

PANCHATANTRA

The Panchatantra is an ancient collection of Indian animal fables. It is believed that it was first written around 200 B.C. to educate and entertain the children of the royal family. Each tale uses imagery to explain a moral or idea.

In literature, the **theme** is the main idea or moral of a story. Typically, the theme of a story conveys a message or lesson about life. The theme is generally not stated outright, but rather represented by the story's characters and their actions, as well as symbols and motifs.

On a separate sheet of paper describe the theme of this story and how it relates to today.

The Fish That Were Too Clever



Two fish lived in a pond. Their names were Satabuddhi (having the understanding of a hundred) and Sahasrabuddhi (having the understanding of a thousand). The two of them had a frog for a friend, whose name was Ekabuddhi (having the understanding of one).

For a time they would enjoy friendly conversation on the bank, and then they would return to the water. One day when they had gathered for conversation, some fishermen came by just as the sun was setting. They were carrying nets in their hands and baskets of dead fish on their heads.

When the fishermen saw the pond, they said to one another, "There seem to be a lot of fish in this pond, and the water is very low. Let us come back here tomorrow morning!" After saying this, they went home.

These words struck the three friends like a thunderbolt, and they took counsel with one another.

The frog said, "Oh, my dear Satabuddhi and Sahasrabuddhi, what shall we do? Should we flee, or stay here?"

Hearing this, Sahasrabuddhi laughed and said, "Oh, my friend, don't be afraid of words alone! They probably will not come back. But even if they do come back, I will be able to protect myself and you as well, through the power of my understanding, for I know many pathways through the water."

After hearing this, Satabuddhi said, "Yes, what Sahasrabuddhi says is correct, for one rightly says: Where neither the wind nor the sun's rays have found a way, intelligent understanding will quickly make a path. And also: Everything on earth is subject to the understanding of those with intelligence. Why should one abandon the place of one's birth that has been passed down from generation to generation, just because of words? We must not retreat a single step! I will protect you through the power of my understanding."

The frog said, "I have but one wit, and it is advising me to flee. This very day I shall go with my wife to another pond."

After saying this, as soon as it was night, the frog went to another pond.

Early the next day the fishermen came like servants of the god of death and spread their nets over the pond. All the fish, turtles, frogs, crabs, and other water creatures were caught in the nets and captured, also Satabuddhi and Sahasrabuddhi. Although they fled, and through their knowledge of the various paths escaped they for a while by swimming to and fro, they too, together with their wives, fell into a net and were captured.

That afternoon the fishermen happily set forth toward home. Because of his weight, one of them carried Satabuddhi on his head. They tied Sahasrabuddhi onto a string and dragged him along behind.

The frog Ekabuddhi, who had climbed onto the bank of his pond, said to his wife, "Look, dear! Mr. Hundred-Wit lies on someone's head, and Mr. Thousand-Wit is hanging from a string. But Mr. Single-Wit, my dear, is playing here in the clear water."