



CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF



Story Description

Nicholas knows that guarding the family’s sheep is important, but he also thinks it’s one of the most boring jobs in the world. He decides to make his day more exciting by shouting “Wolf!” so the townspeople will run to help. His practical joke is a huge success from his point of view, but the townspeople are furious.

Nicholas realizes his mistake when the wolf attacks and everyone refuses to respond to his cry for help. This retelling of Aesop’s classic fable carries the story beyond the wolf’s attack, and illustrates the power of honesty and forgiveness.

Main Character Traits

Honesty/Responsibility/Trustworthiness

Other Character Traits

Caring, Citizenship, Courage, Diligence, Forgiveness, Listening, Obedience to Parents, Respect for Others, Self-Discipline, and Unselfishness

Contents

Responsibility and Unselfishness	Diligence and Self-Discipline
Unselfishness and Citizenship	Respect for Others
Courage	Obedience to Parents and Listening
Honesty	Caring
Trustworthiness	Forgiveness and Courage

Responsibility and Unselfishness

“Take the sheep up to the hill where there’s lots of green grass for them to eat,” Dad said. “And don’t forget that in the nearby forest lives a big wolf that loves to eat sheep. So always be careful to watch the sheep.”

“I’ll be careful,” promised Nicholas.

Sometimes in the large forest it became hard for the big wolf to catch something to eat. When that happened, he took a chance to capture his favorite meal, a sheep. Nicholas always had to be very careful that the wolf did not attack his sheep.

“I know watching sheep is important,” Nicholas said to himself, “but it gets so boring.”

Nicholas has a big responsibility in watching the sheep. It is an important job that his dad is trusting him to do. If he does not watch the sheep, a wolf could kill one of his sheep. However, Nicholas begins to think more about himself than the sheep. He is more worried about not being bored than he is worried about protecting the sheep from the wolf. Instead of being selfish, he needs to be unselfish.

Unselfishness and Citizenship

Everyone heard Nicholas yelling, “Wolf! Wolf!” Farmers left their horses in the field, women stopped their washing, store owners left their shops, and carpenters threw down their tools. Everyone in town ran up the hill as fast as they could go. Nicholas hid behind a rock and laughed as he watched the townspeople slip, slide, and fall as they raced up the hill. “This is so, so funny!” he said. “I’ve never seen anything so funny.”

The townspeople were showing good citizenship to go and help someone in need. They were also being unselfish because they left their jobs to go help Nicholas. In other words, they put the needs of Nicholas before their own needs.

Courage

The townspeople came with sticks and stones. They were huffing and puffing as they walked around looking for the wolf.

The townspeople had the courage to kill the wolf. They brought sticks and stones to kill him, so they were ready to do what was necessary to protect Nicholas and the sheep.

Honesty

The townspeople asked, “Where’s the wolf?”

Nicholas hid his grin and lied, “The wolf ran into the forest when he saw you coming.”

Some of the men and women began to wonder about this when they saw the sheep so quiet. “Where did the wolf come from?” asked a man.

Nicholas pointed and said, “Right by that rock.”

Some men and women walked to the rock and saw no wolf tracks. One of the women came to him and said, “Let me warn you! If you’re playing tricks on us, we will not come to help you!”

His dad also warned him, “Nicholas, I hope you’re not lying.”

"I'm not lying," said Nicholas.

Nicholas was not being honest—he was lying, and the townspeople and his dad suspected that he was lying. When Nicholas continued to lie, he made it harder and harder to get out of his own trap. He is also building his reputation as a liar. It is important to be known for telling the truth. This will help you in all areas of life—school, home, and later in your work.

Trustworthiness

As the townspeople went away, they began talking among themselves. "There was no wolf," a farmer said. "The sheep are much too quiet. Nicholas is lying."

A woman added, "We also didn't see any wolf tracks."

"I'm not helping him anymore," a farmer said.

"I'm also not helping him," a store owner said.

The townspeople realize that they cannot trust Nicholas to tell them the truth; he is not trustworthy. They don't want to help someone who is lying to them. That is why they decide that they will not help him in the future. Remember that whether you realize it or not, you are constantly building your reputation by what you do and say.

Diligence and Self-Discipline

One day Nicholas became so bored that without thinking, he suddenly jumped on a rock and yelled as loud as he could, "Wolf! Wolf!"

Nicholas needs diligence and self-discipline—sticking with watching the sheep even when he is bored and doesn't want to. Diligence and self-discipline help you complete jobs and this leads to success.

Respect for Others

A few townspeople ran up the hill to help Nicholas. As Nicholas watched them run up the hill, he laughed so hard that he had to hold his tummy. "Ha! Ha! Ha! This is so, so funny."

When the townspeople saw him laughing, they were furious. An angry man said, "There's no wolf! We saw you laughing."

Nicholas did not show the townspeople respect by laughing at them. You should always treat people the way you would like to be treated. This is called the Golden Rule, and it shows that you respect them.

Obedience to Parents and Listening

Mom came and scolded him, "Don't ever do that again! That's lying! When you become known as a liar, how can anyone trust you?"

"I was just having a little fun," whispered Nicholas.

"To you it was fun," Dad said, "but it was not fun for the townspeople. They're furious. They stopped what they were doing to help you. To them you're now a liar who can never be trusted. Don't ever do that again!"

But Nicholas was not listening. He was furious.

When Dad and Mom left, he kicked a stone and grumbled, "Why is everyone so mad at me? Can't they take a little joke? I was just having a little fun. And why is everyone talking to me about lying?"

Nicholas needs to listen to and obey his parents. They are giving him good advice. Instead of admitting his mistake (lying), he tries to justify it. To justify something means that you give a reason for doing something in order to make what you did seem right. Nicholas cannot change his lying ways until he is willing to admit he has done wrong.

Caring

Then one day while watching his sheep, Nicholas heard a rustling noise coming from the forest. "I wonder what that is," he said to himself.

Suddenly the hungry wolf ran out of the forest. "Oh, nooooo!" cried Nicholas. "It's the big, bad wolf! He's coming to attack my sheep. I need to call for help!" Nicholas quickly jumped on a rock, waved his hat wildly, and screamed as loud as he could, "Wolf! Wolf! There's really a wolf! I'm not lying! Please! Come and help me save my sheep!"

As Nicholas watched the wolf drag his favorite lamb into the forest, he groaned, "Ohhhhh! Why didn't I listen? Why did I lie and act so foolish?"

Nicholas does not want anything to happen to his sheep—he cares about them. However, he should have cared about them earlier. If he had thought about the consequences of his actions, he would have realized that it is important to build a trustworthy reputation, so people will trust and give help when it is needed. If you want people to trust you, then build a trustworthy reputation by not lying and by doing what you say you will do.

Forgiveness and Courage

When Nicholas saw Dad and Mom coming, he ran to meet them. "I'm so sorry for being foolish and lying," he cried. "I promise, I will never lie again. Please forgive me. Now I see how foolish it is to lie."

Dad and Mom gave him a great big hug and said, "We forgive you."

Nicholas went before the townspeople and said, "I am very, very sorry for lying. Please forgive me. Now I understand how foolish it is to lie. From now on, I will always tell the truth."

"You're forgiven!" the townspeople shouted. After the meeting some townspeople came to him and said, "We're proud of you for having the courage to say, 'I am sorry.'"

It took a lot of courage for Nicholas to apologize to the townspeople and ask for forgiveness. However, when you ask for forgiveness, people should be willing to forgive you.

Questions

1. What did Nicholas's father warn him to be careful of?
He warned him about a big wolf that would sometimes attack sheep.
2. When Nicholas first became bored, what did he do?
He threw stones at rocks and trees.
3. When Nicholas became bored with throwing stones at rocks and trees, what did he do?
He made a slingshot and used it on rocks and trees.

4. When Nicholas became bored with his slingshot, what did he do?
He yelled, "Wolf! Wolf!" so the townspeople ran to help him.
5. Why were the townspeople suspicious about there actually being a wolf?
They did not see the wolf or his tracks and the sheep were calm.
6. What was the first lie that Nicholas told?
He said that the wolf had gone into the forest.
7. Although most of the townspeople did not believe him, what did one woman say?
She said, "Maybe Nicholas is telling the truth."
8. What happened when Nicholas went back to watching the sheep?
He became bored again using his slingshot and watching the sheep.
9. Without thinking, what did Nicholas do?
He jumped on a rock and cried, "Wolf! Wolf!"
10. What did the townspeople say and do this time?
Some of the people thought that Nicholas was fooling them again, but others thought that maybe it really was a wolf, so they went to help.
11. How did the townspeople discover the truth?
They saw Nicholas hiding behind a rock and laughing at them.
12. What did Nicholas's mother warn him about lying?
She said that once you become known as a liar, no one can trust you.
13. What reason did Nicholas give for crying wolf?
He said that he just wanted to have a little fun.
14. How did the townspeople feel about Nicholas's joke?
They were furious.
15. What did Nicholas think about the townspeople being so mad?
He was mad and couldn't understand why they were so upset.
16. One day what did Nicholas hear coming from the forest and what was it?
He heard a rustling noise, and it was the big wolf.
17. How do you know that Nicholas was scared when he first saw the wolf?
He was trembling.

18. Why was he scared?

He knew the wolf could kill his sheep and probably would. (inference)

19. What did Nicholas do when he saw the wolf coming for his sheep?

He yelled for help and said that there really was a wolf and that he was not lying.

20. Why didn't the people come to help?

They assumed that Nicholas was lying again.

21. When Nicholas's parents came, what did he tell them?

He said, "I'm sorry for being foolish and lying. I promise I'll never lie again. Please forgive me."

22. Why did he have a change of attitude and apologize to his parents?

Once the wolf took his sheep, he realized how important it was to have the townspeople believe him and help him. (inference)

23. What did Nicholas say to the townspeople?

He asked for forgiveness and apologized for lying.

24. How did the townspeople respond?

They forgave him and were proud that he had the courage to say that he was sorry.