and woman next door exist in many variants. The kind couple are always poor and the unkind couple always rich.

From Thailand comes the tale “If it Belongs to Us, It Will Come to Us” [in *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida, Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994]. An honest old couple find a pot of gold in a field. They leave it there, saying “If it belongs to us, it will come to us.” Thieves hear them and dig up the pot, finding it full of snakes. They dump the pot into the old couple’s home as revenge. But in the morning the couple find gold spilling onto the floor.

A motif which appears in many variants in Asia is “The Honest Woodcutter” [in *Thai Tales Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida, Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994]. A woodcutter loses his axe in a stream. A Thewada (forest spirit) offers him a gold or silver axe, but he honestly says neither is his. He is given both, plus his own. A neighbor imitates and claims the gold one. He is left with nothing. *Motif Q3.1 Woodsman and his gold axe.*

A Vietnamese tale, “Under the Starfruit Tree” [in *Under the Starfruit Tree: Folktales of Vietnam* by Alice M. Terada, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989] tells of a kind man who lets an eagle eat the fruit from his tree. He is told to leave his bag under the tree and the eagle places a bar of gold in it. His unkind, already rich, brother imitates and is carried off by the eagle.

Pourquoi Tales: Pourquoi tales often have a moral appended and are useful in education, since they are short and easy to convey. One example is the Penan story collected by Jay Langub in *Suket: Penan Folk Stories*. Dayak Studies. Koto Samarahan: University Malaysia Sarawak, 2001) and retold in my collection *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008). Forest Gecko and Squirrel go on an expedition. Gecko catches fish, Squirrel gets a wild boar, but neither will share. When they return home, their wives are so angry that Squirrel’s wife bops him on the head with her wooden spoon. Hence his white spot on the head. Forrest Gecko’s wife whops him on the back with her wooden comb. Hence his striped back.

Another unusual pourquoi tale comes from Kalimantan. “Why Shrimps Are Crooked” appears in *Indonesian Folktales* by Murti Bunanta (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), p. 50-61, and also was published as a brightly illustrated picture book *Mengapa Tubuh Udang Benkok: Why Shrimps Are Crooked*. A Folktale from Central Kalimantan, Indonesia by Murti Bunanta, illus. by Denny A. Djoenaid. Jakarta: Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak, 2005. The tale tells of fish at work making a farm. All help and one fish cooks each day. The fish prepare a tasty soup by jumping into the cooking pot and laying eggs, then adding vegetables and cooking. But shrimp refuses to listen to any advice from those fish who have gone before him. He fires up the pot first and then jumps in. When the fish return to eat, they can’t find shrimp...until one fish finds

him curled up and red in his vegetables. This is why you will always see shrimp curled up and red in your food. Murti Bunanta's storytelling students have had a great deal of fun acting this tale out in their performances for children. Simple pourquoi tales like this are easily adaptable and provide an entertaining way to pass on life lessons.

Kantchil Adaptations: Finally let's take a look at one of SE Asia's most beloved folk heroes, Kantchil the Mouse Deer. This tiny trickster is well known throughout Malaysia, Indonesia, and in Singapore. He is a trickster, always getting the better of the larger animals. And as such, he is not always especially moral. But educational and governmental agencies would like to portray Kantchil as an upstanding example of moral behavior. So his actions are getting a bit of tweaking. When I was asked to write three Kantchil tales for publication by the Singapore Library Board, I was asked to please make him into a leader in the animal world, rather than just a trickster. I agreed to do this, and altered the story in which Kantchil crosses the river while counting crocodiles. In my new version, he did this in order to make the river safe for the animals to drink. Thus he becomes a civil leader and hero, as well as a trickster. It was a minor tweak, and I have seen this tweaking of Kantchil's character in other recent publications in the area. As a folklorist I find this curious, after all folktales change over time. As an educator I find it useful. As a lover of the traditional Kantchil, I am not so sure I approve.

Web distortions: Another problematic current development in the use of the folktale is the appearance on the web of numerous tale renditions provided in sloppy style and without any sources given. For example I found two versions of the Indonesian tale "Red Onion and White Onion"

<http://xastory.blogspot.com/2008/01/bawang-merah-dan-bawang-putih.html> This site seems to be prepared by an Indonesian blogger in an attempt to share Indonesian stories with parents. The story is fairly detailed in its presentation, though no sources are given.

<http://www.squidoo.com/red-onion-and-garlic-story> The page does not tell what culture the story comes from, nor give any sources. The blogger seems to be offering stories for parents, and has modernized the tale by making the heroine a teenager, with a drawing of a contemporary girl in a party dress. Both sites relate their stories in shaky English. "It was getting dark, Garlic is getting desperate. Soon night will come, and Garlic. From a distance looks light coming from a shack on the riverbank."

Since anyone can put a story up on the web easily, folktales will be appearing in many forms. It is important to train our students (teachers, librarians in training, and children's book authors) to evaluate these sites with care and search for well written versions to share with children. As a former Children's Librarian and an author of children's books, I am horrified to see these shoddy texts proliferating on the internet. But as a Folklorist, I can rest assured that Walter Anderson's "law of self-correction" will stand. He suggests that stories keep their shape over time. One re-teller can decimate a story. A second can forget, change, and make it even worse. But eventually a teller with a strong sense of story will happen onto the fragment and with self-assurance blow it back into its full form.

Following is a bibliography of SE Asian tales with moral content, and texts for three stories you might like to share.

A Selection of Additional Moral Tales from SE Asian Folklore

A bibliography from Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald www.margaretreadmacdonald.com
See also the tales mentioned in the paper “Sharing SE Asian Folktales for Character Education”

Indonesia:

“Why Shrimps Are Crooked” in *Indonesian Folktales* by Murti Bunanta (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), p. 50-61. *Mengapa Tubuh Udang Benkok: Why Shrimps Are Crooked*. A Folktale from Central Kalimantan, Indonesia by Murti Bunanta, illus. by Denny A. Djoenaid. Jakarta: Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak, 2005. Foolish shrimp refuses to listen to advice of other fish. Prepares soup by jumping into boiling pot. Why shrimp are curled up and red in your dishes.

“The Spoiled Little Kitten” in *Indonesian Folktales* by Murti Bunanta (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), p. 57-58. Also: *Anak Kuching yang Manja: The Spoiled Little Kitten. A folktale from Deli Serdang in North Sumatra Province*. By Murti Bunanta. Illus. by Hardiyono. Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, 2010. A kitten wants a better mother, asks sun, cloud, wind, hill, buffalo, rope, rat. Discovers mother cat is strongest of all. This Sumatran version of *Z42 Stronger and strongest* has the unusual theme of an unkind child (kitten) who learns to respect his mother.

Go to Sleep, Gecko! A Balinese Folktale retold by Margaret Read MacDonald, illus. Geraldo Valerio (Atlanta, GA: August House, 2006). *Go to Sleep, Gecko! Tidurlah, Tokek!* Trans by Dina Simarmata-Tuasun. Jakarta: Libri, PT BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011. And *Gecko's Complaint, A Balinese Folktale*. Bilingual edition: English and Indonesian Text by Ann Martin Bowler. Illus. I Gusti Made Sukanada (Hong Kong: Periplus, 2009). Chief responds to Gecko's nightly complaints about fireflies keeping him awake by summoning fireflies, buffalo, rain and determining that Gecko must learn to put up with the fireflies. Useful to talk about good leadership (Chief) and learning to live with problems (Gecko).

Burma/Myanmar:

“Not Our Problem” in *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Atlanta, GA: August House, 1992), p. 18-20. And *A Kingdom for a Drop of Honey and Other Burmese Folktales* (New York: Parents, 1969), 29-30. Thai version in *Telling Tales from Southeast Asia and Korea*. APCEIU, SEAMEO, SEAMEO INNOTECH, and SEAMEO SPAFA, 2010 <http://asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/sub1.htm> A drop of honey falls from the king's lips, fly eats honey, gecko eats fly, cat eats gecko, dog attacks cat, woman beats dog, man beats woman, her friends beat him, his friends beat her friends, soldier rush to break up fight, take sides, civil war, palace burnt to ground. King, who constantly told his advisor that the drop of honey and etc was not his problem, not agrees that it was.

“How Friendship Began Among Birds” in *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Atlanta, GA: August House, 1992), p. 55-56. *Burmese Folk Tales* by Maung Htin Aung (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 50-51. In this Burmese tale, Pheasant and Crow speak only highly of each other. Other birds realize they should do the same.

“The Old Wise Man” in *Telling Tales from Southeast Asia and Korea*. APCEIU, SEAMEO, SEAMEO INNOTECH, and SEAMEO SPAFA, 2010, p. 81-82.

<http://asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/sub1.htm> Old man tells prince he is planting mangoes for the next generation.

“The Giving Farmer” in *Telling Tales from Southeast Asia and Korea*. APCEIU, SEAMEO, SEAMEO INNOTECH, and SEAMEO SPAFA, 2010, p. 85-86.

<http://asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/sub1.htm> Farmer stops to remove boulder in road that others walk around. Treasure box under stone is awarded to him by king.

Cambodia:

“The Legend of the Tiger” in *Silent Temples, Songful Hearts: Traditional Music of Cambodia* by Sam-Ang Sam and Patricia Shehan Campbell (Danbury, CT: World Music Press, 1991), p. 116.

King, Queen, astrologer, and four ministers travel to study magic arts. Lost in jungle they collaborate to turn selves into a Tiger in order to survive. Origin of Tiger.

Laos:

“The Father’s Test” in *Lao Folktales* by Wajuppa Tossa and Kongdeuane Nettavong (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 68-69. Father gives each of ten sons seeds to plant, to bring their plants to him when grown. Youngest son comes empty handed, others bring fantastic plants. The father had boiled the seeds before giving them out, so only the youngest son was truthful.

“Maeng Nguan, the Singing Cricket” in *Lao Folktales* by Wajuppa Tossa and Kongdeuane Nettavong (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 51-52. The humble cricket sings most beautifully and pleases Indra. Other, boastful animal’s songs do not.

“The Crow and the Peacock” retold by Wajuppa Tossa and Prasong Saihong.

<http://www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/multimedia/crowandpeacock.htm>

Crow and Peacock agree to paint each other. Crow takes great pains to paint beautiful colors and designs on Peacock’s feathers. Peacock simply dumps a pot of black paint over crow. Many good texts of Lao folktales retold by Tossa and Saihong are found on this site, as well as videos of traditional tellers.

Laos/ Hmong:

“Corn and the Lazy Farmer” And in *A Treasury of Asian Stories & Activities for Schools & Libraries* by Cathy Spagnoli (Fort Atkinson, WI: Alleyside Press, 1998), p. 44-46. And “The Farmer and His Crops” in *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Atlanta, GA: August House, 1999), p. 10-15.

A lazy farmer neglects his fields and his vegetables revolt.

Malaysia:

“Matt Jenin and the Coconuts” in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 35. A Malaysian version of *J2061 Air-castle shattered by lack of forethought*. Matt imagines selling his coconuts

and buying chickens, hatching chicks, buying ducks, hatching ducks, buying goats. He waves his arms to move his goats along...and falls from the coconut tree.

“A Fight Among the Vegetables” in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 69-70. Why vegetables live where they do. King Solomon has to separate them because of their fighting among themselves. A Malay tale from Pahang.

“Gelugur and Jelutung” in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), 71-72. Villagers in KampungGelugur think their *gelugur* fruit worthless and those in KampungJelutung think *julutung* trees useless. Jelutung folks love *gelugur* fruit, Gelugur folks prize *julutung* resin. They learn from each other and share.

“The Squirrel and the Forest Gecko” in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 110-111. Why Squirrel has white mark on head and forest gecko has stripes on back. Wives whop them when they fail to share their food from a hunting and fishing expedition. A Penan folktale from Sarawak.

“The Liar’s Pile” in *The Singing Top: Tales from Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), p. 112-113. Sticks tossed on the place where a boy told a lie. Origin of liar’s piles of sticks in Sarawak. Passersby add a stick to the pile and remember the importance of telling the truth.

Thailand:

“The Elephants and the Bees” in *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994), p. 31-32. And in *Teaching with Story: Creating Connections in the Classroom through Story* by Margaret Read MacDonald, Jennifer MacDonald Whitman, and Nathaniel Forrest Whitman (Atlanta, GA: August House, 2013). Bees guide elephants to safety from forest fire. Elephants shelter bees in their mouths and save from smoke.

“The Pious Son-in-law” in *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994), p. 52-54. Son-in-law keeps telling father-in-law that nothing is certain and all things must change. He repeats this when the crop is planted, grows, harvested, even when it is cooked and in the bowl. His father-in-law strikes out in anger and the bowl spills...thus the rice grains are lost...proving the wisdom of the adage.

“The Good Boy” in *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994), p. 61-63. Gentle boy befriends elephant, given bell to ring if in need. Elephant saves boy when trapped under tree trunk. Later boy calms enraged elephant for king.

“Medicine to Revive the Dead” in *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand* by Supaporn Vathanaprida (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994), p. 64-66; *Three Minute Tales* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Atlanta, GA: August House, 2004), p. 133-134. And in many accounts of the life

of the Lord Buddha. Lady Kisa asks Lord Buddha to revive her dead baby. She is told to bring a mustard seed from a house where death has never visited. After going to many homes, she realizes that death is universal.

Philippines:

“Why the Sea is Salty” in *Telling Tales from Southeast Asia and Korea*. APCEIU, SEAMEO, SEAMEO INNOTECH, and SEAMEO SPAFA, 2010, p. 85-86.

<http://asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/sub1.htm> Giant Ang-Ngalo helps people obtain salt by stretching his long leg across sea so they can fetch it. But he stands on ant hill and the ants start to bite his leg. He asks the people to hurry back so he can pull up his leg, but they dawdle and laugh at him. He has to pull back leg because of the biting and the salt they had fetched all falls into the sea. A story from the Philippines about loss because of thoughtlessness.

“Those Who Quarreled” in *Once in the First Times: Folk Tales from the Philippines* by Elizabeth Hough Sechrist (Philadelphia, PA: McCrae Smith, 1969). The part of a house argue about which is most vital to the building. They end by realizing all must work together.

Vietnam:

“BánhDày, BánhChu’ung” in *Asian Tales and Tellers* by Cathy Spagnoli (Little Rock, AK: August House, 1998), p. 66-67. Sons to bring most delicious food to father. Youngest son brings sticky rice, simplest is best. Round like heaven and square to symbolize earth.

Why Shrimps Are Crooked A folktale from Central Kalimantan.

Retold from Murti Bunanta, *INDONESIAN FOLKTALES*. Libraries Unlimited.

Since there had been a forest fire, the fish decided it would be a good time to make a farm. The trees and brush had already been burnt away by the fire. The land was ready to plant.

All of the fish met in the forest. They would share the work according to the *mandepplan*. Each fish would help the others.

The first day the fish came to Manjuhan’s farm.

“I am honored that you have come to my farm,” said Manjuhan.

“While you plant the seeds, I will prepare the lunch. Come back at noon and you will have delicious food.”

“Can you really cook, Manjuhan?” Asked Gabus fish.

“Just wait. The food will be delicious!” said Manjuhan.

The fish all went to the fields. Some dug holes in the ground with a long, sharp stick, while others put in the seeds. Step, dig...plant. Step, dig...plant.

While the fish were working hard in the field, Manjuhan got the meal ready.

Manjuhan had brought a big cooking pot.

Manjuhan prepared wood for the fire.

...put rice into the pot...put vegetables into the pot...

Manjuhan looked at the pot. "This might not be so tasty." Then Manjuhan had an idea. Manjuhan jumped into the pot and swam around. Manjuhan deposited many fish eggs in the pot!

Then Manjuhan jumped out again... lit the fire... and soon the food began to boil.

The fish in the fields could smell that good food. They hurried back to eat. It was delicious!

"Manjuhan, you can really cook! How did you do it?"

"Secret recipe."

But Kakapar came to Manjuhan privately.

"The fish are coming to my farm tomorrow. Please tell me how you made such delicious food."

Manjuhan showed Kakapar how she had jumped into the cold water, laid the eggs, and then cooked the food.

Next day the fish arrived at Kakapar's farm.

"Welcome to my farm. You honor me with your visit. Come back at noon and I will have delicious food for you all."

"Can you really cook, Kakapar?"

"Just wait. It will be delicious."

Then Kakapar filled his pot with cold water... put in the rice... put in the vegetables... Jumped in and swam about laying eggs... and jumped out again. Then Kakapar built up the fire.

When the animals came in at lunchtime it was delicious.

"Kakapar! How did you cook this?"

"Secret recipe." said Kakapar and smiled at Manjuhan.

Next day was Balida's turn. So Balida went to Kakapar.

"You must tell me how you made this delicious food. They are coming to my house tomorrow." So Kakapar shared the secret.

And so it went. Every fish asked advice of the one who had already cooked. And every fish cooked a delicious dish.

At last it was Shrimp's turn. Shrimp never paid attention to what was going on. And Shrimp never ever asked for advice. He thought he knew everything.

"Do you know how to cook, Shrimp?" asked the fish.

"Oh course I do. Come back at lunchtime."

"Would you like some advice?"

"I don't need advice! It will be delicious just like the others," insisted Shrimp.

So the fish went off to plant in Shrimp's field.

Shrimp got out his big pot.

Shrimp put in the rice.

...put in the vegetables...

...started the fire...

When everything was boiling...Shrimp jumped in!

Oh NO!

Shrimp never did call the fish for lunch.
They smelled the delicious food and came.

“Where is Shrimp?”

The food was cooked.The fire was out.

“Let’s eat! It smells delicious! Shrimp can cook after all!
I wonder where he is?”

The fish started to eat.
Everything was fine until Gabus fish took his helping.
“I think I found Shrimp.”

There curled among the vegetables was little shrimp all crooked and bright red.

Poor Shrimp.

So when you see shrimp in your food...all curled up and red among the vegetables...you will remember how important it is to always ASK FOR ADVICE when you need it!

Not Our Problem A Burmese Folktale.

Retold from: “Not Our Problem” in *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald. August House, 1992. And in *Teaching with Story: Creating Connections in the Classroom through Story* by Margaret Read MacDonald, Jennifer MacDonald Whitman, and Nathaniel Forrest Whitman. August House, 2013.

A King sat with his Advisor eating honey on puffed rice.
A drop of honey fell onto the window sill.

“Oh, your majesty!” said his Advisor, “A drop of honey has fallen onto the window sill!”
“Never mind.”Said the King. “It is not our problem.”

Slowly the drop of honey dripped down from the windowsill...
and fell with a *plop* on the ground below the palace.

A gecko saw the honey and began to eat it.
“Your majesty, a gecko is eating the drop of honey.”

“Never mind,” said the King. “It is not our problem.”

A cat *pounced* on the gecko and began to eat the gecko.
“Your Majesty a cat is eating the gecko which was eating the honey.”

“It is not our problem.”

But just then a dog ran out and attacked the cat. The two began to fight.
“Your Majesty a dog and cat are fighting under the palace.”

“Never mind. It is not our problem.”

The owner of the cat saw the dog attacking her cat.
So she ran out with a broom and began to beat the dog.
But when the owner of the dog saw the woman beating his dog, *he* ran out and began to beat *her*.

Your Majesty, the owner of the cat and the owner of the dog are fighting under the palace.
Perhaps I should send someone to stop the fight.

“Never mind,” sighed the king. “It is not our problem.”

Soon the friends of the woman began to beat the man!
And friend of the *man* began to beat the woman’s friends.

“Your Majesty, at fight is going on under the palace. We should do something to stop this.”

“Never mind,” insisted the king. “It is not our problem.”

Just then the soldiers were passing through town.
When they saw the fight, they rushed to break it up.
But when they heard the situation, Some sided with the man. And some sided with the women.
The soldiers began to fight among themselves.
And a civil war broke out!

In the fighting the palace was burned to the ground.
The King and his Advisor stood in the ashes.

“You know...” said the King. “Maybe the drop of honey was our problem.”

GO TO SLEEP GECKO A story from Bali.

Retold by Margaret Read MacDonald. From *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About*. (August Hosue, 1999).
And from *Go to Sleep Gecko!* Illus. Geraldo Valerío. (August House, 2006).

One night the Village Boss was awakened by a loud noise.
"GECK-KO! GECK-KO! GECK-KO!"
The Village Boss got out of bed and leaned out the window.
"Gecko what are you doing here? It is the middle of the night. Go home and go to bed."

"I can't sleep," said Gecko. "The fireflies are flitting all around my house
blinking their lights 'on... off...on... off...'
You've got to make them stop. You're the village boss. Do something about it."

"I'll talk to the fireflies in the morning. Now go home and go to bed."
So Gecko turned and dragged himself grumpily home. "Geck-ko...geck-ko...geck-ko..."

Next morning the Village Boss called the fireflies.
"Fireflies, is it true you have been flashing your lights 'on...off...on...off...' keeping Gecko awake?"

"Oh yes, We have to blink our lights on and off all night.
Buffalo leaves his droppings all over the road. Without our lights, people might step in it."

"Why that's very thoughtful of you! Just keep on doing what you've been doing.
You can go home now." So the Fireflies went home.

That night at midnight the Village Head was awakened again.

"GECK-KO! GECK-KO! GECK-KO!"

"Gecko go home and go to bed!"

"But I can't sleep. The fireflies are still blinking their lights 'on...off... on...off...'
You said you'd make them stop."

"Gecko, the fireflies need to blink their lights.
Buffalo drops poop in the road.
Without their lights people might step in it."

"Then talk to BUFFALO! You're the village boss. Do something about it!"

Gecko went home so grumpily. "Geck-ko....geck-ko....geck-ko...."

In the morning the Village Head called Buffalo.

"Buffalo, is it true that you have been leaving droppings all over the roads?"

"Oh YES. I drop poop all over the roads everyday.
Rain comes every afternoon and washes holes into the road.
I just fill them up the best way I know how.
If I didn't do that somebody might stumble in the holes and get hurt"

"Why that is very thoughtful Buffalo. Just keep on doing what you have been doing.
You can go home now." So Buffalo went home.

That night at midnight the Village Head was awakened again.

"GECK-KO! GECK-KO! GECK-KO!"

"Gecko will you please go home and go to bed."

"I can't sleep. The fireflies are flashing their lights. 'On...off...on...off...'"

"I talked to Buffalo. He is filling up the holes that Rain washes out.
You'll just have to put up with the fireflies."

"Then talk to Rain. You're the village boss. Do something about it!"
Gecko went home grumbling. "Geck-ko...geck-ko...geck-ko..."

In the morning the Village Boss called Rain.

"Rain, is it true that you are washing holes in the road every day?"

"Oh YES. I have to rain very hard every afternoon. If I didn't rain the puddles would dry up.
And if the puddles dried up the mosquitoes would die.
And if the mosquitoes died there would be nothing for Gecko to eat.
So I have to rain hard every day."

"I see. Rain you may go home."

That night at midnight: "GECK-KO! GECK-KO! GECK-KO!"

"Gecko go home and go to bed."

"But I still can't sleep. The fireflies are blinking their lights 'on...off...on...off...'"

"Gecko listen carefully: If Rain doesn't rain every afternoon, there will be no puddles.

If there are no puddles there will be no mosquitoes.
If there are no mosquitoes YOU, Gecko, will have nothing to eat.
Now what do you think of that?"

Gecko thought.
If Rain stopped raining... Buffalo could stop filling the holes
and the fireflies could stop flashing their lights...
but then GECKO wouldn't have MOSQUITOES to eat!

"Gecko," said the Chief. "The world is all connected.
"Some things that you just have to put up with.
Now go home and go to sleep."

So Gecko went home. "Geck-ko...geck-ko...geck-ko..."

Gecko closed his eyes.
Gecko went to sleep.
Outside the fireflies blinked...'on...off...on...off..."

Some things...you just have to put up with.
After all...the world is all connected.