

Tellable Tales



Feelings are funny things

Easy to learn stories for all sorts of situations

This book contains a number of stories that are quick to learn, and can be adapted for a variety of situations. It has been written for those attending workshops on using storytelling in education, health and at home, including foster carers

Many of the stories come from 'Telling Tales-storytelling as emotional literacy' or 'Building Relationships through Storytelling'

The Storyteller's Toolkit

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Listening - paying attention, focus
curiosity
- 
Imagination - The Mind's Eye
Visualisation
problem solving
- 
Emotion - feelings in the story,
in the teller & listeners
- 
Language - language used
phrases, repetitions
poetry, rhythm
- 
Voice - vocal expression,
tone of voice
- 
Action - gesture, movement
physical position
- 
Face - facial expression
conveys feelings
- 
Memory - story bones &
story maps
- 
Eye Contact - contact with audience
how are they reacting?

Riddles -

I'm always wet and I never rust. Go on and wag me if you must. What am I? **A tongue**

What do people make that no one can ever see? - **Noise (but there are many great answers to this question)**

What can you break with just one word? **Silence**

What is it that you own that other people use much more than you?
Your name

It is lighter than a feather yet no one can hold it for more than two minutes

What is it? **Your breath (an equally good answer 'a snowflake')**

Thirty white horses on a red hill, First they champ, Then they stand still. **Teeth**

What can you catch but never throw? **A cold**

If you have it, you want to share it. If you share it, you no longer have it- **A secret**

What loses its head in the morning and gets it again in the evening?
A pillow

I start with a T, end with T and I am full of T – what am I? **A teapot**

What has many holes but can hold water? **A sponge**

I have keys but no key holes, I have space but no room. You can enter but you can't come in. **A computer keyboard**

No legs have I to dance, No lungs have I to breathe, No life have I to live or die And yet I do all three. What am I? **A fire!**

Stone Soup

There was once a village at a place where three countries bordered with each other. Every time there was a war, which had been often, it was this village that bore the brunt. Many people had been lost and buildings destroyed and even though peace had come, the village remained a sad place. Money was short. People didn't talk to each other much and many bore a heavy heart.

One night, as autumn blurred with winter, a traveler came to the village. He had journeyed through many lands and seen many things. What he learnt had made him wise but not rich for he had no money to speak of. He was traveling through a land he had never been before, and it didn't feel the friendliest place. He had not seen a soul for days but at last he came to the a place of human life. The sun had set and the sky glowed like the last embers of a dying fire.

The traveler went up to the first house he came too hoping he may get a bite to eat and a bed for the night. A woman answered the door but she was fearful of strangers. She was most lonely and longed for company but she had closed her heart to what she wanted the most. She told the traveler, 'There's nothing here for you, we don't have enough for ourselves. Strangers used to be welcome here but not anymore.'

The man soon realised that if he wanted to eat that night he'd have to think fast. He said to the woman, 'Well thank you. I can see times are hard. But I have soup stone that will feed me for tonight. If I could borrow a pot from you I can make it myself. It will come back to you no worse than when you gave it to me.'

The woman could not refuse this request and she was curious to see how the man might feed himself from a stone. She gave the man a heavy iron cooking pot and watched from her window as the man collected wood, made a fire next to a tree and filled the pot with water from a stream. Using a rope, he hung the pot from a branch, so the flames licked the bottom of the pot. Soon the water was boiling and the man took a small smooth stone from his pocket. He rubbed it for a

moment and, after inspecting it closely, dropped it carefully in the water. He looked after his meal closely, every few minutes stirring the simmering water.

The woman who had watched all this could contain herself no longer and went down to where the man was sitting underneath the tree. 'How can you possibly hope to make a meal out of that?' she asked. 'This is a fine broth,' replied the man, 'and there's enough here for a banquet if you'd care to join me. It's true it's a bit thin seeing as I've been living of it all week. But that's nothing that a potato or two wouldn't put right. Still, there's no point dwelling on that. As my mother used to say, *Whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about.* Better be grateful for what you have than wish away your life wanting more.'

'Well, I think I might have a potato that could go in' said the woman thinking it would be interesting to try some stone soup.

She went back to her house and got two potatoes for the traveler. He gratefully put them in the stew. They talked a while and another villager was passing by, he noticed them and enquired what they were doing. The traveler explained that he was cooking stone soup, 'it's coming on nicely now although with a few carrots it really would be something, but *whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about.*'

The villager thought that he would have a couple of carrots he could contribute. That was nothing to ask for and he went and fetched them, telling his neighbour on the way that they were making stone soup. Soon there was quite a group standing around the fire, and the traveler told them about stone soup which was beginning to look more interesting in the pot.

'It's looking pretty good now, a bit of flour would help thicken it up but *whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about.*' but someone said they might have some flour they could give.

And so it went on, as the traveler lamented that soup might benefit from some herbs, spices, noodles, tomatoes, onions and barley, well, all those things were given. Soon the air was sweetened by the aroma of

rich broth. The traveler said, 'I've known kings and queens who prefer no dish more than this stone soup. Although, if truth be told they would always like some lamb or beef in it but whatever you must do without is never worth another thought about.'

At this the woman, who had first turned the traveler away remembered that she had a piece of meat, not much, but here was a man that ate with kings and queens and, at the very least, deserved to be offered some hospitality. She went and got the meat and invited everybody into her home where they could feast on a meal fit for kings. The villagers brought bread, cheeses and wine to share. Somebody said they had no food to give but they had firewood. That offer was gratefully accepted. Soon the woman's house was ready for a banquet and a fire was roaring in the hearth.

And such a feast it was, the stone soup was delicious, the wine flowed as well as the conversation. In the orange glow of the fires many hearts warmed and opened. Everyone had a story to tell and at the end of the evening everyone agreed it was the best evening that had been had for many a year. And this was all due to the generosity of the traveler with his stone soup. When everybody had gone the traveler scooped out the stone from the bottom of the now empty pot, cleaned it and put it in his pocket and telling his host he must be on his way. But the woman insisted that he must stay and made up a bed for him so that he might have one night in the warmth.

Nobody knows what happened after that night except what everybody knows that an evening of food and stories is always a great way to pass a winter's night and that something can always be made out of nothing.

This story is a rich metaphor for growing a community where everybody thinks they have nothing to contribute. If each contributes a little it becomes something. The catalyst is just a stone. The end result is people sharing their stories which helps bind people together. There is an intriguing question about whether the traveller was just getting a meal for himself or there to heal the community.

The Cracked Pot

Once a young man and woman got married and they lived in a small house on the top of a hill. The land where they lived was dry and hot, and it was rare that they saw a drop of rain. They had no running water, so twice a day the man would walk down a little dusty track that led to the river. Across his back he carried a pole from which two large clay pots hung for carrying water, one on each side of him. So it was that he carried water each day as he went from being a young man to becoming older, he had children and they themselves had grown.

But all the time he carried the same two pots, only one pot had a small crack in it. Through this crack water would leak out and by the time the man had reached home there were only a few drops of water left. The perfect pot would taunt and tease the cracked pot. As the two pots would swing behind the old man's back the perfect pot would say to the cracked pot,

'You're rubbish you are. I don't know why the old man keeps you, you can't keep any water in you, you're good for nothing. You are useless.' The cracked pot said nothing.

This taunting happened on every trip the man made, up and down the hill, twice a day, day after day. Then one day the cracked pot could bear these hurtful words no longer. When the old man had returned home after fetching water and he had put the pots on the ground, the cracked pot said to him, 'Man, why do you keep me? I'm useless! I can't keep any water in me. Why don't you throw me away and get a new pot? Haven't you realised I've got a crack and I'm not perfect like him'

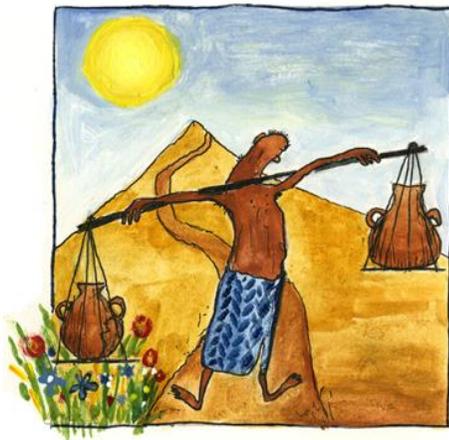
'Oh pot, of course I know you have a crack,' said the man 'and you, you really don't know that is what makes you special to me. You see your water leaks out and waters one side of the path as I walk up the hill. A long time ago I planted some seeds of flowers and fruit along the path and everyday the water you drip waters them. Turn around and look and see how beautiful the flowers are.'

The pot turned and saw that down the hill, along the path, were flowers of every colour, and they beautiful to see, like a rainbow across a cloudy sky. So every day from then on when the so-called 'perfect' pot taunted

him, the cracked pot just took a deep breath and smelled the flowers, and they smelled good. So, if ever you feel less than perfect and wonder what you're there for, just remember that there is no one who is truly perfect and it's our cracks that make us who we are, and, if your feelings ever get so much that you can't bear it, take a breath to appreciate the beauty that's around you.

This story deals with issues about how we see ourselves and treat others. This version is from 'Building Relationships through Storytelling – A Foster Carers Guide to Attachment and Stories' by Steve Killick & Maria Boffey and available to download free <http://tinyurl.com/hpufpcv>

The book also contains a number of other traditional stories that can be adapted for telling.



Tongue Meat

There was once a Sultan and one day, whilst he was walking amongst his people in the local bazaar disguised in ordinary dress, he saw a man and a woman, clearly husband and wife and clearly quite poor, talking together. He saw them chatting and laughing with each other and the woman well she was so radiant and full of life, so voluptuous and shapely too. He was especially interested to see this as his own wife who stayed in the palace all day, although she had once been beautiful was now thin gaunt. She would hardly eat anything and she never smiled, let alone laughed.

The husband and wife separated to go to different stalls in the market. The Sultan went up to the man.

‘Your wife, she is so happy but you look so poor. Tell me how this is so. My own wife, even though I give her all the riches you can imagine, is always sad.’

‘It is simple,’ replied the man. ‘I feed her meat of the tongue. It keeps her very happy is what a woman needs.’

‘Tongue meat. It is that simple? Thank you, I know what to do.’ And the Sultan left the man and returned to his palace. He instructed his chef to prepare a dish of tongue meat.

The chef found a good piece of lion tongue, fried it up with garlic and spices. He tasted a little himself.

‘Exquisite,’ he declared, ‘Par excellence. At least for tongue meat it is.’ And the dish was served to the Sultan’s wife. It did not seem to make much difference so the Sultan declared it should be a diet of tongue meat until his wife improved. So the woman was served a diet of a different tongue every day. Over the next few weeks she had tongue of giraffe, buffalo and tiger, elephant, squirrel and rat, zebra, crocodile and antelope.

But it didn’t make any difference. In fact, it seemed to make things worse. The poor woman now seemed even more fed-up and had not enjoyed her food.

The Sultan went and looked for the man whose advice he had taken. Eventually he found him.

‘You told me that all it needs to make a woman happy is tongue meat. I have fed my wife on it and isn’t hasn’t helped. In fact, it has made thing worse. So, as I am the Sultan and you are not, I will tell you what we are going to do. I am going to take your wife back to the palace with me and you can have my wife. That is the way that you will get to keep your head!’

And so it was the two wives were exchanged. The Sultan’s wife went to live with the man and his wife went to the place.

And so things continued, the poor man’s wife was at the palace and fed on the tongue meat and the sultan’s wife went to live with the poor man. But within a few months it was the Sultan’s wife who was now full of laughter. She had put on weight and looked so healthy. The poor man’s wife was now looking thin and gaunt, She hardly smiled let alone laughed even though she had all the luxuries of the palace.

The Sultan was now quite enraged. He went back to the poor man and said, ‘I have now fed my wife and yours on tongue meat and it has not done them any good. Now tell me, what is your secret what are you not telling me?’

The poor man had to stop himself from laughing. ‘Your Excellency, what I meant by the meat of the tongue was that everyday I talk to my wife, I tell her the funny things that have happened to me during the day, I tell jokes and stories too, full of wonder and delight. I sing and she talks right back to me. Two tongues wagging. That is the meat of the tongue.’

And so the Sultan came to realise what it was he must do to keep his wife happy. It could not be bought but it could be given.

The Fearsome Giant

There once was a land that had once been beautiful but was now covered in shadow. The people lived in darkness and fear. A great giant had come and scared people so much that they longer went out of doors if they could help it.

Some people who had seen it said that it got bigger and bigger the more you looked at it. Others said this was ridiculous but they looked away and avoided it all the same. There was no-one that dared stand up to the horrible, loathsome giant.

But there was a young girl and she saw all the fear that this tat this giant had called even in people who had never seen it. She said to herself, 'This is very strange, no one has seen this giant and everyone is scared. How do we know this giant isn't scared of us. He must have a mother, and he must have a name. If I can find out his name, well maybe we can talk and work something out so that we don't have to be scared all the time.'

So the young girl set out and came near to the place where the giant was. And she could see him, he was standing in the middle of the road. No one could get pass even if they wanted to. Then he saw her and with a few giant strides he came closer to her. And then he roared out load at her,

'Fee, Fi, Foe, Fume, I am your night mare and I will be your doom.'

The girl wanted to run away but she summoned her courage. As she tried to take a step forward. Her knees were shaking and refused to move. Eventually she lifted her leg and it went backward like it had a mind of her own.

And when she did she saw the giant grow taller. She took another step backward and saw it grow taller again. She stopped, remembered her determination to find out the giant's name, and summoning up her courage she took a step forward. And the giant shrunk a little. And the girl saw this. She took another step, and another and saw the giant grow smaller with each step.

Eventually she stood right before it. And the giant was only a foot high. It was big enough for her to pick up and stand him in the palm of his hand.

‘What is your name?’ she asked.

‘My name is fear’ was the reply.

Helping a Tree

There are two trees close to a railway line. One night there is a storm, one tree is blown into the other. This tree says ‘hello friend, do you mind if I might lean on you for a while till i take root again?’

The other tree says ‘No, you might knock me over. you will have to find somewhere else.’

The first tree falls and lands on the railway track.

Railway workers come and clear the tree off the tracks. They see the still standing tree. They realise that tree may fall in the next storm so they decide to cut it down.

That tree thinks to itself. ‘Maybe it would have been better if I helped that tree’

A tale told to me from Cath Little and it was told to her by Said from Syria – It is a perfect metaphor for immigration and co-operation.

The Wooden Sword (The King of Naples)

The King of Naples was a powerful King with a great army, but he was never quite sure how much he could trust his own army. He decided he would go amongst them in disguise and find out what they were saying. Disguising himself to look like an ordinary soldier, he went up to one man and said 'Our King is a great man, is he not?' but the soldier looked at disbelievingly, 'The King- He is miserly, look at what we are paid for wages. Also he is cuckold, everyone knows this' (*Cuckhold-He has an unfaithful wife*). The King was dumbstruck by this, and angry too- he thought 'is this what all me my men think of me? I must find out.'

He recovered himself and saw another soldier. He went up to him and said, 'Our King is a miser and a cuckold is he not? Look at the wages he pays us.'

The other soldier replied, 'What! Our King is most noble but yes it is true we are not paid so well. But I have found a way to feed my family. The swords we are given for the royal parade are worth much and never needed for fighting. I have sold mine and have enough to feed my family to Christmas.'

'But what if you are discovered?'

'How can I be, the swords are never drawn so I have I wooden sword in my scabbard and no one will ever know it is only made of wood.'

The King is again outraged at what his soldiers are doing. He decides he will punish these two as an example to the other men.

At the next parade to honour the King, the King of Naples stops the march and asks all the men to listen. He calls out the first man he spoke to and says, 'You have called me a miser and cuckold.'

The man denied it but the king would not accept this and ordered the man to get on his knees. He then called out the second man and ordered him to pull his sword and chop the first man's head off.

The second man realised that he would be exposed when he pulled his sword and it was likely that then he would be executed to. He began to pray to Saint Januarius, the patron saint of Naples for a miracle - And

then he had an inspiration - He went and stood before the man on his knees and called out to the sky, 'If this man is guilty then let him pay with his head. But if he is innocent then let my sword be changed to wood.'

And then he pulled out his wooden sword.

The King knew he had been outwitted and now he could not punish these men to whom a miracle had occurred. He decided to take it as a blessing and treated his men more generously from that day on.

Told by Paola Balbi but there are many other versions located in various places and no where at all. There is a version from Afghanistan in 'Wisdom Tales from around the World' by Heather Forest.

Maybe it is. Maybe it isn't.

Once, there was a farmer who lived in the north of China. He lived with his father and some would say he was rich young farmer and they would say that because he had one horse, and not many farmers had a horse, so he was well off indeed.

Now, one day his horse ran away over the border to the land of the nomads. Everybody in the village came to offer him comfort and sympathised with him, agreeing with him when he said, "this is a catastrophe". The farmer went to tell his father and he said, "Father, I have lost my horse. This is a disaster. It is a catastrophe." Now the old man, who had been around a long time, had seen a thing or two, and knew the ways of the world well, said,

"You say it is a catastrophe. Well maybe it is or maybe it isn't. How can you tell? What makes you so sure? How do you know that this is not a blessing?"

Well, one week later, the horse returned and it had brought with him a beautiful stallion, one of the most wonderful horses that the nomads used to keep. The farmer was delighted and all his neighbours came to congratulate and agreed with him "this, indeed, is a great blessing." The son went to tell his father, but the father just said,

"You say this a blessing. Well maybe it is or maybe it isn't. How can you tell? What makes you so sure? How do you know that this is not a catastrophe?"

Well the son paid no attention to his father who just seemed to want to unsettle him. He was now even richer and he would spend his days riding the beautiful creature. But the horse was wild, and one day, it bucked and threw the farmer up into the air. He landed badly and broke his hip, he became lame thereafter. Everyone came to console the farmer and to offer sympathy. But the father, well, he just said "Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. How do you know that this is not a blessing?"

Not long after the event, the nomads from across the border invaded the country. The people of the land had to fight back and the King had

to raise an army. Everybody had to fight but things did not look good. Nine out of ten of the people who went to fight the nomads died in the war. One day the conscription officers came to take everyone in the farmer's village and to put them in the army. They took everyone but when they saw the farmer they took one look at him and they said, "You are lame, you cannot fight. You stay in the village. Go and look after your father."

The villagers all congratulated the farmer on his good fortune. He would live and they would surely die. The farmer went to tell his father the good news that they could live together and look after each other.

And the father said, "You think this is good news. Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't."

So it was the son went to live with his father and they looked after each other till the end of their days. They lived happily and meditated long on the way of the world, that what can see like disasters can turn into great things and what can seem like triumphs can turn into disasters. Things will always change and change is the only thing that is constant. It is the great mystery of the world that cannot be understood, only accepted.

The Snow-Tiger's Whisker

There was once, long ago, a young boy who lived with his mother and father. But his mother died leaving the boy and father to look after each other. Then, after a while, the father remarried and again there were three in the house.

The boy did not want this woman. He had lost his mother and now he felt he was losing his father as well. The woman said. 'I know I cannot replace your mother but I can look after you and we can love and respect each other.' She tried to take care of him, she would talk to him, prepare him for school and cook his meals on his return. But the boy remained hostile. He would be sullen, never looking at this intruder. The woman tried harder but the harder she tried the more the boy turned away. In time she became angry.

One day she cooked a special meal but the boy just pushed the plate away. He was not hungry. In her frustration, she pushed the plate back, he pushed it away again, then she pushed him and the boy stood up and pushed her to the floor. He then ran out.

The woman spoke with the boy's father. 'There must be something I can do. I know he is in pain for the loss of his mother but I am not her and should not suffer this. There may be a medicine that will help. I will see the medicine man.'

So she set off for the town and went to the house of the medicine man.

'Please, there must be a potion that would make him love me' she cried.

'There is,' replied the old medicine man, 'but I lack one vital ingredient. I need a whisker from the head of a snow-tiger. Not at all an easy thing to get. Tiger's do not give up their moustaches. It is a dangerous animal that must not be killed. No one is brave enough to risk getting a whisker from a living snow-tiger.'

'I am not brave but this is a thing that must be done and if no one else will do it for me then I will do it myself.' With that the woman prepared some supplies and set off for the high mountain, the home of the snow-tiger. The journey was hard, her clothes were ripped and her shoes

were wrecked but she climbed up the slopes of the mountain. It began to snow hard, and she took cover under some trees at the edge of the forest just below the tree line. There she collapsed, exhausted, and she slept.

When she awoke the storm had passed. The sun shone down on the snow which was white, fresh, pure. The air was sharp. And she could see paw-prints; a sign that the snow tiger was close. She followed them up the mountain until she saw the prints disappear into a cave. This was the lair of the snow-tiger. Outside the entrance she took from her bag a piece of meat and placed it upon a plate. Then she retreated as far away as possible where she could still watch. And she watched and she waited and, at last, the tiger emerged. It was magnificent, crossed with white and black stripes; it was beautiful and also ferocious, muscular and majestic in movement. The tiger looked around and saw the woman in the distance. It sniffed the meat and then ate it. Then it went back into the cave.

The next day the woman again went and placed a piece of meat on the plate outside the cave. This time she went only as half as far away. Again the lion came out, looked about, sniffed the meat, ate it then returned to his cave. On the third day she did the same, again going only half the distance away. Again the tiger came out, looked and ate the meat. She carried on like this, halving the distance she retreated each day until on the seventh day she was only one foot away from the plate. The tiger came out, looked at the woman, then ate the meat. When he finished the woman bent over and stroked the tiger. The tiger looked at her again, and then he spoke.

‘Well,’ said the tiger, ‘what do you want?’

‘I have fed you these last seven days and you have eaten my food. I would ask in return that you might give me one of your whiskers.’

‘What you say is true and you have been patient and brave. What you ask is not unreasonable and is fair exchange. You may pluck one.’

The tiger lay on the ground and the woman selected a whisker, the longest she could find, and twisted it around her finger. Then she pulled quickly, the tiger flexed and growled, and then relaxed. The woman thanked the tiger and stroked his coat. He stood up, bowed his head and walked away. The woman, with the whisker still twisted around her finger, ran all the way down the mountain and did not stop until she came to the house of the medicine man.

‘Here it is, the ingredient you require to make the medicine for my boy.’

‘How did you get this?’ asked the medicine man and the woman told him exactly what she had done. The healer, slowly, took the long hair and, holding it between finger and thumb, held it up to the light of the fire and looked at it carefully. Then he just let it go. It fell slowly, but too fast for the woman to catch, towards the fire. It burst into flame and, in a second, vanished.

‘What! What! What have you done? That was the ingredient. It was so hard to get. You have thrown it away’

‘You no longer need it’ said the healer. ‘What you have done with the tiger is what you must do with your son. Have patience, wait. Give him time. You need no other medicine.’

The woman went home and she did what she had learnt. It did not take seven days, nor seven weeks but after seven months, the boy responded to the woman’s gentle care. He never forgot his birth mother but he could accept the love of another.

This is from ‘Building Relationships through Storytelling’ and adapted from versions by Len Cabral (Ready-to-tell Tales), Clarissa Pinkola Estes, and Heather Forest (Wisdom Tales from around the World). There are versions of this story in South-East Asia and in Africa. The Asian versions feature a husband who is traumatised and depressed after fighting in a war. The theme is of patience overcoming anger and of facing the fear gradually also presents a positive step-mother story in contrast to other tale.

The Talking Tortoise

There was once a tortoise and he just talked and talked and talked. At the water hole where he and all the other animals used to go he would often find that he would have no-one to talk too. The others avoided him as he spoke so much and never listened to others. This tortoise just talked too much

One day two beautiful geese came to the waterfall they were flying south for the winter and the tortoise started chatting to them. He told them how beautiful they were and was also very polite, 'oh you look so beautiful and the way you fly is so graceful' he was very charming and the geese were flattered but they also noticed that he did go on quite a lot.

After a little while he asked if they were staying on and they told him, 'No, we will be leaving shortly to fly south'. The tortoise replied, 'Take me with you, take me with you' said the tortoise

The geese explained that they were flying and certainly couldn't take the tortoise with them. The tortoise said 'Nothing is impossible, let me think of how it could be done. Yes, I know what to do. If you to put a stick and you bite each end of it with your beaks and then I bite hold of it in the middle and that way you can carry me.'

'Well,' said one of the geese, 'it's true you have you talked quite a bit which means your mouth would be very strong but we're not sure you can keep your mouth shut that long.'

'Give me a chance to prove it' said the tortoise. Eventually the geese decided that they would give him a chance but he would have to take responsibility if it went wrong.

And so the tortoise found a stick, the geese get hold of either end and the tortoise bit hold of the middle and they set off. After a long run up there actually managed to leave the ground and flew up in the air. They couldn't fly very high because the tortoise was quite heavy. As they flew over towns and villages people would look up and say 'that is a marvelous thing' and 'Isn't it amazing. What a sight' or 'I've never seen

The Lady of the Lake

In the heart of Wales there is a lake, high in the hills and carved out by the glaciers of the Ice Age many thousands of year ago. That lake is called Llyn y Fan Fach.

Once there was a young shepherd looking after his sheep who came from the small town of Myddfai. He was a solitary soul who would spend his time quite happily walking the hills, watching his sheep and the winds blowing patterns across the black waters of the lake. One night, the night of the full moon, he saw, come out of the lake, a herd of white cattle driven by a woman, her yellow corn hair flowed long behind her back and her eyes were as green as the land itself. Whether the young man wondered who the woman was and if she had come from the fairy world, it mattered not to him. He was in love with her. The shepherd overcame his shyness to approach her and he offered all that he had on him that he could offer, a piece of bread. She took it and said, 'this bread is too hard' and she took her oxen back under the waters and disappeared. The young man told his mother and could not forget her. The night of the next full moon his mother baked bread to a different recipe which he took with him to the lake. Again, the woman came out of the lake. He offered her the bread and this time she took and said, 'this bread is too soft' and again she disappeared back into the water.

One New Year's Eve, Nos Calan, but rather than join his friends for the celebration he went alone to the lake in the hope he might see the woman from the lake taking his mother bread baked to a different recipe. And, under the light of the full moon, he saw her emerge. He gave her the bread, she tasted it and said, '*This is true baked bread, and with this I can wed.*' He had the courage to speak.

"Then marry me, For I love thee and would care for you forever.'

"And I do love thee also and will happily marry you and bring my cattle as dowry. But there is one condition also. Strike me three times, whether with cause or without, then I will leave you.'

'That will never happen for I know the way I feel and I could never cross you.'

So it was that this lady of the Lake came to live with the farmer, they married and the cattle brought forth the creamiest milk and butter and the cheese became the most sought after in the land. The farmer became prosperous and was given the respect of his community, he could hold his head up and he at last felt that he could fill his father's shoes. But this was as nothing to the happiness of being with his wife, and they had three children, three fine sons.

And the cattle multiplied also giving further riches, but if the villagers ever thought that these were fairy cattle or that the farmer's wife was one of the Gwragedd Annwn (*The wives of the other world – pronounced Grow-geff a-noon*)- an Elfish bride, with all that that implied, well that was never said, at least not out of doors, for everyone loved her for where she went she brought laughter, and with a lightness of touch.

One day they went to a christening at the local church. After talking to so many people the shepherd was ready to leave but his wife just kept talking to the other guests. After a while he went to get her and did so placed his hand upon her.

'You have now struck me once' said his wife. Her husband apologized and promised he would not do again but many years passed and the came to a wedding. Everyone was so happy and pleased for the young couple getting married but the Lady of the Lake was crying out loud for all to hear.

'What makes you cry so?' asked the husband, 'on this happy day.'

'I can see that there will be no happiness for them. They will only know pain and suffering in their marriage.'

'Well you must not spoil this day for them ' he said and placed his arm upon her.'

'Now you have struck me a second time. Once more and I must leave.'

The husband swore there would not be a third time and many years passed until they were at a funeral of a friend of the husband. Everyone was full of tears for the loss of the young man but the shepherd suddenly heard the fairy laugh above all the crying.

‘Why do you laugh when everyone feels sadness?’

‘Because I see how happy is now and there is no more suffering for him.’ But the husband was angry and placed his arm upon her.

‘Now you have struck me a third time and I will keep my promise. You will not see me again’ said the woman and she returned to the lake, taking all her animals with her. Her husband pleaded with forgiveness but he watched as his wife walked under the waves and returned to her home. He stayed by the lake hoping that she would return but she never did and eventually he came to accept that he had lost his wife, his love.

But sometimes the three sons would go to the lake and on three occasions they saw their mother who came to them and she showed them the magical healing powers of the herbs and roots of plants. When they grew these boys used what the mother had taught them and they became very famous doctors and they wrote a book about all the cures they found. So famous did they become that they became known as the Three Physicians of Myddfai.

The Butterfly Story

There was a young man who always thought his father got the better of him in any argument or discussion. One day he thought up a way that he thought would prove to his father he was pretty smart.

He caught a butterfly and held it cupped between his two hands. He thought he would go to his father and tell him that he has have a butterfly trapped in his hands. If his father is so clever he should know whether it is dead or alive. But whatever the father said the boy planned to prove him wrong. If he said alive, the boy would squash the butterfly. If he said dead he would let him fly away. Either way he would prove his father wrong.

He went to his father and said, 'I have a butterfly in my hands. If you're so smart tell me is it dead or alive.'

The old man looked him, 'I'm not so smart as you think I am but all I can say is that the answer, like so many things, lies in your own hands.'

The Mustard Seed

Kisagotami was born into a very poor family. She was very thin and this was seen as a poor thing so she was rarely shown any respect by the villagers. She grew up and then was married but she was never given any respect by her husband's family. That was until she had a child and then when they saw what a wonderful mother she was treated her with great respect.

But then her child died when just six months old. Kisagoami was struck by a terrible grief that she could not accept the death of her child. She picked up the body of her child and carried her on her hip as if the child was still alive. and she went round asking everybody she met 'who has got any medicine for my son?' Everybody laughed, 'Whoever heard of medicine for the dead' they mocked. She was driven out of my mind by her sorrow. She at last met a wise man who did not straight away point out the obvious fact that her child was dead. Rather he wanted her to understand that for herself. The young woman asked, 'Oh wise one, could you give me medicine for my son. he is ill.' The Wise Man looked at the body of the dead child and he knew how to help. He told the mother, 'Go and bring me some a handful of mustard seed to make my medicine but it must come from a house in which no one has died.'

Kissgotami was delighted. She now knew what she must do. She felt she had met with somebody who fully understood her. She went straight to the city and went to the first house that she came to and she asked for a handful of mustard seed for medicine. The house holder gave it to her but then she said this, 'is a house where no one has died?' The man answered that his wife had died and he told his of grief and sadness of when he had lost his wife. Kisagotami listened with growing sympathy understanding his grief and from her own experience. When he finished listening to the story she went to the next house and again asked for some mustard seed and, when it was given, asked if this was a house where no one had died she heard another story of the loss of parents, a story of sickness of age and death.

As she heard so many stories she then realised why the wise man had sent her on this quest. She went back to him and she took the body of her son and then she took it into the forest and buried it. He asked her if she had brought the mustard seed. She told him what had happened and what she had learnt about. She went on to follow the wise man as a student and in time she became a great teacher herself.

The Turnip

There were two brothers. One was obsessed with making money and had become very rich. He had no time for his brother, a poor farmer who only just made enough to get by.

The poor brother worked his land and grew a lot of turnips. One year one of his turnips had grown unfeasibly large. The farmer looked at it and thought to himself, 'this turnip is magnificent, it would be a shame if it just cut up and cooked for then it would be like any other turnip. What can I do with it?'

He thought hard about this question and then when he heard the King was coming to town, he had an idea. He would present it to the King as a gift. And when he presented it to the King, it was the King who was impressed by its enormous size. He also realised that the farmer was giving him something not only unusual but that was also of great value to a poor farmer.

The King said, 'I want to give you something' and he gave the farmer a chest of treasure full of gold and jewels. The farmer was delighted with his new found riches and his wealthy brother heard about it so he decided to pay his brother a visit.

The rich brother learnt from his poor relation how he had been given a treasure chest in return for a turnip, a measly turnip. The rich brother reasoned to himself that if he gave the King a chest of treasure he himself then he would be given much more by the King in return. If he gave a chest for a turnip what would he give for a treasure chest?

The brother put all his fineries and wealth into a chest and took it to the King in his palace. He presented and waited for his reward. The King was very pleased to receive a gift of great treasures from one of his subjects.

'Wait here' said the King to the rich brother, 'I want to give you something in return' and off he went to his treasure room. He looked around for a suitable gift and his eyes fell upon the giant turnip.

'Now that is something that anybody would appreciate so he took the turnip and gave it to the brother. This was not what the rich brother

was expecting but you do not refuse a gift from a King any more than you would refuse it from anyone else.

The rich brother bowed to the king and thanked him and reflected that he had become the poor brother whilst his brother had become rich.

The Clever Wish

Once there was a man who did someone a very good turn. It so happened that the person he helped had magical powers and he thanked the man by offering to grant just one wish for him. But the man's family has lots of problems and he goes to ask them what do they think he should wish for.

His father says, 'You should wish for money, after all we are so poor we have not got enough to eat'. His wife says, 'Wish for a child. We have always longed for a child and we have always been barren'. The man's mother says, 'I am blind, I would give anything to see again.' Well, everyone had different but important things to wish for and the man did not want to let anybody down. He thought long and hard for one wish which would give everybody what they wanted. What wish did he think up that solved the problem?

His wish was, 'I wish my mother could see my wife's new born baby rocking gently in a cradle made of solid gold'.

The Wolves Inside

A young boy was spending time with his grandfather. One day he asked him, 'When I grow up, what kind of man will I be?'

'What do you mean?' asked his grandfather.

'Well. I want to know if I will be good or bad' said the boy.

'I don't know. It depends' said the Grandfather.

'Depends on what?' said the boy.

'Well, Inside of each of us are two wolves and sooner or later they have to fight with each other. One of the wolves fights for hope and kindness. The other wolf fights for selfishness and anger. What kind of man you will grow up to be will depend on who wins the fight, whether it is the Good Wolf or the Bad Wolf.'

The boy looked alarmed. 'How will I know which one will win? Is there nothing I can do?'

'Ahh,' said the old man, 'the one that will win will be.....the one that you feed'

This short and enigmatic story, an old Native American story, reflects a universal theme. The internal battle inside between being full of love and compassion or consumed by anger and hate is described in the metaphor of two fighting wolves, the good wolf and the bad wolf. It also suggests that the victor will be the one that is encouraged or 'fed'. Anger and hatred can indeed consume us and override other aspects of our personality if we dwell on it and feed it through our thoughts. To deal with feelings anger sometimes we have to let go of them, to give up our resentments and search for understanding of those we feel have wronged us. This story acknowledges the control we have in that eternal struggle through choosing which parts of our self that we wish to nourish(From 'Telling Tales).

The Thieves and the Donkey

Once there was an old man walking home after a hard day at that Market and walking behind, on a harness was his donkey. The old man was so tired he was half asleep and plodding along without being aware of the world around him. He had no idea that two thieves were watching him very carefully.

"Look at that old man," said one thief to the other, "he's in a world of his own. I've got an idea how we can steal his donkey without him even noticing."

The two thieves sneaked up behind the man and his donkey. Very quietly they undid the harness and keeping hold of it to keep the tension on the harness tight, one of the thieves harnessed himself into the reins. The other thief led the donkey away. The old man noticed nothing and just kept plodding slowly along all the while thinking he was pulling his donkey along behind him.

Eventually they came to a watering hole where the old man thought both he and his donkey could enjoy a well deserved drink of cool refreshing water. He turned around and when he saw, not his donkey but a man, he jumped out of his skin with surprise.

"What! Where's my donkey? Who are you?"

The thief had his answer ready. He looked himself up and down, he slapped and pinched himself.

"Oh, heaven be praised. The hex has worn off. The spell has been broken.". The thief went down on his knees. "Thank you for looking after me all this time. I am so very grateful" and he leant forward to kiss the old man's feet.

"What are you talking about?" shouted the old man, "Where's my donkey?"

"It was me. I was your donkey but I am really a man. My name is

Ahmed. You see it was my mother. She got so fed up with me drinking and coming home absolutely drunk all the time that she put a spell on me. She turned me into a donkey and I had to live as a donkey for seven years to learn my lesson. And you bought me and looked after me. Thank you so much. Yes, you beat me a few times but you thought I was a donkey. How could you know I was a man. I forgive you."

The old man was flustered and didn't know what to say, eventually he said, "Well, well, oh my goodness! I can't take you home now. I wouldn't know what to do with a man. What are you going to do now."

"Well," said the thief, unfastening the harness, "I guess I'll have to go home and see if I have been forgiven."

"Yes, good idea" said the old man. "Look, here's some money to get you some food and drink on the way home." and the old man gave the thief all the money he had earned that day at the market. The thief thanked the old man for being such a good keeper and they parted.

The next week the old man went back to the Market, this time to buy himself a new donkey. The other of the two thieves was there and with him was the old donkey that he was trying to sell. The old man thought that donkey looks very familiar. He went up to the thief and the donkey. He looked at the donkey very carefully, then he looked at the man very closely, up and down, then he looked at his donkey again. Then he said, in a very cross voice.....

"Ahmed, have you been drinking again?"