

Foolish Kailani

adapted from a Polynesian folktale
retold by Jack MacLeod



¹ Have you ever spent time near an ocean beach? If so, you've probably seen lines of shells and seaweed on the sand. Those lines mark the place where the water has been. During each day, the water rises and falls, covering more or

less of the beach. These changes in water level are called high and low tides. Tides play an important part in this story.

² A man known as Foolish Kailani once lived high on an island mountain. From his home, Kailani could look down to the

- ocean, very far away. Like everyone else on the island, he knew that the ocean belonged to a great and powerful chief.
- 3 Foolish Kailani was very poor. Sometimes, he didn't even have a coin to buy a little salt for his food. Food without salt didn't taste very good.
- 4 One day, a visitor came to Foolish Kailani's home. Kailani's dogs got very excited. They licked at the visitor's ankles.
- 5 "Why do the dogs lick your ankles?" asked Foolish Kailani.
- 6 "I am a fisherman down in the village," laughed the visitor. "My ankles are salty from the ocean water. The dogs like the salty taste."
- 7 "The ocean is salty?" exclaimed Kailani.
- 8 "Foolish man!" said the visitor. "Of course it's salty. Everyone knows that." Then, he went on his way.
- 9 Foolish Kailani found the idea of salt in the ocean very exciting.
- 10 "So he thinks I'm foolish, does he? It is other people who are foolish. They pay good money for salt to cook with. Why not just use the ocean water? Isn't water free for the taking?"
- 11 The next time Foolish Kailani ran low on salt, he decided to go to the ocean for more. He hollowed out a large gourd. Placing the gourd in a net, he slung it on his back and started down the mountain.
- 12 Before long, Foolish Kailani realized what a big job he had assumed. The path down the mountain was steep and rocky. It was a very long way to the ocean, but he kept going.
- 13 Finally, Foolish Kailani reached the shore. He was amazed. Kailani had never seen so much water up close. The water lapped high onto the beach, licking at his toes. He lived so high on the mountain that he didn't realize the water was sometimes high on the beach and sometimes low.
- 14 Foolish Kailani wondered if the Ocean Chief would be angry with him if he caught him taking some of the water.
- 15 "There is so much water," he reasoned. "Surely the Ocean Chief won't miss the little bit that I will take."
- 16 So Foolish Kailani filled his gourd with ocean water and plugged the opening with leaves. He wrestled the heavy gourd onto his back and started up the mountain.
- 17 The weight of the water made the steep climb seem even steeper. He ascended for several hours, stopping often to rest. About halfway up, he happened to look back toward the beach he had visited.
- 18 "Oh, my," he cried, "what have I done?" The beach was much larger, and the sand was bare and dry.
- 19 Foolish Kailani didn't know about tides. He thought he had taken enough water to uncover the beach. "Oh, my," he moaned. "The Ocean Chief will be very unhappy with me for taking so much water."
- 20 There was only one thing to do! He must go back and return the water he had taken. Foolish Kailani scurried down the path, paying no attention to how tired he was. When he reached the beach, he quickly poured the water out of the gourd. Then, he hurried back up the path so that the Ocean Chief wouldn't catch him.
- 21 When he was far up the mountain, Foolish Kailani again looked back at the beach. In the hours it had taken him to climb, the water had once more risen on the beach.
- 22 "Ah," the foolish man sighed. "The Chief's ocean is full again. It's a good thing I replaced the water before he noticed."
- 23 Foolish Kailani never told anyone what he had done. But now, he understood why the people never took ocean water for their cooking pots.

COMPREHENSION

- A** Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.
- 1** Another title for this story might be
 - a** A Lot of Work for Nothing.
 - b** Why There Are Tides.
 - c** Cooking without Salt.
 - 2** The fisherman thought Kailani was foolish because
 - a** Kailani liked salt.
 - b** Kailani did not know about the salty ocean.
 - c** Kailani's dogs licked his ankles.
 - 3** Kailani thought he had taken too much water because
 - a** he did not know about the tides.
 - b** he believed everything he was told.
 - c** the gourd was too heavy.
 - 4** Kailani didn't tell what he had done because
 - a** he knew people would think he had done something wrong.
 - b** he had learned about the tides.
 - c** Neither **a** nor **b**
 - 5** Judging from the story, high and low tides probably
 - a** take a number of hours to happen.
 - b** happen once a month.
 - c** Both **a** and **b**

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** scooped out; created an empty space (11)
 - 2** taken on; tried to do (12)
 - 3** flowed; splashed (13)
 - 4** struggled to lift; moved with difficulty (16)
 - 5** climbed; rose (17)
 - 6** hurried; scrambled (20)
 - 7** put back; returned (22)
- 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** **great** (2)
 - a** very important
 - b** huge; large
 - 9** **cook** (10)
 - a** to prepare food to eat
 - b** a person who prepares food
 - 10** **low** (11)
 - a** sad
 - b** not high

THINK ABOUT IT

- D** The *silly* man was foolish.
The man was foolish.

When writers or speakers are careless, they sometimes use an unnecessary word and say the same thing twice.

Read each sentence. Which word in **bold type** is not needed because the same idea is expressed elsewhere in the sentence? Write the word.

- 1 The **poor** man didn't seem to have good **fortune** or much money.
- 2 The **excited** dogs were thrilled to see the **visitor**.
- 3 The **free** ocean **water** wouldn't cost the man anything.
- 4 The **rocky path** was full of stones.
- 5 He **quickly filled** the gourd with water in a hurry.

- E** Homographs are two (or more) words that are spelled the same but have different meanings and origins. A word's meaning will depend on how it is used.

A palm tree **spoke** to him.
The wheel had a broken **spoke**.

The two words in **bold type** are homographs.

Read each pair of sentences. If the words in **bold type** mean the same thing in both sentences, write *same*. If the words do not mean the same thing, write *different*.

- 6 The man tasted a **bit** of food.
The man's dog **bit** him.
- 7 The waves **lap** against the shore.
The man tried to hold all the food on his **lap**.
- 8 "I **will** take a little water," he said.
"The Ocean Chief **will** not miss it."
- 9 The man stopped to **rest**.
He would spend the **rest** of the day walking.
- 10 The heavy gourd made his **back** hurt.
He looked **back** toward the beach.

- F** A pronoun can take the place of many words.

Read the sentences. Which pronoun in parentheses () makes sense in each sentence? Write the pronoun.

- 11 The man didn't have enough money to buy salt. (He, It) was very poor.
- 12 The visitor laughed at the man's question. "(You, It) are foolish," he said.
- 13 The man emptied the gourd. He carried it on (his, my) back.
- 14 When the man saw all the water, he was amazed. (It, He) frightened him.
- 15 The foolish man didn't tell the other people. (They, He) would laugh at him.