

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

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by Maxine Fisher, based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen,
Themes: Honesty, Self-Esteem, Leadership, Judging Character
Grade Level: K-5 (ages 5-10)
Running Time: 26 minutes

SUMMARY

In this story, the Emperor would rather spend money on new clothes than almost anything else. The Emperor is so consumed with clothing that he prefers to spend the treasury's money on clothes, even when his subjects are in need.

When he decides he needs new clothing for the upcoming festival, the Emperor requests the money for his new suit from the treasurer. He wants to use the money to purchase a beautiful new suit of clothes from the town weaver. In frustration, after being taxed for all manner of things, the weaver crafts a plot to assure he would no longer be poor. He fashions a suit of clothes that will be invisible to anyone who is foolish or incompetent. All others will be able to appreciate its beauty. The Emperor agrees to pay him the huge sum of 50,000 binooki. His loyal subjects tell the Emperor that his invisible clothing is simply perfect. The Emperor, not wanting to appear foolish, wears what is actually nothing in the royal procession. It is only when a child calls out, "The Emperor's got nothing on!" that the people feel free to acknowledge what they see. The Emperor, certain now that he is wearing nothing, feels he has no alternative but to march on with dignity. The people of the kingdom cheer the Emperor, and express their glee. The Emperor, realizing the error of his ways, announces he will eliminate the needless taxes and free those he had jailed for non-payment.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about the importance of honesty and self-esteem.
- Children will explore aspects of leadership.
- Children will investigate ways to judge character.
- Children will examine the importance of setting proper priorities.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the different things they own that they consider special. Ask:

- What are some of your favorite things that you have here in school or at home?

- Why are they special?
- How do you feel when you have them? When you don't have them?
- Do you have special clothing that you like to wear?
- How do you feel when you wear your special clothing?

Explain to children that they are about to hear a story about an Emperor. In this story, the Emperor likes nothing more than clothing.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the story *The Emperor's New Clothes*, with the children. Ask:

- What kinds of outfits did the Emperor like to wear?
- Why did the Emperor want money from the Treasurer?
- How did the treasury get its money?
- What else was the tax money used for? Were these expenses reasonable?
- Could the townspeople afford the taxes?
- What happened when they could not pay their taxes?
- What kind of person do you think the Emperor was?
- Is this a good quality for an Emperor?
- Why did the weaver decide to trick the Emperor?
- How do you think the people in the castle felt about working for the Emperor?
- Did he set a good example for his subjects?

As you discuss these questions with children, be sure to emphasize that qualities like kindness, fairness, consideration, respect, etc., help us decide how we feel about people rather than clothing and other possessions they may own. Have children think about the children who shouted that the Emperor had no clothes on. Ask:

- Why do you think the Emperor felt his clothing was so important?
- How did the children's honesty help the others?
- How did their honesty help the Emperor?
- How do you think the Emperor felt about himself before the children said anything?
- How do you think he felt afterward?
- Do you think clothing mattered as much to the Emperor at the end of the story? Why? Why not?
- Do you decide whether you like someone or not based on what he wears? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think the weaver returned the money?
- In the end, was the Emperor able to wear something special, that was not costly?

In order to explore how honesty can effect circumstances, make a chart

with three columns: Before Event, Event, After Event

Have children list the situations that existed before the Emperor led the parade. Be sure to include such things as: Emperor thinks only of himself, he uses taxes to raise money for clothes, he ignores the plight of his people, he puts people in jail for non-payment of unreasonable taxes, and his clothes are more important than anything else.

Then the pivotal event occurs. Two children announce honestly what was apparent, but that no one would acknowledge.

This honesty changes everything. Afterwards, the people are happy and cheering, the Emperor realizes his mistakes. He frees those he jailed. He eliminates the hated taxes. He realizes he can express himself through his clothes – and be an individual – but economically. He has put his priorities in order! You could further discuss the importance of setting appropriate priorities. Which things going on in the town should have been more important to the Emperor than his clothes?

Another activity is to create two lists. One for qualities of a good leader – the second, for qualities that are not good in a leader. The first list would include such characteristics as fairness, consideration of others, thrift, setting proper priorities etc. The second would include selfishness, wastefulness, not considering others, not setting a good example, etc.

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