

# THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE

The Fisherman and His Wife

by Wanda Gag

Themes: Fairy Tales

Grade Level: K-4

Running Time: 20 minutes, animated

## Summary

The Fisherman and His Wife is the story of a poor fisherman and his wife who live in a little hut near the sea. When the fisherman leaves home to fish one day, he catches something most surprising from the sea. The fisherman catches a fish--but not an ordinary fish. This fish can talk, and it explains to the fisherman that it is really a prince who has had a spell cast upon him. The fish begs to be released back to the sea and the fisherman obliges, having no use for a talking fish. The fisherman returns home and tells his wife the story of the talking fish. His wife asks the fisherman if he asked the fish to grant him a wish. When the fisherman answers no, his wife insists that he return to the sea and ask the fish to give them a decent cottage to live in. When the fish grants this wish, the wife insists that the fisherman go back again and ask for a mansion. Reluctantly, the fisherman agrees, and, again, the wife's wish is granted. This pattern continues, with the greedy wife continuing to ask for more and the fish granting each wish. Eventually, the wife asks for too much. After being made emperor and pope, she asks to be just like God. This time, when the fisherman asks the fish for this on behalf of his wife, the air is filled with thunder and the fisherman and his wife are returned to their little hut, all of their wealth and power gone forever.

Children will enjoy this powerful tale about the consequences of greed.

## Objectives

- Children will learn about greed
- Children will learn to appreciate what they have
- Children will learn to think critically

## Before Viewing Activities

Share the book *The Fisherman and His Wife* with children. Ask children to think about things they have wished for in the past. Ask: What did you wish for? Why did you want this so badly? How would your life be different if you had this? What would your life be like if your wish never came true?

Talk with children about fishing trips they may have taken. Ask: What kind of equipment did you use on your fishing trip? Who did you go with? What did you catch? How did you feel about catching (or not catching) fish? What do you like most/least about fishing?

## After Viewing Activities

Discuss the ending of the story with children. Ask: How do you think the fisherman felt at the end of the story? How do you think his wife felt? What do you think is the lesson of this story? Encourage children to think about times when they may have behaved in a way that might be considered greedy.

Talk with children about the many things they already have and stress the importance of thinking carefully before asking for things that may not be appropriate.

Encourage children to think about what the kind of life the fisherman and his wife had together after returning to live in the tiny hut. Have children create the next chapter to the story of *The Fisherman And His Wife*, accompanying their stories with illustrations. Later, have children share their stories and illustrations with their classmates and display them on a classroom wall or bulletin board.

Other book based films and videos about greed are available from Weston Woods. These include: *DOCTOR DE SOTO* by William Steig  
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