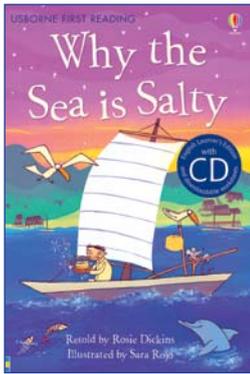


Why the Sea is Salty • Teacher's notes



Author: Traditional, retold by Rosie Dickins

Reader level: Intermediate

Word count: 618

Lexile level: 300L

Text type: Folk tale from Korea

About the story

The story begins, surprisingly, by explaining that the sea wasn't always salty, and at one time was sweet enough to drink. The salt is all due to a magic millstone that belonged to a great King, and could produce anything the King wished for, from gold to spices. A thief decides he wants the millstone for himself, so he goes to the King's palace and is taken on a tour by a kind guard. The thief tricks the guard into telling him where the millstone is hidden, and how the King makes it work, then creeps back later to steal it.

The thief escapes on a boat, and is soon wondering what to wish for. He starts eating a bun, finds that it isn't salty enough and is inspired to ask the millstone for salt. It works... but the thief falls asleep without telling the millstone to stop. He wakes to find a heap of salt, weighing down the boat and growing by the minute, but he doesn't know how to make the millstone stop. Finally the boat sinks and the thief swims ashore to be captured by the King. As for the millstone, it's still churning out salt on the ocean floor.

About the author

Rosie Dickins grew up in England and Hong Kong. She has always loved reading, especially fairy tales. She studied literature at Oxford, edited books in Asia and now lives in London with her husband and young daughter. She has written over 50 children's books. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking – although her salt and spices mostly come from the supermarket and not from a magic millstone.

Key words

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

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| p4 millstone | p18 bet | p33 bright |
| p6 flour | chimney | poured |
| p7 jewels | p20 teased | p34 munched |
| special | p21 proudly | p35 riches |
| spices | p23 magician | p37 grew |
| whatever | p24 tour | p38 tickling |
| p8 treasure | p26 crept | p39 heap |
| chest | p27 tiptoed | p41 yelled |
| p9 thief | reached | p42 sink |
| p10 scratched | p28 cloak | p43 waves |
| p12 guards | p29 leaped | slopping |
| p14 throne | sailed | p44 dug |
| p15 royal | p30 wondered | buried |
| p16 suppose | p31 spat | p45 right [straight] |
| hidden | p32 grinned | ocean |

Key phrases

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| p4 | it all began with |
| p5 | belonged to |
| p8 | thanks to |
| p16 | to be sorry not to [do something] |
| p28 | as fast as he could |
| p36 | all night long |
| p38 | to be woken by |
| p46 | to this very day |
| p47 | As for... |



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Before reading

Fill three glasses with drinking water. Add a teaspoon of sugar to one, half a teaspoon of salt to another and leave the third as it is. Don't let your class know the difference. Invite volunteers to taste the water. (You could provide straws if you want several people to drink from the same glass.) Ask the students what the difference is between the glasses of water. Which is the nicest one to drink?

Now ask the following questions:

Where can you find plain water? [Taps, rivers, rainwater, lakes – various possible answers here.]

Where can you find salty water? [Seas and oceans, or tears.]

Where can you find sweet water? [It has to be made, for example in desserts or drinks.]

Ask students: do you believe that the sea was always salty? Show them the cover of the book. Explain that this story is a traditional Korean folk tale that explains where the salt in the sea came from.

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.

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| pp2-3 | What are the people in the picture doing? What's it like drinking sea water today? | p18 | Have you noticed which animal is following the thief? And the palace guard? [Look out for the rat and dog throughout the book.] |
| p4 | Have you seen a millstone before? [Some large ones have survived from old mills.] | p21 | How would you describe the guard? Is he doing his job well? |
| p6 | How do millstones usually work? [One round, flat stone is turned above another to crush grains into flour.] | p23 | How would you describe the thief? |
| p9 | What differences can you see between the thief's house and the King's palace? | p30 | What would you ask the millstone for? |
| p11 | What are the guards holding? | p33 | How do you think the thief feels? |
| p15 | Is this how you expect a king's bedroom to look? What does the thief wonder? | p35 | What did the thief forget to do? |
| | | p41 | How do you think he feels now? |
| | | p47 | What do you think will happen next? |

After reading

How could the thief have avoided losing the millstone? What else should he have asked the guard? [How to make the millstone stop!]

What do you think the King will do, now that he doesn't have a magic millstone to make gold, jewels and spices for him? [You could explore various options: the King might come up with a scheme to make more gold and jewels, or he might decide he didn't need any more treasure.]

Would you prefer it if the sea were sweet? What about all the things we use salt for – can you think of some examples? (Cooking; preserving meat and fish; in some countries, melting snow and ice on the roads; fixing dyes in materials.)

Do you know where the salt you use every day comes from? (In some countries, it is mined underground, and in others, it is harvested from the sea or from salt pans inland). Maybe you can find out more as a homework project.

