

# THE CLEVEREST THIEF

Third Grade

## **Outcome:**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the story through discussion, reading, writing, predicting, drawing, role playing, and sequencing.

## **Overview:**

Students will read and explore a folktale from India while utilizing interdisciplinary connections in language arts, social studies, dramatic arts, art, character education, and physical education.

## **Materials:**

Book, *The Cleverest Thief*  
World map or globe  
Unlined paper  
Crayons or markers  
Lined paper  
Pencils  
Blackboard or Whiteboard  
Soft floor cushions or pillows

## **Optional:**

Forest, Heather. "The Wise Master." *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*. Little Rock: August House, 1996. 145-146.  
Forest, Heather. "The Talkative Turtle." *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*. Little Rock: August House, 1996. 13-14.  
Forest, Heather. "A Flock of Birds." *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*. Little Rock: August House, 1996. 17-18.  
Computer with Internet access

## **Assessment Tools:**

"Alike and Different" Worksheet A  
"Alike and Different" Worksheet B  
"Ask the Question" worksheet  
"Blends" worksheet

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## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

### **Introduction:**

#### **Materials:**

World map or globe

Unlined paper

Crayons or markers

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Asks students what they know about India.
- Helps students locate India on a world map or globe.
- Asks students what they know about Buddha and Buddhism and if they have ever seen a picture or statue of Buddha.
- Shares the following information with students as appropriate:
  - Buddha was a man who lived in India many years ago.
  - Buddha studied and meditated for a long time, attempting to determine the cause and cure of unhappiness. Teacher asks students what meditation is (spending time in quiet, deep, serious thought). He sat beneath a tree and promised not to leave until he understood the whole meaning of life. He sat for 49 days until the truth came to him. He became the “Wise One.”
  - “Buddha” means “enlightened one.” Buddha became a great teacher and taught that unhappiness is a natural part of life. The cure to unhappiness is to get rid of selfish desires. He said that we should think as much of others as we do of ourselves.
  - Buddha taught that we should not steal, cheat, or be angry. We should not repeat hurtful things and should not harm any living creature.
  - Some of Buddha’s followers gave up all of their possessions and spent their time learning his lessons. Buddha’s followers who live in a religious community and follow the rules of the order are known as Buddhist monks. Though some women are also called monks, most are called “nuns,” and the term “monk” usually refers to a man. Other religions also have monks and nuns.
  - Over the years, Buddhism has separated into branches that teach different variations of the religion. Buddhists do not agree about certain teachings, but they all agree Buddha taught that pain, suffering, and unhappiness are a natural part of life and can be escaped by getting rid of selfish desires.
  - Monks may live alone or live in a monastery. Teacher asks students what a monastery is (a building or group of buildings where a community of monks may live).
  - One of the few possessions Buddhist monks own is the robe they wear. The robes are the color of falling leaves, as a constant reminder of the importance of not clinging and letting go. Wise and/or elderly Buddhist monks usually wear orange robes.
  - Monks are given an alms/begging bowl for food, a belt, a razor, and a few other personal items. Many monks depend on gifts of food to live. They are not allowed to be employed in paid work.

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## **Introduction cont.:**

- Buddhist monks spend their time meditating and learning Buddha’s teachings. They look for enlightenment. They use meditation to free their minds from aggression, ignorance, jealousy, and pride. Meditation helps them to rid themselves of these negative feelings and lets their wisdom shine through.
- They teach others by their words and by the example that they set of how they live. They follow precepts that teach them to live a peaceful life, following rules such as:
  - not killing a single creature of any kind
  - not taking what is not given to them
  - not speaking dishonestly
  - not smoking, using alcohol, nor taking non-medicinal drugs
  - not eating after noon
  - not wearing cosmetics, perfume, nor jewelry
  - not dancing, singing, nor playing music
  - and not using luxurious beds or seats
- Asks students how the life of a monk is different than their own life.
- Asks students to name some of the precepts that they can use in their own lives.
- Discusses classroom rules with students and how they are similar and different from the monks’ precepts.
- Instructs students to create a poster with classroom rules, using the monks’ precepts as inspiration.
- Asks students to share their posters with the class.

## **Students Read the Story:**

### Materials:

Book, *The Cleverest Thief*

### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Informs students that they will be reading a folktale from India.
- Divides the class into four groups.
  - Group A: Read the story through page 8, put the book away, and then work together to write an ending to the story.
  - Group B: Read the story through page 10, put the book away, and then work together to write an ending to the story.
  - Group C: Read the story through page 13, put the book away, and then work together to write an ending to the story.
  - Group D: Read the story through page 18, put the book away, and then work together to write an ending to the story.
- Asks each group to read their ending to the class.
- Asks students how the stopping point for reading the story influenced each story ending.
- And students take turns reading the entire story aloud.
- Asks students how their stories differed from the *The Cleverest Thief*.

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## Questions for Assessing Students' Comprehension:

- What is the setting of the story?
- If you were not told that it takes place in India, how could you figure it out?
- Who are the main characters in the story?
- What is the plot of the story?
- What does “clever” mean?
- What does “cleverest” mean?
- What is a thief?
- What stories or movies do you know that have a character who is a thief?
- What is a monastery?
- What is a monk?
- What is meditation?
- The great monk guided the other monks for more than half of his one hundred years. How many years is half of one hundred?
- What does “leading a life of peace and service” mean?
- Is it necessary to be a monk to lead a life of peace and service?
- What can you do to lead a life of peace and service?
- Why did the great monk need to choose someone to take his place as leader of the monastery?
- Why was this hard for him?
- How would you choose a leader?
- What test did the great monk use to choose a leader?
- Do you think this was a good idea? Why or why not?
- How do you think the monks felt when they were told to steal something so that no one would know?
- How would you feel if you were asked to steal?
- What did each of the monks steal?
- When they met with the great monk, Dhammika was “empty-handed.” What does that mean?
- What reason did Dhammika give for not stealing?
- What did the great monk mean when he said, “...you may hide your actions from the world, but never from yourself”?
- Why did the great monk choose Dhammika to be the next leader?
- What did the great monk mean when he told Dhammika that, “You, alone, stayed true to yourself and my teachings”?
- What were the great monk’s teachings?
- How did the great monk feel about choosing Dhammika?
- How did Dhammika feel about being chosen as the next leader? How can you tell?
- What is the lesson of this story?
- Look at the illustration on page 32. What objects do you see? (an alms bowl with grains of rice and a gold coin, an orange belt or sash, a staff, prayer beads, an outer layer of robe, a straight razor, and a toothpick).

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## **Questions for Assessing Students' Comprehension cont.:**

- Look at the illustrations of the leaves throughout the story. What is the significance of the falling leaves? (As noted in the introductory activity, Buddhist monks wear robes that are the color of falling leaves, as a reminder of the importance of not clinging and letting go. Also, the life cycle of the leaves mirrors the leadership cycle of the monks. The leaves are dying and falling when the great monk's leadership is ending, and they are green when a new leader is chosen.)

## **Language Arts:**

### • **Diary Entry**

#### Materials:

Lined paper

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Instructs students to write a diary entry about the story from the point of view of one of the story's characters.
- Asks students to read their entries aloud.
- Asks students how and why each character had a different description and interpretation of the story events.

### • **Rewrite the Story**

#### Materials:

Lined paper

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

- Teacher tells students to rewrite the story by changing the following:
  - the story setting to their school in modern times
  - the great monk to their teacher or principal
  - Dhammika to themselves
  - the other monks to their friends
- Students share their stories with the class.

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## **Language Arts cont.:**

### • **Making Comparisons**

#### Materials:

Blackboard or Whiteboard

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Informs students that sometimes a person or thing is shorter, taller, or slower than someone or something else.
- Shares the following information with students:
  - To show these comparisons, an adjective (describing word) can be expressed in three ways called degrees. The comparison shows the degree of what the adjective expresses. Example: the child is young, the toddler is younger, and the baby is youngest.
  - Many one syllable words form these degrees by adding /-er/ and /-est/. (Teacher writes examples on the board.)
  - Some adjectives do not follow this pattern such as “good” (good, better, best).
- Asks students to use the following adjectives (that do follow the pattern) to express degrees of comparison: fast, neat, flat, light, kind, great, long, deep, soft, tight, high, low, loud, bright, smooth, sweet, quiet, and fresh.

### • **Alike and Different**

An activity for differentiated learning

#### Materials:

“Alike and Different” Worksheet A

“Alike and Different” Worksheet B

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

Teacher divides the class into three groups.

- Group A: Work with the teacher to complete the “Alike and Different” Worksheet A. Write two ways each pair of words is alike and two ways each pair is different.
- Group B: Work individually to complete the “Alike and Different” Worksheet A as per directions for Group A.
- Group C: Complete “Alike and Different” Worksheet B individually.

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## **Language Arts cont.:**

### • **Ask the Question**

#### Materials:

“Ask the Question” worksheet

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

Students write a sensible question for each answer given.

1. India
2. In the monastery
3. The great monk
4. Steal so that no one can name the thief
5. A necklace right off the neck of a wealthy woman
6. A single grain of rice from a stall in a bazaar
7. I would be the thief. I would always know it.
8. Dhammika

### • **Adjectives Contest**

#### Materials:

Book, *The Cleverest Thief*

Lined paper

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Divides the class into several small groups or teams.
- Reviews the concepts of adjectives with students.
- Asks students to look at the illustrations on the cover of the book and on page 31.
- Instructs students to write as many adjectives about those illustrations as they can in two minutes.
- Asks each team to write their adjectives on the board. Students evaluate all of the words to make sure they are adjectives and that they accurately describe the illustrations.
- Announces the winning team of the contest that has the most adjectives.

### • **Author’s Insight**

#### Materials:

Unlined paper

Crayons or markers

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Informs students that the author, T. V. Padma (Padma Venkatraman), grew up in India where she heard at least two versions of this story. As a child, she traveled with her aunts and cousins to several Buddhist sights in India including Bodhgaya, the place where Buddha attained enlightenment. This special memory is still fresh in her mind. She remembers this as one of the most beautiful and peaceful places she has ever visited.

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## Language Arts cont.:

### **Author's Insight cont.**

- Asks students to draw a beautiful and peaceful place either from their memory or their imagination.
- Asks students to show their pictures to the class and describe them.

## Phonics:

### • **Blends**

#### Materials:

Book, *The Cleverest Thief*

“Blends” worksheet

#### **Directions:**

1. Find words in the story that begin with each blend. Write the word(s) in the space provided.
2. Combine the word endings with the blends (br, cl, gr, pl, sl, sp, st, tw) to make words. These words do not have to be story words.

Blends:

1. br \_\_\_\_\_ (brought)
2. cl \_\_\_\_\_ (cleverest, clearly, close)
3. gr \_\_\_\_\_ (great, grain, greed)
4. pl \_\_\_\_\_ (place, pleased)
5. sl \_\_\_\_\_ (slipped, slipping)
6. sp \_\_\_\_\_ (spoke)
7. st \_\_\_\_\_ (steal, stole, stolen, stealing, strange, stayed, stall)
8. tw \_\_\_\_\_ (twitter)

Word endings:

1. —ain \_\_\_\_\_ (brain, grain, plain, Spain, stain, Twain)
2. —and \_\_\_\_\_ (brand, stand, grand)
3. —ay \_\_\_\_\_ (bray, clay, gray, slay, spay, stay)
4. —eed \_\_\_\_\_ (breed, greed, speed, steed, tweed)
5. —ing \_\_\_\_\_ (bring, cling, sling, sting)
6. —ink \_\_\_\_\_ (brink, clink, slink, stink)
7. —ock \_\_\_\_\_ (clock, stock)
8. —ump \_\_\_\_\_ (clump, grump, plump, stump)

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## **Social Studies:**

### • **Monks**

#### Materials:

Book, *The Cleverest Thief*

Unlined paper

Crayons or markers

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Informs students that:
  - One of the few possessions a monk owns is his three-part robe. These robes are the colors of falling leaves. Wise and/or elderly Buddhist monks usually wear orange robes.
  - Monks are given a begging/alms bowl, a belt, a razor, a staff, and a toothpick. These items along with the three-part robe are called the Eight Requisites. Some orders of monks have small differences in what these eight items are. (Some may include a water strainer, needle and thread, or other necessary item.) The items always include the three-part robe, the bowl, and the razor.
- Asks students to review the illustrations in the book and find these items.
- Asks students to name the objects and discuss the usefulness of the objects in the illustrations on page 32 (alms bowl with grains of rice and a gold coin, an orange sash or belt, a staff, prayer beads, an outer layer of robe, a straight razor, a toothpick).
- Asks students to name eight items for living they would *need*, if those were their only possessions.
- Asks students to name eight items that they would *want*.
- Leads students in discussing want vs. need.
- Asks students to draw the eight items that they would want *and* need if those were their only possessions.
- Asks students to show their drawings to the class and explain why they chose the items.

## **Drama:**

### • **Character Interviews**

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Divides the class into pairs.
- Informs students that they will each have the opportunity to pretend they are a character from the story and an interviewer.
- Instructs students to work with their partner to decide which character they will each play, what questions the interviewer will ask that character, and how the character will answer. Students are reminded to answer as the character, including using appropriate facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
- Asks students to practice their interviews.
- Asks students to present their interviews to the class.
- Leads class in a discussion about the interviews as appropriate.

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## **Character Education:**

### • **Write a Story**

#### Materials:

Lined paper

Pencils

#### **Directions:**

- Teacher reminds students that Buddha taught that people should:
  - Live without harming others.
  - Defeat greed.
  - Act with wisdom.
- Students write a story that incorporates at least one of Buddha's teachings.

## **Physical Education:**

### • **Meditation**

#### Materials:

Soft floor cushions or pillows

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Reminds students that after a night of deep meditation, the great monk called all the monks to gather around him.
- Reviews the meaning of meditation and asks students to share knowledge of meditation or personal experiences.
- Informs students that there are many ways to meditate and that they will do a seated meditation.
- Creates a quiet environment, dims the lights, and asks students to sit on a comfortable floor cushion or pillow or to sit on a chair.
- Asks students to:
  - Sit up straight on the cushion in a comfortable position such as cross-legged or in a chair with their feet in front. Students should sit up tall and straight to facilitate proper breathing.
  - Close their eyes, place their hands in their lap, and relax their bodies.
  - Breathe in and out easily and evenly.
  - Add counting to their breathing by counting 1 as their first inhalation, 2 as their first exhalation, 3 as their second inhalation, 4 as their second exhalation... until they reach 40. After they reach 40, they should continue to breathe in and out slowly and evenly without counting.
  - Think about the people in their lives such as family, friends, and teachers.
  - Think positive thoughts about these people.
  - Feel appreciation for these people being in their life.
  - Think about having more energy.
  - Think about doing their best in all they do.
  - Slowly open their eyes and become aware of the environment around them.
- Asks students to share about their meditation experience.

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## **Extension Activities:**

### • **Author’s Insight Extension**

#### Materials:

Book, *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Reminds students that as a child the author, T.V. Padma (Padma Venkatraman), heard at least two versions of the story that inspired her to write *The Cleverest Thief*.
- Reads “The Wise Master” on pages 15-16 of *Wisdom Tales from Around the World* by Heather Forest. This is another version of *The Cleverest Thief* about a wise teacher who tested the integrity of his students.

### • **Jataka Tales**

#### Materials:

Book, *Wisdom Tales from Around the World*

#### **Directions:**

Teacher:

- Informs students that Jataka tales are ancient fables attributed to Buddha. Some of these tales (which were spread by word of mouth) were old at the time Buddha lived. Jatakas were told to illustrate concepts such as compassion, respecting all life, and understanding cause and effect. These stories filtered into different cultures as people traveled.
- Reads “The Talkative Turtle” on pages 13-14 and “A Flock of Birds” on pages 17-18 in *Wisdom Tales from Around the World* by Heather Forest. These tales feature animals who unwisely act like people. Their unfortunate experiences point the way to wiser conduct.

### • **Technology Connection**

#### Materials:

Computer with Internet access

#### **Directions:**

- Teacher helps students access [www.storycove.com](http://www.storycove.com).
- Students view the animation for *The Cleverest Thief* narrated by the author.
- Students explore the animations and activities for other stories on [www.storycove.com](http://www.storycove.com).

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Worksheet A

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Alike and Different

**Directions:** Write two ways each pair of words is alike and two ways each pair is different.

1. monastery / hotel

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

2. necklace / bracelet

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

3. rice / pasta

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

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Worksheet B

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Alike and Different

**Directions:** Write two ways each pair of words is alike and two ways each pair is different.

1. monastery / hotel

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

2. necklace / bracelet

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

3. rice / pasta

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

4. great monk / president

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Dhammika / me

Alike: \_\_\_\_\_

Different: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Ask the Question

**Directions:** For each answer below, write a sensible question.

1. India

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In the monastery

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The great monk

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Steal so that no one can name the thief

\_\_\_\_\_

5. A necklace right off the neck of a wealthy woman

\_\_\_\_\_

6. A single grain of rice from a stall in a bazaar

\_\_\_\_\_

7. I would be the thief. I would always know it.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Dhammika

\_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Blends

### Directions:

1. Find words in the story that begin with each blend. Write the word(s) in the space provided.
2. Combine the word endings with the blends (br, cl, gr, pl, sl, sp, st, tw) to make words. These words do not have to be story words.

### Blends:

1. br \_\_\_\_\_
2. cl \_\_\_\_\_
3. gr \_\_\_\_\_
4. pl \_\_\_\_\_
5. sl \_\_\_\_\_
6. sp \_\_\_\_\_
7. st \_\_\_\_\_
8. tw \_\_\_\_\_

### Word endings:

1. -ain \_\_\_\_\_
2. -and \_\_\_\_\_
3. -ay \_\_\_\_\_
4. -eed \_\_\_\_\_
5. -ing \_\_\_\_\_
6. -ink \_\_\_\_\_
7. -ock \_\_\_\_\_
8. -ump \_\_\_\_\_