

Misery and Honey (or Honey and Trouble)

A folktale from Haiti (with versions across the Caribbean)

Recommended Key Stage: KS1

Synopsis

Monkey overhears a woman shouting about misery and mistakenly believes she is talking about her spilt honey. He then proceeds to travel around the jungle asking the other animals for some misery (or trouble), and one by one they give him just that. Monkey is very confused and eventually finds his way to a wise man. When he asks the wise man for misery, he hands over a bag and instructs the monkey to take it to the middle of the desert. He does as such, and when he opens it, a pack of dogs leaps out and chases him up a tree! Feeling sorry for the monkey, the wise man helps him down and asks him what he really wants. He sits him down and Monkey is finally given what he wants – a piece of toast slathered in honey.

Part 1: Share the Story

Share the audio of **Misery and Honey**, told by **Chris Smith** on The Story Museum website or tell the story yourself.

Top storytelling tips:

- Learn the story beforehand so that you can be expressive and maintain eye contact with the students.
- Use actions and sound effects and encourage the students to join in.

Find one or two moments in the story to stop and ask the students to predict what is going to happen next, or how they would feel if they were the characters.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

KS1

- What do you like about this story? Is there anything you don't like?
- What was monkey's mistake?
- Have you ever had a misunderstanding like this? What happened?
- [Prediction] What do you think will happen because of monkey's mistake?
- What could monkey have done differently?
- How do you think monkey feels after talking to the animals?
- How would you help monkey if you were in the story? What advice would you give him?
- How could the animals show kindness to monkey?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Story Walk - Students stand in their own space around the room. - Tell the story slowly using Resource A - As you tell it, the students use the space to mime it while staying in their space. Try doing this with no sounds, just expressions.	Soundscape - Work as a whole class to retell the story of Misery and Honey using music and noise. - Experiment with different ways to make noise, using voice, clapping, stomping, natural materials, objects in the classroom or musical instruments– discuss what would be best for each sound (e.g. the honey pot smashing, the monkey climbing, the dogs barking, etc.) - Talk about body and mouth percussion – what sounds can we make this way? Where would they be best in the story? - Split into groups, with each group taking one moment from the story. - One by one, each group will tell their part of the story only using the sounds they have decided, until the whole story is told.
If the mirror could talk - Choose five children for this game and four chairs set out in a square – four of the children sit in the square with the other child walking into the middle in character. - Imagine they are the monkey in the story. When the monkey walks into the square, each child sitting in a chair becomes a mirror. When the monkey looks into one of the ‘mirrors’, his reflection can give him some advice. - Choose a moment in the story – e.g. when monkey doesn’t get what he wants and is hurt by his friends instead. What might his reflection tell him? They might tell him everything will be okay; they might tell him not to play with people who hurt him, or they might tell him he needs to think about what he is asking! Each mirror might give different advice. - Try the activity again with a new character in the middle – e.g. the wise man. What might the mirrors say to him when he is trying to fix the problem? Or when monkey is in trouble?	Freeze the story - Children work in pairs or small groups, and freeze frame a part of the story. - Encourage children to show how they are feeling with their facial expressions and body language. - Do some thought-tapping to find out what each of the characters are thinking at each point of the story. - Do these thoughts and feelings change much throughout the story?

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Communicating feelings Write a letter from monkey, after the events of the story, to the other animals explaining how they made him feel. Think about the advice that monkey could give to the other animals for next time. Could he suggest ways they could have been kinder? Could he help them become better listeners and friends?	Acts of Kindness As a class, create a 'Random Acts of Kindness' jar. Ask the children to think about different ways they can be kind to the people they meet. Each child can then write their random act on a slip of paper, fold it up and put it in the jar. Each day, someone can pull out a slip of paper, and everyone is challenged to do that random act of kindness. Keep a log or chart of how many acts are completed in a week.
Innovate the story • Tell a new story, using Misery and Honey to help. Here are some prompt questions to get you started: - What if the monkey had seen something different be dropped? - What if the animals had been helpful instead? - What if the Wise Man had made a different suggestion? • Children could work individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole class to tell their story. This could be through drama, oral storytelling, puppetry, drawing, etc. • How have they used the original story to influence their new story?	

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Stories with a misunderstanding or problem:

Monkey and Mango

Baby Possum's Blackberries

Elephant and Giraffe

The Grumpy Gecko

The Unlucky Man

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHE

- Managing setbacks
- Understanding likes and dislikes
- How to be a good friend and use good communication

Resource A

Story Walk prompts for Misery and Honey

- You are a monkey – what does a monkey do?
- Ooh, what is that smell? Sniff the air... It's that yellow, sticky stuff all on the floor!
- What is it? Scratch your head... Oh, the woman called it misery! Yum, yum, I want some misery!
- Climb down the tree, run to your friend to tell them!
- Ow! That wasn't misery!
- Quick, run to find another friend
- Ouch ouch ouch! That wasn't misery either! These animals aren't being very helpful...
- Who can help, I wonder?
- Maybe a wise man can help... knock on the door
- Ah, finally! He has given me a big bag of misery!
- Take the bag to the desert – look far and wide
- Undo the rope on your bag... take a big sniff... Hmm, that doesn't smell quite right... What is it?
- Ah! Dogs! Quick, run away!
- Climb the tree, as quick as you can!
- Breathe... You're safe for now
- Finally, the wise man helps you
- Give yourself a cuddle – that was scary!
- And finally, he gives you what you want... A nice piece of toast and honey – yum yum!