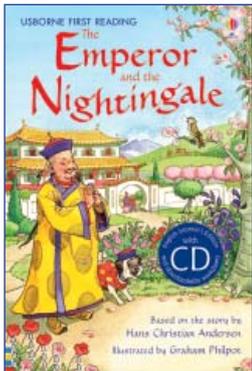


The Emperor and the Nightingale • Teacher's notes



Author: Hans Christian Andersen

Reader level: Intermediate

Word count: 831

Lexile level: 350L

Text type: Children's classic author, fairy tale

About the story

The Emperor of China wants to have the best of everything. So when he hears that something called a nightingale has the sweetest song in his palace garden, he sends his servants to find it. The nightingale turns out to be a plain-looking brown bird, but the Emperor loves her song and keeps her in a silver cage.

Then the Emperor of Japan gives him a clockwork bird. It can't sing as sweetly as the real nightingale, but it sparkles with gold and jewels. The Emperor forgets all about the nightingale and she flies away.

One day, the clockwork bird breaks down. Missing the real nightingale, the Emperor becomes sick. The nightingale returns and sings to him until he is better. The Emperor begs her to stay, but she flies away. The Emperor plants a tree to remember her – and, to his delight, two nightingales build a nest in it.

About the author

This story was originally written by Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), who was inspired by the traditional tales he heard as a child. Andersen was born in Denmark, the son of a poor shoemaker and a washerwoman. He left home to seek his fortune when he was just fourteen. He tried acting and singing, without success. Then he turned to writing, and became famous all over the world for his fairy tales.

The story has been adapted and simplified for beginner readers and English language learners, but retains all the charm and freshness of Andersen's original.

Key words in the story

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

Emperor	p26	cage
nightingale		missed
p3 proud	p29	rubies
p4 palace	p31	noticed
bricks	o34	fix
p5 tinkled	p36	staring
p8 gardener	p37	shadows
p11 frown	p41	cured
p12 snapped	p42	begged
p13 servants	p43	prefer
p14 bushes		replied
p16 croak	p44	plant
p17 pond		remind
p21 clapped	p45	watered
p22 among	p46	flutter
p24 enchanted	p47	building
p25 ordered		nest

Key phrases

p3	the best of everything
p5	Music to my ears
p9	Cheer up!
p13	they didn't dare...
p14	They searched high and low
p19	What a voice!
p20	In the end
p30	Well, sort of...
p35	the Emperor longed for the little brown bird not even...
p37	close to death
p39	She had found out
p47	To his surprise



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Before reading

Ask your students to think about Very Important People. What kinds of people are Very Important? Encourage a range of answers, including kings and queens. Ask if they know: who is even more important than a king or queen? (Bear in mind that they may also answer: God or a god.)

Do they know of any emperors, real or fictional?

What does an emperor have? You might like to collect images of palaces, jewels, robes, banquets and other signs of wealth and splendour. You could group these under the heading, "The best of everything".

Now show the students a picture of a nightingale, and write its name. Does it look impressive? Why might an emperor want an ordinary brown bird? If you can, search online for a sound clip of a nightingale singing that you can play to your students.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- | | |
|--|---|
| p8 Compare the picture of the gardener with the Emperor on page 3. How are they different? | p31 How do you think the real nightingale feels? |
| p12 How is the Emperor feeling? Why? | p35 Where do you think the nightingale has gone? [There is no right or wrong answer to this.] |
| pp14-15 There is no nightingale here – but which other animals can you see? | p36 Can you describe the Emperor in this picture? |
| p22 Is the nightingale happy to go to the palace? Why not, do you think? | p41 What do you think the Emperor will do now? |
| p30 Which nightingale would you prefer? | p45 Do you think the nightingale will come back again? |

After reading

Do you think the Emperor has learned something?
What do you think is the message of the story?

What do you think would be a good present for the Emperor?

Do you know any other stories by Hans Christian Andersen?
(Some of the best known are The Snow Queen, The Ugly Duckling and The Emperor's New Clothes.)

