

The Tyrant Who Became a Just Ruler

By Maude Barrows Dutton
1908

Maude Barrows Dutton's book The Tortoise and the Geese includes fables and folktales originally from India. In this folktale, an unkind leader decides to rule fairly. As you read, take notes on why the ruler changes his mind.

- [1] In olden times there lived a King, who was so cruel and unjust¹ towards his subjects that he was always called The Tyrant.² So heartless was he that his people used to pray night and day that they might have a new king. One day, much to their surprise, he called his people together and said to them, —

“My dear subjects, the days of my tyranny are over. Henceforth³ you shall live in peace and happiness, for I have decided to try to rule henceforth justly and well.”



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The King kept his word so well that soon he was known throughout the land as The Just King. By and by one of his favorites came to him and said, —

“Your Majesty, I beg of you to tell me how it was that you had this change of heart towards your people?”

- [5] And the King replied, —

“As I was galloping through my forests one afternoon, I caught sight of a hound⁴ chasing a fox. The fox escaped into his hole, but not until he had been bitten by the dog so badly that he would be lame⁵ for life. The hound, returning home, met a man who threw a stone at him, which broke his leg. The man had not gone far when a horse kicked him and broke his leg. And the horse, starting to run, fell into a hole and broke his leg. Here I came to my senses, and resolved to change my rule. ‘For surely,’ I said to myself, ‘he who doeth evil will sooner or later be overtaken by evil.’”

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement describes the main theme of the short story?
 - A. Treating others badly will result in being treated poorly yourself.
 - B. You're more likely to get what you want if you're kind to people.
 - C. It is more important for a ruler to be loved, than to be fair.
 - D. Even the cruelest people have good in them.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "In olden times there lived a King, who was so cruel and unjust towards his subjects that he was always called The Tyrant." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Henceforth you shall live in peace and happiness, for I have decided to try to rule henceforth justly and well." (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "Your Majesty, I beg of you to tell me how it was that you had this change of heart towards your people?" (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "For surely,' I said to myself, 'he who doeth evil will sooner or later be overtaken by evil.'" (Paragraph 6)

3. What does paragraph 4 reveal about the King?
 - A. His decision to become a fair ruler was unexpected.
 - B. He was always a fair king deep down.
 - C. He cares what his people think about him.
 - D. His decision to be fair has made him happier.

4. In the story, the King becomes a ruler. Describe how the fox impacted the king's decision to change the way in which he ruled his people. Cite two details to support your analysis

5. How does paragraph 6 contribute to the overall structure of the story? Cite two details to support your analysis