

CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

SOMMER-TIME STORIES



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Story Description

The proud emperor loves to parade before his people with beautiful clothes. When a court official suggests paying the soldiers more money so they don't have to beg for food, the furious emperor is ready to throw him in jail.

Now everyone fears saying anything displeasing to the emperor. When two swindlers decide to take advantage of him by selling him invisible clothes with special powers, none of the emperor's advisors dare to tell him the truth. The emperor parades through the city in his underwear until one young lad is brave enough to speak honestly and opens the emperor's eyes. In this retelling of the Hans Christian Andersen classic folktale, the emperor learns to value honest advisors, even when the truth is unpleasant.



Main Character Traits

Courage/Honesty/Humility

Other Character Traits

Assertiveness, Fairness, Listening, Proper Work Ethic, Respect for Leaders, Responsibility, Self-Discipline, and Unselfishness

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Humility

Long ago there lived a very proud emperor. He was proud of his palace which was the finest in the city. He was proud of his city which was the greatest in the land. Most of all, he was proud of his beautiful clothes which he loved to parade in before all his people. Every day his royal men blasted their horns and declared, "The emperor is coming!"

You can tell that the emperor has a lot of pride because he is always showing off in front of the people. He even has trumpeters announce his coming so no one will miss seeing him. We call this "tooting your own horn." No one likes it if you toot your own horn. Let others say nice things about you, but don't brag on yourself.

Fairness/Listening/Self-Discipline

Because of the way the emperor spent the kingdom's money, there was very little money left for others. His soldiers were poorly dressed and often had to beg for food. One day an official suggested, "Your Majesty, maybe we should pay the soldiers more money, so they will be better dressed and never have to beg for food."

Upon hearing this, the emperor flew into a furious rage. "What?" he demanded. "Are you saying I'm paying my soldiers too little money? Do you want to be thrown into jail?"

The official bowed, lowered his head, and whispered, "I am very, very sorry for what I said."

"Don't ever insult me again!" the emperor warned.

Not only was the emperor not fair to his soldiers, but he didn't even want to listen to wise counsel about how he was spending his money. You should always listen to wise advice; it will keep you from making mistakes. Also, instead of using self-discipline to not show his great anger, he got very angry. This caused him to lose respect with his people, and instead they feared him.

Respect for Leaders

Everyone in the kingdom heard how the emperor acted with the official. Now no one would say anything to displease the emperor.

The people didn't respect the emperor; instead they feared him. There is a big difference between respect and fear. If you respect someone, you will honor him and do all you can for him. If you fear someone, you will do what you can to keep him from harming you, but no more. Also, people usually like someone they respect, but dislike someone they fear.

Proper Work Ethic and Responsibility

From a far country, two lazy swindlers, Rex and Max, heard the news....One day Rex jumped up and exclaimed, "I've got a great idea!"

"Excellent!" Max shouted as he rubbed his hands together. "This will make us lots of money without having to work."

...Rex lied, "We'll be working day and night to weave these beautiful garments."

When they went to their workroom, Max said, "We need to set up our looms so when someone comes, we can make believe we're working."

"You're right," Rex said. "Let's put up the looms."

Rex and Max did not have a proper work ethic. Instead of working, they wanted to be lazy. That is why they devised a plan to trick the emperor out of a lot of money. If they didn't get caught this time, they eventually will. Cheaters always get caught in the end.

Honesty and Courage

When the prime minister came to the swindler's room, he did not see anything on the looms! He blinked, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. He began to shake. "I can't see anything!" he said to himself. "I can't be unfit for office!"

Rex pointed to the garment on the loom and declared, "Look at the wonderful colors, and the fine gold threads. Is this not the most beautiful garment you have ever seen?"

Not wanting to be unfit for office, the prime minister quickly declared, "I've never seen anything so beautiful in all my life!"

...The prime minister went to the emperor and reported, "I just saw the most wonderful garment that I have ever seen. It is beautiful!"

The prime minister let his fear of the emperor keep him from being honest. It would have been difficult and the emperor may have thrown him in jail, but he should have been honest. As the story ended, he may have lost his job anyway. Have the courage to be honest; it will help keep you out of trouble.

Respect for Leaders

Secretly the people despised the emperor for showing off. But knowing the anger of the emperor when people disagreed with him, they always praised him regardless of how they felt.

The people did not really respect the emperor; they only pretended to respect him. Because they feared him, they did not let him see their true feelings for him. If you become a leader, be humble and kind. Never boss people around; think about how you would like to be treated.

Honesty and Courage

The emperor, wanting to see the beautiful garments, said to his faithful prime minister, "Let's visit the weavers."

When they knocked on the door, the weavers dashed to the looms. "Come in," Rex said.

Max, making believe he was holding up the cloak, asked, "Is this not the most beautiful cloak you have ever seen? Look at the wonderful colors, the beautiful silk, and all the gold."

"And look at these trousers," Rex said. "Are they not beautiful?"

The emperor began to shake. "I see nothing!" he declared to himself. "Am I unfit to be emperor? That can't be!"

...When Rex and Max came to the palace, it was filled with officials for a royal welcome....The emperor proudly looked around at those standing around him and asked, "Are these not the most beautiful garments you have ever seen?"

Fearing the anger of the emperor, everyone clapped and exclaimed, "They are beautiful!"

Everyone (the emperor, the prime minister, the other court officials, the people in the city) needed courage so they could be honest. The emperor was afraid that the people would realize he was unfit for office. Everyone else feared the emperor's wrath. Don't let fear control you. Do what is right even when it looks like it will get you in trouble or get you caught.

Humility and Unselfishness

The emperor looked in the mirror and exclaimed, "These are the most beautiful garments I have ever seen! I can't wait to parade before my people! These garments will be my greatest treasure."

As the emperor proudly looked at his invisible garments, Rex and Max quickly slipped out the back door, jumped on their horses, and rode away with their treasures to hide in the mountains.

As the emperor marched before the crowds, the people clapped and shouted. The emperor asked different ones what they saw. They said, "The garments are magnificent! The silk cloak is beautiful! Your garments are lovely! I've never seen anything like it!" The emperor was thrilled at what he heard.

The emperor was so focused on himself and how he looked that he didn't care about anyone else. If he had been unselfish and thought about how others felt, he wouldn't have wanted the special clothes in the first place. Remember this saying: It's not about you.

Assertiveness/Courage/Honesty

However, in the city there was one family who taught their young son, Fredrick, "Regardless of what others say, always tell the truth!" When Fredrick saw the emperor in his underwear, he did not cheer.

Upon seeing this, the emperor went to him and asked, "How do you like my new clothes?"

Fredrick lowered his head and whispered, "Your Majesty, I see you in your underwear."

...The emperor was so furious at himself that he had believed the lies of the swindlers. He was also deeply distressed that no one in his kingdom had the courage to tell him the truth except for this one young boy.

As they drove back to the palace, the emperor said to his prime minister, "That young lad opened my eyes. I have been very proud and selfish. I always demanded that everyone say good things about me. From this day on, I want everyone always to tell me the truth, even if it's painful. I need someone just like that young boy as my future prime minister."

Fredrick was the only person with the assertiveness and courage to tell the truth about the emperor's clothes. He was probably afraid that the emperor would put him in jail or something else cruel, but he still told the truth anyway. It may be hard, but always tell the truth; you'll be glad you did!

Honesty and Courage

When Fredrick and his parents came to the palace, the emperor said, "I am very pleased with what you did, Fredrick. I need a true and faithful minister to serve me. Since you had the courage to stand up for the truth when no one else would, I want

you to be trained at the palace to become second in command as my prime minister."

"I would be greatly pleased, Your Majesty." Fredrick and his family moved into the palace. Because Fredrick always wanted to be honest and learn, he became a wise prime minister and became known as one who always told the truth.

The emperor rewarded Fredrick for having the courage to tell the truth. This one incident affected all of Fredrick's future because it is the reason he became the new prime minister. Telling the truth does have rewards. When you always tell the truth, you develop a reputation as an honest person. This will be of great benefit during your life in your work and at home.

Questions

1. What was the emperor proud of?
He was proud of his palace, his city, and most of all his clothes.
2. Why did the emperor have his trumpeters announce his coming?
He wanted everyone to know he was coming so he could show off to them. (inference)
3. What did a court official suggest the emperor do about the soldiers and why did this suggestion make the emperor mad?
The court official suggested that the emperor pay the soldiers more money so they would be better dressed and not have to beg for food. This made the emperor mad because he didn't want to share his money, and this would be admitting he was wrong to have paid them so little.
4. What news spread throughout the kingdom and what news spread even to other countries?
The fact that the king became furious when he heard something displeasing spread throughout the kingdom. The fact that the emperor loved his clothes spread to other countries.
5. What was the goal of Rex and Max?
They wanted to trick the emperor and become rich without having to work.
6. How did Rex and Max describe the fabrics that they used?
They claimed their garments were magnificent, beautiful, and wonderful like none other in the whole world, and had the unusual quality of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for office.
7. Why did the emperor want the weavers to make the garments for him?
He desired their exceptional beauty and also wanted to see who was unfit to serve him.
8. What did Rex and Max claim that they needed in order to make the garments?
They said that they needed the finest silk and gold thread and to be paid in advance.

9. Since they weren't really working, why did Rex and Max set up the looms?
They pretended to be working, so no one would guess the truth.
10. Why did the emperor send his prime minister to check on the garments?
He knew that his prime minister was faithful and fit for service, so he wanted to know if the prime minister could see the garments or not.
11. What happened when the prime minister could not see anything on the looms?
He knew that he was not unfit for office, so he lied and said that the garments were beautiful.
12. When the Prime Minister first looked at the "garments," why did Rex and Max want the Prime Minister to tell the emperor what he said he had seen?
Since the Prime Minister had "seen" the garments, they wanted him to tell this to the emperor to help confirm what they were saying—that there were really clothes to be seen. (inference)
13. How did the people really feel about the emperor and why?
Secretly they despised him for showing off.
14. Why did the emperor pretend to see the garments and say they were beautiful?
He did not want people to think of him as unfit for office.
15. Why did everyone in the palace praise the garments?
They feared the wrath of the emperor—what he would say and do if they told the truth.
16. Just before the emperor paraded through the streets in his new clothes, what did Rex and Max do?
They quickly slipped out the back door, jumped on their horses, and rode away to hide in the mountains.
17. How did the people react when they saw the emperor in his underwear?
They clapped, shouted, and said, "The garments are magnificent! The silk cloak is beautiful! Your garments are lovely! I've never seen anything like it."
18. What had Fredrick's family taught him?
They had taught him that regardless of what others said, he should always tell the truth.

19. Why didn't Fredrick cheer like everyone else?
He saw that the king was in his underwear.
20. What was Fredrick's reply when the emperor asked him how he liked the new clothes?
He replied, "Your Majesty, I see you in your underwear."
21. What made the emperor realize the truth?
He saw how the crowd gasped, smiled, and whispered, "That child is right. The emperor has no clothes."
22. Who was the emperor furious at?
He was furious at himself for having believed the swindlers.
23. Why was the emperor distressed?
He was distressed because no one was brave enough to tell him the truth except that one little boy.
24. What did the emperor finally realize about himself?
He realized that he had been proud and selfish and that he needed everyone to tell him the truth even if it was painful.
25. What kind of prime minister did the emperor need?
He needed a true and faithful prime minister.
26. What kind of prime minister did Fredrick become known as?
He became known as a wise prime minister who could always be counted on to tell the truth.