

Before You Read

The Monkey Who Asked for Misery

Connect to the Folktale

In this folktale, the main character mistakes something bad for something good. Think about how someone might make that mistake. An example is wanting to do something that seems like fun but turns out to be dangerous or harmful.

Partner Talk With a partner, talk about how someone could mistake something bad for something good. What could happen as a result of this mistake?

Build Background

This folktale takes place in Haiti, a nation on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea.

- A **folktale** is a traditional story that is passed down by word of mouth long before it is written. A folktale may change as each teller adds or varies details, but the basic story stays the same.
- Often folktales reinforce the traditions and values of the culture that preserves them. Folktales entertain and teach lessons.
- The characters in folktales may be animals, people with extraordinary powers, or ordinary people who have unusual experiences.

Set Purposes for Reading

BQ BIG Question

As you read, ask yourself what mistake Monkey makes and what lesson he learns. How might Monkey's story help readers?

Literary Element Conflict

Conflict is the central struggle between opposing forces in a story. Conflict is important in storytelling because it advances the plot. Characters have **external conflicts** when they struggle against some outside force, such as society. Characters have **internal conflicts** when they struggle against something inside themselves, such as their own emotions. As you read the folktale, ask yourself what conflicts Monkey faces and how the conflicts are resolved.

Learning Objectives

For pages 284–288

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objective:

Reading: Analyzing conflict.

Meet Diane Wolkstein



International Storyteller

Diane Wolkstein has collected stories from Haiti, Israel, Egypt, Greece, and Turkey. She performs them at festivals, theaters, schools, and museums all over the world. She was born in 1942.



Literature Online

Author Search For more about Diane Wolkstein, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u2.

The Monkey Who Asked for Misery

retold by Diane Wolkstein



Eight Huts in Haiti.
D. Roosevelt. Private
Collection.

Monkey was sitting in a tree when a woman walked by on her way to market. Just as she passed, she tripped and the calabash¹ on her head fell off and broke. The sweet sugar-cane syrup in the calabash ran all over the ground.

“Good Lord, what Misery you have given me,” she cried. “For three days I have been walking to market to sell this syrup and now I’ve lost it. Good Lord, Papa God, why did you give me such Misery?” But there was nothing to be done, so the woman continued on her way.

Monkey came down from the tree. What was this Misery Papa God had given the woman? He sniffed it. *Hmmm*. It

¹ A *calabash* is a type of gourd, or large fruit. When hollowed out, they are often used as containers.

smelled good. He put one finger in and licked it. *Hmm*. He put in another finger. He put in his hand. And then one foot. And soon he was licking it up from the ground. *Th Th Th Th Th . . . Thh*. Then it was gone. But Monkey wanted more. He had not known Misery was so sweet. He decided to visit Papa God. He raced at top speed and found Papa God.

"Good morning, Papa God," said Monkey.

"Hello, Brother Monkey," said Papa God.

"I've come to see you, Papa God."

"Yes, Brother Monkey."

"Papa God—I want Misery."

"In the awful condition you're in, *you* want Misery?"

"Oh yes, Papa God, I need lots and lots and lots of Misery."

"Brother Monkey—"

"Papa God, I've already tasted Misery. I know how sweet it is."

"Well then, go over there. Do you see the three sacks? Take that one. No, not that one—*that* one. Yes. Put it on your back and walk until you come to a place where there are no trees. Then open it up. But remember, if you truly want lots of Misery, there must not be any trees in the place where you open it."

Monkey took the sack. He put it on his back. He thanked Papa God and left. He walked and walked and walked and walked and walked. He walked and walked and at last, he came to a place where there was not one tree to be seen. Monkey set the sack down. He looked in every direction. There was not one tree. He rubbed his stomach. He couldn't wait. He loosened the string of the sack and opened it up.

Rrrrrr. Rrrrr. Rrrrrrrr. Five huge dogs jumped out of the sack and began to chase Monkey. Monkey ran. The dogs followed close behind him. When Monkey had no breath left, a tree appeared. *One* tree. Monkey climbed that tree and the dogs barked and scratched, but they could not reach Monkey.

Papa God had sent the tree. Papa God sent the tree especially to Monkey.

Too much Misery at one time is not a good thing—even for Monkey. *fa*.

Conflict What is Monkey's conflict? How is it both internal and external?

Conflict What type of conflict does Monkey now face?

BQ BIG Question

Why would someone retell this story?

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

1. In your own words, tell what happens to the woman at the beginning of the story. [Summarize]
2. What clues in the story show that Monkey is an extraordinary animal? [Identify]
3. What mistake does Monkey make about “misery” at the beginning of the story? [Interpret]
4. What do this mistake and Monkey’s other actions show about his character? [Analyze]
5. Why does Papa God decide to give Monkey the bag with dogs inside? [Infer]
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** How can you apply what you have learned from this folktale to your own life? Explain what you would do or not do. [Connect]

Academic Vocabulary

Monkey confused the sweet syrup with misery. **Consequently**, he wanted more of it.

In the preceding sentence, *consequently* means “as a result.” Think about how Papa God’s attitude toward Monkey changes when Monkey ignores his warnings about misery. What actions does Papa God take? Why does he do these things? Then fill in the blank in the following statement.

Papa God can’t convince Monkey that misery is a bad thing. Consequently, Papa God decides to _____.

TIP

Summarizing

To answer question 1, remember that when you summarize, you retell events in your own words.

- Skim the beginning of the story to remind yourself of what happens to the woman.
- Using transitional words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*, retell what happens to the woman in your own words.

FOLDABLES Study Organizer Keep track of your ideas about the **BIG Question** in your unit Foldable.



Literature Online

Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u2.

Literary Element Conflict

1. List three external conflicts characters have in this folktale.
2. Papa God wants to teach Monkey a lesson through conflict. Do you think it is fair of Papa God to give Monkey the bag of dogs when Monkey thinks he will be getting syrup? Explain.

Review: Theme

As you learned on page 135, the **theme** is the main idea or message of a story. Sometimes, the theme is stated in the story, but more often it is not. The theme may be shown through the actions of characters or in other ways. Folktales from different times and places often have similar themes or lessons. These themes are called **recurring**, or repeated, themes.

Because the theme of "The Monkey Who Asked for Misery" is not stated directly, the reader must determine what it is. Use the graphic organizer below to find clues in the folktale that help you identify the theme.

The theme of the story is _____.

Clues from Monkey's words and actions	Clues from Papa God's words and actions

Test Skills Practice

3. The theme of the folktale is
 - A run fast when being chased by dogs.
 - B don't eat too many sweets.
 - C be careful when walking to the market.
 - D be careful what you desire.

Grammar Link

Infinitives An **infinitive** is a verb form that may function as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. An infinitive is formed from the word *to* together with the base form of a verb.

To dance well requires practice.
(noun: subject of the sentence)

My sister wants **to dance**.
(noun: object of *wants*)

Rafael had permission **to attend**.
(adjective: describes what kind of permission)

Angela left early **to meet** her sister at the airport. (adverb: answers the question *why?*)

How can you tell whether the word *to* is a preposition or part of an infinitive? If the word *to* comes immediately before a verb, it is part of the infinitive.

Those young players want **to win**.
(infinitive)

The coach is pointing **to the pitcher**.
(prepositional phrase)

Practice Write down three infinitives from the folktale. Tell whether they function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. Then, use an infinitive to write your own sentence about Monkey's experience.

Research and Report

Visual/Media Presentation Use the Internet or a library to research a culture's folktales. Select a folktale to read aloud to the class. Make a poster or an electronic presentation to display the folktale. Find art or photos in a book or on the Internet to illustrate the folktale. Include the name of the person who created the artwork and the name of the book or the Web site where the art appears.

