

# KOREAN CULTURE THROUGH FOLK TALES

**GRADES:** Middle School (6-8)

**AUTHOR:** Terri Rutter

**SUBJECT:** History, Literature, Culture

**TIME REQUIRED:** One to two class periods (50-minute classes)

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will understand the societal relationships described in Confucianism.
- Students will analyze Korean folk literature to find evidence of Confucian ideals.
- Students will recognize evidence of Confucianism in their own society.

## **STANDARDS:**

### **NCSS Standards:**

Standard 1: Culture

### **Common Core Standards:**

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

SL 1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

Brief synopsis of Confucianism – Attached

Korean Folktales – Attached (Additional folk tales can be found with any internet search or library visit)

Folktales Key: Attached

## **BACKGROUND:**

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher who lived around 551 BC- 479 BC. He was a social philosopher who sought to understand how to fix the conflict ridden times he was born in. He developed a philosophy of personal and governmental morality, which he then began presenting to various leaders of his era. While his ideas did not catch on greatly during his lifetime, they eventually spread throughout China and beyond. Confucian principles shape Asian governments even to this day.

Confucianism has been a defining force in Asia for centuries. In the philosophy of Confucianism, respect for and obedience to those in authority over you is a key tenet. All societal relationships are based on this respect and obedience. While elders and authority figures care for those younger, the young give obedience to the wishes of the elders. The guiding principles of

Confucianism are *In* (Ren in Chinese) and *Ye* (Li in Chinese). *Ren* is concern for others and *Li* is appropriate behavior. Governments have come and gone, but Confucianism still influences life in East Asian countries.

Korea received Confucianism from China through cultural diffusion via the trade routes. During the Chosŏn Dynasty, King Seongjong was central to the establishment of Confucianism in Korea. Following that, Confucianism was further solidified as a state policy during the centuries of the Chosŏn Dynasty.

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Question students about their familial relationships. Ask if they think their parents still obey their grandparents. Ask if they get ordered around by older brothers and sisters. Ask if they do what the older sibling says and have them explain why or why not. Ask if they order younger siblings around. Ask why they think younger siblings might listen to them or not listen.
2. Explain that in East Asia there is a philosophy that would make obedience in these situations a requirement. Introduce Confucius and the basic beliefs of Confucianism to them by having them read the Confucius synopsis.
3. As students finish, have them think about their own family and write down which of the basic relationships applies to them – and which direction it is flowing. Select students to share these relationships. Students will use this same paper for the activity which follows.
4. Read the folktale Cinderella to students. Using the Confucius synopsis, discuss with students what Confucian relationships are evident. Discuss which relationships are being followed according to Confucius' ideals and which are not.
4. Give each student a folktale to read, being sure to separate the folktales so students next to each other don't have the same tales. This will make swapping tales between students easier.
5. Explain to students that they will be reading Korean folktales and looking for examples of any of the Confucian relationships in the tales. They are also to look for instances where the relationship is not being conducted according to Confucian beliefs (i.e. in a reciprocal fashion), or where the relationships are missing.
6. Students should note the title of each folktale as they read it, and they are to note examples of Confucian relationships (or note where characters are not exhibiting it)
7. Students will swap tales until all students have read and analyzed at least 3 tales.
8. Either in small groups, or as a whole class, have students share their analysis of the tales.

### **EVALUATION:**

Students will be assessed on correct identification of Confucian relationships in the attached folktales. Folktale key is provided.

**ENRICHMENT:**

Students can choose one or more of the Confucian relationships and create their own folktale which highlights the relationship. Alternatively, the folktale can show the lack of the Confucian relationship and the resultant discord which would follow this.

**RESOURCES:**

Vietnamese Cinderella Tale: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/tam.html>

The Korea Society:

[http://www.koreasociety.org/102\\_korean\\_studies\\_curriculum\\_materials/103\\_by\\_subject\\_area/118\\_folktales/view\\_category](http://www.koreasociety.org/102_korean_studies_curriculum_materials/103_by_subject_area/118_folktales/view_category).

Korean Folktales: <http://park.org/Korea/Pavilions/PublicPavilions/KoreaImage/hangul/litera/>  
Hyun, Peter. *Korean Children's Favorite Folk Tales*. Seoul: Hollym, 1995.

**HANDOUTS:****Confucianism Synopsis****Attached Folktales:**

*Vietnamese Cinderella*

*The Disobedient Frog*

*Two Brothers*

*Nolboo Hungboo*

*Three Gifts*

## Confucianism Synopsis

The Chinese scholar Confucius was born in China around 551 BCE. He was a brilliant student and developed a philosophy based on self-monitoring of behavior, rather than societal laws forcing correct behavior on citizens. In traditional view, when a society operates under a structure of laws, people are punished after doing illegal activities. People generally obey the laws, even when they don't understand the reasoning behind them, so they can avoid this punishment.

Confucius believed there was a better way. He wanted citizens to become accustomed to proper behaviors so actions would be controlled before they occurred. He felt people would then behave properly to avoid feeling ashamed and embarrassed, not in response to laws. There could then be a reduction in the number of laws necessary to run society.

In Confucianism, correct behavior starts with your relationship toward other people in your life. There are specific duties you have toward others around you based on your relationship / status with them.

Originally, there were five relationships spelled out:

- **Ruler to subject** – King's duties to his people, and the peoples' duties to the king.
- **Father to Son** – Father's duties to his son, and the son's duties to the father.
- **Husband to Wife** – A husband's duties to his wife, and her duties to him.
- **Older Brother to Younger Brother** – Older brother's duties to the younger, and the younger brother's duties to the older.
- **Older Friend to Younger Friend** – An older friend's duty to a younger friend and the younger's duties to the older.

In all cases, **the senior person owes fair treatment and care to the younger / junior person, while the younger / junior person owes respect and obedience to the senior.** Confucius felt that society would run smoothly if people always acted properly in these relationships with one another.

In more modern times, the relationships have changed slightly to allow for the expanding role of women in society. An updated version of the five relationships might read:

- **Boss to Employee** – Boss' duties to workers, and the workers' duties to the boss.
- **Parents to Children** – Parents' duties to children, and children's duties to the parents.
- **Husband to Wife** – A husband's duties to his wife, and her duties to him.
- **Older sibling to Younger sibling** – Older sibling's duties to the younger, and the younger sibling's duties to the older.
- **Older Friend to Younger Friend** – An older friend's duty to a younger friend and the younger's duties to the older.

Confucianism spread throughout China and migrated to Korea and Japan as well. Government workers had to pass tests on the teachings of Confucius to get their jobs. It was felt that those

who studied Confucius' teachings would be those most likely to practice his teachings – therefore making a good government. Confucianism is still common in many Asian cultures today. It can be seen in the respect and obedience that many Asian children give to their parents, and in the respect given to the elderly in these societies.

# Vietnamese version of Cinderella

## *The Story of Tam and Cam*

### **Vietnam**

Long, long ago there was a man who lost his wife and lived with his little girl named Tam. Then he married again a wicked woman. The little girl found this out on the first day after the wedding. There was a big banquet in the house, but Tam was shut up in a room all by herself instead of being allowed to welcome the guests and attend the feast. Moreover, she had to go to bed without any supper.

Things grew worse when a new baby girl was born in the house. The step-mother adored Cam--for Cam was the name of the baby girl--and she told her husband so many lies about poor Tam that he would not have anything more to do with the latter. "Go and stay away in the kitchen and take care of yourself, you naughty child," said the wicked woman to Tam. And she gave the little girl a dirty wretched place in the kitchen, and it was there that Tam was to live and work. At night, she was given a torn mat and a ragged sheet as bed and coverlet. She had to rub the floors, cut the wood, feed the animals, do all the cooking, the washing up and many other things. Her poor little soft hands had large blisters, but she bore the pain without complaint.

Her step-mother also sent her to deep forests to gather wood with the secret hope that the wild beasts might carry her off. She asked Tam to draw water from dangerously deep wells so that she might get drowned one day. Tam worked and worked all day till her skin became swarthy and her hair entangled. But sometimes she went to the well to draw water, looked at herself in it, and was frightened to realize how dark and ugly she was. She then got some water in the hollow of her hand, washed her face and combed her long smooth hair with her fingers, and the soft white skin appeared again, and she looked very pretty indeed.

When the step-mother realized how pretty Tam could look, she hated her more than ever, and wished to do her more harm. One day, she asked Tam and her own daughter Cam to go fishing in the village pond.

"Try to get as many as you can," she said. "If you come back with only a few of them, you will get flogged and will be sent to bed without supper." Tam knew that these words were meant for her because the step-mother would never beat Cam, who was the apple of her eyes, while she always flogged Tam as hard as she could.

Tam tried to fish hard and by the end of the day, got a basket full of fish. In the meantime, Cam spent her time rolling herself in the tender grass, basking in the warm sunshine, picking up wild flowers, dancing and singing. The sun set before Cam had even started her fishing. She looked at her empty basket and had a bright idea. "Sister, sister," she said to Tam, "your hair is full of mud. Why don't you step into the fresh water and get a good wash to get rid of it? Otherwise mother is going to scold you."

Tam listened to the advice, and had a good wash. But, in the meantime, Cam poured her sister's fish into her own basket and went home as quickly as she could. When Tam realized that her fish were stolen away, her heart sank and she began to cry bitterly. Certainly, her step-mother would punish her severely tonight!

Suddenly, a fresh and balmy wind blew, the sky looked purer and the clouds whiter and in front of her stood the smiling blue-robed Goddess of Mercy, carrying a lovely green willow branch with her. "What is the matter, dear child?" asked the Goddess in a sweet voice. Tam gave her an account of her misfortune and added: "Most Noble Lady, what am I to do tonight when I go home? I am frightened to death, for my step-mother will not believe me, and will flog me very, very hard."

The Goddess of Mercy consoled her. "Your misfortune will be over soon. Have confidence in me and cheer up. Now, look at your basket to see whether there is anything left there." Tam looked and saw a lovely small fish with red fins and golden eyes, and uttered a little cry of surprise. The Goddess told her to take the fish home, put it in the well at the back of the house, and feed it three times a day with what she could save from her own food. Tam thanked the Goddess most gratefully and did exactly as she was told.

Whenever she went to the well, the fish would appear on the surface to greet her. But should anyone else come, the fish would never show itself. Tam's strange behavior was noticed by her step-mother who spied on her, and went to the well to look for the fish which hid itself in the deep water. She decided to ask Tam to go to a far away spring to fetch some water, and taking advantage of the absence, she put on the latter's ragged clothes, went to call the fish, killed it and cooked it.

When Tam came back, she went to the well, called and called, but there was no fish to be seen except the surface of the water stained with blood. She leaned her head against the well and wept in the most miserable way. The Goddess of Mercy appeared again, with a face as sweet as a loving mother, and comforted her: "Do not cry, my child. Your step-mother has killed the fish, but you must try to find its bones and bury them in the ground under your mat. Whatever you may wish to possess, pray to them, and your wish will be granted."

Tam followed the advice and looked for the fish bones everywhere but could find none. "Cluck! cluck!" said a hen, "Give me some paddy and I will show you the bones. Tam gave her a handful of paddy and the hen said, "Cluck! cluck! Follow me and I will take you to the place." When they came to the poultry yard, the hen scratched a heap of young leaves, uncovered the fish bones which Tam gladly gathered and buried accordingly. It was not long before she got gold and jewelry and dresses of such wonderful materials that they would have rejoiced the heart of any young girl.

When the Autumn Festival came, Tam was told to stay home and sort out the two big baskets of black and green beans that her wicked step-mother had mixed up. "Try to get the work done," she was told, "before you can go to attend the Festival." Then the step-mother and Cam put on their most beautiful dresses and went out by themselves.

After they had gone a long way Tam lifted her tearful face and prayed: "O, benevolent Goddess of Mercy, please help me." At once, the soft-eyed Goddess appeared and with her magic green willow branch, turned little flies into sparrows which sorted the beans out for the young girl. In a short time, the work was done. Tam dried up her tears, arrayed herself in a glittering blue and silver dress. She now looked as beautiful as a princess, and went to the Festival.

Cam was very surprised to see her, and whispered to her mother: "Is that rich lady not strangely like my sister Tam?" When Tam realized that her step-mother and Cam were staring curiously at her, she ran away, but in such a hurry that she dropped one of her fine slippers which the soldiers picked up and took to the King.

The King examined it carefully and declared he had never seen such a work of art before. He made the ladies of the palace try it on, but the slipper was too small even for those who had the smallest feet. Then he ordered all the noblewomen of the kingdom to try it, but the slipper would fit none of them. In the end, word was sent that the woman who could wear the slipper would become Queen, that is, the King's First Wife.

Finally, Tam had a try and the slipper fitted her perfectly. She then wore both slippers, and appeared in her glittering blue and silver dress, looking extremely beautiful. She was then taken to Court with a big escort, became Queen and had an unbelievably brilliant and happy life. The step-mother and Cam could not bear to see her happy and would have killed her most willingly, but they were too afraid of the King to do so.

One day, at her father's anniversary, Tam went home to celebrate it with her family. At the time, it was the custom that, however great and important one might be, one was always expected by one's parents to behave exactly like a young and obedient child. The cunning step-mother had this in her mind and asked Tam to climb an areca tree to get some nuts for the guests. As Tam was now Queen, she could of course refuse, but she was a very pious and dutiful daughter, and was only glad to help. But while she was up on the tree, she felt that it was swaying to and fro in the strangest and most alarming manner.

"What are you doing?" She asked her step-mother. "I am only trying to scare away the ants which might bite you, my dear child," was the reply. But in fact, the wicked step-mother was holding a sickle and cutting the tree which fell down in a crash, killing the poor Queen at once. "Now we are rid of her," said the woman with a hateful and ugly laugh, "and she will never come back again. We shall report to the King that she has died in an accident and my beloved daughter Cam will become Queen in her stead!"

Things happened exactly the way she had planned, and Cam became now the King's first wife. But Tam's pure and innocent soul could not find any rest. It was turned into the shape of a nightingale which dwelt in the King's garden and sang sweet and melodious songs.

One day, one of the maids-of-honor in the Palace exposed the dragon-embroidered gown of the King to the sun, and the nightingale sang in her own gentle way: "O, sweet maid-of-honor, be careful with my Imperial Husband's gown and do not tear it by putting it on a thorny hedge." She then sang on so sadly that tears came into the King's eyes. The nightingale sang more sweetly still and moved the hearts of all who heard her.

At last, the King said: "Most delightful nightingale, if you were the soul of my beloved Queen, be pleased to settle in my wide sleeves." Then the gentle bird went straight into the King's sleeves and rubbed her smooth head against the King's hand. The bird was now put in a golden cage near the King's bedroom. The King was so fond of her that he would stay all day long near the cage, listening to her melancholy and beautiful songs. As she sang her melodies to him, his eyes became wet with tears, and she sang more charmingly than ever.

Cam became jealous of the bird, and sought her mother's advice about it. One day, while the King was holding a council with his ministers, Cam killed the nightingale, cooked it and threw the feathers in the Imperial Garden. "What is the meaning of this?" said the King when he came back to the Palace and saw the empty cage. There was great confusion and everybody looked for the nightingale but could not find it. "Perhaps she was bored and has flown away to the woods," said Cam. The King was very sad but there was nothing he could do about it, and resigned himself to his fate.

But once more, Tam's restless soul was transformed into big, magnificent tree, which only bore a single fruit, but what a fruit! It was round, big and golden and had a very sweet



smell. An old woman passing by the tree and seeing the beautiful fruit, said: "Golden fruit, golden fruit, drop into the bag of this old woman. This one will keep you and enjoy your smell, but will never eat you." The fruit at once dropped into the old woman's bag. She brought it home, put it on the table to enjoy its sweet-scented smell.

The next day, to her great surprise, she found her house clean and tidy, and a delicious hot meal waiting for her when she came back from her errands as though some magic hand had done all this during her absence. She then pretended to go out the following morning, but stealthily came back, hid herself behind the door and observed the house. She beheld a fair and slender lady coming out of the golden fruit and starting to tidy the house. She rushed in, tore the fruit peel up so that the fair lady could no longer hide herself in it. The young lady could not help but stay there and think of the old woman as her own mother.

One day the King went on a hunting party and lost his way. The evening drew on, the clouds gathered and it was pitch dark when he saw the old woman's house and went in it for shelter. According to custom, the latter offered him some tea and betel. The King examined the delicate way the betel was prepared and asked: "Who is the person who made this betel, which looks exactly like the one prepared by my late beloved Queen?" The old woman said in a trembling voice: "Son of Heaven, it is only my unworthy daughter."

The King then ordered the daughter to be brought to him and when she came and bowed to him, he realized, like in a dream, that it was Tam, his deeply regretted Queen. Both of them wept after such a separation and so much unhappiness. The Queen was then taken back to the Imperial City, where she took her former rank, while Cam was completely neglected by the King.

Cam then thought: "If I were as beautiful as my sister, I would win the King's heart." She asked the Queen: "Dearest Sister, how could I become as white as you?" "It is very easy," answered the Queen. "You have only to jump into a big basin of boiling water to get beautifully white." Cam believed her and did as suggested. Naturally she died without being able to utter a word! When the step-mother heard about this she wept until she became blind. Soon, she died of a broken heart. The Queen survived both of them, and lived happily ever after, for she certainly deserved it.

# The Disobedient Frog

A young frog lived with his widowed mother in a large pond. A rascal and a trouble maker, he never listened to his mother and caused her much grief and embarrassment. If his mother said go play on the hillside, he went to the seashore. If she said go to the upper neighborhood, he went to the lower. If she said do this, he did that. Whatever she said, he did the opposite.

"What am I going to do with that boy?" she mumbled to herself. "Why can't he be like the other boys? They always listen and do what they are told. And they're always kind and respectful. I don't know what will become of him if he keeps behaving like this. I have to do something to break him of his bad habits." Mother Frog sighed deeply.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Little Frog. "Hush all that mumbling. You don't have to worry about me. I'm doing fine just the way I am."

"Is that so?" said Mother Frog. "Then why can't you croak properly? You don't even sound like a frog. Let me teach you." With a smile, she puffed herself up and let out a loud *Croaaakk! Croaaakk!* "Now you try."

Grinning broadly, Little Frog puffed himself up and let out a loud *Croaaakk! Croaaakk!*

"Why you impudent little rascal! You're going to be the death of me!" cried Mother Frog. "You'll listen to me if you know what's good for you. Now you..."

"*Croaaakk! Croaaakk!*" croaked Little Frog, hopping away.

Day after day Mother Frog scolded her young son but he continued to do as he wished and just the opposite of what she said. She fretted and worried so much about him that she became ill. Still he continued to misbehave. One day she called him to her bedside.

"My son," she said, "I don't think I will live much longer. When I die, please don't bury me on the mountain, bury me beside the stream." She said this because she knew he would do the opposite of what she said.

A few days later Mother Frog died. Little Frog cried and cried. "Oh my poor mother! I worried her so much by misbehaving. Why didn't I listen to her?" he scolded himself. "Now she's gone. I killed her. I killed her."

Little Frog thought about his mother and all the trouble he had caused her. Then he told himself, "I always did the opposite of what Mother said because it was fun. But this time I will do exactly what she told me to do." So Little Frog buried his mother beside the stream, even though he did not think it was very wise.

A few weeks later there was a storm. It rained so much the stream overflowed its banks. Little Frog could not sleep for worrying that his mother's grave would be washed away. At last he went to the grave to keep watch.

In the pouring rain he sat, crying over and over, "*Croaaakk! Croaaakk!* Please don't wash my mother away!" And that is what he did every time it rained. And ever since then, frogs have cried *Croaaakk! Croaaakk!* when it rains.

## Two Brothers

In times past there lived two brothers whose loving ways were the talk of the valley where they lived. They took care of their widowed mother and upon her death they divided everything evenly. Together they worked diligently from sunup to sundown to produce the most they could from their fields. It never failed that come autumn they had the largest harvest in the valley.

One late autumn evening, after they had spent the afternoon sacking and dividing the last of the rice harvest, the older brother thought, "Brother has lots of expenses since he just got married a few months ago. I think I will put a sack of rice in his storehouse and not tell him. I'm sure he would never accept it if I offered it to him." So, late that night, he carried a sack of rice to his brother's storeroom.

The next day, while tidying up his own storage, the older brother was surprised to find he still had the same number of sacks of rice as he had before taking one to his brother. "That's odd," he said, shaking his head, "I'm sure I took a sack of rice to Brother's house last night." He counted his sacks again. "Well," he said, scratching the back of his head, "I'll just take him another one tonight." So, late that night he carried a sack of rice to his brother's house.

The next morning, he was again shocked to find he had the same number of sacks as before. He shook his head over and over and decided he would take his brother another sack that night. After a late dinner he loaded the rice and set out for his brother's house. It was a full moon and he could see the path quite clearly. Soon he saw a man carrying something bulky coming down the path.

"Why, Brother!" they both called out at the same time. The two brothers put down their sacks and laughed long and hearty for both understood the mystery behind their unchanging number of sacks of rice. The younger brother too had been bringing rice because he thought his older brother could use the rice because he had a larger family.

## **Nolboo Hungboo A Korean Folktale**

### **Retold By Eyoungsoo Park**

Many years ago, there lived two brothers. Nolboo, the older, was so mean that nobody liked him. Younger brother, Hungboo, was the opposite. He was kind, polite, and generous to everybody and was filial to his widowed father. Naturally everybody liked him. Every parent wished to have a son like him and nobody doubted that God would bless him.

One day, Father called his two sons to his bedside and took his last breath after telling them his last wish. He wanted them to always get along well and help each other. Hungboo was very sad and grieved over the loss of his father, but his older brother became happy instead. In Korea, it was customary that the oldest son get all the inheritance. Being the oldest, Nolboo could do anything he wanted to do with his father's estate. Immediately, he told Hungboo and his family to move out.

Hungboo didn't have any money even to rent a room, and had to move out on the street with his wife and children. He knelt down on the ground and begged his brother to allow them to stay until they could find a place of their own, but his brother didn't listen. Hungboo's family packed a few belongings and had to sleep outside until they found a vacant lot on sunny side of a mountain and built a little hut. The whole family worked on other people's farms but their wages were not enough for them to live on. They often had to skip meals. The children became hungry and cried for anything to eat. Hungboo couldn't stand his family's suffering. He went over to his brother's.

"Why did you come?" asked the older brother.

"My children are so hungry and cry. I couldn't idly watch them, so I came to borrow some rice from you. Please help me!" Hungboo begged his brother for food.

"Who told you to have so many children? I have no intention of giving you grain, even if mine rots in the barn." Nolboo refused to help him. Hungboo saw his brother's wife preparing the dinner table. He asked her to spare some boiled rice for his hungry children. After giving him a fiery sidelong scowl, she hit him with her wooden spoon on his left cheek. The smack left rice on his cheek and Hungboo asked "Please hit me on the other side too." This time she wiped the wooden spoon with her apron and hit him again. Hungboo had to return home with empty hands.

The long winter season was over and spring finally came. A pair of swallows built a nest under the eaves of Hungboo's hut. The whole family was happy to have the cheerful guests and tried everything they could to make the birds comfortable. Soon, they had five baby swallows, who grew stronger every day. One day, one of the babies dropped out of the nest to the hard ground and had his legs broken. Hungboo put medicine on and bandaged the injured legs and put the baby back in the nest. All five of the babies grew up to be adult swallows and flew away to the south when the winter came.

Again, Hungboo's family didn't have enough food or clothes to warm themselves. Eventually this winter season too was finally over, and spring time came back. Another pair of swallows came to occupy the old nest under the hut's eaves. The whole family was again happy to have the guests. On the very first day, one of the swallows dropped something in front of Hungboo. It was a gourd seed. He planted it and watered it every day with a great care. By the end of the summer, the vine had many gourds growing.

One day, Hungboo decided to pick some of the gourds and open them. As a game, each of his children made a wish when a gourd was opened

"I wish there were gold inside."

"I wish there were rice."

When the first gourd was cut open, it kept pouring out gold and silver coins. When they opened the second gourd, it kept pouring out rice. They opened the last gourd without a wish, and out came a group of workers with tools. "God sent us to build you a house," one of the men said. The workers didn't waste any time. A gorgeous castle was built on the sunny side of the hill. On completion of the castle, all the workers disappeared in a blink of an eye. Hungboo and his family now had enough money and rice to live happily ever after.

It didn't take much time before Hungboo's brother learned about his brother's wealth. Nolboo came over to Hungboo's house.

"You must have stolen all this money," he accused his brother. No sooner had Hungboo told him how he became rich, than Nolboo hurried back home. A pair of swallows under the eaves of his big house was raising baby swallows. He picked one of the babies from the nest and broke its legs. Then he applied some medicine, bandaged the legs and put it back in the nest. All the babies grew up and flew off to the south when winter came.

As expected, one pair of swallows returned in the Spring and dropped a gourd seed in front of Nolboo. He planted and watered it with great care hoping that he too would be as wealthy as his brother. It grew and four gourds ripened on the vine.

Nolboo called all his family together and announced that he was going to cut open their gourds. There was great excitement. Nolboo wished for gold and silver. His wife wished for rice. His children wished for a castle, bigger than their uncle's.

Nolboo opened the first gourd, out of which poured unbearably stinky human waste. He had to pick the gourd up and throw it outside. "It was a rotten one. This one looks good." He opened the second one, out of which a countless number of poisonous snakes crawled. They opened the third gourd, hoping it would fulfill their dreams. This time goblins flooded out and started beating up on Nolboo.

Still Nolboo still didn't give up his greed. He went back and opened the last gourd. A flood of water poured out and washed away all of their belongings and their home. Nolboo and his family had nothing left. The family went over to Hungboo's house.

"My younger brother, please forgive me. From now on, I will be a good person." Shedding tears from his eyes and on his knees, Nolboo begged his younger brother for a room and food for his family. Hungboo helped his brother up from the ground and welcomed him and his family.

"There is nothing to worry about big brother. We have more than enough rooms and rice for both of our families." Nolboo and his family truly changed and the two families lived together happily ever after.

## **Three Gifts**

### **A Korean Folktale retold by Eyoungsoo Park**

Long, long ago there lived a very rich old man with three sons. Realizing the day of his last breath was just around the corner, he called his sons to his bedside to relay his last wish.

"My loving sons, I am old and sick. Before the time for me to take my last breath, I want to tell you my last wish. Listen well to what I am about to tell you and make me happy by abiding by it. As you all know, we are the richest family in town. Don't fight over my estate. Divide it equally among the three of you. Do not be greedy, work diligently, love and support one another, and live a peaceful life."

A few days later, the elderly father died, leaving his great fortune to his three sons. No sooner had the funeral ended than the two oldest sons conspired with each other to take much larger shares of their father's wealth, leaving only a small portion for their youngest brother to live on.

"From now on, just as our father wished let's keep working diligently but seek our own fortunes separately. You may think it unfair, but we two who are older soon have to marry and support families, so we need a much larger portion of the inheritance. You still have many years to make a fortune before you become old enough to marry and have a family," said the oldest brother to his youngest brother.

The three brothers divided up their father's fortune among themselves exactly as the older two brothers had conspired. The youngest brother accepted his older brother's decision without even a single complaint and moved out on his own with his share. He kept diligently working just as his father had asked. The youngest brother was not rich, but very generous and kindhearted. He shared whatever he had with the poor and needy in town. As he shared his fortune with his neighbors, his fortune rapidly dwindled. He lived a very simple life just like those needy people with whom he had been sharing his wealth.

On the other hand, his two older brothers kept their large fortune all to themselves and their fortune became larger and larger. They lived in a beautiful mansion, wore the most beautiful clothes, and covered their bodies with glittering gold jewelry. Their youngest brother, in his ragged clothes, became an embarrassment to them.

One day the two older brothers spoke to their younger brother, "You squandered all of your fortune. Look at your shabby appearance. We are too ashamed to call you our brother. For our sake, we want you to leave this town. Come back only when you are rich and worthy of us."

The youngest brother became saddened at being forced out of his town by his own brothers. He left his hometown without any particular destination in mind. Walking all day, he became hungry and tired. While he was resting his two feet in a cool, clear stream of water, an elderly monk with silvery hair and beard approached to cross the stream. There was no bridge, and no stepping stones. The elderly monk's legs were shaky as he had a very large pack on his back.

"Please sit here and rest awhile, Elder and let me carry your pack across the stream," said the youngest brother. After carrying the pack safely across the stream, he helped the elderly monk to cross.

"Thank you young man!" said the old monk. But, the youngest brother did not stop there. He carried the monk's heavy pack all the way to the temple. The young man found that the old monk was the only occupant of a small but beautiful temple. There was no one to cook, wash clothes or help with other tasks. Because he had no idea where else to go, the

young man offered to stay and help the monk. The elderly monk gladly accepted his offer.

As the months passed, the young man learned Buddhist doctrines from the old monk, but he began to miss his brothers and friends back in his hometown. Finally, he decided to go home. The monk brought out an old straw mat, a large dipper made of gourd and a pair of chopsticks.

"I wish I could give you better ones, but these are the only things I can give you as gifts. Take them with you. You might find them useful on your way." The young man gratefully accepted the elderly monk's meager gifts and hurried toward his hometown. He walked all day without eating anything. As dusk fell, he spread the monk's old straw mat and immediately fell into a sound sleep.

It was dawn when he woke up from an amazingly restful sleep. He almost fainted from fright to find himself lying on a comfortable bed in a splendid room. He wondered if he was dreaming, but he soon realized everything was real. He reached under the soft mattress to find the old straw mat beneath it.

He took out the gourd dipper that the monk had given him. Out of it poured all kinds of delicious food. His shaky hands tapped the chopsticks. Many maids, as beautiful as angels, suddenly appeared. Some started singing, and others started dancing to entertain him while he ate. Whatever the young man wished for came out of the gourd dipper. Naturally, he became very, very rich.

He decided to hurry back to his brothers. Walking out of his beautiful castle, he saw a beautiful carriage with twelve horses already waiting for him. He rode to the gate of his town, where he changed into his old ragged clothes and sent the horses and carriage back to his castle.

He started walking on foot to his brothers' home. Seeing him in his ragged clothes, the two older brothers became very displeased and gave him a cold reception.

"But, my very dear elder brothers, I wish to be allowed to live in the same town with you. Please let me stay," begged the young man.

"What's good about us living in the same town? You are just an embarrassment to us as you were months ago. Go back wherever you have been and seek your own fortune just as our father wished," said the older brothers. They didn't even invite their younger brother into their house.

Rejected by his brothers, the young man was very sad. The sun was already setting behind the western side mountains and dusk started to cover over the town. He stopped on a nearby hillside and spread out the straw mat to sleep on. When he awoke from his restful sleep the next morning, he again found himself in a beautiful bedroom of another newly built castle.

The next morning, his brothers saw a large new castle on the hillside, and approached it out of curiosity. When they walked near the gate, the gate opened and the gate keeper invited them in. When they learned that it was their own brother who had become so rich, and how he had done so, they hurried back home. They put on a show of being very generous men and gave away all of their worldly possessions to the needy in the hope that the elderly monk would give them the same gifts.

After their worldly possessions had all been given away, they hurriedly traveled to the temple described by their brother. They pounded on the gate, but nobody answered. They walked into the temple ground. They still didn't see anybody. They looked for the elderly monk, but he was nowhere to be found. They waited for days, weeks, months, but the monk never came back. They soon ran out of food and money. They had no home to return to and begged their way

back to the youngest brother's castle.

Seeing his brothers approach his castle, the youngest brother ran up to them and welcomed them with his arms wide open. He respectfully invited them in, and shared all of his fortunes with them. The older brothers were deeply touched by their younger brother's love. United again, the three brothers all lived happily ever after, just as their father had wished.



## **Folktales Key – Possible responses – more can also be found.**

### **Cinderella**

- Parent / Child relationship – Father fails in his duty to care for Tam.  
Stepmother is cruel to Tam.  
Stepmother cares for Cam.  
Tam obeys her stepmother and climbs the tree.  
Stepmother kills Tam.
- Friend / Friend - Tam treats the old woman as a mother and cares for her
- King / Subject relationship – Old woman serves the king and hosts him
- Sibling relationship – Cam actively works to get Tam in trouble with the fish.  
Tam gives Cam advice which kills her.
- Husband / Wife relationship - Cam kills the king's bird and lies  
King restores Tam as queen.  
King neglects Cam once Tam is back

### **Disobedient Frog**

- Parent / Child relationship – Son refuses to listen to mother  
Son finally does obey mother

### **Two Brothers**

- Parent / Child relationship – Brothers care for their mother
- Sibling relationship – Brothers evenly divide everything  
Each brother brings the other rice secretly

### **Nolboo Hungboo**

- Parent / Child relationship – Nolboo doesn't obey father's wishes  
Hungboo always does as father wishes.  
Hungboo goes begging to Nolboo so he can feed his children
- Sibling relationship – Nolboo makes Hungboo move out  
Hungboo gives respect to Nolboo  
Hungboo lets Nolboo and family move in and shares with them

### Three Gifts

Parent / Child relationship – Father tries to get all sons to divide inheritance equally  
Older sons disobey father's wishes about inheritance.

Sibling relationship – Two older brothers take all the inheritance.  
Two older brothers have younger leave town  
Younger brother doesn't complain about inheritance  
Younger brother goes to his brothers to share his gifts  
Younger brother accepts older brothers back after they are poor

Friend / Friend - Younger brother carries the elderly monk across stream  
Younger brother cares for the elderly monk