

Before you READ

This is a story about a thoughtful and loving son. He works hard to fulfil his parents' wishes and gets some unexpected help.

Taro's Reward

1. A YOUNG woodcutter named Taro lived with his mother and father on a lonely hillside. All day long he chopped wood in the forest. Though he worked very hard, he earned very little money. This

*chopped: cut
into pieces*



made him sad, for he was a thoughtful son and wanted to give his old parents everything they needed.

2. One evening, when Taro and his parents were sitting in a corner of their hut, a strong wind began to blow. It whistled through the cracks of the hut and everyone felt very cold. Suddenly Taro's father said, "I wish I had a cup of saké; it would warm me and do my old heart good."
3. This made Taro sadder than ever, for the heart-warming drink called saké was very expensive. 'How do I earn more money?' he asked himself. 'How do I get a little saké for my poor old father?' He decided to work harder than before.
4. Next morning, Taro jumped out of bed earlier than usual and made his way to the forest. He chopped and cut, chopped and cut as the sun climbed, and soon he was so warm that he had to take off his jacket. His mouth was dry, and his face was wet with sweat. 'My poor old father!' he thought. 'If only he was as warm as I!'
And with that he began to chop even faster, thinking of the extra money he must earn to buy the saké to warm the old man's bones.
5. Then suddenly Taro stopped chopping. What was that sound he

whistled through:
passed through
with a whistling
sound

cracks: narrow
gaps/openings

saké: a popular
Japanese drink ('sa'
is pronounced like
'fa' in 'father' and
'ke' rhymes with
'way')

expensive: costly

made his way to:
went to

heard? Could it be, could it possibly be rushing water?

Taro could not remember ever seeing or hearing a rushing stream in that part of the forest. He was thirsty. The axe dropped out of his hands and he ran in the direction of the sound.

6. Taro saw a beautiful little waterfall hidden behind a rock. Kneeling at a place where the water flowed quietly, he cupped a little in his hands and put it to his lips. Was it water? Or was it saké? He tasted it again and again, and always it was the delicious saké instead of cold water.
7. Taro quickly filled the pitcher he had with him and hurried home. The old man was delighted with the saké. After

cupped a little in his hand: took some water in his hands (as if in a cup)

delicious: very tasty

pitcher: a pot usually made of mud

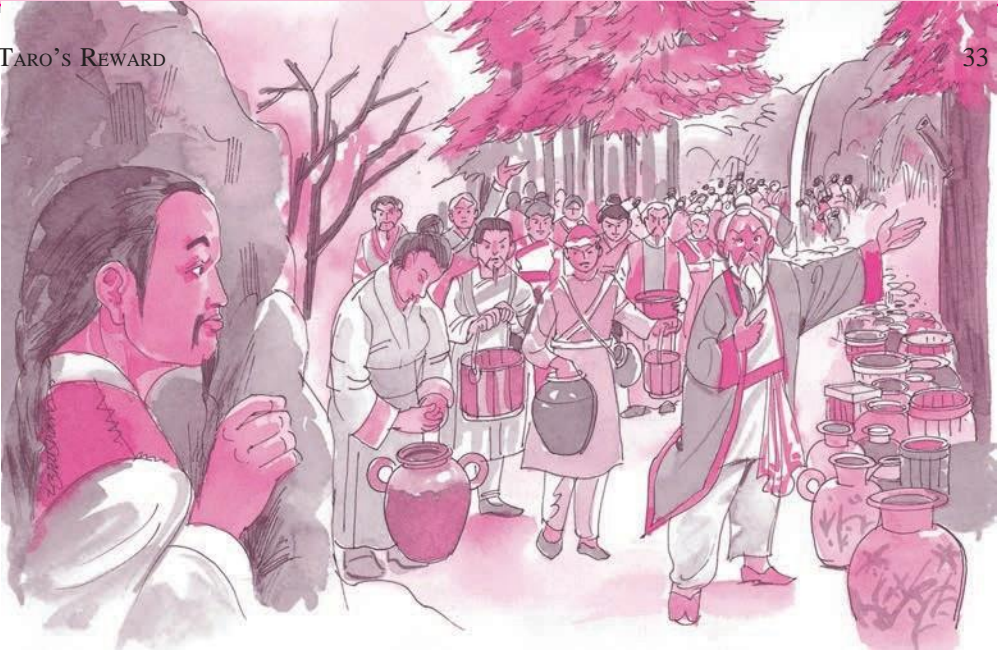


only one swallow of the liquid he stopped shivering and did a little dance in the middle of the floor.

8. That afternoon, a neighbour stopped by for a visit. Taro's father politely offered her a cup of the saké. The lady drank it greedily and thanked the old man. Then Taro told her the story of the magic waterfall. Thanking them for the delicious drink, she left in a hurry. By nightfall she had spread the story throughout the whole village.
9. That evening there was a long procession of visitors to the woodcutter's house. Each man heard the story of the waterfall and took a sip of the saké. In less than an hour the pitcher was empty.
10. Next morning, Taro started for work even earlier than the morning before. He carried with him the largest pitcher he owned, for he intended first to go to the waterfall. When he reached it, he found to his great surprise all his neighbours there. They were carrying pitchers, jars, buckets — anything they could find to hold the magic saké. Then one villager knelt and held his mouth under the waterfall to drink. He drank again and again, and then shouted angrily, "Water! Nothing but water!" Others also tried, but there was no saké, only cold water.

greedily: as if
desiring more
and more

intended: planned



11. “We have been tricked!” shouted the villagers. “Where is Taro? Let us drown him in this waterfall.” But Taro had been wise enough to slip behind a rock when he saw how things were going. He was nowhere to be found.
12. Muttering their anger and disappointment, the villagers left the place one by one. Taro came out from his hiding place. Was it true, he wondered? Was the saké a dream? Once more he caught a little liquid in his hand and put it to his lips. It was the same fine saké. To the thoughtful son, the magic waterfall gave the delicious saké. To everyone else, it gave only cold water.

tricked: deceived

muttering: speaking unclearly

13. The story of Taro and his magic waterfall reached the Emperor of Japan. He sent for the young woodcutter and rewarded him with twenty pieces of gold for having been so good and kind. Then he named the most beautiful fountain in the city after Taro. This, said the Emperor, was to encourage all children to honour and obey their parents.

sent for: called

[a Japanese story retold]

Template for submitting your opinions:

5-Finger Retell

Title

Setting

Problem

Events

Beginning

Middle

End

Characters

Solution