

# Tales of the World

*Tales are one of the most interesting and revealing expressions of culture. Anchored in history, verbally transmitted, they are also the carriers of the main values of a culture. This activity uses tales to explore the perceptions (and stereotypes) we may have about different cultures.*



## Issues addressed

- Perceptions and images we have of other cultures and of our own ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

## Aims of the activity

- To raise curiosity about tales from other cultures and peoples.
- To challenge stereotypes and prejudice about other cultures' values.
- To raise curiosity about other peoples, cultures, music and language.
- To puzzle participants and introduce a good atmosphere in the group.

**Time:** 60 - 90 minutes.

**Group size:** Minimum of 4 people.

## Preparation

- Choose all or some of the tales and a copy of 'version A' for each participant.
- Also prepare copies of the full tales, to be handed out at the end, including, if you so wish, copies of the originals in their original languages.

## Instructions

1. Hand each participant a copy of the tales (version A) and give them 15 or 20 minutes to read them.
2. Ask each participant to try to guess where the tales comes from. It works best if you give people a range of choices like Southern Europe, Northern Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, Middle East, South America, Asia, North America.
3. Then ask people to get into groups of 4 to 6 to exchange their guesses and to discuss the reasons for them.
4. Now ask each group to come up with a common decision about the origin of each tale. Allow 30-45 minutes for these group discussions.
5. In plenary, ask each group to present their conclusions and the reasons behind their choices. This will very likely lead to further discussions as people will re-evaluate their guesses as different groups come up with different ideas and suggestions.
6. You will have to judge when to call the discussion to a close. Then give out the full version of the tales (including also the original language version), or read out the full version and say where the tale comes from.

## Debriefing and evaluation

If you think it appropriate, start the discussion by asking participants to say if they liked the tales, whether they were surprised by the origins, if it was difficult provides plenty of fun and action! If you like making collages you could try 'Portraits' (page 149).

## Tips for the facilitator

Tales often express fundamental values and the same tale may exist in different versions in different countries due to variations in geographical and climatic conditions, religion, values, etc.

The activity works best if participants are able to go beyond the strict practical circumstances (like the climate, or whether a certain animal exists in a given region) and look also into the values (or the morals) transmitted by the tale.

## Suggestions for follow up

A good follow-up activity, especially in a multi-cultural group, is to ask some participants to bring tales from their own countries or cultures to a future session. It may be also an interesting way to bring different generations closer.

If you like reading stories, perhaps you also like playing games? 'Limit 20' (page 110)

## TALES - VERSION A (to be handed out first):

### THE BLIND WILD BOAR

Once upon a time there was a hunter who went out into the bush with his rifle. There, he caught sight of two wild boars walking one behind the other. The hunter took aim and shot at the second boar but something that astonished him happened: The leader ran away, while the other one did not seem to know what to do. It was left standing with something that looked like a dry twig in its mouth.

The hunter carefully approached, because he thought the wild boar would attack him. He soon noticed that it stood where it had stopped, without following his friend. Curious, the hunter came closer to have a better look. Then he saw, that what had looked like a dry twig, was the tail of the wild boar that had run away. Now the hunter understood that the wild boar was blind, and that his bullet had hit the leader's tail and had cut it off. He caught the blind wild boar and took it home and all the while it still carried the cut off tail in its mouth.

In his house, the hunter fed the wild boar and took care of it in the best way possible. It is funny. Even the animals show consideration for their fellow creatures. Should not we, people who have been gifted with intelligence, take care of our parents, siblings and friends who happen to be in need of help?

## THE TALE OF W. X. WHO CAUGHT FISH FOR HIS STEPMOTHER IN THE COLD WINTER

W. X. was a man who lived a long time ago. His real mother died early and his father remarried a woman whose family name was Z. Thereby she became W. X.'s stepmother.

The stepmother was mean and did not like W. X., so she used to slander W. X. in front of his father. As time went by, the father began to dislike his son too. The son remained kind and considerate to his parents despite of this.

One winter the weather was very bad with lots of snow falling, often for several days on end. It was so cold after the snowfalls that the small river nearby, which usually sang so cheerfully, now lay there quiet and frozen.

The people stayed home because of the cold, and the animals also rarely went out. The ground was completely covered with snow.

One day W. X.'s stepmother decided that she wanted fresh fish for dinner and told her stepson. He thought:

- Where can I get fresh fish when it is snowing all day and all the rivers are frozen?

As mentioned before, W. X. was a considerate son so he immediately went out into the white wilderness to look for fish.

W. X. looked for a long time but how should he find fresh fish? Eventually he went down to the riverbank. The ground was hard and cold and the wind was howling. It was so cold his whole body shivered.

Now W. X. lay there staring at the frozen river and thought:

- I cannot come home empty-handed, when my stepmother wants fish.

What would he do? W. X. thought and thought; but could not think of a solution. In the end he broke into tears of despair and tears flowed down his cheeks. The more he cried, the more tears there were, and eventually there was a hole in the ice that covered the river. Suddenly two fish jumped up onto the ice next to the hole. They had come to life from the warmth in W. X.'s tears.

Over joyous W. X. lifted up the fish and carried them home to his stepmother.

Like W.X. we should never give up hope.

## THE PIGEONS AND THE BIRDCATCHER'S NET

There was once a very old oak and in it there lived many pigeons. All day long the pigeons would fly around and look for food but in the evenings they would return to spend the night in the oak.

One day, the pigeons were out looking for food as usual. Suddenly a small pigeon said:

“Look, look how much seed! How much food there is lying strewn on the ground”. The other pigeons saw that she was right and flew there to settle down but an old wise pigeon shouted:

“Stop! Don't fly there. How come there is so much seed in the middle of the ground?”

“Never mind”! said another pigeon. “Come, let's eat together.”

The whole flock landed except the old wise pigeon. They began feasting while she followed their actions from a distance. When the pigeons had feasted on the seed they wanted to fly away - but could not. They were caught in the bird catcher's net and started crying out in despair:

” Help! We are caught! Help!”

The old wise pigeon replied:

“Take it easy.”

But one of the pigeons shouted:

“Look! Someone is coming this way. It is the birdcatcher who is coming to catch us”.

The old wise pigeon said:

“Calm down. Lift off the ground all at once and you can lift the net.”

The whole flock helped each other and the net lifted a bit. Now, all the pigeons tried as hard as they could and managed to lift the net so that they could fly away with it. The old wise pigeon flew first and the others followed her.

They flew for a long time until they came to a tree. Then the old wise pigeon said to them, while showing them the tree:

“You can settle down here. A good friend of mine lives here, a mouse.”

She called for the mouse that came and gnawed a hole in the net so that the pigeons were let free. The whole flock offered their deepest thanks to the mouse.

## HOW THE HARE GOT HIS SHORT TALE

In the vineyard the wolf was digging and planting new vine. He had asked the fox and the hare to help him. He had prepared a tasty meal for them - a pot of honey. All three worked diligently, but the fox was tempted to taste the honey in advance, so he turned to the nearest vine and hollered:

“Hello! Hello!”

“What's going on?” asked the wolf.

“I'm invited to a party”, lied the fox.

“Run along then”, replied the wolf.

“And be back soon”, said the hare.

But the fox went straight to the bush, where the wolf had hidden the pot of honey. He ate until he was full from the sweet honey and returned to the wolf and the hare.

“How was the party”? the wolf asked curiously.

“Busy”, the fox grinned.

“How was the food”? the hare enquired.

“Sweet and tasty”, the fox replied cunningly.

And so, they continued to dig. Soon the fox turned around and hollered:

“Hello! Hello”!

“What now”? asked the wolf and the hare.

“I’m invited to another party”, answered the fox.

“Then go”, said the wolf.

And the fox went again. When he returned the wolf and the hare asked if he had enjoyed the party.

“Not half as much as the last time”.

When the fox sneaked out for the third time - and finished the honey in the pot - the wolf and the hare fell asleep, tired from the hard work.

When the cunning fox returned he smeared the sleeping hare's nose with the remains of the honey. Then he shouted:

“Get up you sleepy heads”!

“Oh, you’re back already? How was the party”? the wolf asked and yawned.

“It was finished”, smiled the fox.

“Did you eat well”? asked the hare and sleepily rubbed his eyes.

“Well and tasty”, the fox said and licked his mouth. “Brother wolf, aren't you going to invite us to some food now”?

“Yes sure”! the wolf nodded, “it's noon and time for breakfast”.

He nodded towards the bush by the vine where he had hidden the pot of honey.

But he was soon back with the empty pot and said growling:

“Somebody has finished all the honey! If I only knew who the thief was I'd wring his neck”!

Then the fox answered ingratiatingly:

“It is the hare who has gulped all the honey while you were sleeping brother wolf”.

“It's not true! I did not do it”! the hare protested.

The wolf, furious, jumped on the hare to wring his neck. The hare took off for all his legs were worth with the wolf breathing down his neck.

After a while the wolf had almost caught up with him and managed to bite his tail off.

But luckily for the hare, the wolf could not catch up with him so that he could wring his neck. And since then, the hare has had a short tail.

## THE BLIND WILD BOAR

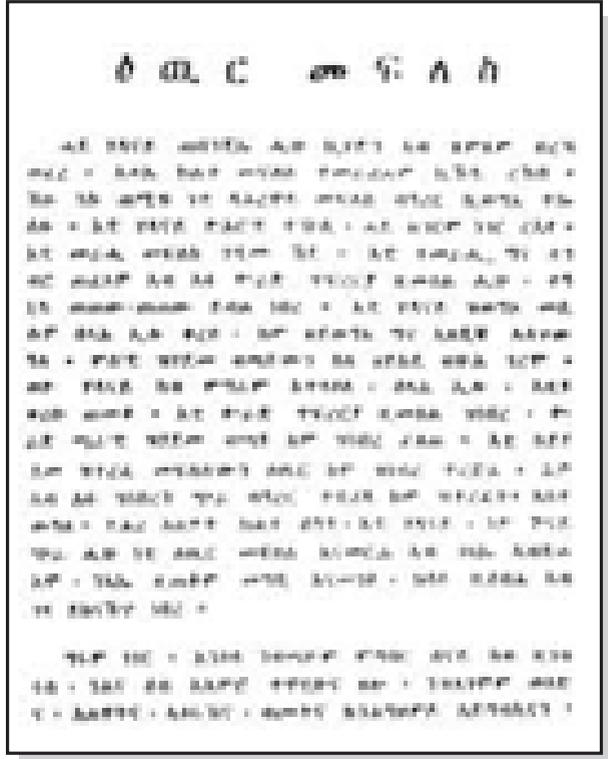
Once upon a time there was a hunter who went out into the bush with his rifle. There, he caught sight of two wild boars one walking behind the other. The hunter took aim and shot at the second wild boar but something that astonished him happened: The leader ran away, while the other one did not seem to know what to do. It was left standing with something that looked like a dry twig in its mouth.

The hunter carefully approached, because he thought the wild boar would attack him. He soon noticed that it stood where it had stopped, without following his friend. Curious, the hunter came closer to have a better look. Then he saw, that what had looked like a dry twig, was the tail of the wild boar that had run away. Now the hunter understood that the wild boar was blind, and that his bullet had

hit the leader's tail and had cut it off. He caught the blind wild boar and took it home and all the while it still carried the cut off tail in its mouth.

In his house, the hunter fed the wild boar and took care of it in the best way possible. It is funny. Even the animals show consideration for their fellow creatures. Should not we, people who have been gifted with minds, take care of our parents, siblings and friends who happen to be in need of help?

*(This tale comes from Tigrea - Ethiopia, Africa)*



## THE TALE OF WANG XIANG WHO CAUGHT FISH FOR HIS STEPMOTHER IN THE COLD WINTER

Wang Xiang was a man who lived during the Jin Dynasty. His real mother died early and his father remarried with a woman whose family name was Zhu. Thereby she became Wang Xiang's stepmother.

The stepmother was mean and did not like Wang Xiang so she used to slander Wang Xiang in front of his father. As time went by, the father began to dislike his son too. The son remained kind and considerate to his parents despite of this.

One winter the weather was very bad with lots of snow falling, often for several days on end. It was so cold after the snowfalls, that the small river nearby, which usually sang so cheerfully, now lay there quiet and frozen. The people stayed home because of the cold, and the animals also rarely went out. The ground was completely covered with snow.

One day Wang Xiang's stepmother decided that she wanted fresh carp for dinner and mentioned this to her stepson. He thought:

- Where can I get fresh carp when it is snowing all day and all the rivers are frozen?

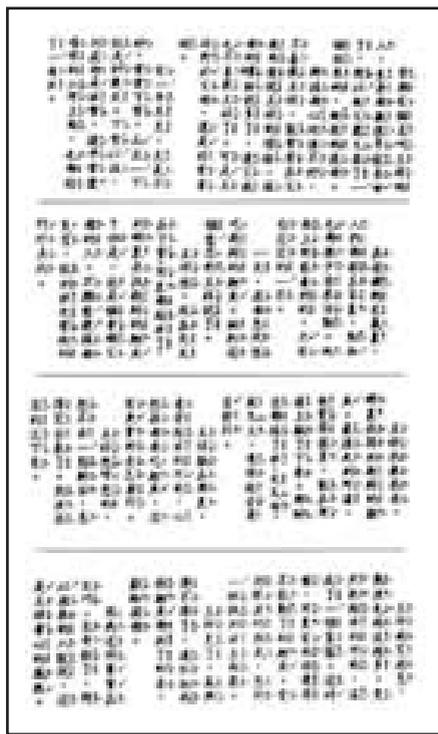
As mentioned before, Wang Xiang was a considerate son so he immediately went out into the white wilderness to look for fish. Wang Xiang looked for a long time but how should he find fresh fish? Eventually he went down to the riverbank. The ground was hard and cold and the wind was howling. It was so cold his whole body shivered. Now Wang Xiang lay there staring at the frozen river and thought:

- I cannot come home empty-handed, when my stepmother wants fish.

What would he do? Wang Xiang thought and thought; but could not think of a solution. In the end he broke into tears of despair and tears flowed down his cheeks. The more he cried, the more tears there were, and eventually there was a hole in the ice that covered the river. Suddenly two carp jumped up onto the ice next to the hole. They had come to life from the warmth in Wang Xiang's tears.

Over joyous Wang Xiang lifted up the fish and carried them home to his stepmother. This wonder, it was later explained, was the result of Wang Xiang's sense of duty.

**(Original Chinese tale)**



## THE PIGEONS AND THE BIRDCATCHER'S NET

In a jungle, there was once a very old oak and in it, there lived many pigeons. All day the pigeons would fly around and look for food but in the evenings they would return to spend the night in the oak.

One day, the pigeons were out looking for food as usual. Suddenly a small pigeon said:

“Look, look how much seed! How much food there is lying strewn on the ground”. The other pigeons saw that she was right and flew there to settle down but an old wise pigeon shouted:

“Stop! Don't fly there. How come there is so much seed in the middle of the jungle?”

“Never mind! said another pigeon. Come let's eat together”.

The whole flock landed except the old wise pigeon. They began feasting while she followed their actions from a distance. When the pigeons had feasted on the seed they wanted to fly away - but could not. They were caught in the birdcatcher's net and started crying out in despair:

“Help! We are caught! Help!”

The old wise pigeon replied:

“Take it easy”.

But one of the pigeons shouted:

“Look! Someone is coming this way. It is the birdcatcher who is coming to catch us.”

The old wise pigeon said:

“Calm down. Lift off the ground all at once and you can lift the net”.

The whole flock helped each other and the net lifted a bit. Now, all the pigeons tried as hard as they could and managed to lift the net so that they could fly away with it. The old wise pigeon flew first and the others followed her.

They flew for a long time until they came to a tree. Then the old wise pigeon said to them, while showing them the tree:

“You can settle down here. A good friend of mine lives here, a mouse”.

She called for the mouse that came and gnawed a hole in the net so that the pigeons were let free. The whole flock offered their deepest thanks to the mouse.

*(The tale comes from India)*

### कबूतर और जाल

एक जंगल में पीपल का एक पेड़ था। पीपल के उस पेड़ बहुत बड़ा था। उस पर बहुत से कबूतर रहते थे। कबूतर दिन-रात पीपल की छड़ों में घूमते रहते। रात होते ही वे सब पीपल के पेड़ पर लौट आते। सबका ये पीपल के पेड़ का आवास था।

एक दिन की बात है। कबूतर पीपल की छड़ों में गए। थोड़े ही उनके पास एक छोटा कबूतर बोला, “देखो, उधर देखो। कितना धारा बिछाया पड़ा है। जमीन पर कितना खान बिछाया पड़ा है।”

कबूतर उधर देखने लगे। उन्हें जमीन पर बहुत सा खान दिखाई पड़ा। वे सब चीं-चीं पीके उड़ने लगे।

जमी एक बड़ा कबूतर बोला, “रुको, रुको। अभी नहीं जाओ। जंगल में इतना धारा बिछाया है।”

एक दूसरा कबूतर बोला, “बड़ी से भी उड़ना हो। जाओ, हम सब मिलकर धारा खाएँ।”

कबूतर जमीन पर उड़ने लगे। वे सब कबूतर उड़ते उड़ते लौट आए। कबूतर धारा खाने लगे। वह धारा से ही देखना रहा। कबूतरों ने देखा धारा खाने। अब वे उड़ना चाहते थे, पर वे उड़ न सके। वे जाल में फँस गए थे।

कबूतर बिल्लवरी लगे, “बिल्लवरी, बिल्लवरी। हम जाल में फँस गए हैं। इसे बिल्लवरी।”

बुढ़ा कबूतर बोला, “बिल्लवरी मत।”

उन्होंने एक कबूतर बिल्लवरी, “उधर देखो, उधर आ रहा है। ओ, वह तो बिल्लवरी है। वह ही बिल्लवरी आ रहा है।”

बुढ़ा कबूतर बोला, “बिल्लवरी मत। हम बिल्लवरी जो बिल्लवरी। एक साथ जाल को लेकर उड़ सकते हैं।”

जमी कबूतरों ने बिल्लवरी जो बिल्लवरी। जाल को उठाने लगे। कबूतरों ने भी जो बिल्लवरी। जाल और उठाने उठ गया। कबूतर जाल लेकर उड़ने लगे। बुढ़ा कबूतर जमीन-जमीन उड़ रहा था। सब कबूतर उसके पीछे उड़ने लगे।

बुढ़ा कबूतर उड़ते उड़ते बहुत दूर उड़ गया। उड़ते उड़ते वे एक छोटा जंगल देखा। वह बोला, “हम सब को जंगल उठाने जाओ। जमीन एक बड़ा जंगल है। वह जंगल फिर है। वह जंगल परत बोला।”

बुढ़ा कबूतर उड़ते ही जंगल उठाने। उड़ते ही जंगल उठाने। कबूतर जाल से बिल्लवरी उठाने। उड़ते उड़ते वे जंगल उठाने।

## HOW THE HARE GOT HIS SHORT TALE

In the vineyard the wolf was digging and planting new vine. He had asked the fox and the hare to help him. He had prepared a tasty meal for them - a pot of honey. All three worked diligently, but the fox was tempted to taste the honey in advance, so he turned to the nearest vine and hollered:

Hello! Hello!

"What's going on?" asked the wolf.

"I'm invited to a party", lied the fox.

"Run along then", replied the wolf.

"And be back soon", said the hare.

But the fox went straight to the bush, where the wolf had hidden the pot of honey. He ate until he was full from the sweet honey and returned to the wolf and the hare.

"How was the party?" the wolf asked curiously.

"Busy", the fox grinned.

"How was the food?" the hare enquired.

"Sweet and tasty", the fox replied cunningly.

And so, they continued to dig. Soon the fox turned around and hollered:

"Hello! Hello!"

"What now?" asked the wolf and the hare.

"I'm invited to another party", answered the fox.

"Then go", said the wolf.

And the fox went again. When he returned the wolf and the hare asked if he had enjoyed the party.

"Not half as much as the last time".

## Od kdaj ima zajček kratek rep

Prvi vinograd je posejal in v vsakem vinogradu sta volk, lisica in zajček. Lisica je bila prava prava in je pripravila sladko južico: rožmarinovo maza.

Vsi so bili na polju delali. Lisica pa je zamislila, da bi se pred južico pridružil volku. Otvorila se je od dela proti bližnji hudi in zakrčala:

"Hej, hej!"

"Kaj pa je?" sta vprašala volk in zajček.

"Na bučnjaku sem kikirjala" se je odpravila lisica.

"Pa pojdi" je odvrnil volk.

"In kmalu se vrni na delo," je dodelal zajček.

Is lisica je odšla pred goro, kamor je volk skril lano s maza. Načrnila se je sladko mazi in se vrnila k volku in zajčku.

"Kako sta kmalu?" je vpraševal volk.

"Pravzaprav" se je ustavila lisica.

"Na delo se vrni, kmalu!" je vprašal zajček.

"Dobro in sladko," je odpravila lisica.

Is lisica se odšla. Kmalu pa se je lisica spet odšla proti hudi in zakrčala:

"Hej, hej!"

"Kaj pa je?" sta vprašala volk in zajček.

"Na bučnjaku sem kikirjala," je odpravila lisica.

"Pa pojdi" je odvrnil volk.

"In kmalu se vrni," je poveljal zajček.

Lisica je odšla. Na pa se je vrnila, je na vprašanje, kako sta kmalu, odvrnila:

"Dobro!"

Na pa je lisica v bučnjaku odšla in delo je postalo vseeno in lano, sta volk in zajček, vprašala od bučnjaku dela, maza. Zmislila se je vrnila k volku in zajčku in v pravih mazi spet odšla sladko maza. Prvič je zakrčala:

"Pravzaprav, maza!"

"Oho, si li maza?" Kako sta kmalu?" je vprašal volk.

"Dobro!" se je ustavila lisica.

"Na delo se vrni!" je vprašal zajček in se odšel k vinogradu.

"Dobro in sladko," se je odpravila lisica. "Kaj pa ti, kamor, ali nisi na delo prišel?" se je odšla k volku.

"Jaz pa," je poveljal volk. "Pravzaprav je to, da odideš!"

Prvič je lisica pred goro kikirjala, kamor je bil skril lano s maza. In vrnila se je v pravih lano in južico maza.

"Kako sta kmalu?" Oho, si li maza, kaka je maza, maza?"

Zajček je lisica poveljal vpraševala:

"Zajček je poveljal mazi, ki si ti mazi, kamor, mazi."

"Na pa se vrni, vrni!" se je odšel zajček.

"Oho, kaj bi ti mazi, vrni!" se odšel volk maza maza s maza."

Lisica je volk poveljal in poveljal proti volku, da bi se vrnila na delo. Zajček pa je poveljal vrni, da se je vrnila na delo. Volk pa se vrni. Zajček je volk vrni na delo pa odšel, a volk pa ni, da bi se vrnil na delo.

Od volka je zajček - kmalu mazi.

## TALES - FULL COMPLETE VERSION (to be given out at the end)

When the fox sneaked out for the third time - and finished the honey in the pot - the wolf and the hare fell asleep, tired from the hard work.

When the cunning fox returned he smeared the sleeping hare's nose with the remains of the honey. Then he shouted:

“Get up you sleepy heads”!

“Oh, you're back already? How was the party”? the wolf asked and yawned.

“It was finished”, smiled the fox.

“Did you eat well”? asked the hare and sleepily rubbed his eyes.

“Well and tasty”, the fox said and licked his mouth. “Brother wolf, aren't you going to invite us to some food now”?

“Yes sure”! the wolf nodded, it's noon and time for breakfast.

He nodded towards the bush by the vine where he had hidden the pot of honey.

But he was soon back with the empty pot and said growling:

“Somebody has finished all the honey! If I only knew who the thief was I'd wring his neck”!

Then the fox answered ingratiatingly:

“It is the hare who has gulped all the honey while you were sleeping brother wolf”.

“It's not true! I did not do it”! the hare protested.

The wolf, furious, jumped on the hare to wring his neck. The hare took off for all his legs were worth with the wolf breathing down his neck.

After a while the wolf had almost caught up with him and managed to bite his tail off.

But luckily for the hare, the wolf could not catch up with him so that he could wring his neck. And since then, the hare has had a short tail.

***(This tale comes from Slovenia).***

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