

Introduction to Storytell It

Today, you will meet two storytellers, the author Charles McNair and his wife, the Colombian doctor Adela Castro. They will share a story about Turtle and Bird. As you listen to the story, think about the fact that love also means forgiveness. Download the joint introduction and the story (the English or Spanish version). Prepare to become a storyteller at home.

Discussion

What did the turtle give to the songbird? What did the songbird do in return? For his forgiveness, what did he receive?

The average songbird lives two years. Many turtles live 100 years. Some live 150 years. Their thick skin and shell protect them from predators. Another word for turtle is tortoise. Try to picture the characters as you listen to the story.

One eight-year-old listener felt inspired to draw a picture of the turtle in this story. After you think about the story, he will help you draw a picture of the turtle as you think it looks today, after a century of loving and forgiving the bird and teaching children to listen to the whisperings of their big hearts.

Why Turtles Don't Sing

Story By Charles
McNair

Translation by
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Photo by Lily T.
Ning



Once upon a time ...

... when the world was new, Turtle had the most beautiful voice of all the creatures. By day and by night, Turtle would rise from the waters where it lived ... and clear its throat ... and sing.

Turtle sang to the sunrise. Turtle sang to the stars. Turtle sang beautiful songs about love and adventure and friendship and dreams.

Turtle's voice sounded so magical that all the other animals would gather to listen. They would sit for hours while Turtle's songs held them in enchantment.

Now in these days when the world was new, Bird did not sing. Bird lived in the trees and flew here and there, but silently, as quiet as wind in the leaves.

One day, Bird came to Turtle with a question.

“Turtle, you have a gifted voice, and you are very generous,” said Bird. “Would you let me borrow your marvelous voice to sing to my friends one morning?”

Turtle did, indeed, have a very big heart. Immediately, Turtle loaned Bird its voice. Bird flew into a tree, lifted its head, opened its beak ... and sang.

Bird’s sweet music stopped monkeys in the trees. It caused a bear on the ground to look up in wonder. Fish even rose from the waters to hear Bird sing on its high branch.

Unlike Turtle, Bird’s heart was not so big. After its song, Bird looked down defiantly at Turtle in the pool below ... then flew away, far away, singing everywhere as it went.

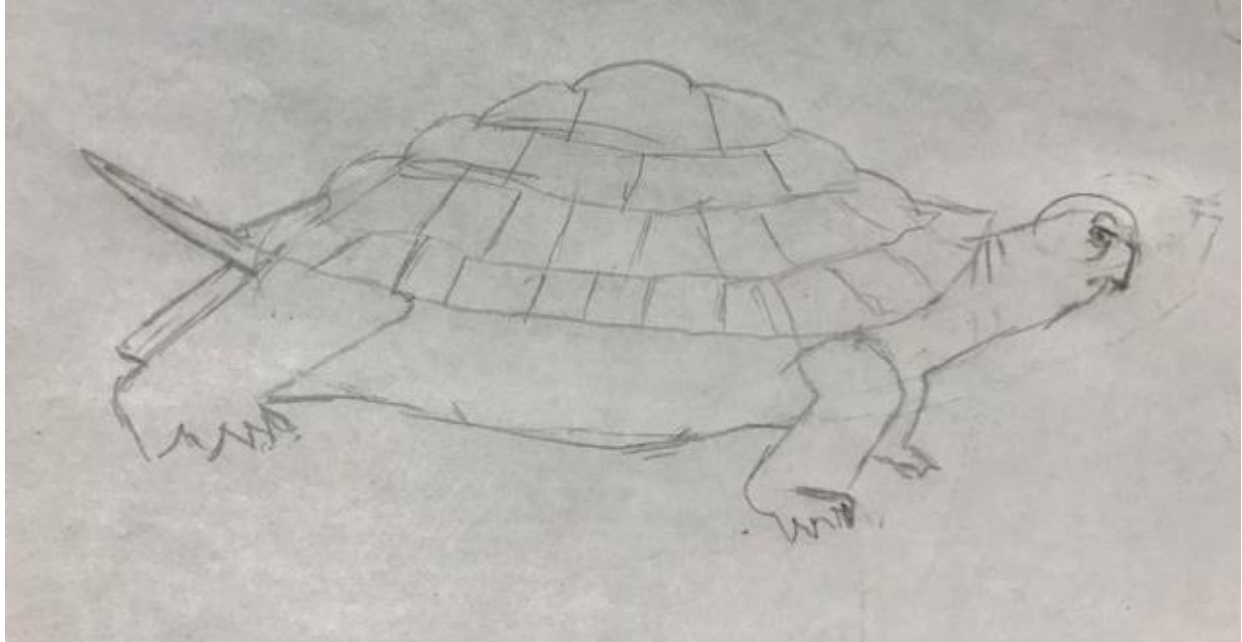
Bird never came back with Turtle’s stolen voice.

Turtle sank silently back into its pond. And forever after, embarrassed at losing its wonderful voice, Turtle pulls its head into its shell and hides from those who come near.

Turtle doesn’t sing now. But because of its big heart, it enjoys another wonderful reward – a long, long life.

When you see Turtle in a pool or sunning on a log, just imagine your children ... and their children ... and their children’s children ... seeing it in 100 years. That’s how long ... and even longer ... Turtle’s big heart beats, full of life and full of love for all.

Love and forgiveness ... even for Bird.



Illustrating the Story

To illustrate means to show or to draw. Quddus Anis, a boy of eight, heard the story of the Turtle and the bird. He created a system for drawing a turtle, in case you want to illustrate this story and tell it to others in your family. You will need a paper and a pencil with an eraser.

1. Create a “horizon line” at the bottom third of the page in light pencil that you can later erase. This will become the resting place for Turtle’s soft belly.
2. Dot the points where the arms and legs will begin, based on their distance from the front and back of Turtle.
3. Sketch the rounded head and eyes and then the legs. Make sure your turtle keeps his mouth closed and does not sing!
4. Leave room for the tail straight across from the head.



5. Make a grid pattern of blocks to create the hard shell of the turtle. This home protects him, so he will live long.
6. Sketch in details such as toes and neck wrinkles.
7. Erase any stray lines.
8. Color the turtle if you like.

What is a fable?

Fables are passed down over so many years, we sometimes do not know the original author.

The word “indigenous” refers to people who have lived in one place for a very long time.

The original plants and animals living in a place are also called its *indigenous species*, just as the original people are called indigenous people.

Before indigenous people knew how to study science, they described what they could not understand with stories, using plants and animals as symbols. The original families who lived many, many years ago also used these stories to explain important messages they wanted children to know. Many groups wanted to keep these stories sacred, knowing that they still tell us what is important today.

One word for an animal story that shares important values is a fable. Such stories teach about the importance of love, honesty, kindness, honor or safe habits. The fable in this unit was a story told by a Cherokee elder to his nephew, Charles McNair, who told it to you. His Colombian wife, Adela Castro, translated the story into Spanish, so more people could learn its message.

Read and Discuss: Shaping Human History

Can you think of any stories your family has shared with you? They may not have been written down, but if they are part of a

long-time family history, they could still be called legends or family histories.

Stories that happened to a family of families, such as nation, a tribe or the world, make up our human history.

The person who tells or writes the story shapes the way we think about history, so we must read and listen to more than one story.

Researching Your Family



Storytellers Mr. McNair and his wife Dr. Castro, from two different countries, demonstrate love within a family.

All over the world, people pass beliefs, songs, dances, recipes and stories from grandparent to parent to child. Have some of these customs been passed down to you?

People who live close to one another share common customs. They also share common feelings with families everywhere. For

example, families try to love and help one another, wherever they live.

Stories in every culture tell of elders who protect the young and youth who respect their elders, all because of love. These family stories help to shape human history.

Learn more about your own family history.

- Where do your parents and grandparents come from?
- Do you know stories of the people who lived in your family's homeland?
- What can you learn about love from the stories of older family or community members?



Storytelling at Home

People in diverse places all belong to one human family. They feel better when they share love between children and elders, brothers and sisters. Tell a story that demonstrates this idea.

1. Sit with your family in a storytelling circle. The student starts a story about a person who loved his or her family. Include

plants and animals. The setting looks like your family's original homeland.

2. The next person adds an event to the story and stops in the middle of a sentence.
3. Each storyteller in the circle must complete the sentence and carry on the story. The characters face challenges along the way.
4. Go around the circle twice, with each person adding elements to the story.
5. The person who began the story finally finishes it, showing how love was restored to the family.