

Trading Places

adapted from a Welsh folktale
by Jennifer Ceaser



- 1 Every night Sean O'Brien returned home from his potato field and complained to his wife, Fiona.
- 2 "My arms ache from weeding, and my legs are tired from pushing the plow," Sean moaned.
- 3 "My work is so difficult!" he continued. "It's much harder than yours, Fiona. I would give anything to trade chores!"
- 4 One day Fiona decided she was fed up.
- 5 "Enough!" she cried. "Tomorrow I'll tend to the field, and you can relax doing my chores."
- 6 "Wonderful!" replied Sean. "Now you'll appreciate how hard I work."
- 7 The next morning as she made pancakes, Fiona told Sean what he needed to do.
- 8 "Mop the floor, collect the eggs, feed the pig, let the cow out to graze, and cook the soup."
- 9 Then, Fiona set off for the field, leaving her husband in charge of the house.
- 10 "Well," Sean said merrily, "I guess I'll gather the eggs first." Off he strolled to the henhouse. He had collected only a dozen eggs when the pig began squealing.
- 11 "Better feed the pig," Sean muttered. As he turned, he tripped over one of the chickens. The eggs flew from his arms and soared through the open door into the house, landing with twelve big "SPLATS" on the floor.
- 12 Sean stormed over to the pigpen, yanked open the gate, and scolded, "Look what you made me do, Pig. Go find your own breakfast!"
- 13 Well, that's exactly what the pig did. Out of the pen Pig darted, heading for the open door. He dashed between Sean's legs, sending the farmer toppling headfirst into the mud. By the time Sean got back inside, the pig had eaten all the pancakes and was sniffing around for more.
- 14 "Get out of my kitchen!" Sean yelled, running toward the pig. But Sean forgot about the broken eggs and went slipping and sliding across the floor. He landed right on top of the mop, breaking its handle.
- 15 "Oh no!" cried Sean, examining the dirty floor. "How am I going to clean up this mess now?" He realized it was getting late, and he hadn't finished a single chore!
- 16 He thought for a moment. "If I take the cow out to graze in the pasture now, I won't have time to cook the soup. But if I cook the soup, I won't have time to take the cow out to graze."
- 17 Suddenly, Sean remembered that the roof had grass growing on it because his house was built into the side of a hill.
- 18 "Why, it's so simple!" he cried. "While the cow grazes on the roof, I can run the cow's rope down the chimney and tie one end around my ankle. That way the cow can't run away, and I'll be able to make the soup."
- 19 With the cow on the roof and the rope around his foot, Sean lit a fire and started cooking. As he began to stir the soup, the cow decided to take a walk. She wandered to the other side of the roof, lost her footing, and slid off the edge.
- 20 All of a sudden, Sean was pulled into the chimney and became stuck, his head poking out of the fireplace. On the way, Sean tipped over the pot, spilling soup everywhere and extinguishing the fire. And guess who was waiting to slurp it up? The greedy pig, of course!
- 21 As Fiona returned from her day in the field, she saw the cow swinging from the roof and mooing loudly. She rushed inside the house. What a mess! Mud covered the floor, broken eggs and puddles of soup lay everywhere, the pig squealed in the kitchen, and her husband hung upside down in the chimney!
- 22 From that day forward, Sean never asked to trade places with Fiona. And he never complained again.

COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 The lesson of this story is never
 - a** trade chores.
 - b** underestimate someone else's work.
 - c** try doing new chores.
- 2 When Sean agreed to trade places with Fiona, he thought that
 - a** he would have an easy day of work.
 - b** Fiona would come back and finish any chores he didn't do.
 - c** Fiona wouldn't be able to do his work in the field.
- 3 When Sean went over to the pig's pen, he was
 - a** angry at the pig for squealing.

- b** annoyed with himself for tripping over the chicken.

- c** Both **a** and **b**

- 4 As Fiona walked toward the house, she knew right away something was wrong because
 - a** the pig was on the porch.
 - b** her husband was stuck in the chimney.
 - c** the cow was swinging from the roof.
- 5 After trying to do Fiona's chores for a day, Sean
 - a** agreed to do them every day.
 - b** realized her chores were just as hard as his.
 - c** hated doing his own chores even more.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 feel pain; hurt (2)
- 2 realize; understand (6)
- 3 walked slowly (10)
- 4 grumbled; complained (11)
- 5 falling over (13)
- 6 looking at closely (15)
- 7 balance or position held using the feet (19)

C A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.

The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

8 stormed (12)

- a** stomped angrily; raged
- b** rained or snowed heavily

9 swinging (21)

- a** trying to hit something
- b** hanging freely; dangling

10 trade (22)

- a** business; kind of work
- b** exchange; swap

THINK ABOUT IT

D Read the sentences. Each one tells about an event in the story. Put the five events in the correct order by writing *a, b, c, d, or e*.

- 1 Sean lit a fire.
- 2 Fiona saw her husband stuck in the chimney.
- 3 The cow was grazing on the roof.
- 4 Sean fell on top of the mop handle.
- 5 The eggs broke all over the floor.

E One word in the following row doesn't belong with the others.

ducks geese ~~foxes~~

Ducks and geese are birds. Foxes are not birds. *Foxes* is the word that doesn't belong.

Which word doesn't belong in each row? Write the word.

- | | | |
|------------|---------|---------|
| 6 potatoes | carrots | apples |
| 7 pigs | beetles | cows |
| 8 gate | door | floor |
| 9 hill | grass | pigpen |
| 10 soup | roof | chimney |

F Fiona did *Sean's* chores.

You add an *'s* to a noun to show that someone owns something. There are also special pronouns that show the same thing.

Fiona did *his* chores.

Read the sentences. Which word or words does each underlined pronoun stand for? Write *a* or *b*.

- 11 Sean landed on the mop, breaking its handle.
a The pantry's
b The mop's
- 12 Sean let the cow graze on top of his house.
a The cow's
b Sean's
- 13 Sean watched in horror as the pig ate their breakfast.
a The pig's
b Sean's and Fiona's
- 14 Fiona spotted the cow at the end of her long workday.
a Fiona's
b The cow's
- 15 "Get out of my kitchen," Sean yelled at the pig.
a Sean's
b The pig's