

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

When I was a lad, my father used to send me out to the fields each day to watch over his sheep. Hey now! There are worse jobs than sitting out in the fresh air all day, but it was boring work for a lad. I longed to be running around with my friends, playing ball, or making boyish mischief.

“Can’t the sheep look after themselves?” I asked my father. “After all, they know how to bleat and munch grass, but there isn’t much else that they do.”

Father said it was important work, and most importantly of all, I must keep my eyes peeled for the wolf – in case he came sneaking into the fields and grabbed one of the spring lambs.

I couldn’t even go to sleep. I had to sit and keep a sharp look out. After a few weeks of this, I got so bored that I began to wish that the wolf would show up and give me something to do.

Then I got thinking to myself: “Let’s liven things up a bit,” I thought. “Let’s play a trick on the villagers.” So I got up and ran as fast as I could into the village shouting at the top of my voice: “Wolf! Wolf! WOOOOOOOLF!”

The villagers grabbed sticks, rolling pins, and pitchforks and came running up to the field to chase away the wolf.

But when they got there, all was peaceful. The lambs were frolicking as usual, quite unmolested.

I laughed: “Ha ha! Fooled you all!”

None of the villagers laughed with me. Some of them grumbled and the blacksmith became quite angry and shouted at me – but he was just a bad sport who couldn’t see the funny side of my joke.

A week later I did the same thing again, only this time I put on an even better act. I daubed red paint on my arm, and pretended that the wolf had bitten me. This fooled even the blacksmith, who was on his guard after the last trick I had played.

When they all arrived breathless in the field, I again called out: “Ha ha! Fooled you!”

This time, quite a few of the villagers were angry with me, and I got quite an ear-wiggling from the blacksmith, the teacher, and the iron-monger. When I got home, my father was furious and told me that I had a stupid sense of humour. But I thought it was funny – and so did my friends.

About a week after that, I was sitting up on the hill watching my father’s sheep as usual. It was getting on for evening, and the sun was setting behind the forest. I would have to spend the night out there, and oh, how lonely and bored was I. Then all of a sudden the sheep dogs started to bark and the flock was running around and bleating like they had all gone mad. Only they hadn’t; there was a wolf among the sheep and he had seized a lamb.



“Wolf! Wolf! WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOLF!” I called out and I ran into the village to get help.

But nobody came. Not one villager. They carried on doing whatever they were doing. Eating supper, drinking ale, or finishing off their work for the day.

“Please,” I said to the blacksmith. “This time it’s true. There really is a wolf.” But he just shrugged his shoulders.

You see nobody believes a liar, even when he’s speaking the truth... And that’s why you should never cry wolf unless you really mean it.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Explain why the villagers are angry with the boy in the short story, “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”
2. How does the boy improve his trick when he does it a second time?
3. Why do the villagers not believe the boy the third time he "cries wolf"?
4. What do you suppose the phrase, "cry wolf" means based on your understanding of the story?
5. What does a *blacksmith* do? Circle the correct answer below.
 - a. Make shoes
 - b. Sell fish
 - c. Sell meat
 - d. Work with iron
 - e. Make bread