

Miriam Olmos

JAPN 309

Fall 2012

5 + 1

Excellent!

### 1. Foxes

- When I first read the title of the story "Enough is enough," I thought that it would be about not taking any more chances at something. I was surprised at first that the Emperor let the foxes do as they wished without saying anything even though he was annoyed by it. Through what we have previously read I believe that a big characteristic about the Japanese culture was to be patient. The emperors try to be patient and give the foxes a chance to behave, once they didn't he decided to act. A value that seems to be recurrent in these stories is of humbleness, when Yasumichi had the dream and he was told to give the foxes another chance, so he did. So this speaks well of himself, that he is a good person.
- The "Loving Fox" story seemed very sweet and kind to me. Love seems to play a big role in the Japanese stories, and I like that it shows a pure love that is willing to give up their life for their loved one. Also a characteristic that keeps on being recurrent is magic. In many of the tales, a person or an animal has a magical power, but it also has a purpose to use that magic on. A cultural behavior that seems to be big in all Japanese culture we have read so far, is that women are willing to give up everything for men. This aspect seems sad to me because men are not willing to do anything for women.

### 2. Turtles and a crab

- In the story "The Grateful Turtle," there are a lot of characteristics, like the story combines the experiences of animals and humans. These kind of stories seemed to resemble the fables that I read in my Spanish classes which are about animals doing good deeds in order to teach a moral lesson. This story also resembles the story of the sparrow where the lady takes care of the sparrow without waiting for anything in return. In this story we see the same, the Emperor made a good deed by saving the turtle, so the turtle wanted to return the favor somehow. So I believe that what we can learn from this story is to learn to speak up against injustice and that if we do good things to do them out of the goodness of our hearts and somehow we will be rewarded.
- The same theme keeps on recurring on these stories, for example in the story of "The Grateful Crab" we read the story of a girl who helped out a crab because the crab was going to get killed. Later in the story as her dad wanted to do a good deed also he got in trouble and could figure out how to get out of it. The unique characteristics would be that animals are given human characteristics and they even have powers to turn into humans. The value that we can take from this story

is to be careful of the things we do and say. As the man wanted to save the frog he got his daughter in trouble, but it wasn't his intention he was just trying to do a good thing.

### 3. Tengu, Boar, and Badger

- Religious beliefs are also present in much of the Japanese tales. For example in the tale of "No Fool, the Hunter," the hermit was so much into his religious beliefs and felt he had reached a high level of faithfulness that he believed he could see the Buddha. An interesting cultural behavior is that it seems to be a current thing that as monks, nuns, or people in general get a lot into religion they seem to lose an aspect of reality. The hunter, because he didn't know much about religion he did not believe that it was possible for a God to appear and moreover that the boy was able to see the God as well because he had not read the level of holiness the hermit had. I think the title suits this story well because the hunter didn't let himself be fooled by an imposter. While it may have been shocking for the hermit, it was better that he was shown what was really behind his visions to prevent any problems or damage to the hermit.
- The story of the "Inspiring, Unfortunately," was a nice story. At first I thought it was going to be like the other stories where a person helped out an animal, then the animal looks for some way to repay the person, most likely when the person is in trouble. I liked that this story had different characteristics for example the bird told the monk he would grant him anything he wanted, but there was a condition to, the monk had to follow certain rules. I like when the monk said that he was already an old person he didn't have any more wishes in life, and I like that his wish was not materialistic because in many other stories that have these same styles the wish is some material thing. I think that the values that are portrayed in this story is to stay humble, to be happy with what we have and also to listen to what we are told. The monk really believed his vision was true and his vision ended up vanishing because he did not follow the rule he was told. But, I think that at least he could have been happy because even though it was for a mere second his wish came true.

### 4. Snakes

- When I finished reading the tale of "The Snake Charmer," I couldn't help but think that it resembles a tale that we could read like in an Arabic culture book. Where it is common for people to play a flute in order to control snakes. It also seemed to me like a good punishment for a crime to put someone in a place that had things that they were scared of that way they were actually regret their bad actions. I think that the cultural characteristics the tale has is about music, for example in other stories we have read, when someone sang so beautifully that a person could use their talent to help others, while in this story because these men

knew how to play the flute he used his talent to help himself to not be eaten by the snake.

- The story of the “Red Plum Blossoms” had many characteristics, the religious part, also this sort of magical aspect to it, also rebirth is a theme that could be discussed in these story. This last theme is the one that seems most interesting to me, because it really shows that the Japanese culture believed in rebirth and most of the time the rebirth is in the form of an animal. Which makes sense because if we are given the opportunity to relive maybe the God which we believe in wants us to see life from a different perspective. It was a little confusing to me. Was it the girl’s obsession for the plum tree what caused her death? To my understanding I think it was because of this obsession that she died, and for this same reason the snake in which she had rebirth in would always be next to the tree. A cultural behavior and believe we see in these story is that is they prayed to the Gods they would be able to save the soles of humans.

#### 5. foxes II

- The saying goes that “revenge is a place that should be served cold,” revenge might not be good but in the tale of “Fox Arson” we also learn that we should be careful of the bad deeds we do to others because we do not know how they might react. The retainer could have shot the fox out of just fun, but why didn’t he think that the fox could do something to him? This story resembles also the story of the feather because the old lady, who broke the sparrow’s backs on purpose, got something back in return, so because the retainer did something bad to the fox that’s what he got. So then this keeps on been a recurrent theme on these stories that according to the way we act that is how we will be rewarded.
- The story of the “Not really a tree at all” was sad to me, the fox got killed because he had tricked the two man. Maybe the fox did this out of protection because if he was seen as his real self he would get killed. But he ended up dead anyway. The characteristic of the magical sense keeps on been recurrent on these stories. Animals that can get transformed into every single thing they wish for. These seemed like fairy tales even though some of the stories end up sadly. it also seems to be a norm that in order to test something the people should soot at it so they can see what is the real motive behind what they shoot. I wonder what direction the story would take if the tree ended up really been a simple tree.