

The Monkey and the Starfish

a retelling of a Javanese tale
by Sandra Upton



- 1 One day Monkey was walking by the sea. He sang a proud song, for Monkey is a proud animal. Sometimes Monkey is too full of himself. This was one of those times.
- 2 Presently he came upon a starfish enjoying the surf and the sun. "Hello, little one," said Monkey. "Move out of my way. I want to continue my walk."
- 3 "Hello," said Starfish. "I am very comfortable here. Surely, you can walk around me."
- 4 "Why should I?" asked Monkey. "I am clever. I am quick. I am quite the best of all the animals. Move out of the way so I may pass."
- 5 Now starfish are peaceable creatures. They do not like trouble. However, they do not like to be insulted either. So Starfish settled himself even more comfortably and said, "No, I think not. You are not as clever or quick as you think."
- 6 "What? What?" shrieked Monkey. He began to jump about. He made a terrible racket. "I am certainly quicker and cleverer than you!"
- 7 Because of this very bad behavior, Starfish decided to teach Monkey a lesson. "Quicker and cleverer than I?" said Starfish lazily. "I do not think so. In fact, I know I could beat you in a marathon."
- 8 At this, Monkey stopped jumping around. He stopped shrieking. He sat down on the sand and started to laugh. He held his sides. He pounded on the sand. He laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks.
- 9 "You silly starfish," he gasped finally, "I accept your challenge. I will race you any time and any place you say."
- 10 "Very well," said Starfish. Then and there they decided on the route of the race. It would take place in a week. Monkey went on his way, looking back now and again at Starfish, who, it should be noted, had not moved out of the way.
- 11 Later that day, Starfish called a Starfish Council. When Starfish explained what had happened, the Council was very angry. They all agreed that Monkey needed a lesson. So they devised a clever plan.
- 12 It was decided that all along the race route, many starfish would hide themselves. Since all starfish look alike, Monkey would not be able to tell one from another. Then whenever Monkey stopped to rest, one of the starfish would pop up behind him. Monkey would not think he was quick or clever by the end of this race.
- 13 On the morning of the race, Monkey and a starfish stood at the starting line. Monkey was his usual self—loud and rather insulting. He hardly looked at the starfish. Now, most of the animals that had come to see the race knew what was going to happen. However, did any of them tell Monkey? No, indeed, for it was their opinion that Monkey needed this lesson.
- 14 The race began and Monkey scampered away. He didn't even look back, so he did not notice that the starfish had disappeared into the high grass.
- 15 By and by he stopped to rest. *I have plenty of time*, he thought. Then in mock concern he said aloud, "Oh, where is Starfish? I hope he is not lost."
- 16 Behind him a voice said, "I am right here." Sure enough, there was a starfish. This startled Monkey. He leaped up and ran off. Every time he stopped, another starfish would slip in behind him. Soon Monkey was exhausted. In fact, he was so tired that he could hardly finish the race.
- 17 Imagine his embarrassment when he saw Starfish standing at the finish line, waiting. Now, Starfish had been there all the time, but Monkey did not know that. He knew only that he had lost the race. With the last of his strength, he ran away.
- 18 For a while, things were quiet in the jungle. Monkey kept to himself. Everyone knew that it would not last. Monkey's boasting and insults were bound to start up again. In the meantime life was pleasant—very pleasant indeed.

COMPREHENSION

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

- 1 The lesson this story teaches is that it is
 - a** not wise to be disrespectful.
 - b** always best to avoid trouble.
 - c** always the fastest who wins the race.
- 2 The Starfish Council was angry because Monkey
 - a** wanted to race.
 - b** had insulted Starfish.
 - c** took too many walks by the sea.

3 You can tell from the story that Monkey is not

- a** popular.
- b** confident.
- c** rude.

4 At the beginning of the race, Monkey was not very

- a** prideful.
- b** loud.
- c** respectful.

5 The setting for this story is near

- a** a city.
- b** a desert.
- c** the sea.

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 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 the splash of waves on the shore (2)
- 2 go on without stopping (2)
- 3 to be treated in a disrespectful way (5)
- 4 cried out in a sharp voice (6)
- 5 a very long race (7)
- 6 an invitation to compete (9)
- 7 formed or developed (11)

C **too** = also

two = the number after *one*

Words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings are called homophones. *Too* and *two* are homophones.

Look at each word in **bold type**. Note the paragraph number. Look at the paragraph and find the homophone for the word in **bold type**. Which of the homophones fits in the blank in the sentence? Write the word.

8 **won** (1)

Monkey ran away because he had not _____ the race.

9 **hear** (3)

Each of the starfish told Monkey, "I am right _____."

10 **counsel** (11)

The Starfish _____ decided on a clever plan to teach Monkey a lesson.

THINK ABOUT IT

D Read each set of sentences. Which word in **bold type** is the best ending? Write the word.

- 1 Starfish suggested a race. This made Monkey feel _____.
angry nervous amused
- 2 Monkey lost the race. This made the other animals feel _____.
worried happy sad
- 3 Monkey told Starfish to move out of the way. This made Monkey feel _____.
powerful silly jealous
- 4 Starfish kept turning up whenever Monkey stopped. This made Monkey feel _____.
silly confident confused
- 5 Monkey ran off in embarrassment. This made Starfish feel _____.
satisfied critical unhappy

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.

My dad is a football *fan*.

He keeps cool with an electric *fan*.

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 Monkey thought he could **beat** Starfish.
Monkey laughed hard and **beat** the sand.
- 7 Monkey stopped to **rest** often during the race.
Starfish and the **rest** of the animals thought Monkey needed a lesson.

8 Starfish was lying on his **back** enjoying the surf and sun.
All the animals laughed at Monkey behind his **back**.

9 Each time Monkey turned around, he **saw** a starfish.
Monkey first **saw** Starfish during a walk by the sea.

10 At **last**, the finish line came into sight.
The **last** thing Monkey expected to see was Starfish at the finish line.

F Metaphors are figures of speech that compare two things but do not use the words *like* or *as*. Metaphors sometimes exaggerate. In other words, they make something seem bigger, better, worse, or more important than it really is.

Mary Lou is *a lamb*.

This means Mary Lou is gentle.

The words in **bold type** are metaphors. One of the words in parentheses () tells what the metaphor means. Write the word.

- 11 The Council's plan was **a gem**.
(flawless, expensive)
- 12 The animals thought Monkey was **a clown**. (foolish, wise)
- 13 Monkey was a real **chicken** at the end of the race. (coward, a bird)
- 14 Starfish was **a walking encyclopedia**. (smart, a set of books)
- 15 Starfish became the **top banana** in the jungle. (leader, a friend)