

The Empty Pot (also known as The Emperor and the Seed)

This resource was produced in partnership with Oxygen for The Story Exchange project (focusing on *how oral storytelling can support teachers to improve emotional literacy in the classroom?*). Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

A story from China

Recommended Key Stage: KS1 and 2

Synopsis: An emperor is looking for an heir and so gives all of the children in the kingdom a seed to prove their worth. A little boy called Ling finds he cannot grow anything from the seed and must admit his failure. His bravery and honesty are then rewarded by the emperor.

Part 1: Share the Story

Show the children a map or globe. Point out the UK and then point out China, where this story takes place.

Watch the video **Stories from the Woodshed: The Empty Pot**

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Key Stage 1 Questions	Key Stage 2 Questions
• What was your favourite part of this story? • What do you think Ling was thinking when his seed wouldn't grow? • How would you feel if all your friends could do it and you couldn't? • What values was Ling showing in the story? • What would you do if you were emperor for a day?	• What was your favourite part of this story? • Who are you most like in the story and why? • What would you do in Ling's situation? • Is this a fair way to decide the next heir? How would you decide? • Do you think bravery and honesty are good traits for an emperor? What else?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Drama/Oracy Activity Story steps (Teacher/adult reads out the steps and each child acts out what is being described) - You are Ling - Wow, the emperor has just announced a competition! - You grab your seed, pot, soil and water, and plant the seed - Go to your garden and wait - Oh no, nothing's happening - Look at your friends' plants – they are so tall and luscious! - Don't give up! Try a new pot - Go back to your garden and wait - Still, nothing is happening... you are getting worried now - The day has arrived... Take your empty pot and walk to the palace - Try not to look at all the amazing plants all around you - Oh no, here comes the emperor! He looks cross! - You show him your empty pot with tears in your eyes - Oh! The emperor is smiling at you! - Stand up tall – you have won the competition!	Freeze Frame Feelings Sculpting Get the children into a circle and choose one or more children to go into the middle. These children are our statues, and the rest of the class can work together to sculpt them into a moment from the story. For example, when Ling goes to see the emperor with his empty pot. Take suggestions from the children in the circle for what Ling might look like in this moment. Are his shoulders drooped? Is he looking at the floor? What does his face look like? The child in the middle adjusts with help from the others. What about the emperor? Would he be towering over Ling? What does his face look like? When the sculpture is finished, children in the circle can take turns walking past and whispering what they think the characters are thinking.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Design Ask the children to discuss what makes someone brave or how Ling showed bravery in the story. They might suggest that Ling was brave because he went to see the emperor even though he was scared; or that he kept on trying despite not being able to grow anything from his seed. Give the children an outline of a person, or ask them to draw one, and ask them to design a brave character. What might they be like on the inside? What would they think and say?	Emotional Literacy Focus Conscience alley Ling has an important decision to make, should he stay at home and hide, or should he be honest and show the emperor his empty pot? Discuss both sides of the argument with the children. Get the children into two lines, with a path running in the middle. Choose one child to be Ling, who will travel down the path hearing advice from both sides. One side will tell him that he should be brave and face the emperor. The other side will tell him that it is too scary and so he should stay at home instead. By the end of the path, 'Ling' will have listened to everybody and can decide.

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories:

Baby Possum's Blackberries (Australia)

Cat and Mouse (China)

The Turtle Who Wanted to Fly (Africa)

The Brave Weaver (India)

Wider Curriculum Links

Science – life cycles of plants

Design and Technology – design purposeful, functional, appealing products for themselves and other users based on design criteria (design the perfect pot for Ling)

PSHE – being a good friend, honesty, resilience, dreams and goals

The Story Exchange was a Paul Hamlyn funded project run in partnership between Oxygen and the Story Museum focusing on the inquiry question: *how can oral storytelling support teachers to improve emotional literacy in the classroom? Storytellers from the Story Museum worked with class teachers in seven Oxfordshire schools to co-teach sessions which have been distilled into these resources to share with the wider community.*



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