

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ School: _____

Grade 5: Lesson 16 Students will read a section of *Why the Dog Hates the Cat* to identify characters in the fable and begin to investigate how they react to their common problem of poverty and hunger.

Why the Dog Hates the Cat

From *A Chinese Wonderbook* by Norman Hinsdale Pitman

Section 1:

"What we shall eat tomorrow, I haven't the slightest idea!" said Widow Wang to her eldest son, as he started out one morning in search of work.

"Oh, the gods will provide. I'll find a few pennies somewhere," replied the boy, trying to speak cheerfully, although in his heart he also had no idea in which direction to turn.

The winter had been a hard one: extreme cold, deep snow, and violent winds. The Wang house had suffered greatly. The roof had fallen in, weighed down by heavy snow. Then a hurricane had blown a wall over, and Ming-li, the son, up all night and exposed to a bitter cold wind, had caught pneumonia. Long days of illness followed, with the spending of extra money for medicine. All their scant savings had soon melted away, and at the shop where Ming-li had once worked his place was filled by another. When at last he arose from his sickbed he was too weak for hard labor and there seemed to be no work in the neighboring villages for him to do. Night after night he came home, trying not to be discouraged, but in his heart feeling the deep pangs of sorrow at the sight of his mother suffering for food and clothing.

"Bless his good heart!" said the poor widow after he had gone. "No mother ever had a better boy. I hope he is right in saying the gods will provide. It has been getting so much worse these past few weeks that it seems now as if my stomach were as empty as the ocean. Why, even the rats have deserted our cottage, and there's nothing left for poor Tabby Cat, while old Blackfoot the Dog is nearly dead from starvation."

When the old woman referred to the sorrows of her pets, her remarks were answered by a pitiful mewing and weebegone barking from the corner where the two hungry creatures were curled up together trying to keep warm.

Just then there was a loud knocking at the gate. When the widow Wang called out, "Come in!" she was surprised to see an old baldheaded monk standing in the doorway. "Sorry, but we have nothing," she went on, feeling sure the visitor had come in search of food. "We have fed on scraps these two weeks—on scraps and scrapings—and now we are living on the memories of what we used to have. Our cat was so fat then she couldn't climb to the roof. Now look at her. You can hardly see her, she's so thin. No, I'm sorry we can't help you, friend, but you see how it is."

"I didn't come for food," cried the monk, looking at her kindly, "but only to see what I could do to help you. The gods have listened long to the prayers of your devoted son. They have seen how faithfully he has served you ever since his illness, and now, when he is worn out and unable to work, they have decided to reward him. You likewise have been a good mother and shall receive the gift I am now bringing."

"What do you mean?" faltered Mrs. Wang, hardly believing her ears. "Have you come here to laugh at our troubles?"

“By no means. Here in my hand I hold a tiny golden beetle which you will find has a magic power greater than any you ever dreamed of. I will leave this precious thing with you.”

“Yes, it will sell for a good sum,” murmured the widow, looking closely at the beetle, “and will give us rice for several days. Thanks, good monk, for your kindness.”

“But you must by no means sell this golden beetle, for it has the power to fill your stomachs as long as you live.”

The widow stared in open-mouthed wonder at the monk’s surprising words.

“Yes, you must not doubt me, but listen carefully to what I tell you. Whenever you wish food, you have only to place this beetle in a kettle of boiling water, saying over and over again the names of what you want to eat. In three minutes, take off the lid, and there will be your dinner, smoking hot, and cooked more perfectly than any food you have ever eaten.”

“May I try it now?” she asked eagerly.

“As soon as I am gone.”

When the door was shut, the old woman hurriedly kindled a fire, boiled some water, and then dropped in the golden beetle, repeating these words again and again:

“Dumplings, dumplings, come to me,
I am thin as thin can be.
Dumplings, dumplings, smoking hot,
Dumplings, dumplings, fill the pot.”

Would those three minutes never pass? Could the monk have told the truth? Her old head was nearly wild with excitement as clouds of steam rose from the kettle. Off came the lid! She could wait no longer.

Independent Practice:

Remember, *Why the Dog Hates the Cat* is told from a third-person, or omniscient, point of view, meaning the narrator knows EVERYTHING! When you read a story told from this point of view, you are looking through the eyes of the narrator, so *you* also know everything.

Complete the remaining sections of your character chart by filling in the WHAT WE KNOW column with everything *you* know about each character. Make sure to add any and all of the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions that you can remember. Use a bulleted list so you have plenty of room for everything you'll want to add in each character's box.

There are some characters that you know a lot about at this point in the fable, and some you know very little about. We can add to those as we learn more about them later in the story.

When you are done with your character chart! Write a few sentences describing what *you* think Widow Wang found in the pot of boiling water when she took off the lid!

Make sure to keep up with your character chart and your guess at what's in the pot. Have them ready for lesson two!

Sourced from LeanZillion