

THE FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS

The Five Chinese Brothers

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Themes: Chinese Culture/Working Together

Level: K - 2

Length: 10 minutes, iconographic

Summary

Each of the five brothers in the story has a special ability or characteristic. The first brother is capable of swallowing the sea. One day, a little boy asks to go fishing with the first brother. The brother agrees, and, as they fish, the first Chinese brother swallows the sea. The little boy runs into the dry ocean and gathers up beautiful things from the ocean floor. Although the little boy had agreed to return from the ocean when called back, he failed to listen to the first Chinese brother. When the entire sea leaves the Chinese brother's throat and once again covers the ocean floor, the boy disappears.

As a result of what happened to the boy, the first Chinese brother is condemned to be executed. He asks permission for one last visit with his mother. Permission is granted and the second Chinese brother, who has a neck made of iron, returns in his place. Of course this brother's head cannot be chopped off, so he is ordered to be thrown overboard and drowned. Again, the second brother returns home to say good-bye to his mother and the third brother, who can stretch his legs, is sent in his place. This brother cannot be drowned. This pattern of new punishments and the brothers overcoming them with their special qualities, continues. The end of the story finds the people agreeing that the first Chinese brother must be innocent because he has overcome every obstacle.

Objectives

- Children will learn about Chinese culture
- Children will learn about the benefits of working together
- Children will explore problem-solving strategies

Before Viewing Activities

Locate China on a map. Point out its distance from where the children live, mountains, proximity to water, different climates.

Emphasize to children that people of other cultures may dress differently, live in different kinds of homes, and use languages or manners of speech that are different from ours. Encourage children to look for things, including style of dress, homes, and manner of speech that are different from what they are used to.

Fill a large cardboard box with books. Have children think about ways they might move the heavy box from one end of the classroom to the other. Encourage children to think of ways to work together in order to move the box. Then have children try it. Ask children to pay careful attention to the ways the brothers work together and problem-solve.

Spend some time talking with children about the things that are special about them individually, and as a group. Help children understand that each person is unique and special. Give children an opportunity to talk about things they particularly like about their classmates and about being a member of the class. Later, have children describe the unique characteristics of each of the brothers.

Share the book *The Five Chinese Brothers* with children. Then ask: Which of the five brother's special abilities would you like to have? Why? How do you think the first brother felt when he had to go to prison? How do you think the brothers felt when they realized that they could help one another? Do you think the people were right to let the first brother go free at the end of the story? Why?

After Viewing Activities

Talk about the different signs of Chinese culture (dress, homes, hair styles, etc.) Then supply children with men's long-sleeves shirts, ladies skirts, slippers, and caps that they can dress up in. (If you can supply only one of each of these

items, children can take turns wearing them.) As children wear the clothing, have them pretend to be the five Chinese brothers. Ask: How does it feel to walk around in this kind of clothing? Do the clothes make you move differently? How would you feel about wearing this clothing in warm weather?

Have children describe each of the brothers' special characteristics in the story. Then present several problematic situations to children. For example, say to children: The five Chinese brothers need to get a treasure chest from a mountain top. Which brother should get the treasure chest? (brother with legs that stretch) Why?

After presenting a variety of these situations, have children talk about the many different things they could do if they had the qualities of the five brothers.

Try this simple activity to help children explore the benefits of working together: Remove books from a book shelf, art supplies from a cabinet, or children's coats from the coat hooks or cubbies. Then tell children that they will have five minutes to return these things to their proper places. When the time has passed, ask children to think about whether or not they could get the job done if they worked alone. Would it have taken more time or less? How could the children have worked together even more efficiently to get the job done faster? Encourage children to think of other tasks that are done more easily when people work together.

Other book based films and videos about Chinese culture are available from Weston Woods. These include: *THE STORY ABOUT PING* by Marjorie Flack *TIKKI TIKKI TEMBO* written by Arlene Mosel and illustrated by Blair Lent

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