

THE STONECUTTER

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Book by Gerald McDermott

Themes: Japanese Culture/Greed

Grade Level: K-3

Running Time: 6:00

SUMMARY

THE STONECUTTER is the story of a man who works diligently each day, cutting stone from a mountain. The stone is used to build the great temples and palaces of Japan. One day, the stonecutter witnesses a prince passing by, preceded by a soldier and followed by musicians and dancers. The stonecutter stops working and wishes to be a prince, so that he too might enjoy wealth and power. The spirit hears the stonecutter's wish and obliges him. Soon, the stonecutter wishes to be the sun, which he decides is much more powerful than a prince. The stonecutter shows his power as the sun in ways harmful to the people of the land. He then wishes to be the clouds, and then a mountain. Each time the stonecutter wishes for more power. The end of the story finds the stonecutter as a mountain, with the sound of a lowly stonecutter chipping away at the foot of the mountain.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about Japanese culture.
- Children will explore the concept of greed.
- Children will investigate the power of greed.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Locate Japan on a map on the continent of Asia.

Point out the different terrains, the climate, the proximity to water. Compare these to where children live.

Share the book, *THE STONECUTTER*, with children. Talk about the ways Japanese culture is similar to, and different from our own. If possible, bring objects representative of Japanese culture into the classroom to share with children.

Talk with children about the things they wish for that they do not have. Ask:

- What would you do if you had this?
- How would your life be different?
- How would this make you happier?
- Would other people be changed if you had this? How?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the way greed affected the stonecutter's wishes throughout the story. Ask:

- Why wasn't the stonecutter satisfied with his work in the beginning of the story?
- What did he do with his power when he became the sun? When he became a cloud?
- If the stonecutter had not seen the prince pass by, do you think he would be happy to be a stonecutter for a long time? Why?
- How do you think the stonecutter felt about being a mountain at the end of the story?
- What do you think is going to happen to him?
- If the stonecutter could make one more wish,

what do you think it would be? Why?

Discuss the "cut paper look" of the illustrations in the film with children. Help children recall the way simple shapes were used to form the robe of the woodcutter, the sun, the clouds, the mountain, etc. Then supply a variety of shapes cut from construction paper, glue, and sheets of cardboard for each child. Have children use the materials to create their own cut paper designs. Later, have children share the designs and display them in the classroom.

Talk with children about uncontrollable forces of nature. Ask:

- Have you ever been outdoors on a very hot summer day? How does the sunshine make you feel? What would you say to the sun if it could talk back?
- Have you ever seen a severe thunder or rainstorm? Can people stop the storm? As children talk, help them to see that forces of nature can be very powerful and are out of our control.

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