NIGHTINGALE
By Hans Christian Andersen
Themes: Animals and Pets, Friendship, Folktales, Music
Grade Level: PreK–4
Running Time: 25 minutes

SUMMARY
This version of the classic Hans Christian Anderson tale is set in the court of the emperor of China. A beautiful nightingale sings in the woods and gardens that surround the emperor's palace. The bird's song is so enchanting that it gets written about in a book, which is how the emperor becomes aware of the nightingale's existence. The emperor orders the bird brought to him. For a time the bird is the emperor's favorite. The emperor even grants the nightingale her wish not to be caged. All is well until the emperor receives a gift: a mechanical bird covered in dazzling jewels. The new bird looks far more beautiful than the nightingale, and sings a tune anyone can learn. When the nightingale will not sing a duet with the windup bird, she is banished from the court on pain of death. The mechanical bird, of course, eventually breaks down. And when the emperor becomes ill, the machine's song can't heal him. A kitchen maid, who has been the nightingale's best friend throughout the story, finds the bird in the forest and brings it back to the palace. The emperor is restored to health, and finally learns the difference between music and noise.

OBJECTIVES
• Children will watch and listen to a story based on a folktale.
• Children will follow a plot that has musical elements.
• Children will make distinctions between enduring art and passing fads.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES
Ask students to define what a nightingale is. Make sure they understand that a nightingale is known for its beautiful song. Inform students that the story they are about to view is based on an old folktale about a nightingale and an emperor. Ask students for their ideas about what an emperor looks like and how an emperor lives. What does a nightingale have that an emperor does not? Ask students to think about that question as they view the program.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES
Prompt students to help you retell the story. Ask Who, What, Where, When, and Why questions to help them recall the details. Discuss the setting, characters, and plot. For setting, ask students to recall what the palace looked like and where it was placed. What were the signs of the emperor's importance? How did the palace make it possible for the emperor to be the last person to know about the nightingale? As you discuss characters, focus on the emperor first. Then compare the other members of the court: the courtiers, the footman, and the kitchen maid. Who was the best person? After reviewing the plot, ask students what lesson the emperor learned. Discuss the difference between enduring art and beauty and passing fads, between the music money can pay for and real music.

Connect the story to science by asking students to research nightingales. Is their song really noticeably different from that of other birds? Have them check nature guides, audio and video tapes about birding, and Internet sites to do their research. Reports to the class should include facts about any species of nightingales that live near you.

Connect the story to social studies by locating China on a map or globe. From current travel magazines and other sources, find pictures of modern Japan. Ask students to compare modern China to the pictures in the program. Lead them to the conclusion that the story is set a long time ago. Encourage interested students to learn more about the history of China. Students can visit web sites about tourism in China in order to see palaces and gardens that look like those in the video.

Connect the story to art, music and drama by helping students put on a live performance or puppet play of the story. Sliding paper walls, folding screens, and other features of palace architecture are easy to reproduce as puppet sets. Another advantage of puppets is that the sound track can be recorded. Students can take turns being puppeteers.

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