



CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

ANDROCLES AND THE LION



Story Description

Androcles lives a miserable life as the slave of a cruel and unjust master. Even though runaway slaves face the death penalty, he flees to the nearby woods. There Androcles delights in his new-found freedom. He also makes an unusual friend: a lion with an injured paw. The two live together happily, but the lion gets captured, and shortly afterwards Androcles, too. Androcles is punished by being fed to a lion.

Androcles prepares to die, glad that he has enjoyed a few weeks of freedom. To his surprise, the ferocious lion doesn't attack. It's the lion he helped! The emperor, amazed at what he observed, frees both Androcles and the lion. Androcles then spreads the message that everyone should appreciate their freedom and that slavery should be abolished. This retelling of Aesop's classic fable demonstrates the importance of freedom and friendship.

Main Character Traits

Citizenship/Appreciation/Fairness

Other Character Traits

Compassion, Courage, Diligence, Friendship, Honesty, Kindness, Loyalty, Perseverance, Proper Work Ethic, and Self-Discipline

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Fairness and Self-Discipline

“You’re not making enough bricks!” barked the angry slave master as he shook his whip in Androcles’s face. Androcles looked up and whispered, “Sir, I’m working as hard and fast as I can.”

“You lazy worker!” yelled the furious slave worker. He yanked Androcles’s arm and shouted, “Come with me! I know you can work faster. You’re getting whipped! I’m making you an example for the other workers.” The slave master marched Androcles to the whipping post and tied him up. As the whip slashed across Androcles’s back, the slave master yelled, “This will teach you to work faster!”

Every time Androcles felt the whip, he gritted his teeth and groaned to himself, “Ohhhhh! If only I could be free!”

When the slave master untied Androcles from the whipping post, he warned, “Every day you don’t make enough bricks, you’re getting whipped! Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Androcles said softly.

Even though the slave master beat Androcles unfairly, Androcles did not show any anger. He used self-discipline to keep his anger under check. If he had showed anger, the slave master probably would have beaten him even more. We must remember that many things in life are not fair, and it doesn’t help to get mad because something is unfair.

Diligence/Perseverance/Proper Work Ethic

The next day Androcles told another worker, “I’m so weak from my beating yesterday, but I’m going to work as fast as I can to make enough bricks. I sure don’t want another beating.”

“I don’t blame you,” the worker said.

But in spite of trying to work as hard as he could, Androcles could not make enough bricks. At the end of the day he groaned, “What can I do? I’m working as fast as I can, but I can’t satisfy the slave master.”

Even though he gets beat by the slave master every day, he continues to work as hard as he can.

Courage

“What can I do? My best is never enough, and every beating leaves me weaker than the day before. These beatings will kill me. Ohhhhh! How I wish I were free! Tomorrow I’m running away! If I get caught and fed to a hungry lion, at least I’ll have my freedom for a few days.”

The next day while making bricks, Androcles watched carefully for his chance to escape. When he was sure no one was looking, he raced into the woods and ran until he could run no more.

Androcles showed courage by escaping while knowing he would be put to death if captured.

Courage/Compassion/Kindness

One day Androcles heard a strange sound. “What’s that?” he asked. He tiptoed towards the sound and peeked through a bush. He froze. “A lion! I better get out of here fast.” But when he saw the lion moaning and groaning and not rushing to attack him, he said, “There must be something wrong with that lion.”

When the lion saw Androcles, he held out his bleeding, swollen paw. “Oh, my!” said Androcles. “Look at that poor lion. I’ll try to help him.” Slowly, Androcles went towards the lion. The giant cat purred like a kitten. When Androcles got closer, he said, “You poor thing. You have a big thorn in your paw.”

Androcles knelt beside the lion. When the lion laid his paw on his lap, Androcles said with a kind voice, “Let me pull out this thorn.” Then he carefully pulled the thorn out and bandaged the paw with his extra shirt.

Androcles was courageous, compassionate, and kind to take out the thorn from the lion’s paw. The lion could have easily killed him and under normal circumstances would have.

Friendship and Appreciation

The grateful lion licked his face as he worked. Then the lion limped along and led Androcles to his cave. As soon as the lion felt better, he went hunting. When the lion found food, he shared it with Androcles.

“I’m so thankful,” said Androcles. “Now I have something to eat and a safe place to sleep.”

Both the lion and Androcles are thankful. The lion is thankful that Androcles helped him, and Androcles is thankful for the food and shelter that the lion gives him. That’s what friends do—they help each other.

Appreciation and Citizenship

One day Androcles sneaked into the city. He watched a boy, who had many toys of his own, yank a ball from his sister. The mother saw this and scolded, “Give the ball back!”

The boy threw the ball at his sister. Then he stormed away and yelled, “Take your ball!”

Androcles shook his head and said, “Look at that selfish boy. He’s mad over a silly ball. That boy needs to appreciate the many things he has.”

Androcles watched men, women, and children arguing and complaining. “Don’t they appreciate what they have?” he asked. “Look at them. They’re free, have fine homes, nice clothes, and lots of good food. Yet they go around grumbling. How foolish they are.”

Androcles longed to be a citizen of the town. He would have been a good citizen because he appreciated his freedom. He realized that the people were foolish for not appreciating the good things they had—their freedom, homes, clothes, and food. We should all be thankful for what we have—even if it is not exactly what we want.

Honesty

One day a young man saw Androcles in the woods hunting. The man quickly went to the officials and said, "I'm sure I saw a runaway slave in the forest."

"Quick!" the official shouted to the soldiers. "That may be Androcles, the runaway slave. We've been searching a long time for him. Put a search team together, and don't forget the dogs."

Soldiers quickly got the dogs and mounted their horses to search for Androcles. When Androcles heard horses and the barking dogs, he ran behind a rock to hide. "Ohhhhh!" he groaned. "I'm sure they'll find me now." The mean dogs quickly surrounded him and barked madly.

Soldiers came quickly and grabbed Androcles. "Are you Androcles, the runaway slave?" a soldier asked.

"Yes, I am," Androcles said. Without another word, the soldiers tied Androcles's hands behind his back, put him on a horse, and took him away.

A soldier threw Androcles in jail, and yelled, "Get in there, you runaway slave. Tomorrow you'll stand before the emperor."

As Androcles stared out of his cell, he said, "No doubt I'm going to die, but at least for a short time I was a free man."

Androcles was honest with the soldiers and told them who he was. He could easily have lied to try to trick them, but he was an honest person and told the truth even when his life and freedom were on the line.

Friendship and Loyalty

The next day the stadium was crowded....As they led Androcles out, the crowd stood and booed. When the soldiers opened the gate, a starving lion gave a mighty roar that thundered throughout the stadium. The crowd cheered. The lion raced towards Androcles. The lion leaped in the air, opened his mouth wide, and was ready to attack. Suddenly, the lion detected a smell!

The lion quickly turned his head and fell to the ground. He knew it was Androcles! The lion crawled towards him, purring like a kitten.

"My dear friend!" exclaimed Androcles as he put his arms around the lion. Then the lion put his paw on Androcles's lap and began licking his face.

The emperor and the crowd were astonished. They had never seen anything like this before. "What is happening?" the angry emperor demanded. "Did they feed the lion before he came out?"

"No, sir," replied an official. "We are sure the lion was not fed for a week."

Although the lion was very hungry, his friendship and loyalty to Androcles were greater. He would not harm the friend who had helped him.

Appreciation

They brought Androcles before the emperor. “Why didn’t the lion attack you?” the puzzled emperor asked.

Androcles bowed and said, “Your Majesty, I met this lion when he had a thorn in his paw. I removed the thorn and bandaged his paw with a shirt. We became best friends, and we lived together in a cave until he was captured.”

“I’ve heard enough,” the emperor said. “Give this kind man and the lion their freedom.”

“Thank you! Thank you!” Androcles said as he bowed before the emperor. “I will be forever grateful for your kindness.” Androcles went to the lion’s cage and led the lion to his freedom.

Androcles appreciated his freedom so much that he went throughout all the towns and villages telling everyone his story. He declared that everyone should be valued and slavery should be done away with. At the close of every speech, he said, “Men, women, and children, always be thankful and appreciate your freedom.”

Androcles not only remembered to thank the emperor for freeing the lion and himself, but he also traveled around telling others to appreciate their freedom. When we learn to appreciate something, it is good to share what we learned so others can benefit from it, too.

Questions

1. Why did the angry slave master give Androcles a beating?
He said that Androcles was not making the bricks fast enough.
2. Why do you think that the slave master treated Androcles the way he did?
He was a bully and enjoyed mistreating prisoners, especially someone he thought was better than him. (inference)
3. Was Androcles being lazy like the slave master said?
No, he was working as fast and hard as he could.
4. Why do you think Androcles was put in prison in the first place?
Maybe he didn’t really do anything bad—it just looked as if he had. (Answers will vary). (inference)
5. When Androcles suggested running away, what was his friend’s warning?
He reminded Androcles that if he were caught, he would be fed to hungry lions.
6. Why did Androcles decide to run away despite the possible punishment?
He realized that the daily beatings would eventually kill him and decided that a few days of freedom would be better than continuing as he was.

7. How did he escape?

While they were making bricks, he watched to see when no one was looking and ran as fast as he could into the woods.

8. What did Androcles make to help him get food?

He made a bow and arrow.

9. What did Androcles need to remember as he searched for food?

He needed to be extremely careful that no one saw him because he did not want to be reported to the emperor's soldiers.

10. What strange sound did Androcles hear one day?

He heard a lion moaning and groaning.

11. When the lion saw Androcles what did he do?

He held out his bleeding, swollen paw.

12. When Androcles approached the lion, what did it do?

The lion purred like a kitten.

13. How did Androcles help the lion?

He removed the thorn from the lion's paw and bandaged it with his extra shirt.

14. How did the lion show his appreciation to Androcles?

He licked Androcles's face, took him to his cave, and shared his food with him.

15. What changed the friendship of Androcles and the lion?

One day the lion was captured.

16. When Androcles sat on the hillside and watched the townspeople, what did he wish?

He wished he were truly free—free to live in the town and not have to worry about being caught.

17. When Androcles went into the city what did he see that upset him?

He saw a boy take a ball from his sister and then throw it at her when scolded by his mother.

18. What else bothered Androcles about the townspeople?

They were not thankful for their freedom, fine homes, nice clothes, or good food, but instead complained, argued, and grumbled.

19. What caused Androcles to be captured?
A young man saw Androcles hunting in the woods and reported it to the emperor's officials.
20. When the soldiers captured him, why did Androcles admit that he was Androcles, the runaway slave?
He was an honest person and told the truth.
21. When the emperor heard how cruel the slave master had been to Androcles, why didn't he allow Androcles to go free?
He said that the law must be fulfilled.
22. How did the people feel about Androcles getting fed to the lions?
They came to watch and thought it would teach slaves not to run away from their masters. These things showed their approval.
23. What did the lion first do?
It gave a mighty roar, raced towards Androcles, leaped through the air at him, and was ready to make the kill with his wide-open mouth.
24. What caused the lion to stop?
It recognized the scent of Androcles.
25. What did Androcles and the lion do next?
The lion crawled to Androcles while purring like a kitten. Androcles hugged him, and then the lion licked his face.
26. How long had it been since the lion had eaten?
The lion had not been fed for one week.
27. After Androcles explained to the emperor why the lion did not attack him, what did the emperor do?
The emperor gave Androcles and the lion their freedom.
28. How did Androcles respond to this good news?
He thanked the emperor again and again.
29. Because Androcles appreciated his freedom so much, what did he do?
He traveled throughout the towns and villages spreading the message that everyone should be valued and that slavery should be done away with. He also taught that everyone should be thankful and appreciate their freedom.