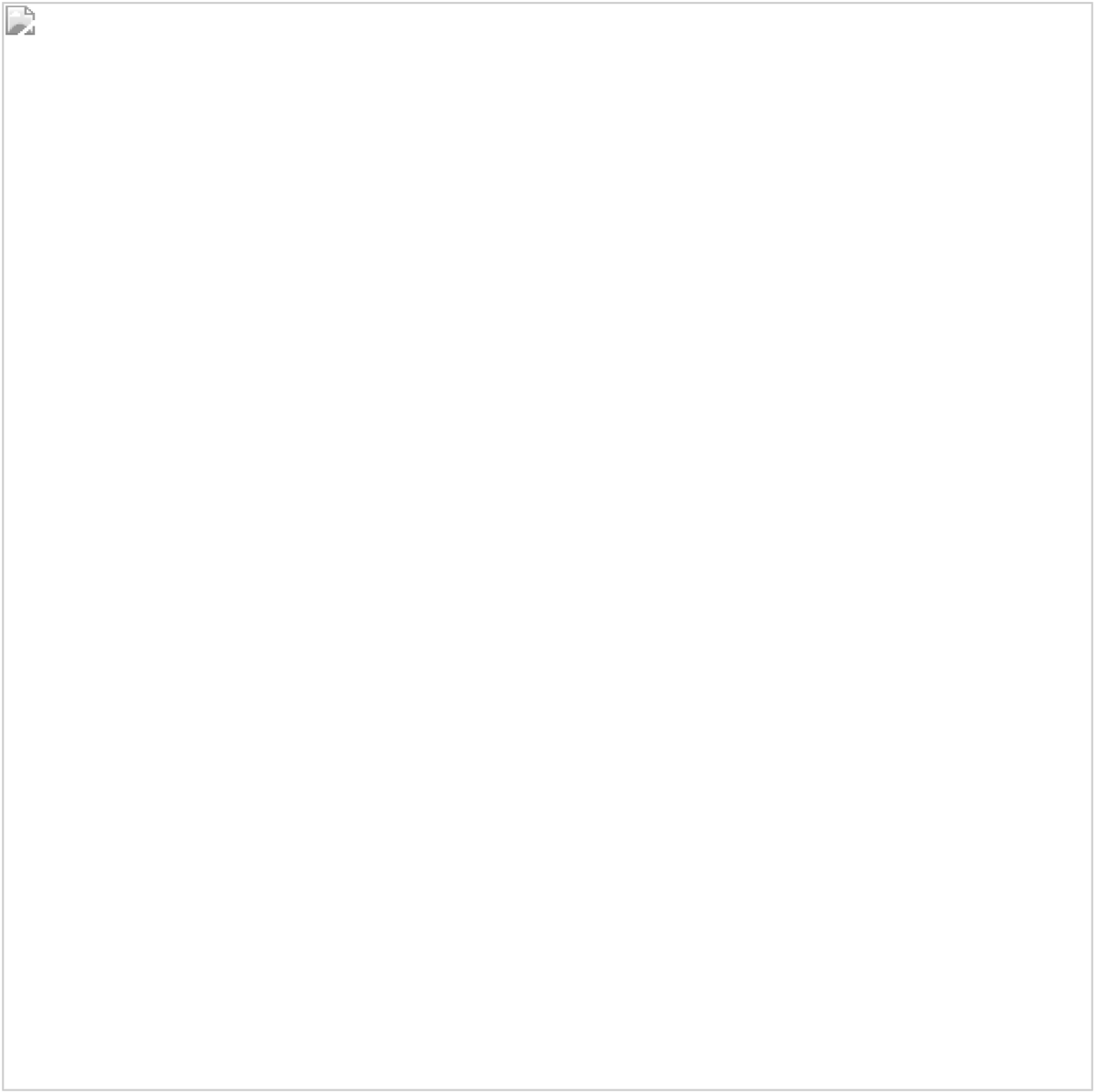
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Just So Stories

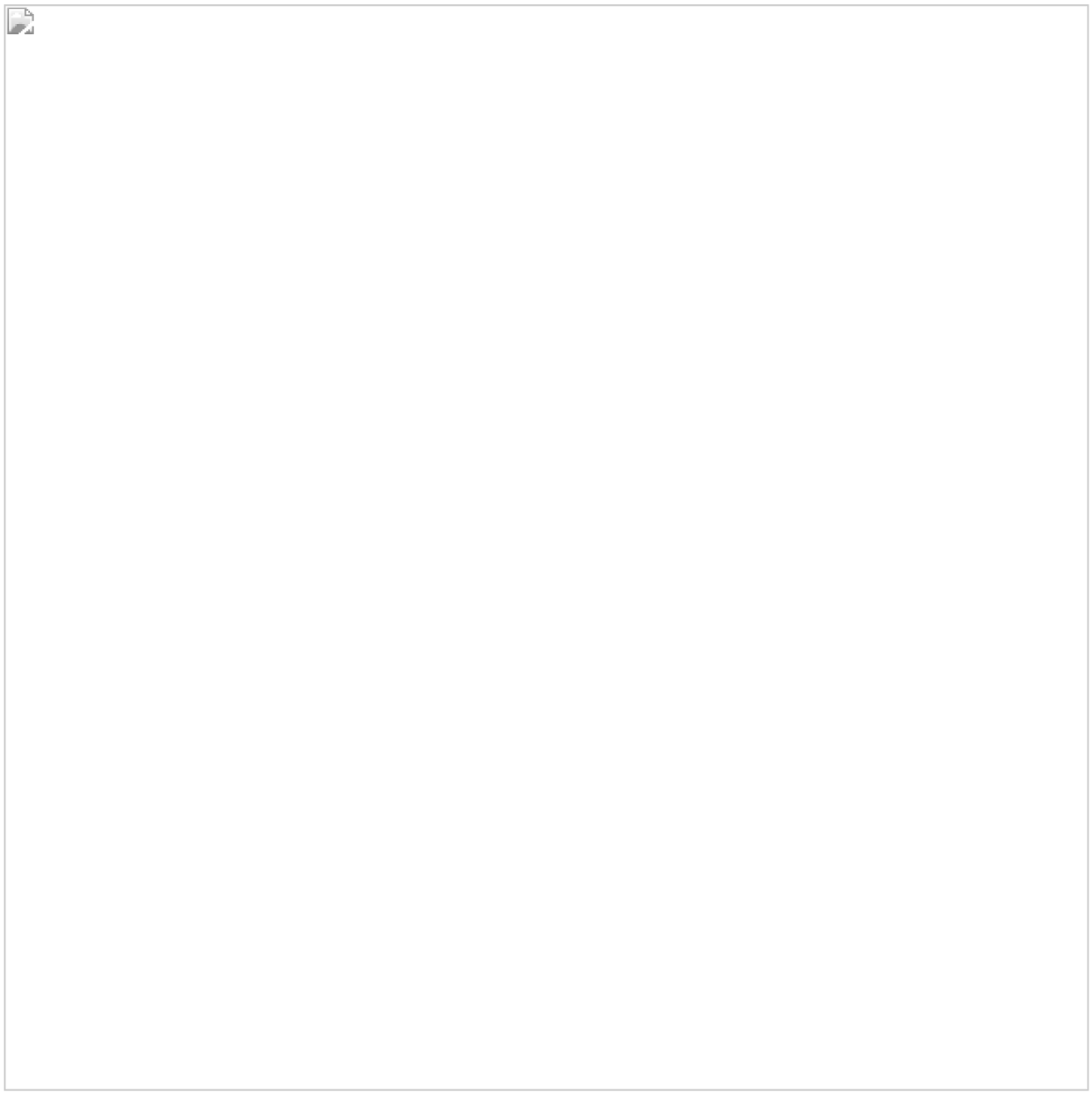
Three Tales of How Things Came to Be



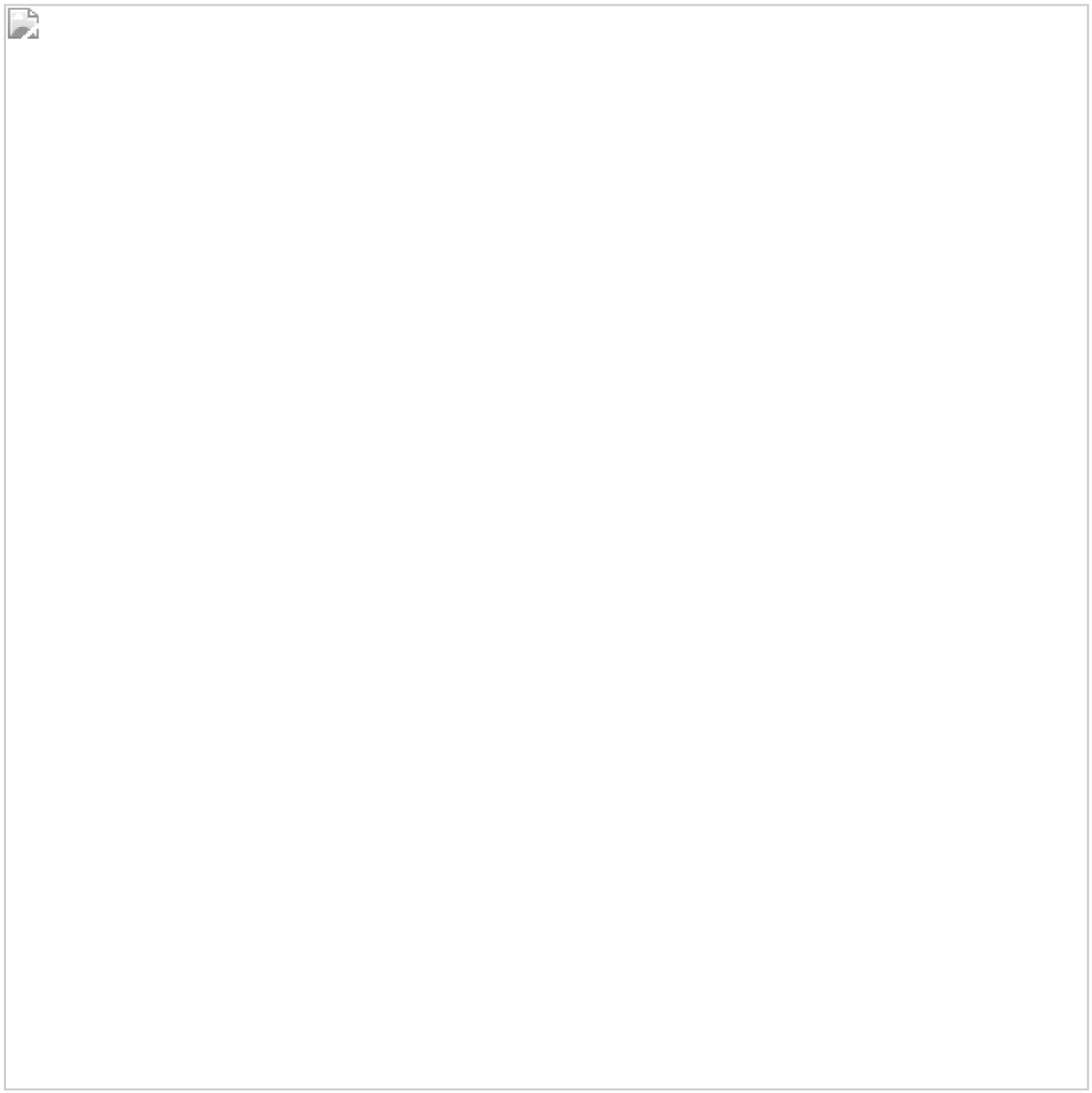
TALK ABOUT IT

If you could ask how one animal got the way it is, which animal would you ask about?

This book belongs to _____



The Elephant's Child



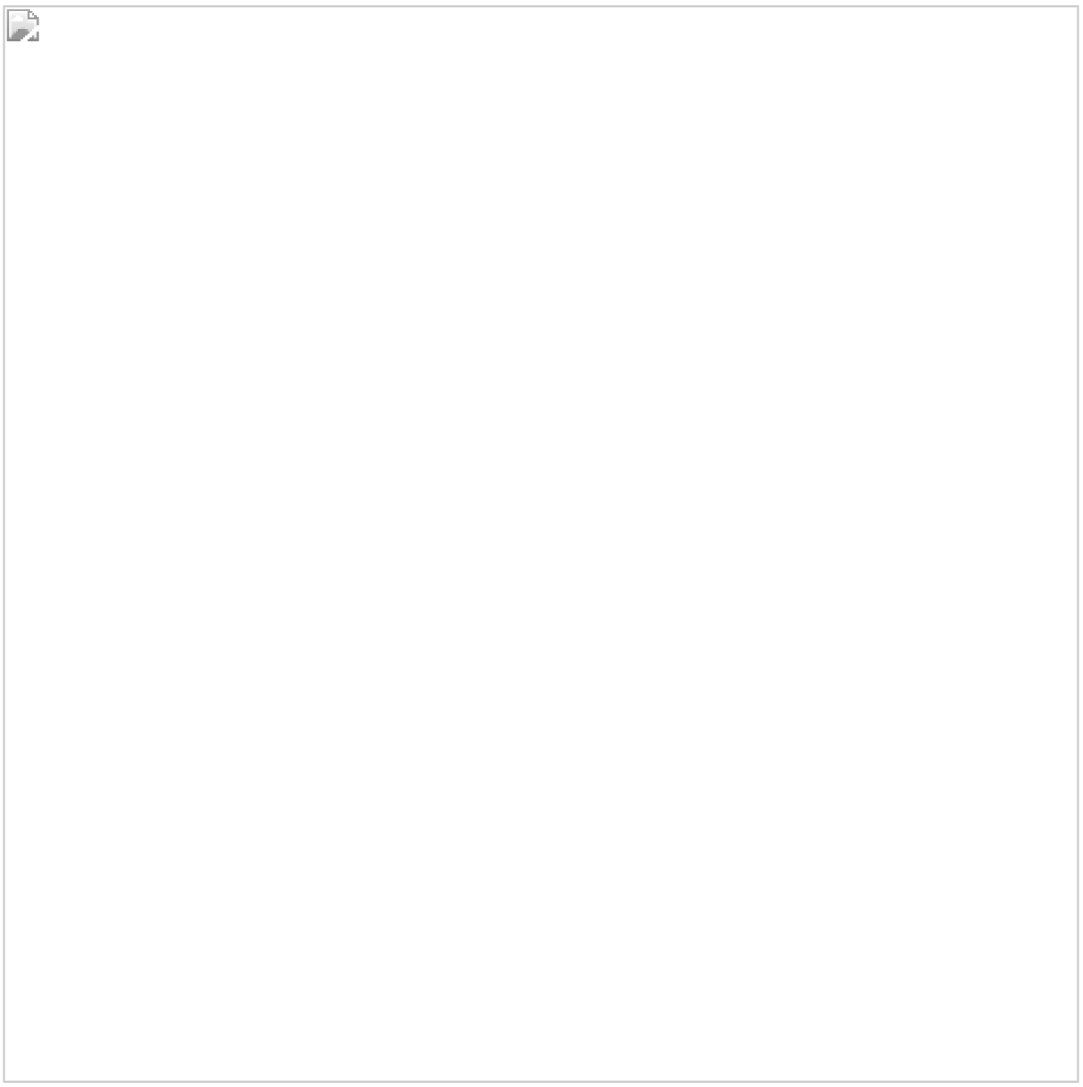
In the High and Far-Off Times, O Best Beloved, the Elephant had no trunk. He had only a blackish, bulgy nose, as big as a boot. He could wriggle it, but he could not pick anything up with it.

There was one Elephant, a new Elephant, an Elephant's Child, who was full of "'satiable curtiosity." That means he asked ever so many questions.

He asked his tall aunt the Ostrich why her tail-feathers grew just so, and his tall uncle the Giraffe what made his skin spotty. He asked his broad aunt the Hippopotamus and his hairy uncle the Baboon, too. Every one of them shooed him away.

TALK ABOUT IT

What is a question you have always wanted to ask? Who could you ask?



Think about it

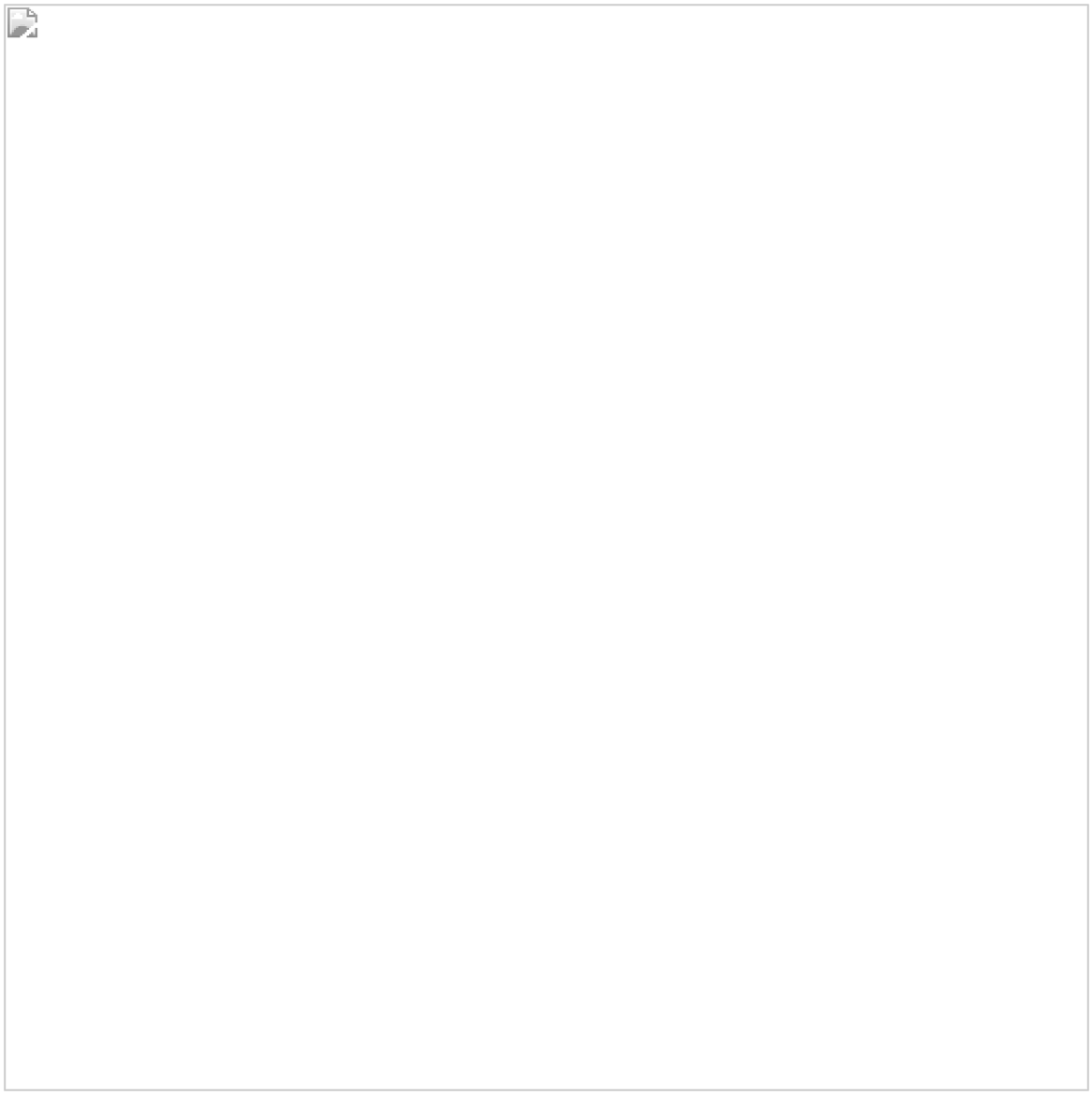
1. What did the Elephant have instead of a trunk, long ago?

- ○ A long tail
- ○ A bulgy nose as big as a boot
- ○ No nose at all

2. What does "'satiable curtiosity" mean?

- ○ He asked ever so many questions
- ○ He was very sleepy
- ○ He liked to run

A New Fine Question



One fine morning the Elephant's Child asked a question he had never asked before. "What does the Crocodile have for dinner?"

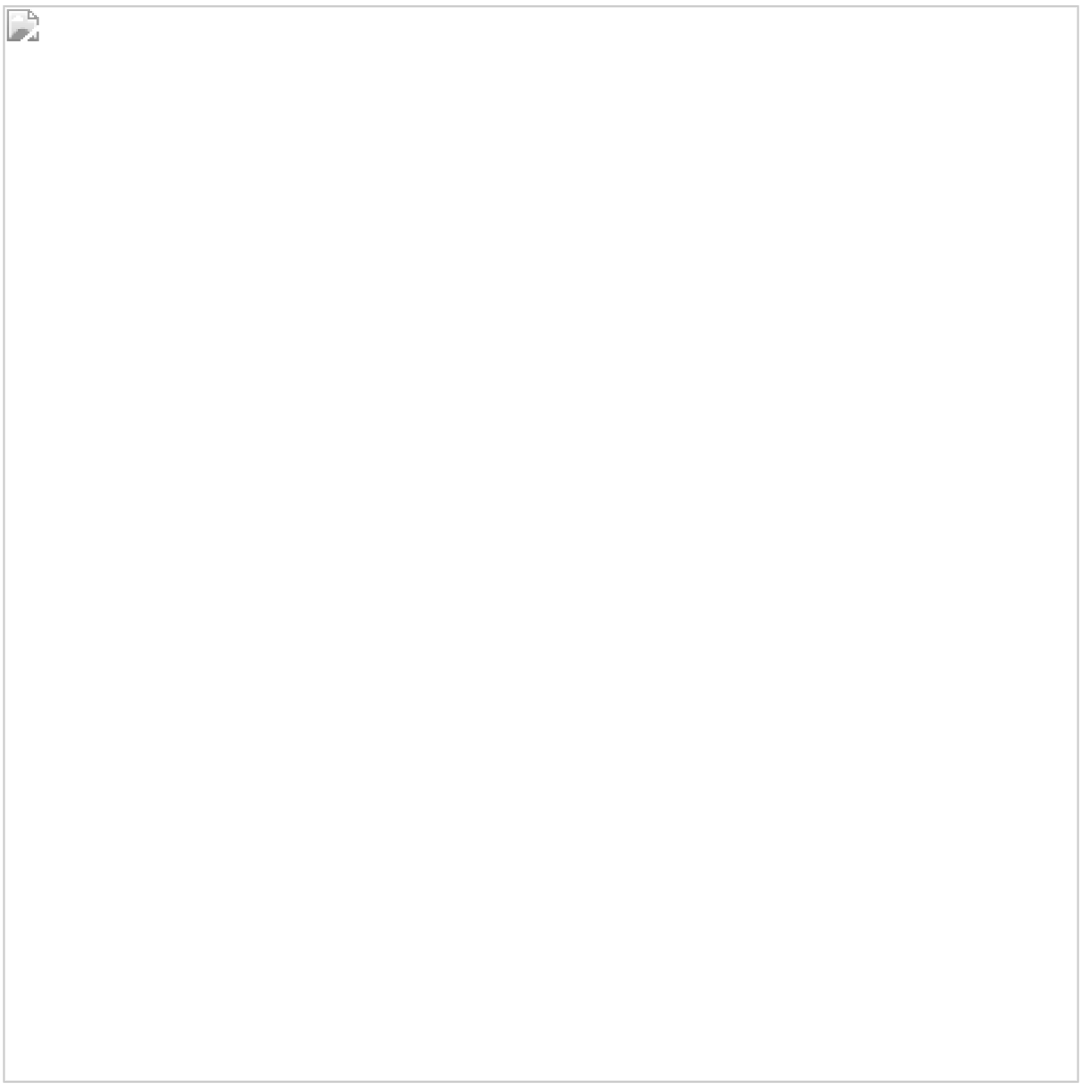
"Hush!" said everybody, in a loud and dreadful voice.

By and by he came to the Kolokolo Bird, sitting in the middle of a wait-a-bit thorn-bush. "Everyone tells me to hush," he said, "and still I want to know what the Crocodile has for dinner!"

The Kolokolo Bird gave a sad little cry. "Go to the banks of the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees, and find out."

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think his family said "Hush!" to that question?

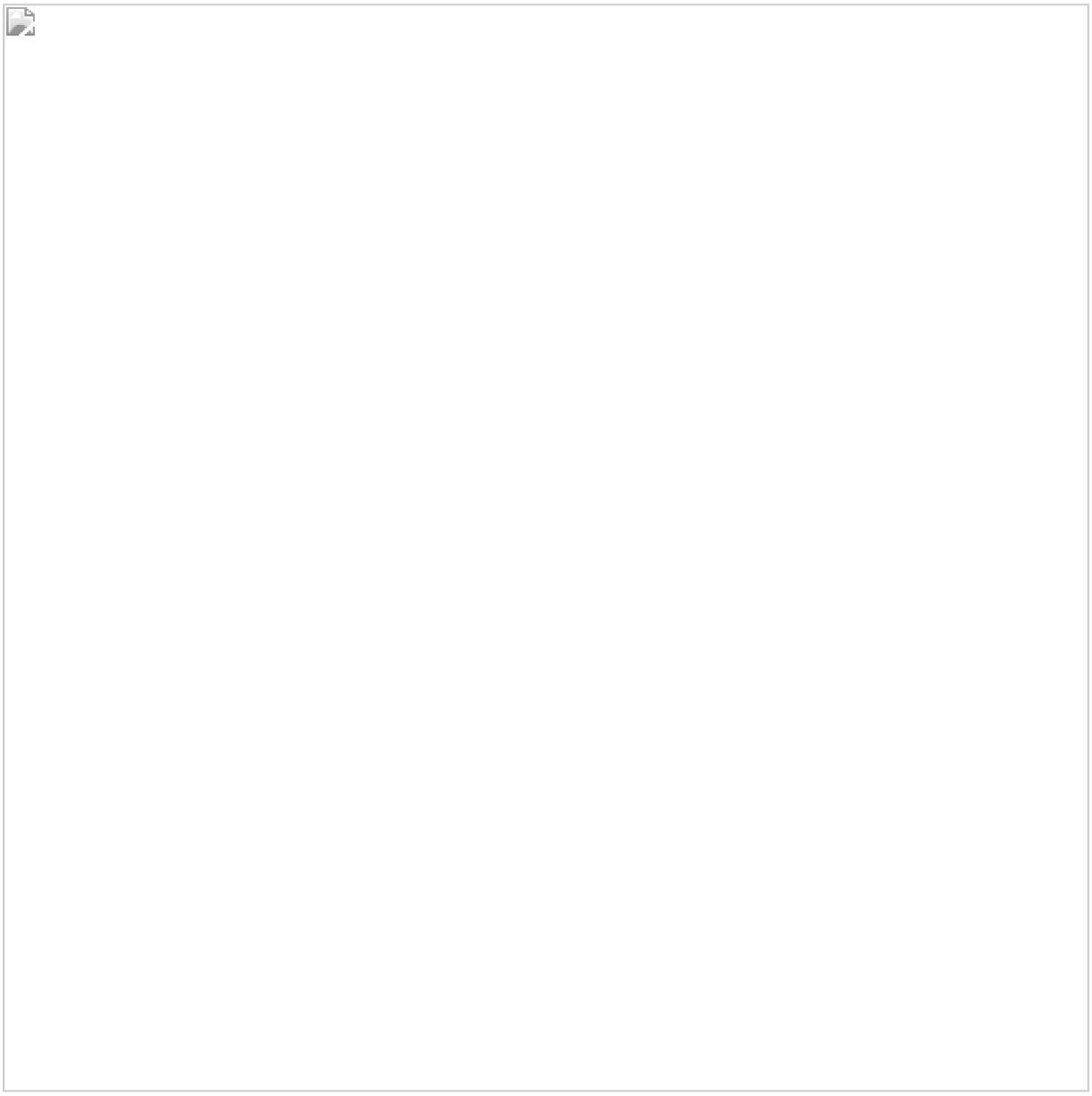


Think about it

1. Where did the Kolokolo Bird send him?

- ○ To the top of a mountain
- ○ To the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River
- ○ Back home to bed

Off to the Limpopo



The very next morning, the Elephant's Child packed a hundred pounds of bananas (the little short red kind), a hundred pounds of sugar-cane (the long purple kind), and seventeen melons (the greeny-crackly kind).

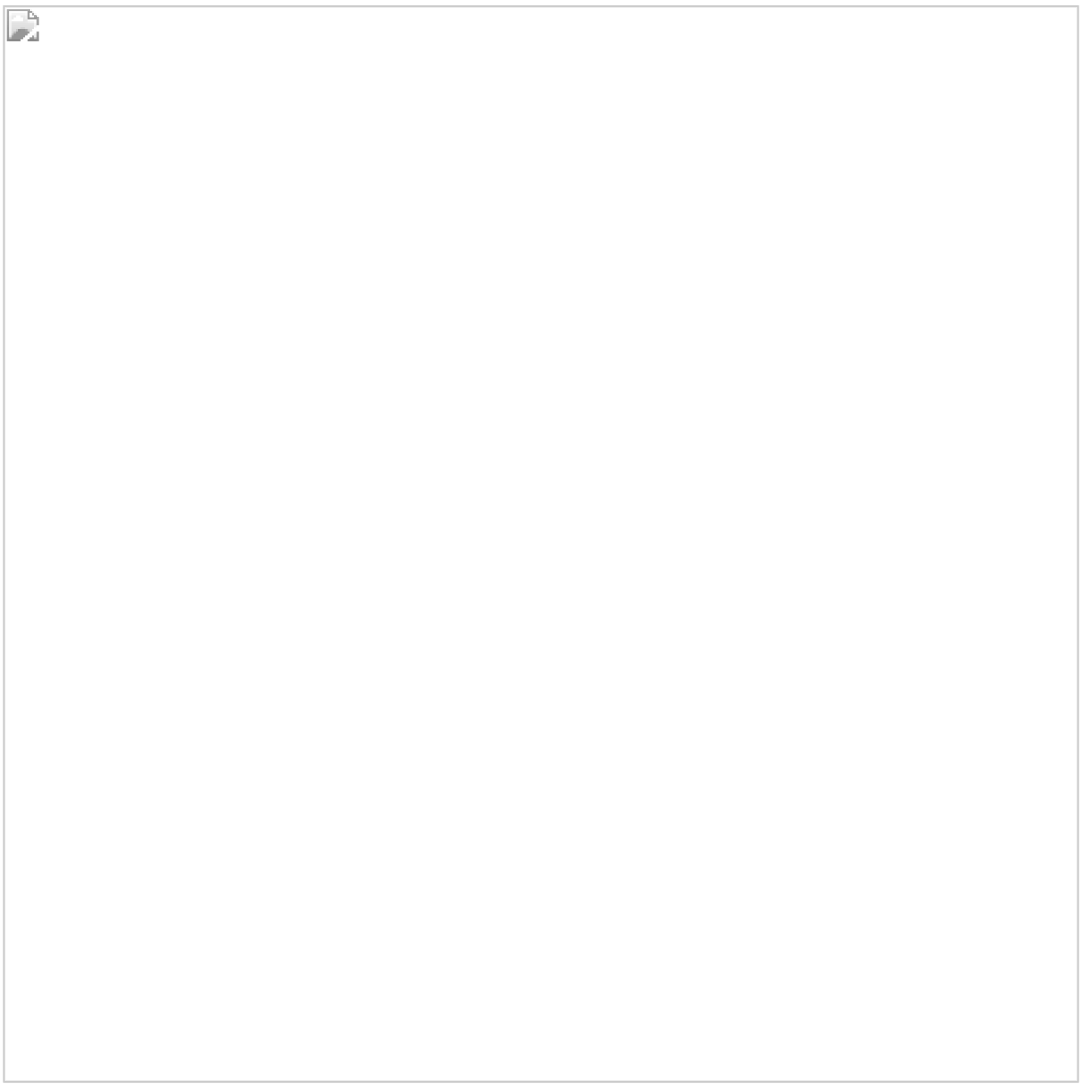
"Goodbye," he said to all his dear families. "I am going to the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River to find out what the Crocodile has for dinner."

Off he went, eating melons all the way, and throwing the rinds about, because he could not pick them up.

TALK ABOUT IT

If you went on a long trip to find something out, what would you pack?

Off to the Limpopo · another picture

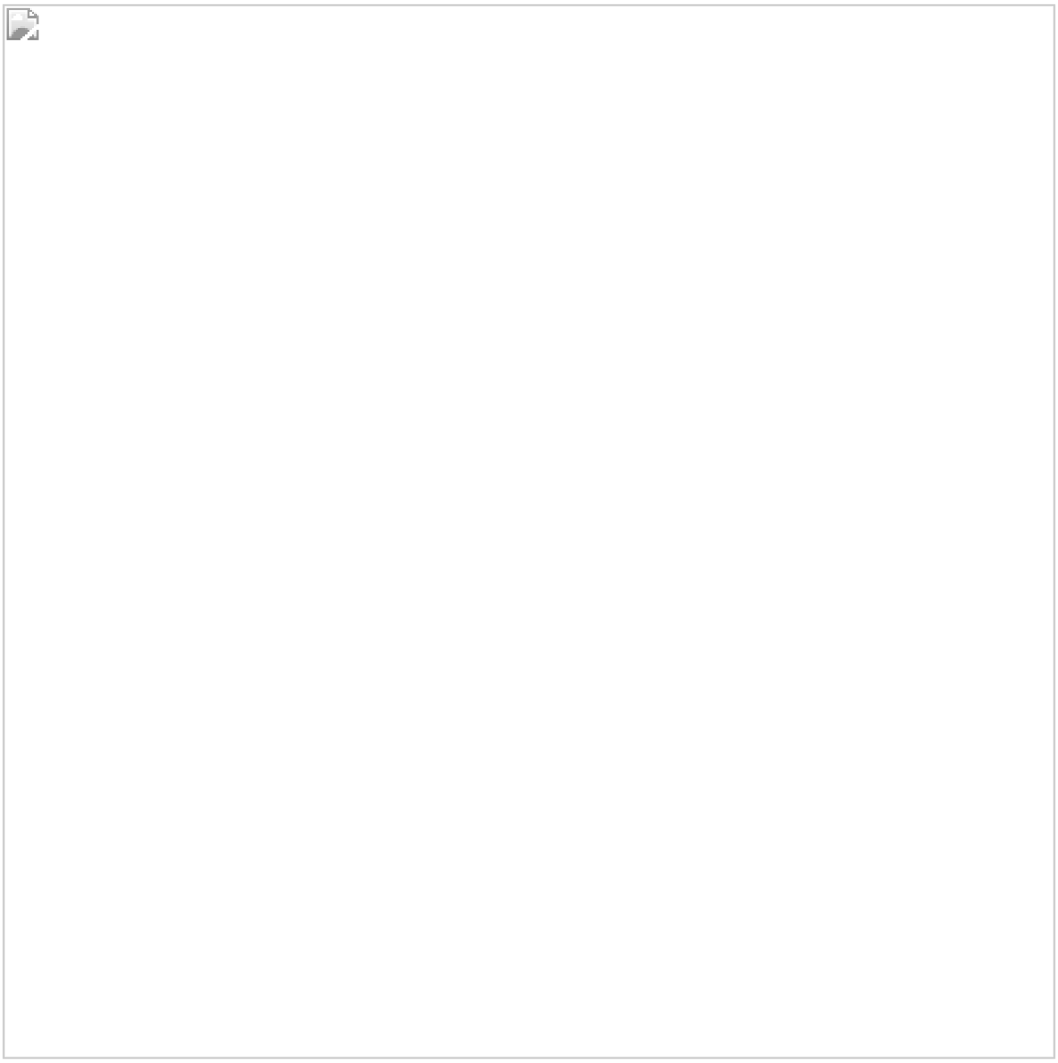


Think about it

1. Why did he throw the melon rinds on the ground?

- ○ He wanted to be messy
- ○ He could not pick them up with his little nose
- ○ He was feeding the birds

A Log That Winked



At the river he met the Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake, curled round a rock. Then he stepped on what he thought was a log of wood. But the log winked one eye. It was the Crocodile!

“Come hither, Little One,” said the Crocodile, “and I’ll whisper.”

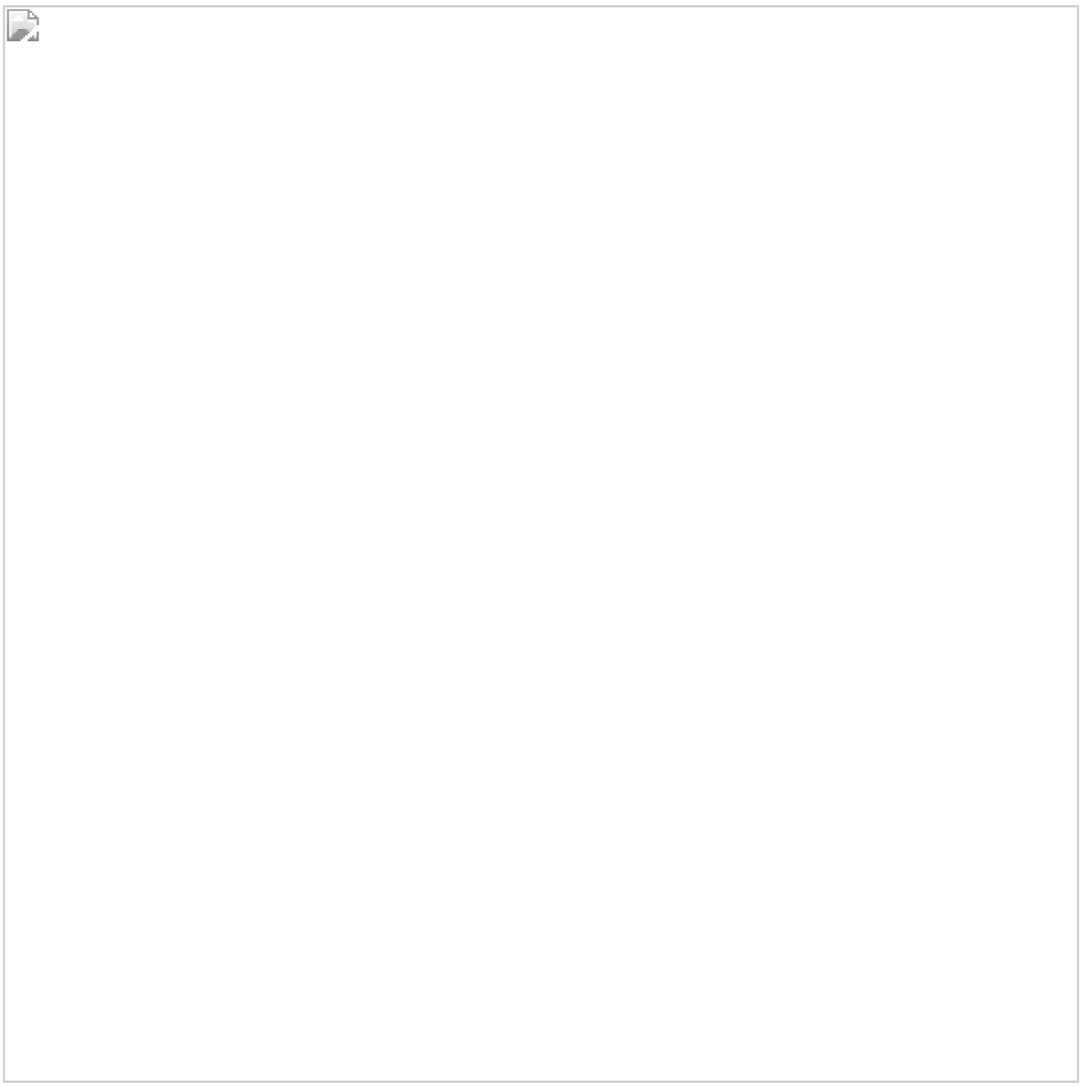
The Elephant’s Child put his head down close to the Crocodile’s musky, tusky mouth, and the Crocodile caught him by his little nose.

“I think,” said the Crocodile, between his teeth, “I think to-day I will begin with Elephant’s Child!”

“Led go!” said the Elephant’s Child through his squeezed nose. “You are hurtig be!”

TALK ABOUT IT

Try saying “Let go! You are hurting me!” while you hold your nose. How does it sound?



Think about it

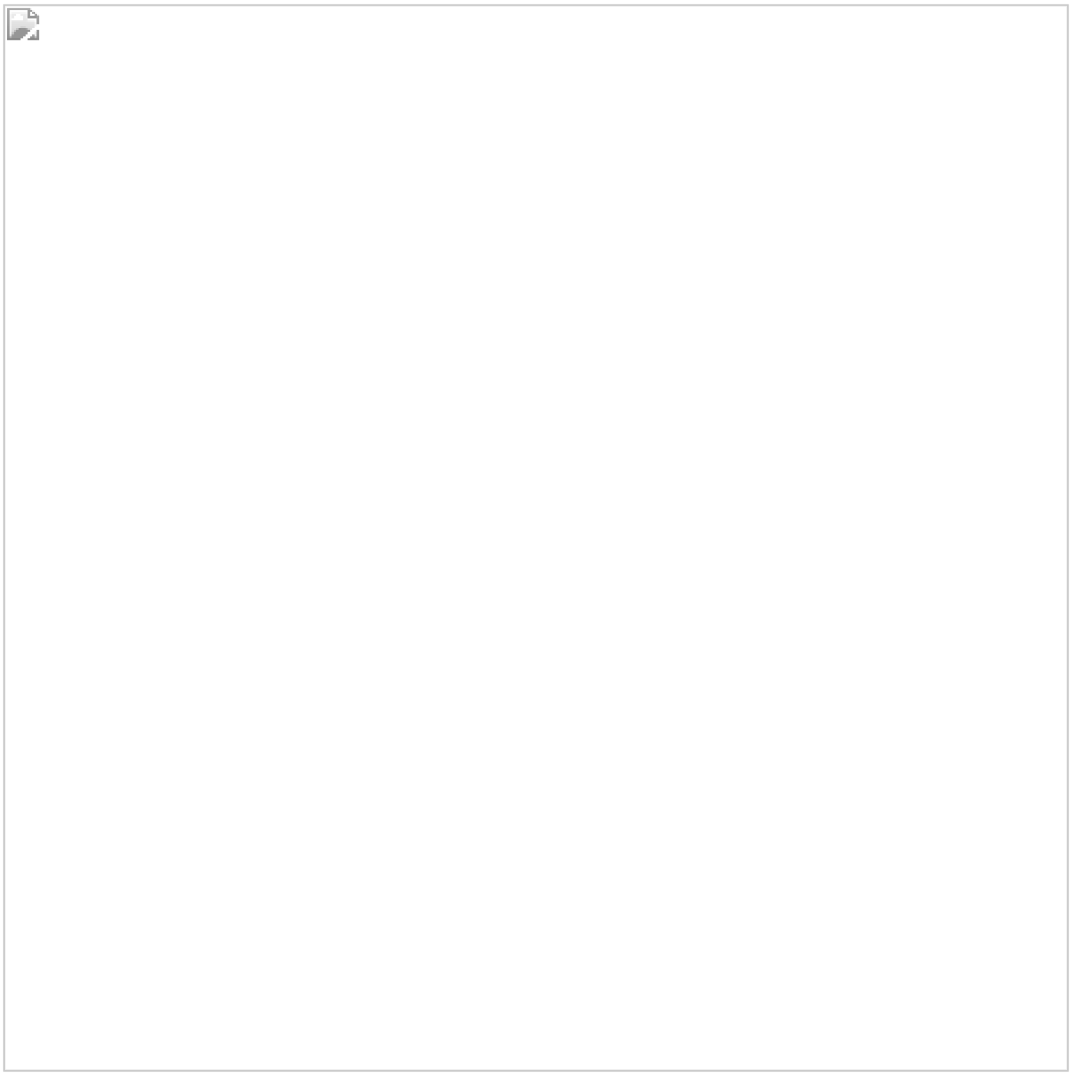
1. What did the Crocodile look like at first?

- ○ A rock
- ○ A log of wood
- ○ A big leaf

2. So what does the Crocodile have for dinner?

- ○ Only bananas
- ○ He wanted to eat the Elephant's Child!
- ○ Nothing at all

Pull, Pull, Pull



The Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake slid down the bank. “My young friend,” he said, “pull as hard as ever you can!”

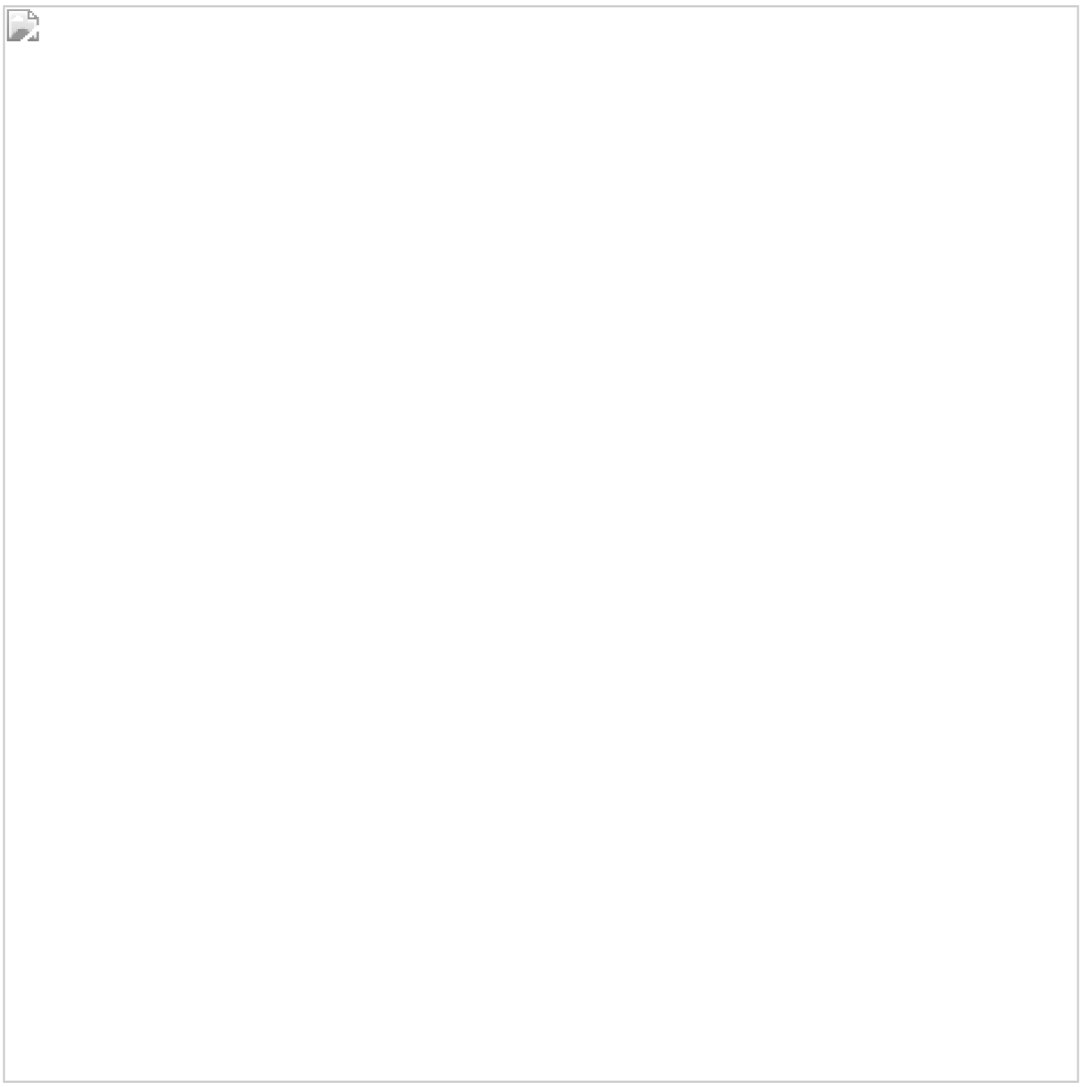
So the Elephant’s Child sat back on his little haunches and pulled, and pulled, and pulled. The Crocodile splashed in the water and pulled, and pulled, and pulled. And the little nose began to stretch.

Then the Python wrapped himself twice round the Elephant’s Child’s back legs, and the two of them pulled together. At last the Crocodile let go, with a plop you could hear all up and down the Limpopo.

The Elephant’s Child sat down hard. But first he was careful to say “Thank you” to the Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake.

TALK ABOUT IT

Who helped the Elephant’s Child when he was in trouble? Who helps you?



Think about it

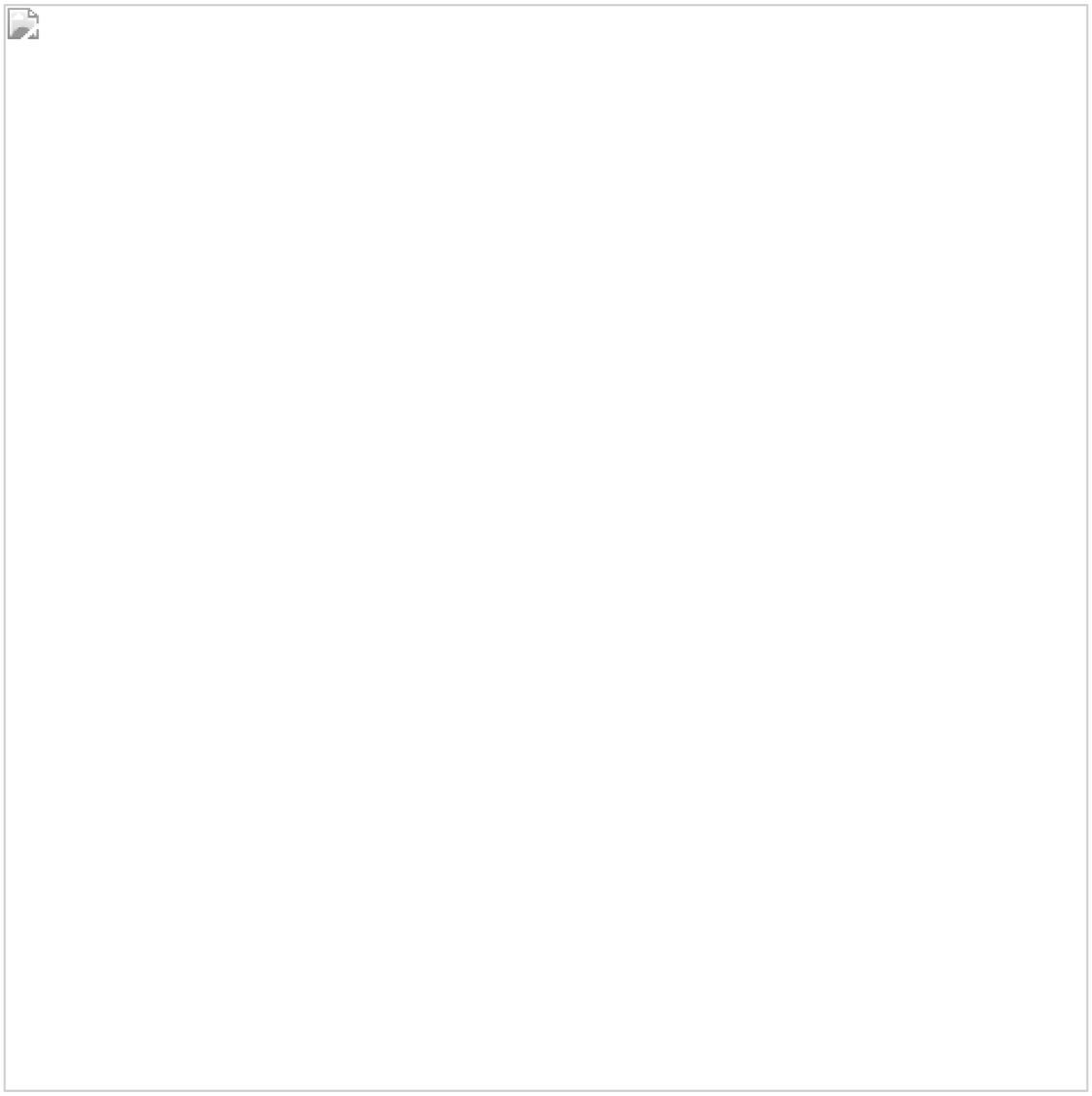
1. Who helped him pull free?

- ○ The Kolokolo Bird
- ○ The Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake
- ○ His aunt the Ostrich

2. What was the first thing he did after he got free?

- ○ He ran away
- ○ He said “Thank you”
- ○ He went to sleep

Three Good Things



His poor nose was nearly five feet long now. He wrapped it in cool banana leaves and hung it in the river to shrink. He waited three days, but it never grew shorter. It was a real trunk now.

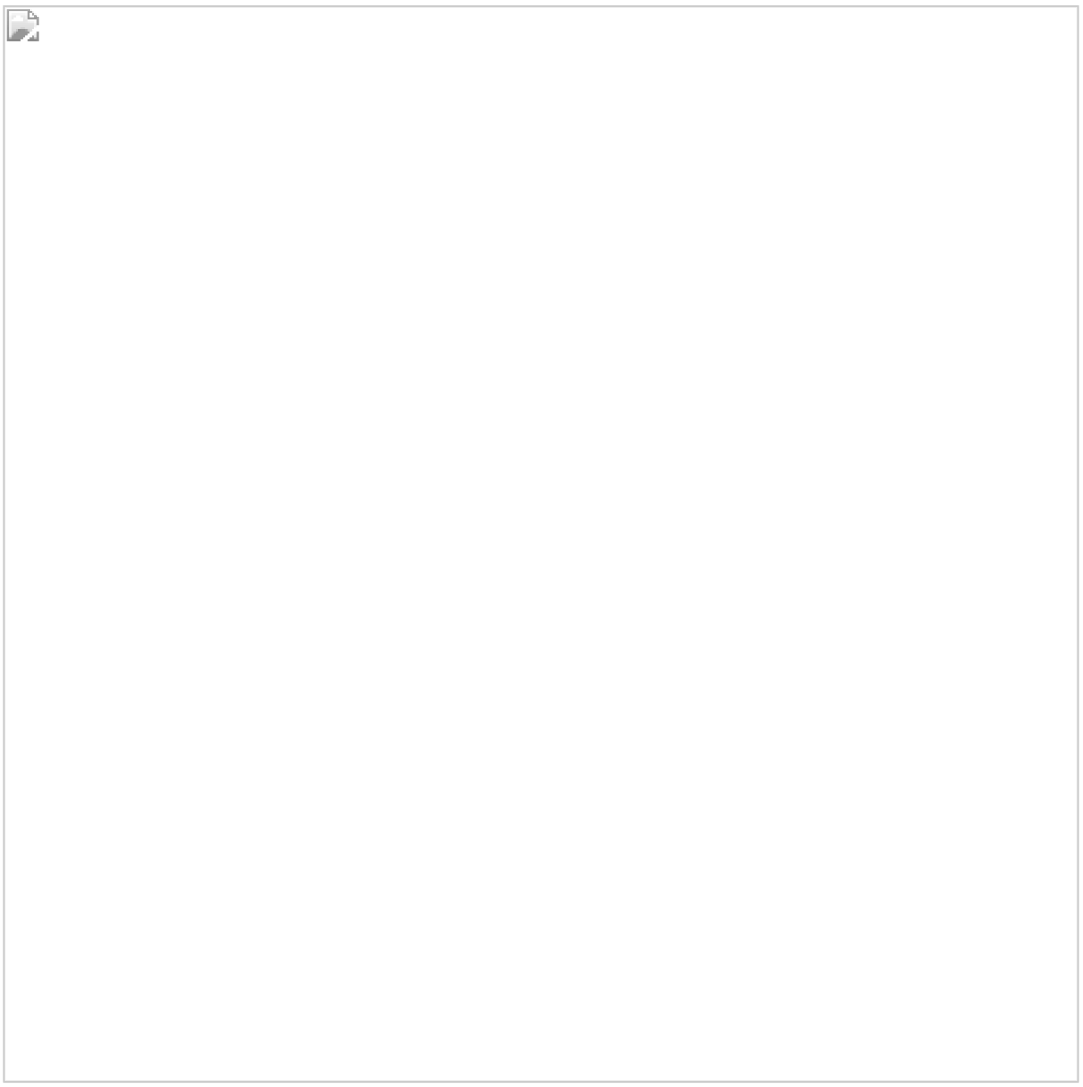
Then a fly bit him, and he swished up his trunk and swatted it. "'Vantage number one!" said the Python. (A 'vantage is a good thing.)

He picked up a bundle of grass with his trunk, and popped it in his mouth. "'Vantage number two!"

He scooped up a schloop of mud and slapped it on his head for a cool mud-cap. "'Vantage number three!"

TALK ABOUT IT

Something that seemed bad turned out to be good. Has that ever happened to you?

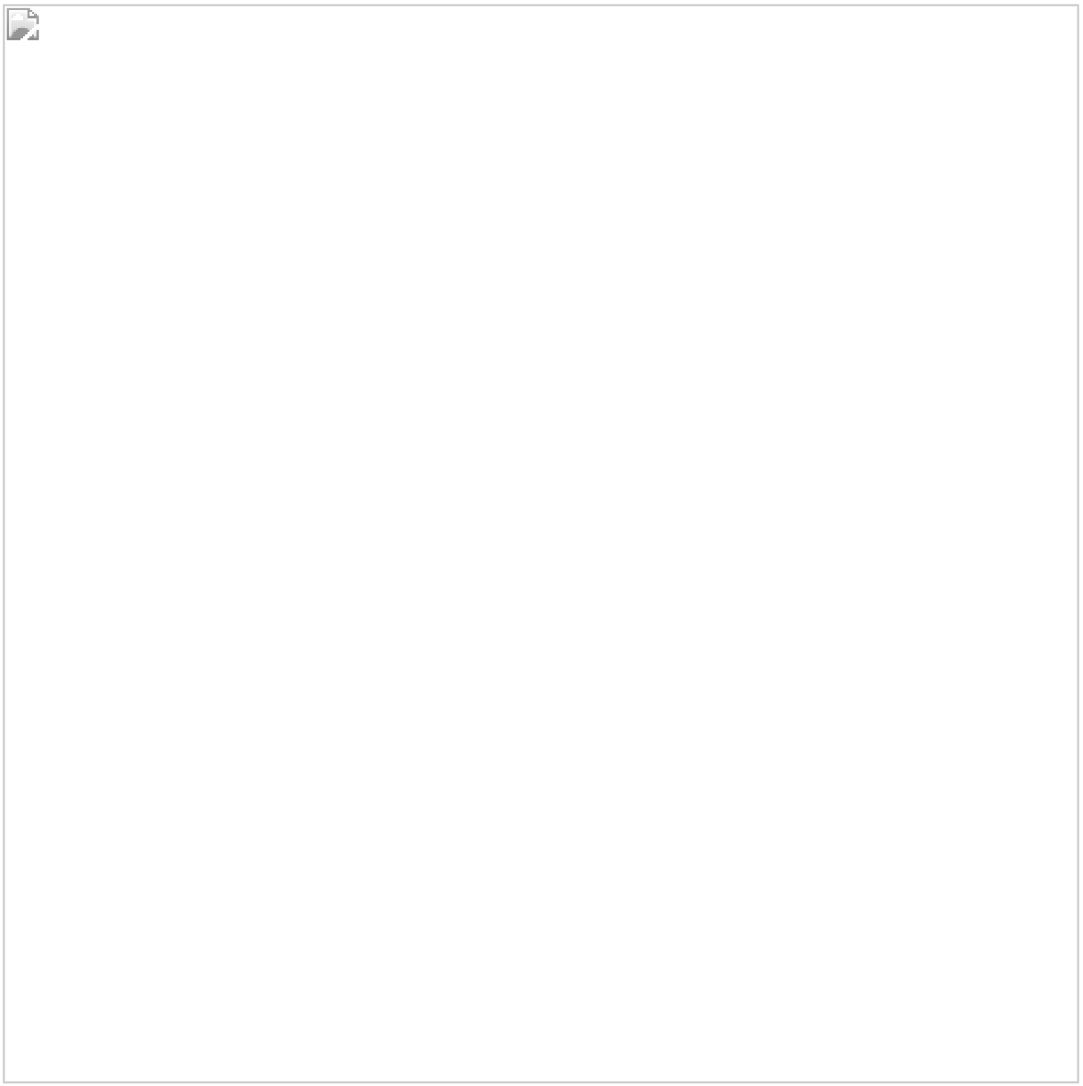


Think about it

1. Name one thing he could do with his new trunk.

- ○ Swat flies
- ○ Fly like a bird
- ○ Swim faster than a fish

Home Across Africa



So the Elephant's Child went home, frisking and whisking his trunk. When he was lonely, he sang to himself down his trunk, louder than several brass bands.

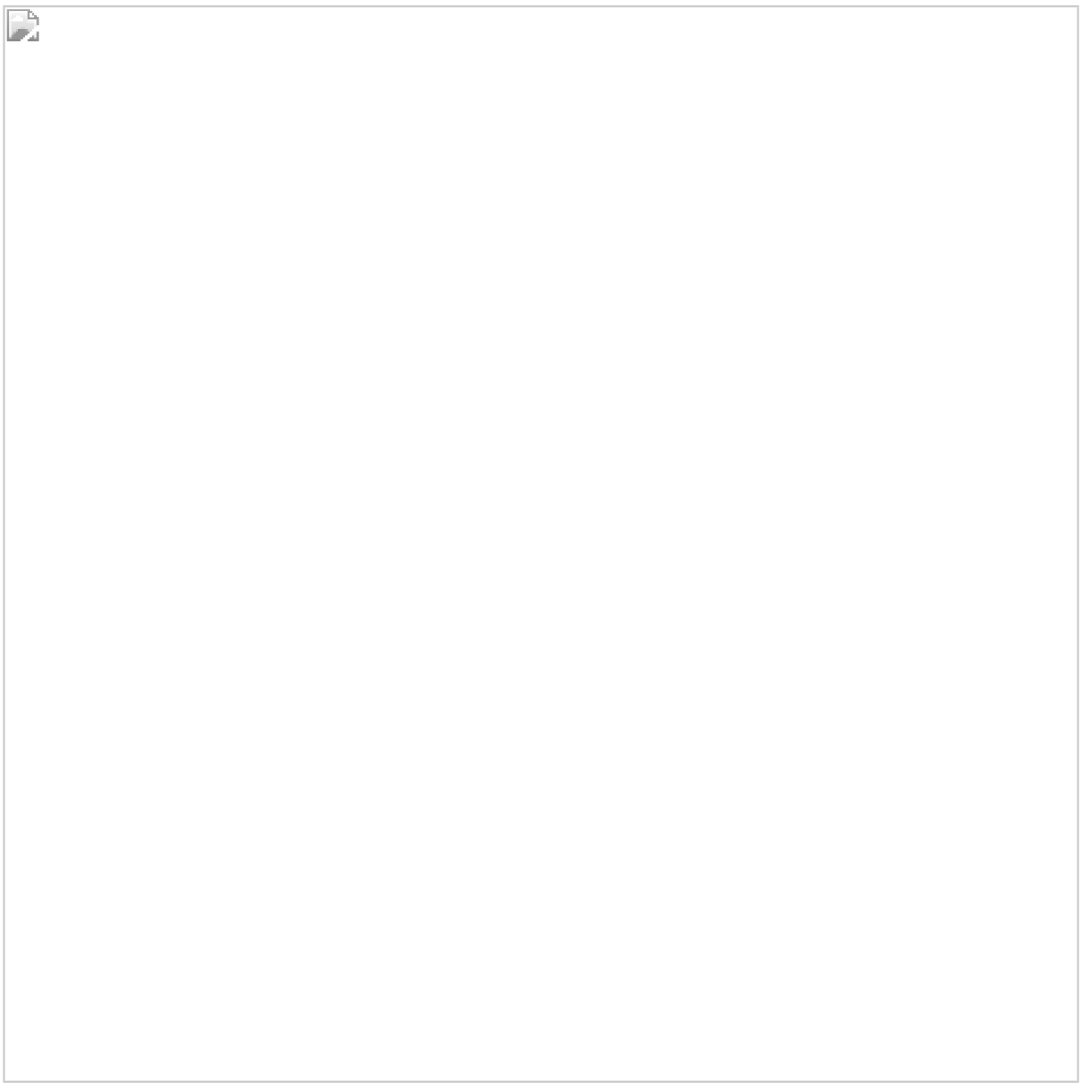
Along the way he picked up the melon rinds he had thrown down before, because now he could.

When his dear families saw his trunk, they asked where he got it. He told them about the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo, and off they went, one by one, to get trunks of their own.

And that is why, O Best Beloved, every Elephant you will ever see has a trunk just like the trunk of the 'satiable Elephant's Child.

TALK ABOUT IT

His questions got him into trouble, and they also gave every elephant a trunk. Are questions a good thing? Why?



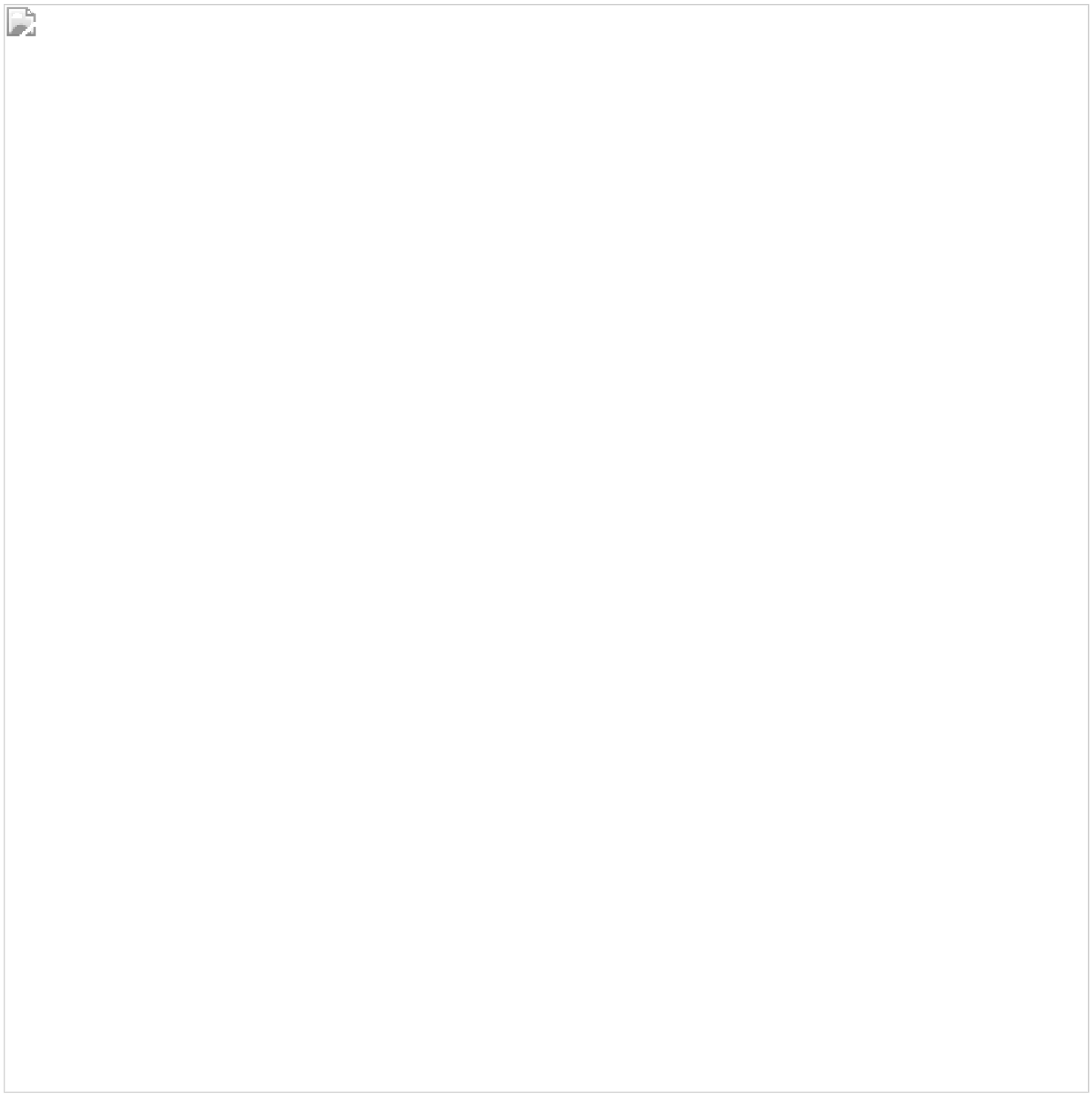
Think about it

1. What did he pick up on his way home?

- ○ The melon rinds he had thrown down
- ○ Shiny stones
- ○ Lost feathers

2. What would you do first if you had a trunk for one day?

The Beginning of the Armadillos



This next tale, O Best Beloved, is about two friends who lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon River, long ago.

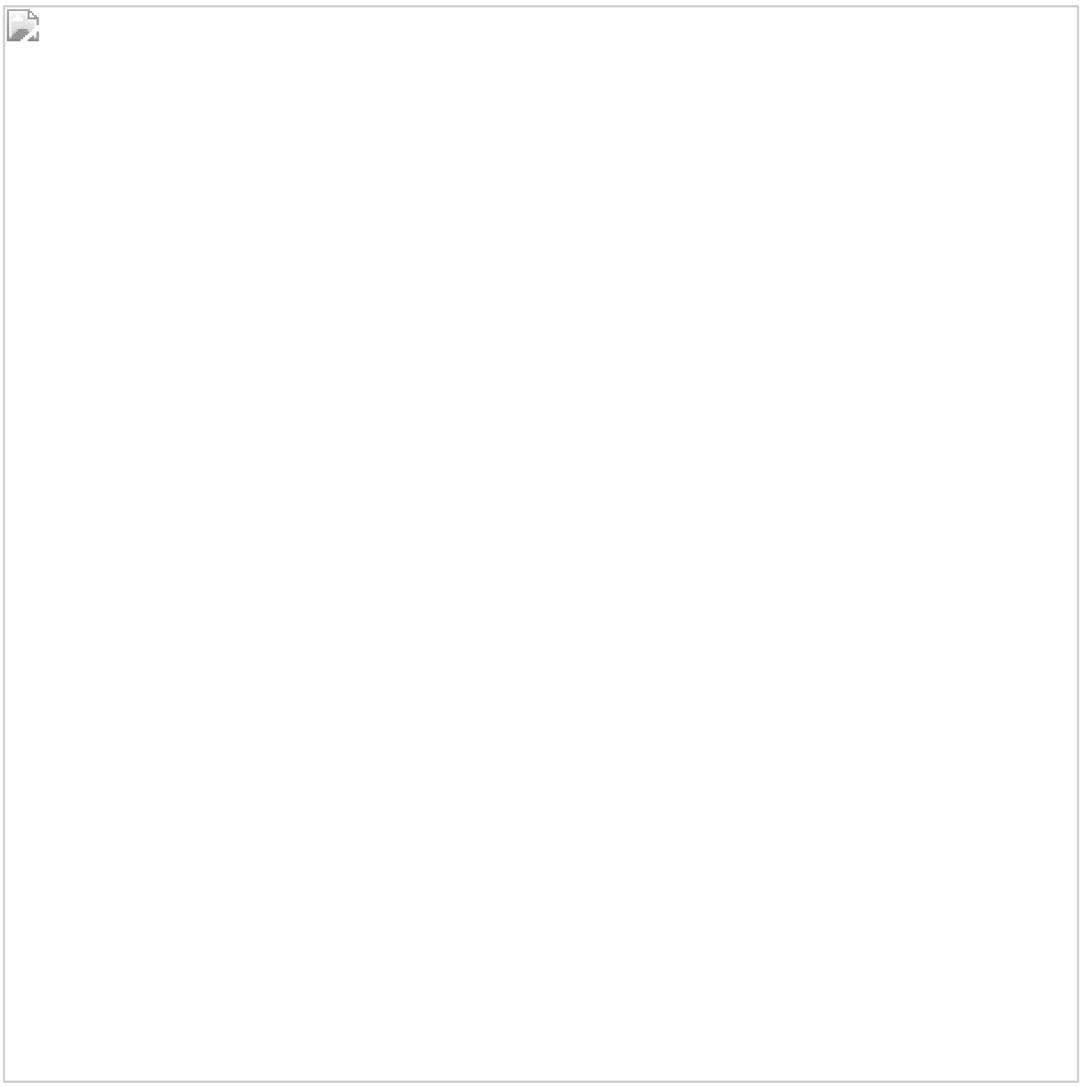
One was Stickly-Prickly Hedgehog, who ate shelly snails. When he was in danger, he curled up into a tight prickly ball.

The other was Slow-Solid Tortoise, who ate green lettuces. When he was in danger, he pulled his head and feet into his hard shell.

They were very good friends.

TALK ABOUT IT

What makes someone a good friend?



Think about it

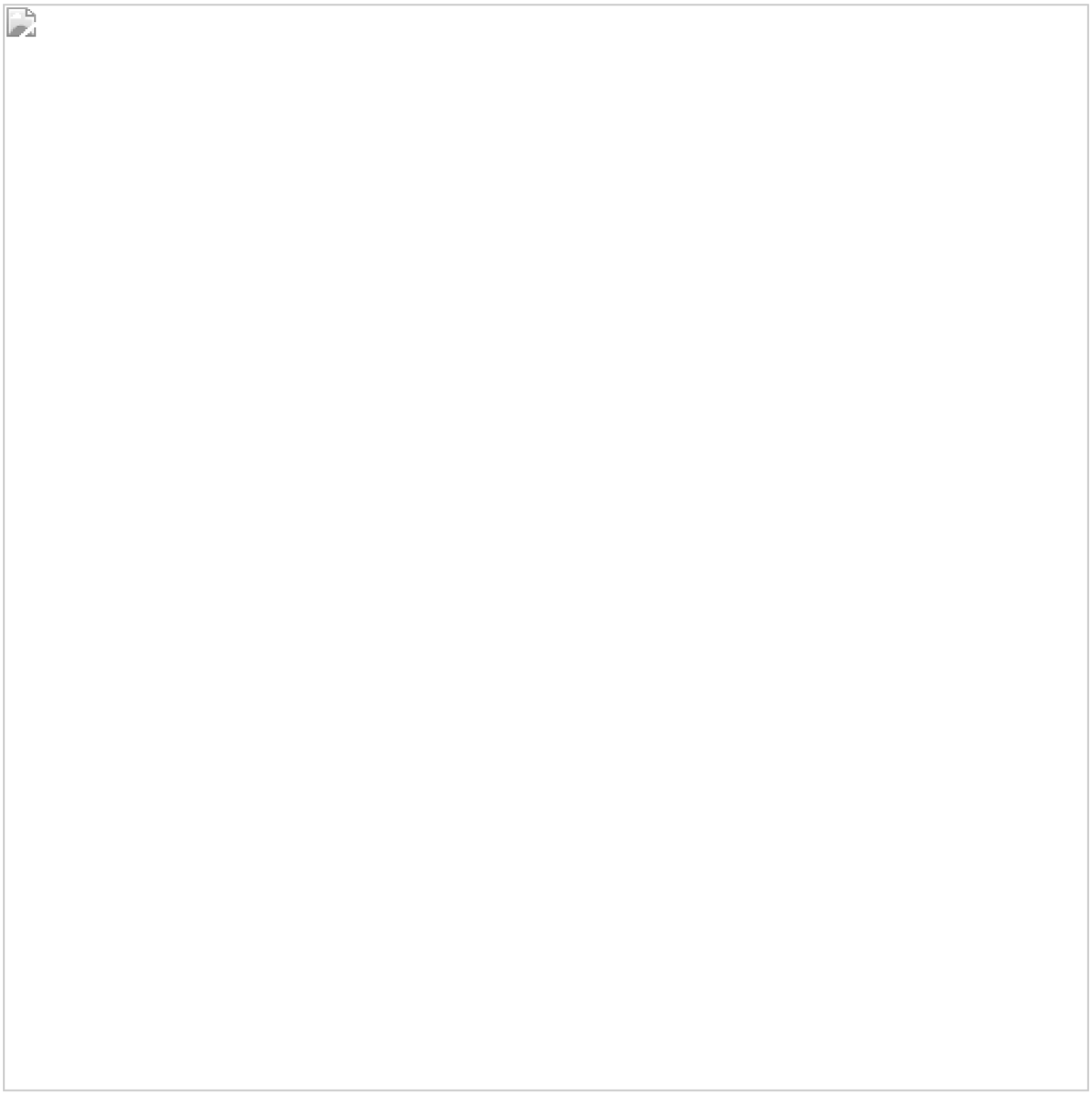
1. What did Stickly-Prickly do when he was in danger?

- ○ He curled up into a prickly ball
- ○ He climbed a tree
- ○ He dug a hole

2. What did Slow-Solid do when he was in danger?

- ○ He ran fast
- ○ He pulled his head and feet into his shell
- ○ He hid behind a rock

Painted Jaguar's Lesson



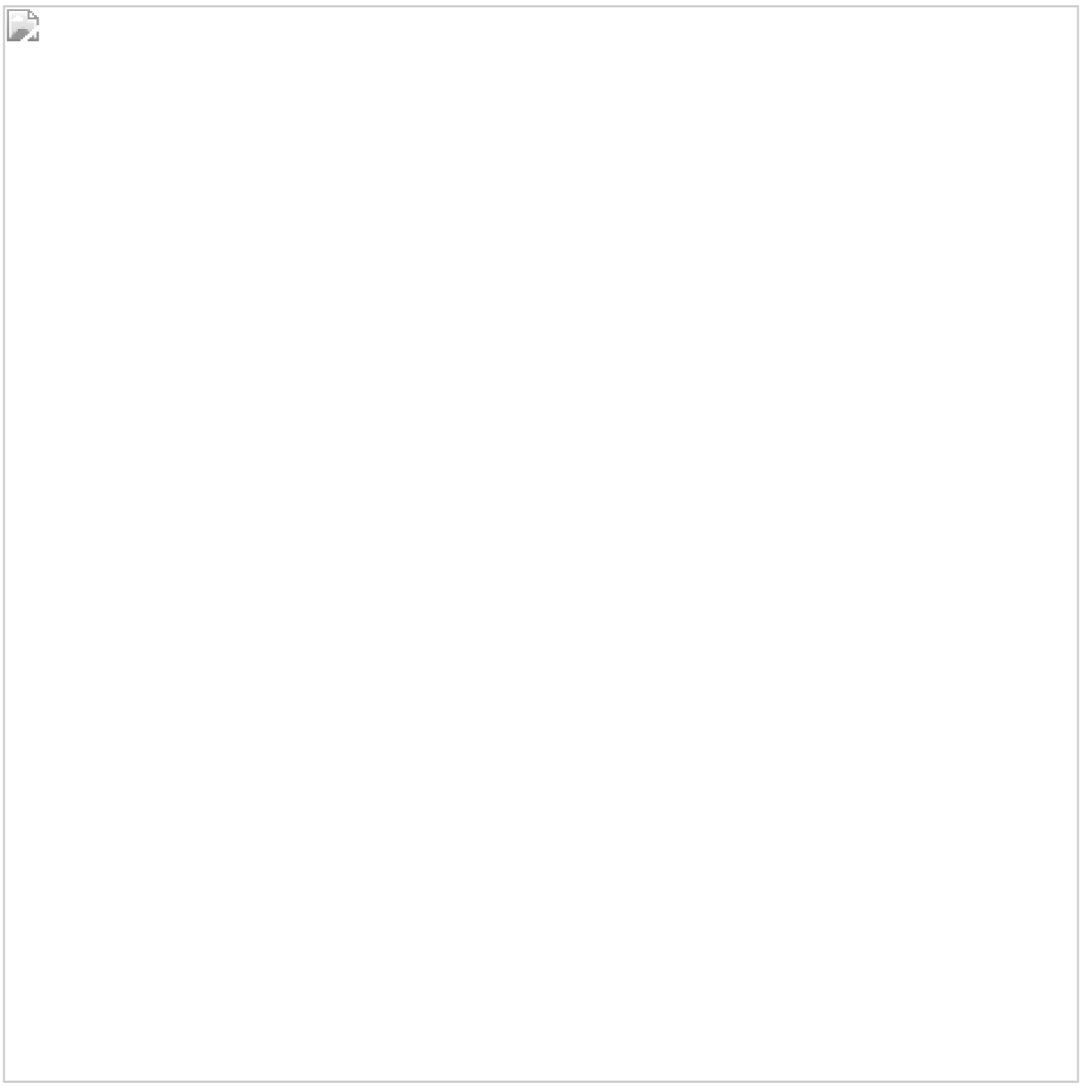
Also on the banks of the turbid Amazon lived Painted Jaguar, who ate everything he could catch.

His mother, graciously waving her tail, told him how to catch a hedgehog and a tortoise. "When you find a Hedgehog," she said, "drop him into the water and then he will uncoil. And when you catch a Tortoise, scoop him out of his shell with your paw."

Painted Jaguar said it over and over so he would not forget.

TALK ABOUT IT

Painted Jaguar's mother taught him things. What has someone taught you that you want to remember?

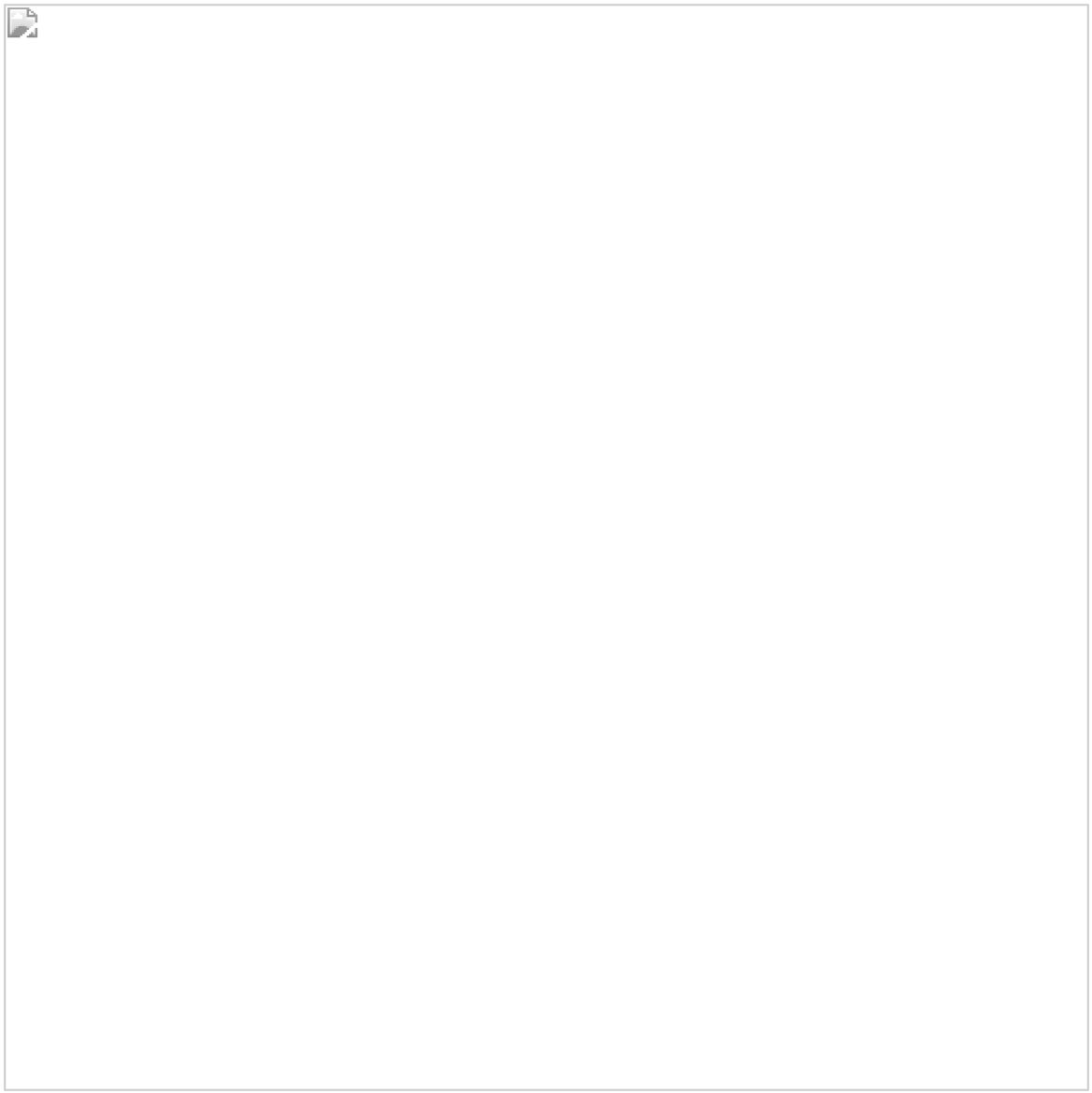


Think about it

1. How did Mother Jaguar say to catch a Hedgehog?

- ○ Drop him in the water
- ○ Sing him to sleep
- ○ Chase him up a tree

Riddles Under the Fallen Tree



One beautiful night, Painted Jaguar found the two friends under a fallen tree. Stickly-Prickly curled up at once, and Slow-Solid pulled in his head and feet.

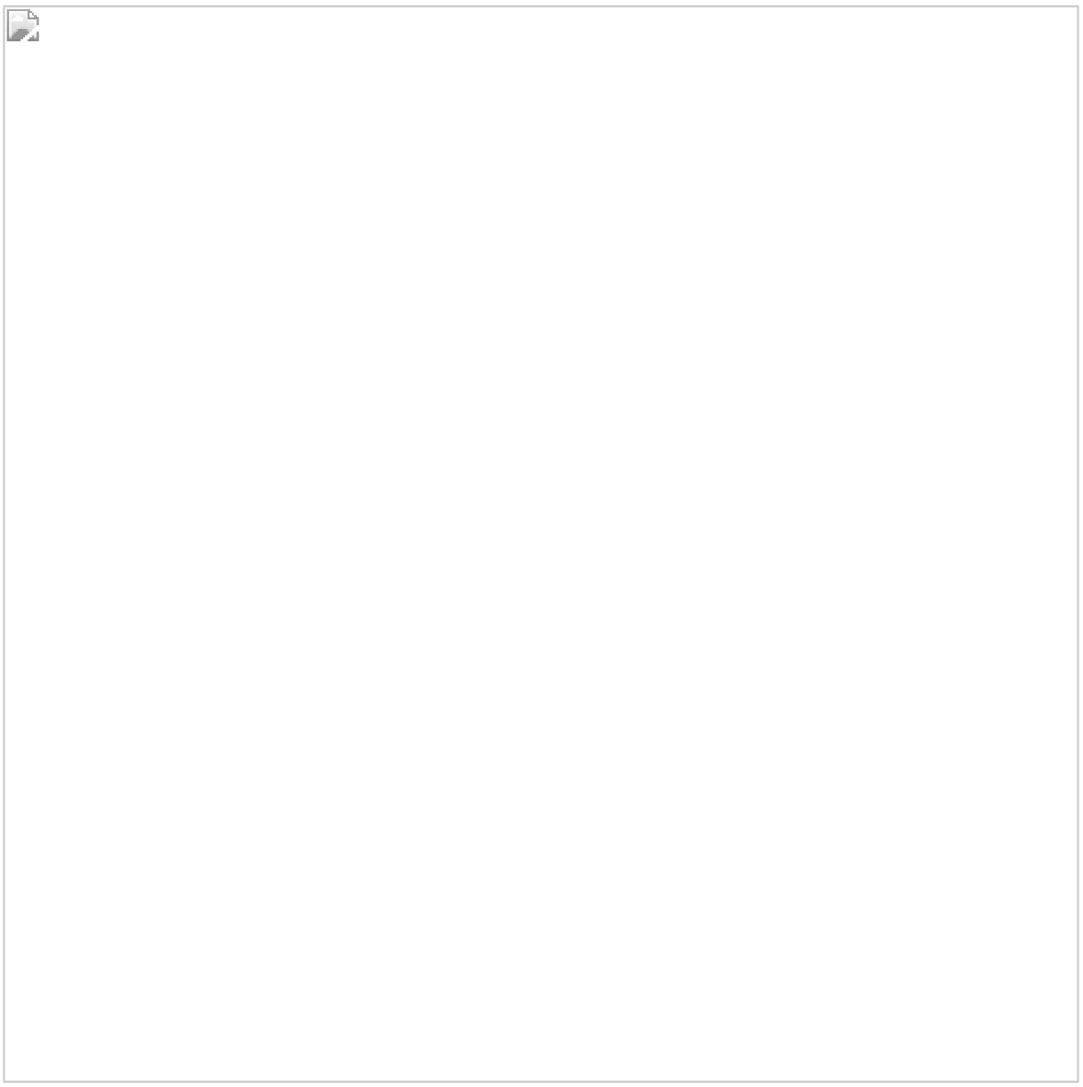
The friends teased him with riddles. “Are you sure of what your Mummy told you?” they asked. “Maybe she said to drop a Tortoise in the water, and scoop a Hedgehog out of his shell?”

All mixed up, Painted Jaguar said, “You are making my spots ache!”

He scooped at Stickly-Prickly with his paw, and got a paw full of prickles. While he licked it, Slow-Solid slid into the river and swam away.

TALK ABOUT IT

The friends used their wits instead of their claws. What does it mean to use your wits?

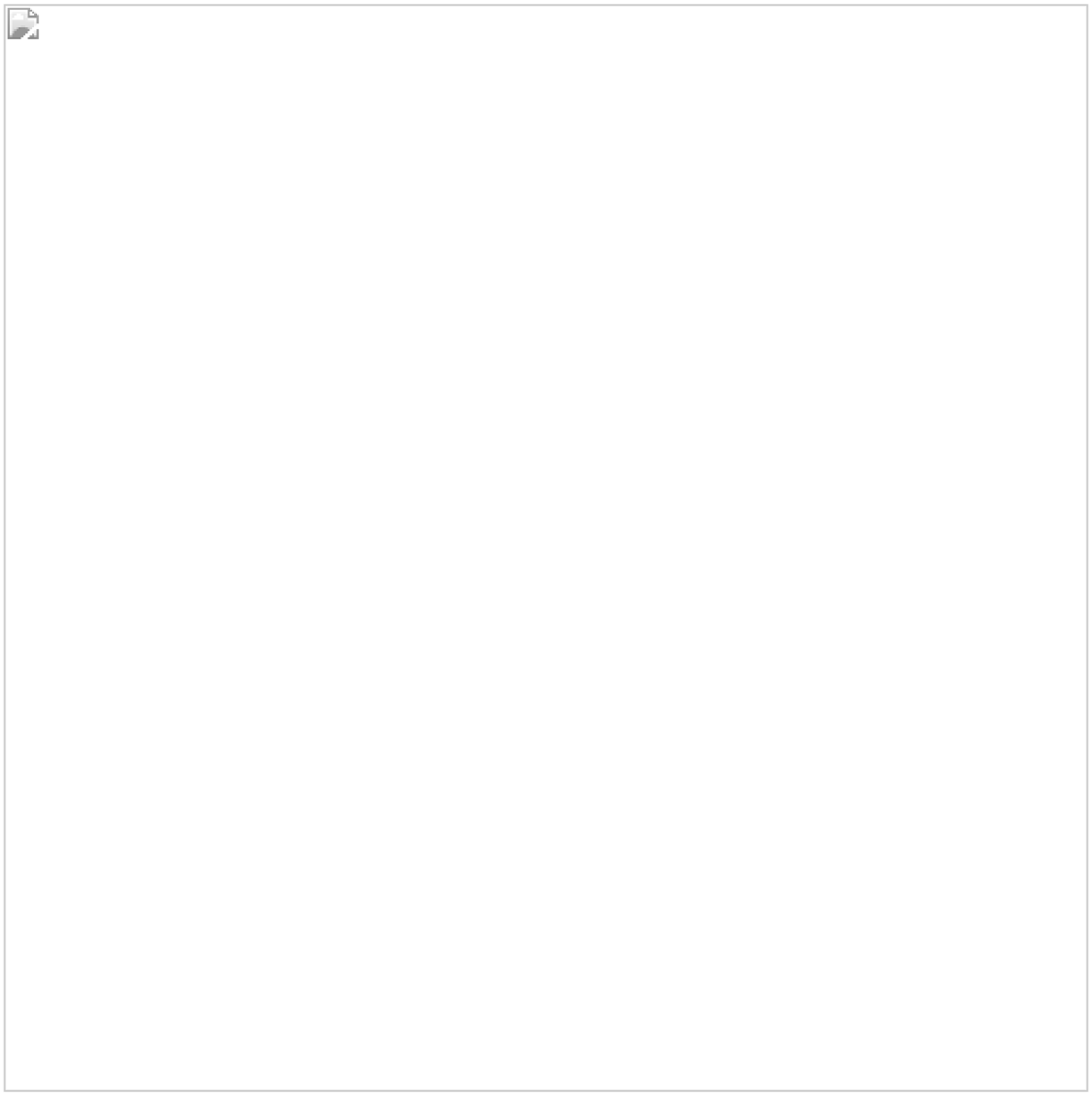


Think about it

1. What happened when Painted Jaguar scooped at the Hedgehog?

- ○ He caught him
- ○ He got a paw full of prickles
- ○ The Hedgehog flew away

Each Helping the Other



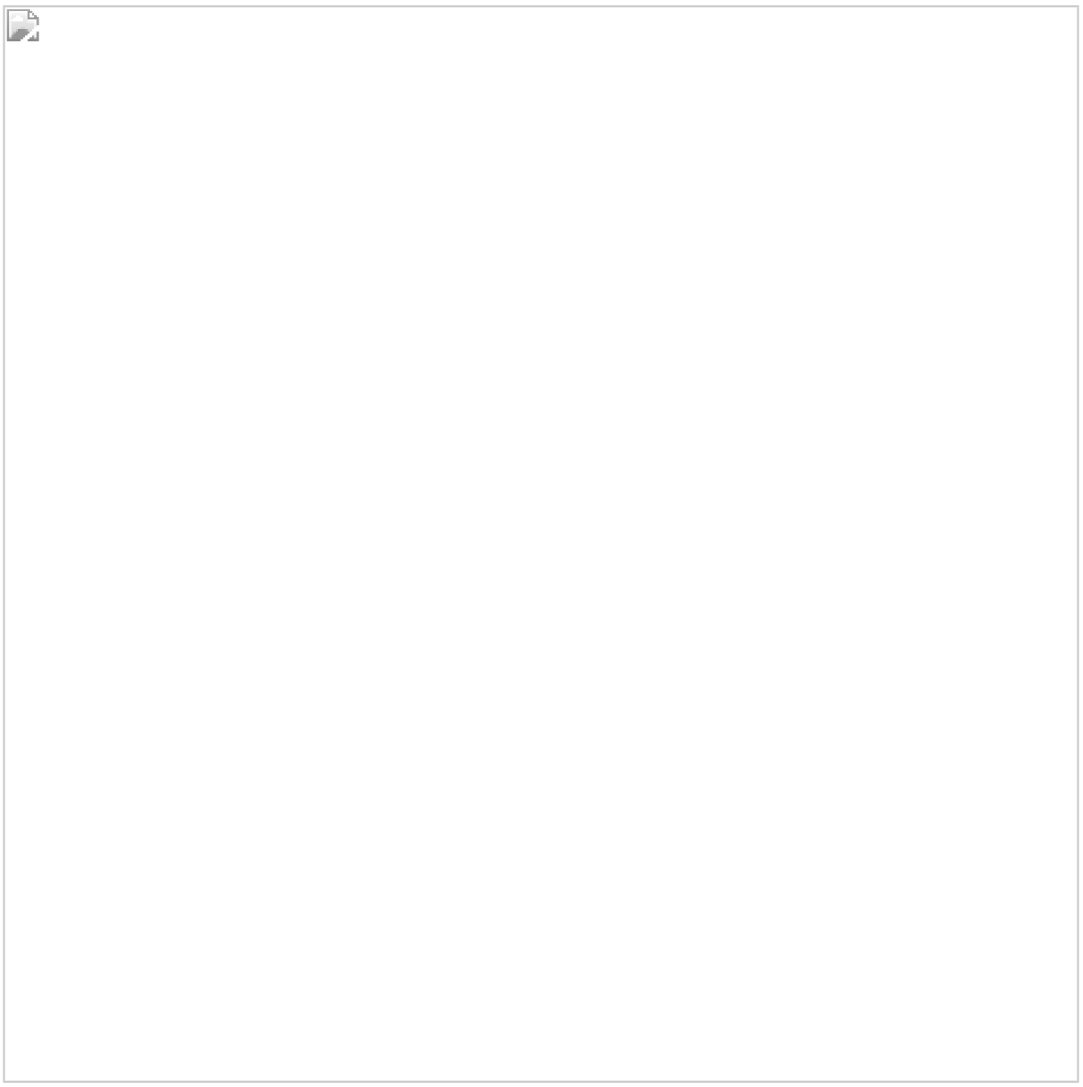
Afterwards the two friends talked it over. “Painted Jaguar will learn the difference between us,” said Stickly-Prickly. “So let us learn each other’s tricks.”

Slow-Solid held up Stickly-Prickly’s chin in the water while he learned to swim. And Stickly-Prickly loosened Slow-Solid’s back-plates, a little at a time, so he could bend and curl.

“Excellent!” they said to each other. “Excellent!”

They practised all night long, each helping the other. By morning, Stickly-Prickly’s prickles had melted together into scales, more like a pinecone than a chestnut-burr. And Slow-Solid’s shell had loosened into bendy scales too.

TALK ABOUT IT
Is there something you could teach a friend? Is there something a friend could teach you?



Think about it

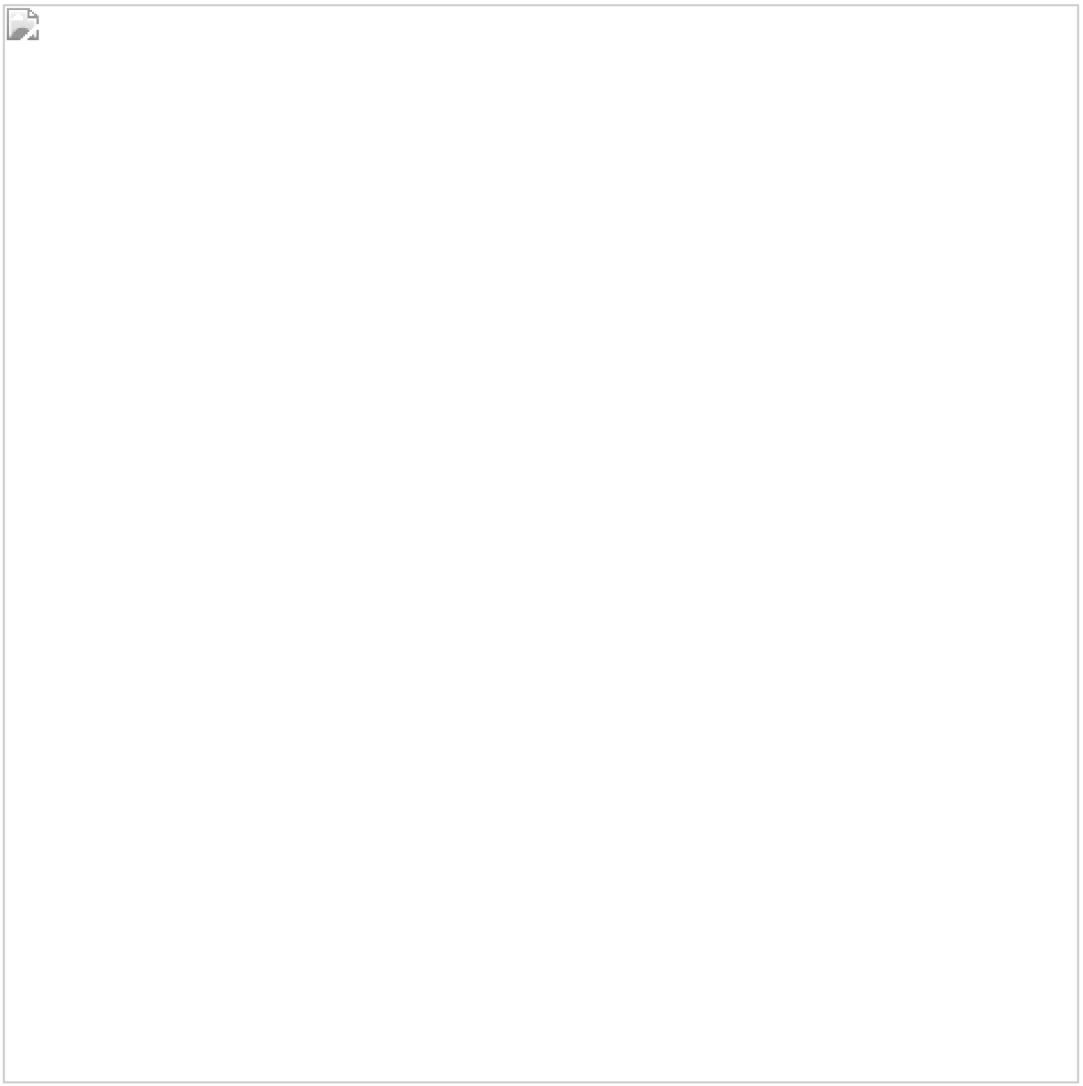
1. What did Slow-Solid teach Stickly-Prickly?

- ○ How to swim
- ○ How to climb
- ○ How to sing

2. What did Stickly-Prickly help Slow-Solid learn?

- ○ How to fly
- ○ How to curl up
- ○ How to roar

Something Altogether New



Along came Painted Jaguar, saying his rhyme: “Can’t curl, but can swim: Slow-Solid, that’s him! Curls up, but can’t swim: Stickly-Prickly, that’s him!”

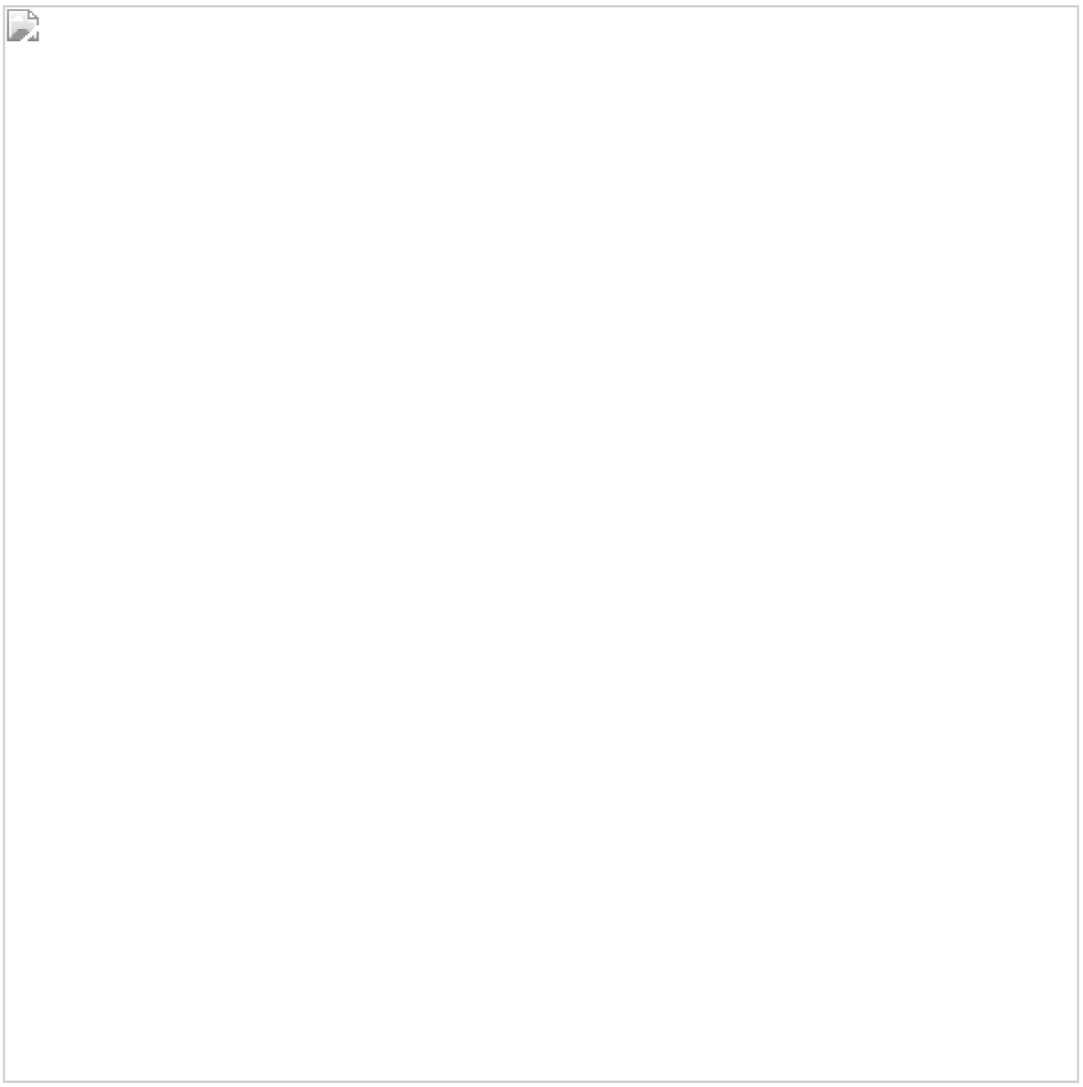
But the two friends curled up and rolled round him, then both slid into the river and swam. Painted Jaguar was so surprised that he fell three times backward over his own painted tail.

He ran to ask his mother what they were. “I should call it ‘Armadillo,’” she said, “till I found out the real one. And I should leave it alone.”

And that, O Best Beloved, is how the very first Armadillos came to be, from two friends each helping the other.

TALK ABOUT IT

The two friends became something new by helping each other. What could you and a friend do together that you can’t do alone?



Think about it

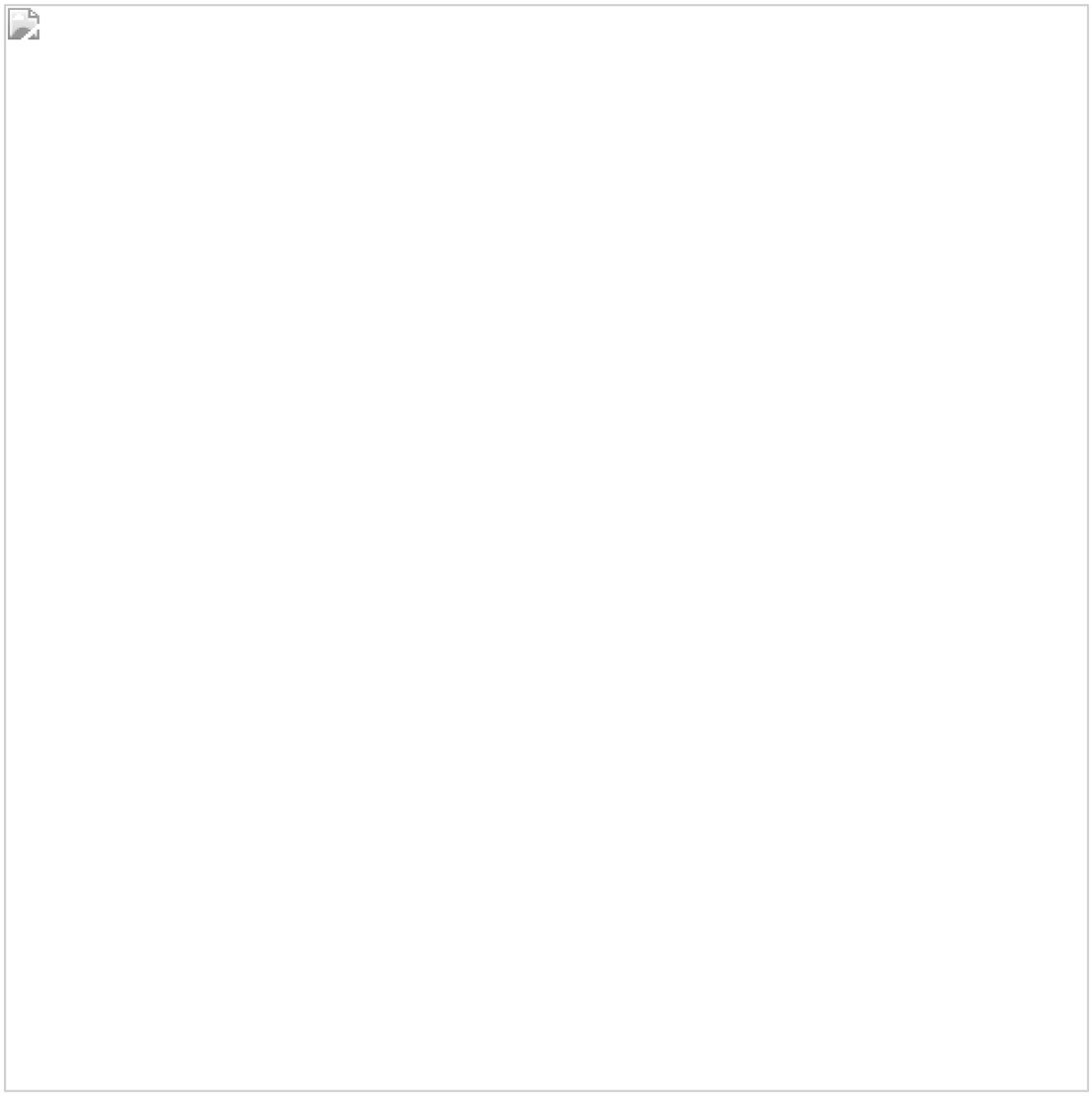
1. Why did Painted Jaguar fall over backward?

- ○ He tripped on a rock
- ○ The friends could now curl AND swim, and that surprised him
- ○ He was dancing

2. What name did Mother Jaguar give them?

- ○ Hedgehog-Tortoise
- ○ Armadillo
- ○ Pinecone

How the Camel Got His Hump



In the beginning of years, when the world was so new and all, a Camel lived in a Howling Desert, because he did not want to work.

On Monday the Horse came, with a saddle on his back. “Camel, O Camel, come out and trot like the rest of us.”

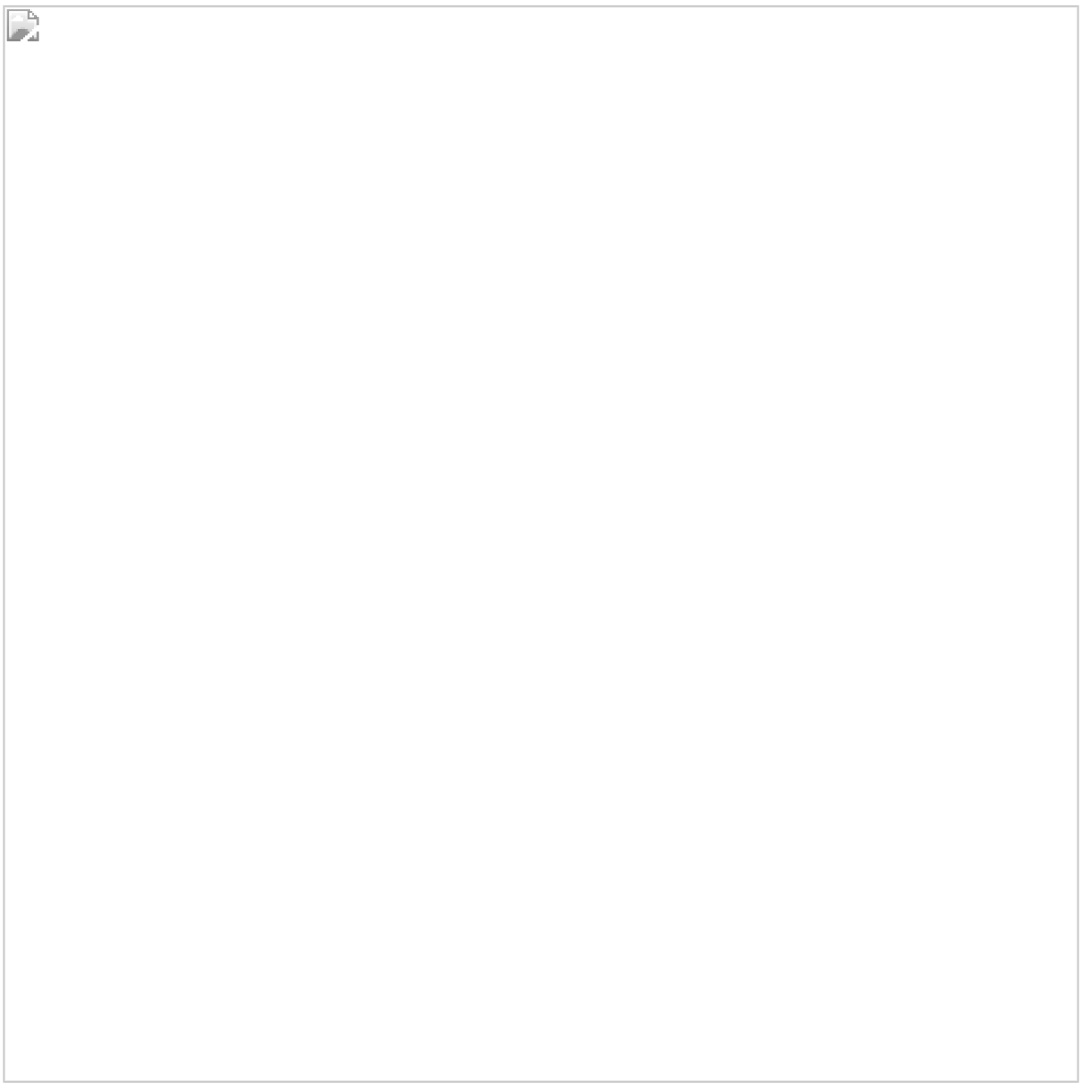
“Humph!” said the Camel.

Then the Dog came, with a stick in his mouth. “Come and fetch and carry like the rest of us.” “Humph!” said the Camel.

Then the Ox came, with a yoke on his neck. “Come and plough like the rest of us.” “Humph!” said the Camel. Just “Humph!” and no more.

TALK ABOUT IT

Say “Humph!” the way the Camel said it. What do you think he meant by it?

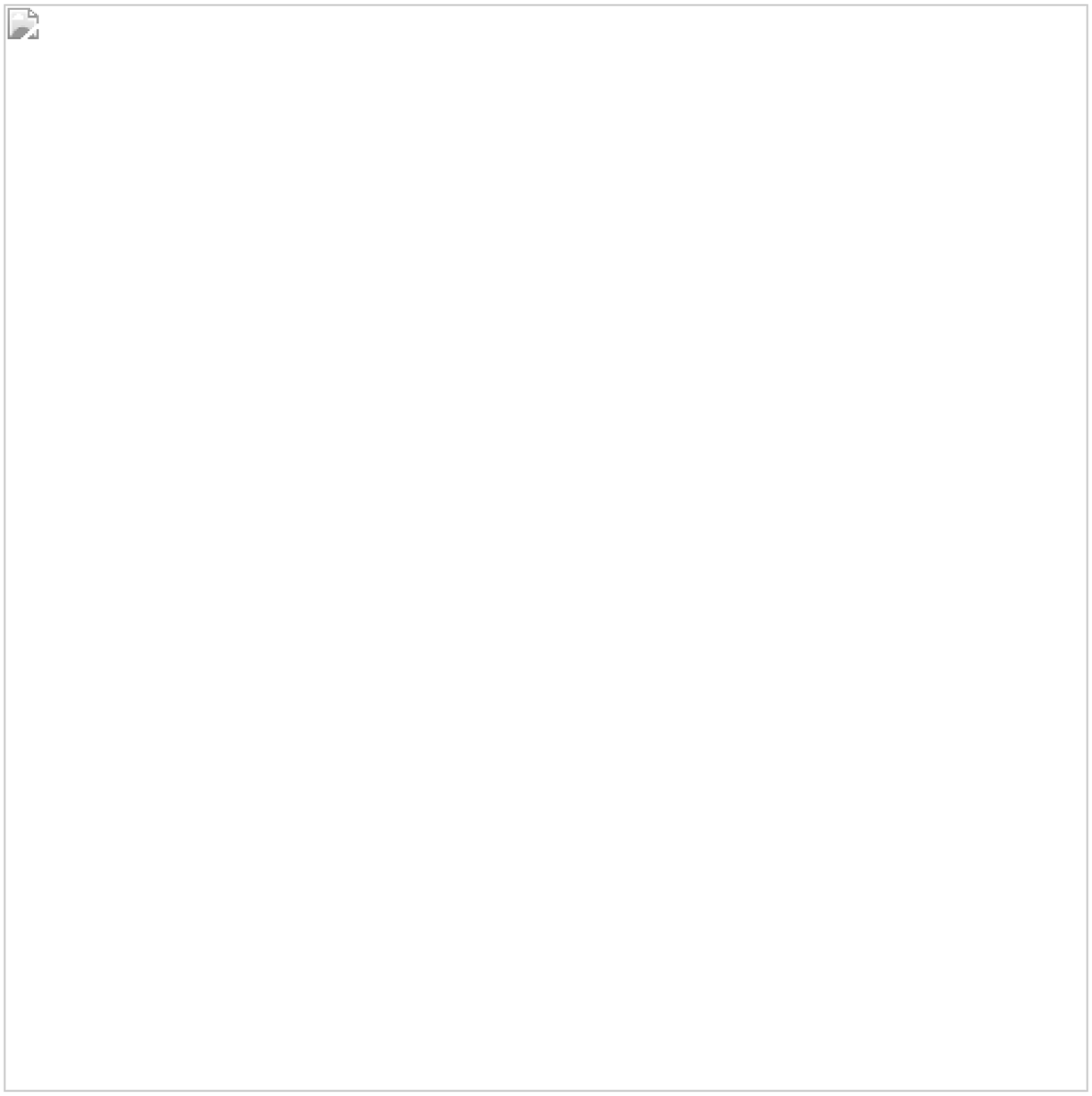


Think about it

1. What did the Camel say to everyone who asked him to help?

- ○ “Yes, please!”
- ○ “Humph!”
- ○ “Tomorrow.”

Double Work for Three



That evening the Man called the Horse, the Dog and the Ox together. “I am very sorry,” he said, “but that Humph-thing will not work. You three must work double to make up for it.”

That made the Three very cross. While they talked it over, the Camel came by chewing milkweed, laughed at them, said “Humph!” and went away.

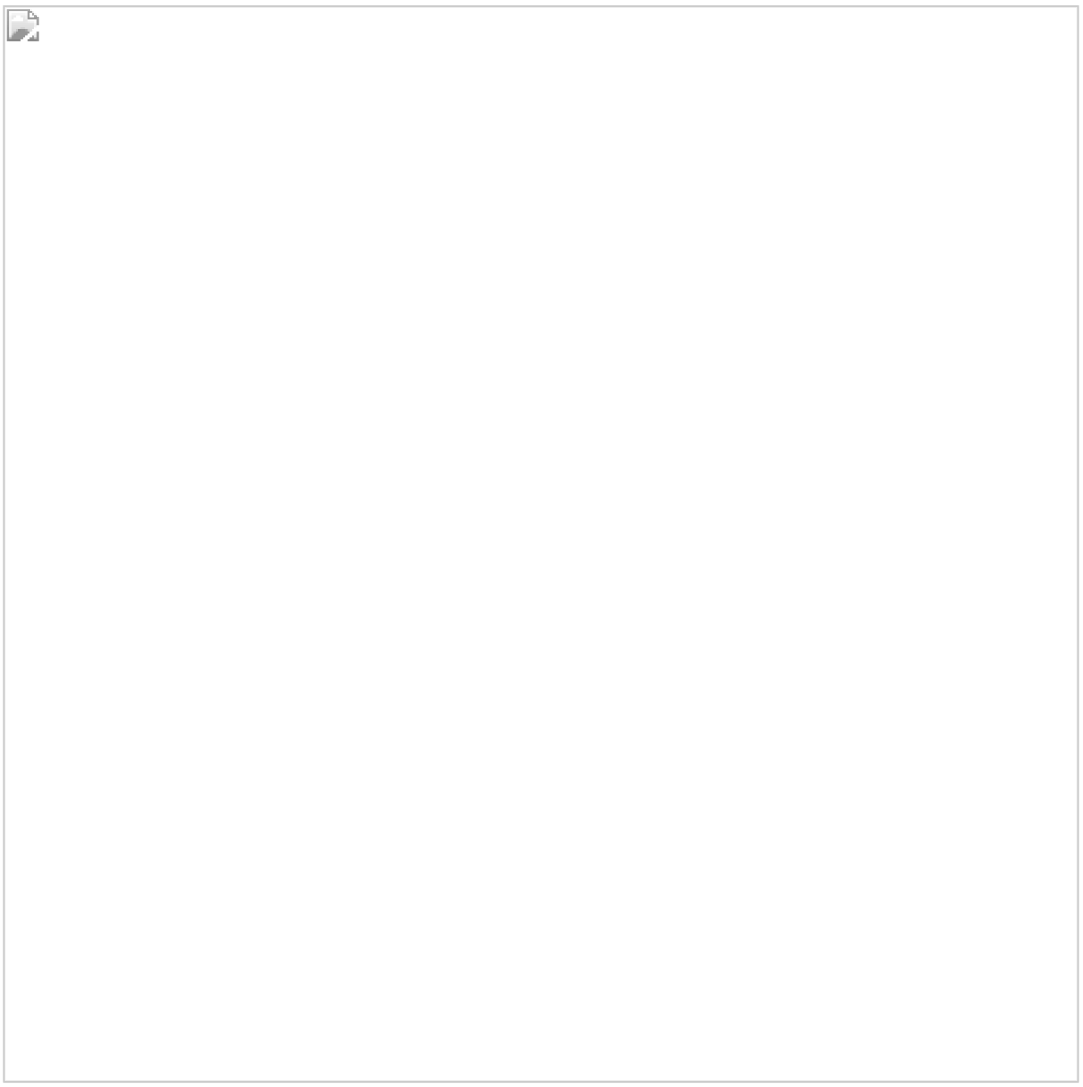
Then along came the Djinn in charge of All Deserts, rolling in a cloud of dust. (A Djinn is a magic spirit, like a genie.)

“Is it right for anyone to do nothing, with the world so new and all?” asked the Horse. “Certainly not,” said the Djinn.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Horse, the Dog and the Ox had to do the Camel’s share. Is that fair? Why or why not?

Double Work for Three · another picture

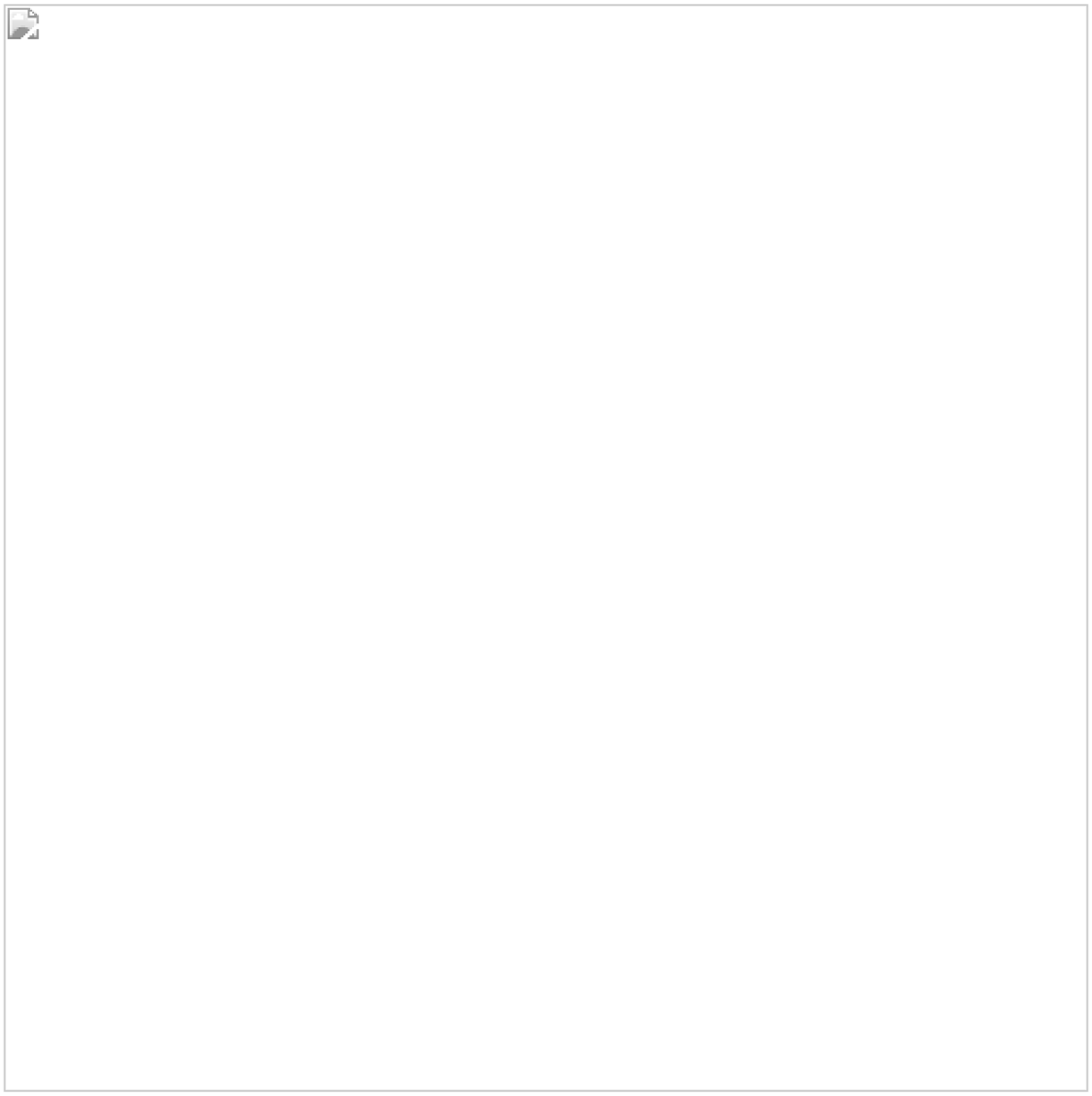


Think about it

1. Why did the Three have to work double?

- ○ Because the Camel would not do his share
- ○ Because they were bored
- ○ Because it was a holiday

The Djinn's Great Magic



The Djinn found the Camel looking at his own reflection in a pool of water, very pleased with his fine back.

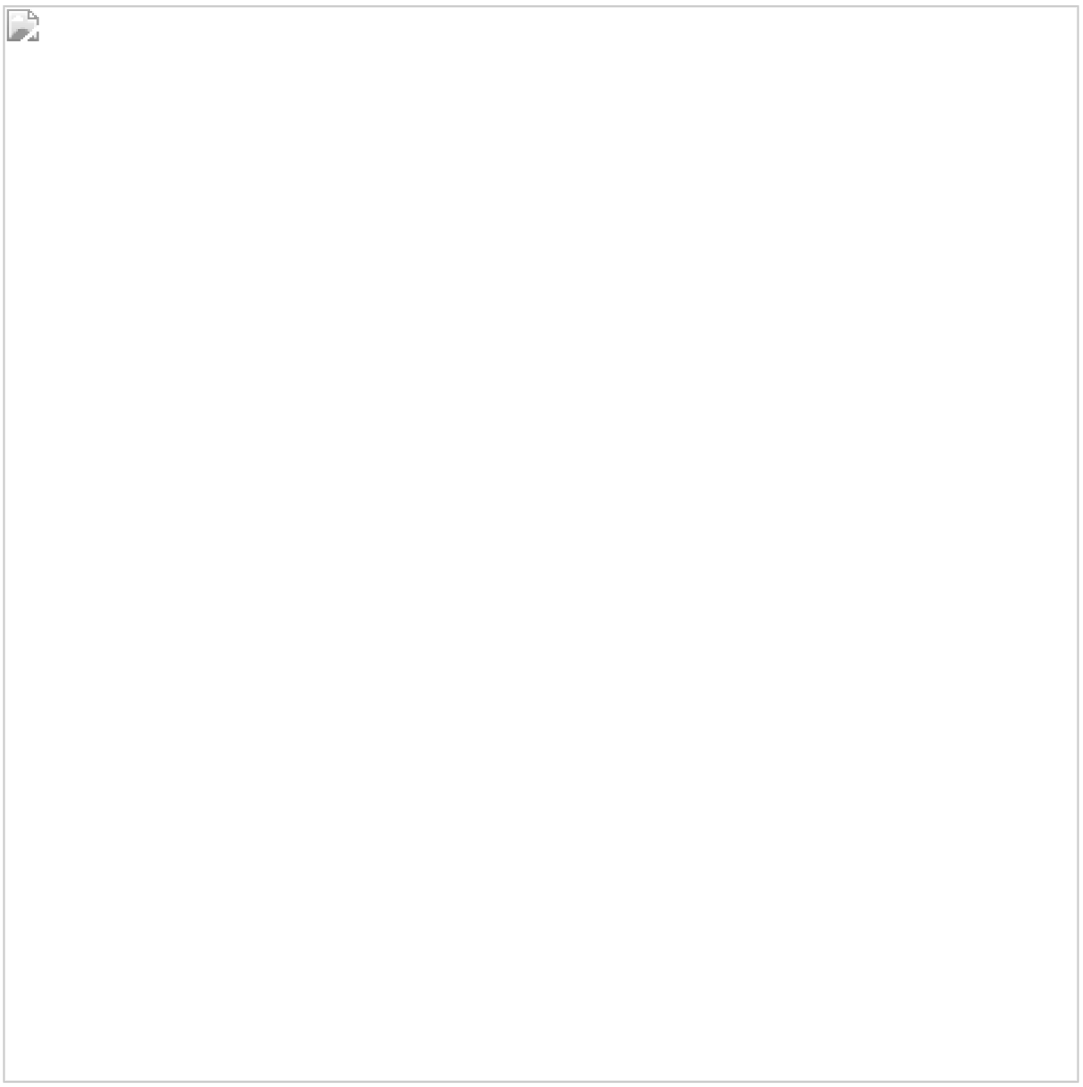
"My long and bubbling friend," said the Djinn, "what is this I hear of your doing no work?" "Humph!" said the Camel.

The Djinn sat down with his chin in his hand and began to think a Great Magic. "I shouldn't say that again if I were you," he said. "You might say it once too often."

"Humph!" said the Camel. And no sooner had he said it than his back began puffing up, and puffing up, into a great big lolloping humph.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Djinn gave the Camel a warning first. Why do you think he did that?

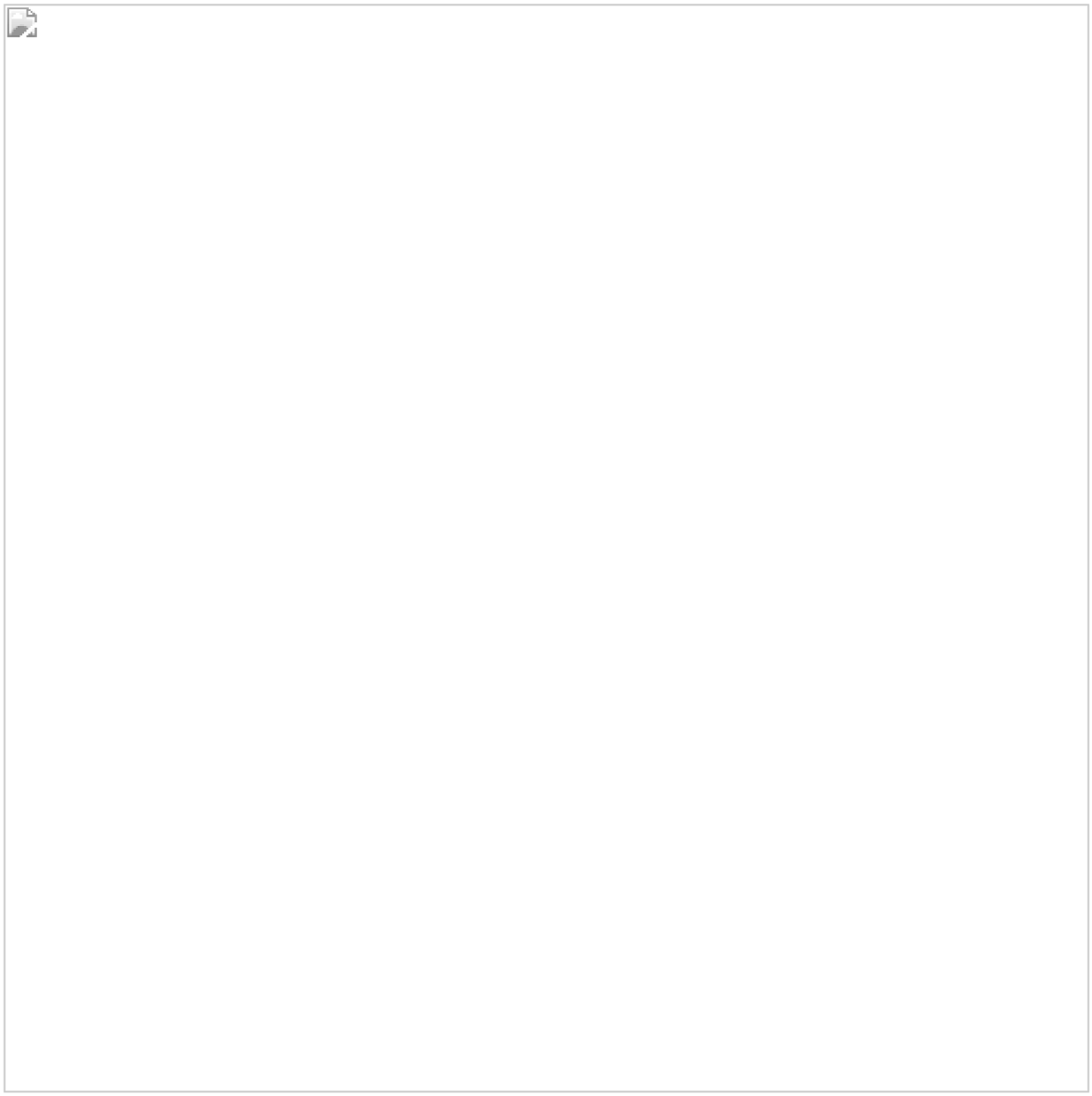


Think about it

1. What happened when the Camel said "Humph!" once too often?

- ○ He fell asleep
- ○ His back puffed up into a great big hump
- ○ He turned blue

Still Catching Up



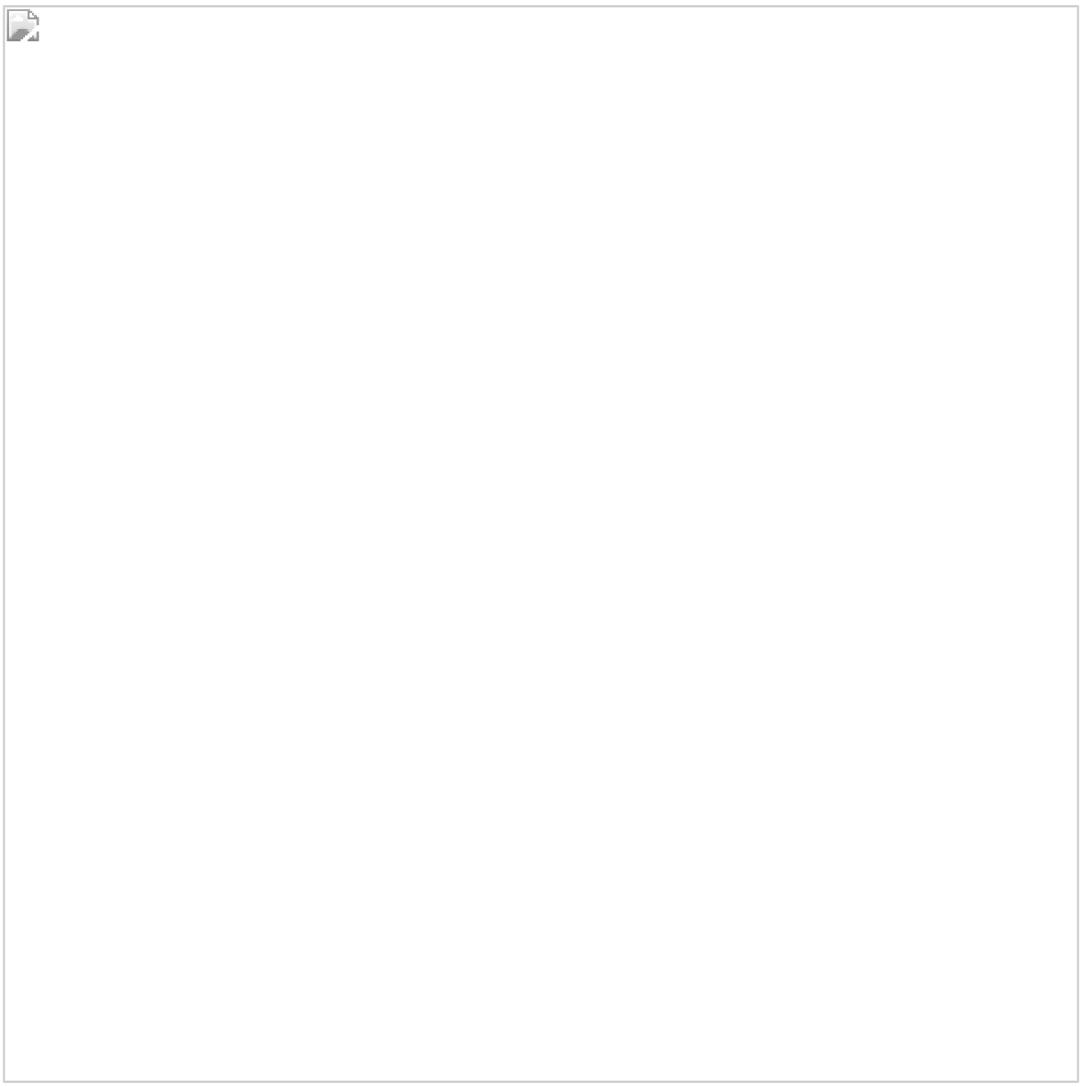
“That’s your very own humph,” said the Djinn. “You have done no work since Monday. You can work for three days without eating, because you can live on your humph.”

The Camel went to join the Three. He wears a hump to this day (we call it “hump” now, not to hurt his feelings), but he has never yet caught up on the three days he missed at the beginning of the world.

Mr. Kipling’s little song says that when we have too little to do, we can get a “hump” of our own. The cure is to take a hoe and dig in the garden.

TALK ABOUT IT

When you get grumpy, what helps you feel better? Have you ever tried digging in a garden?



Think about it

1. What can the Camel do because of his hump?

- ○ Work three days without eating
- ○ Fly over the desert
- ○ Talk to fish

2. Which of the three tales did you like best? Why?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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