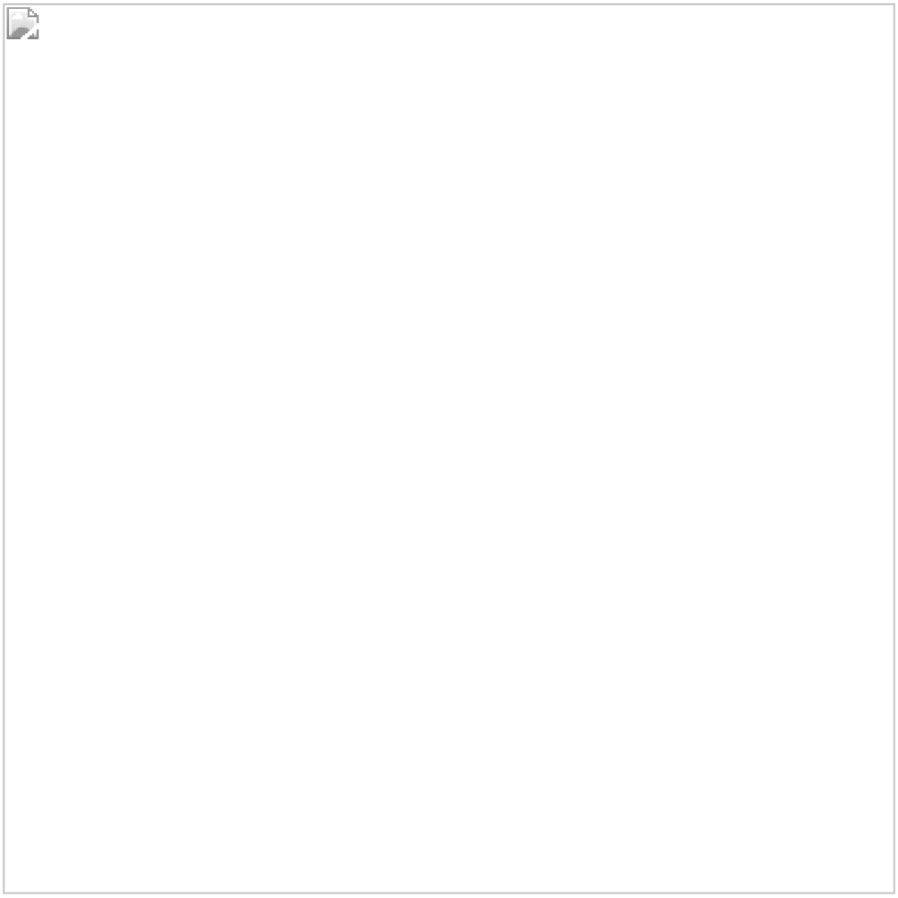
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The Old Man Who Made Withered Trees to Flower

A Tale from Japan



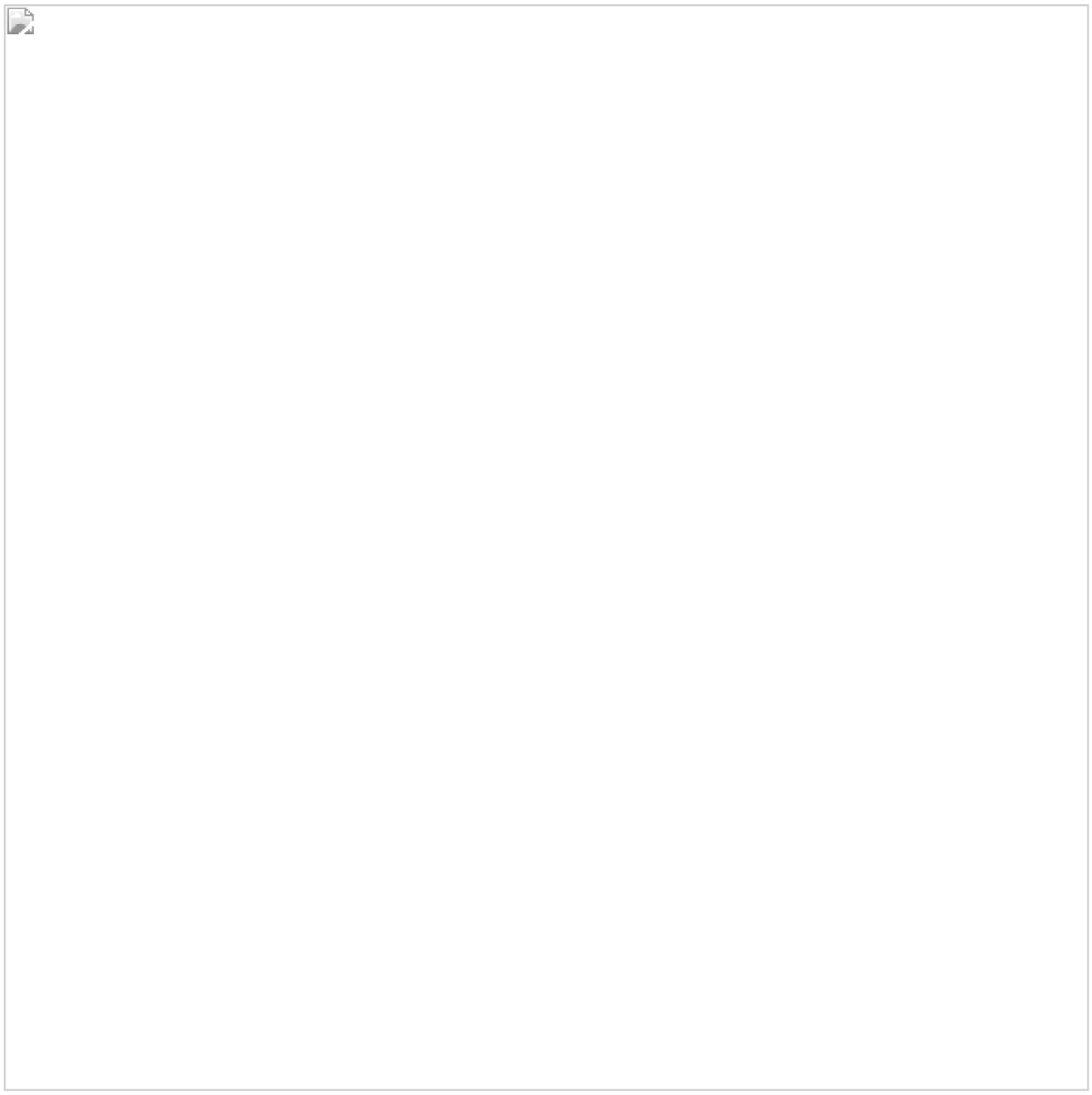
Long, long ago there lived an old man and his wife, who worked a small plot of land. Their life was happy and peaceful except for one great sorrow: they had no child. Their only pet was a dog named Shiro, and on him they lavished all the affection of their old age.

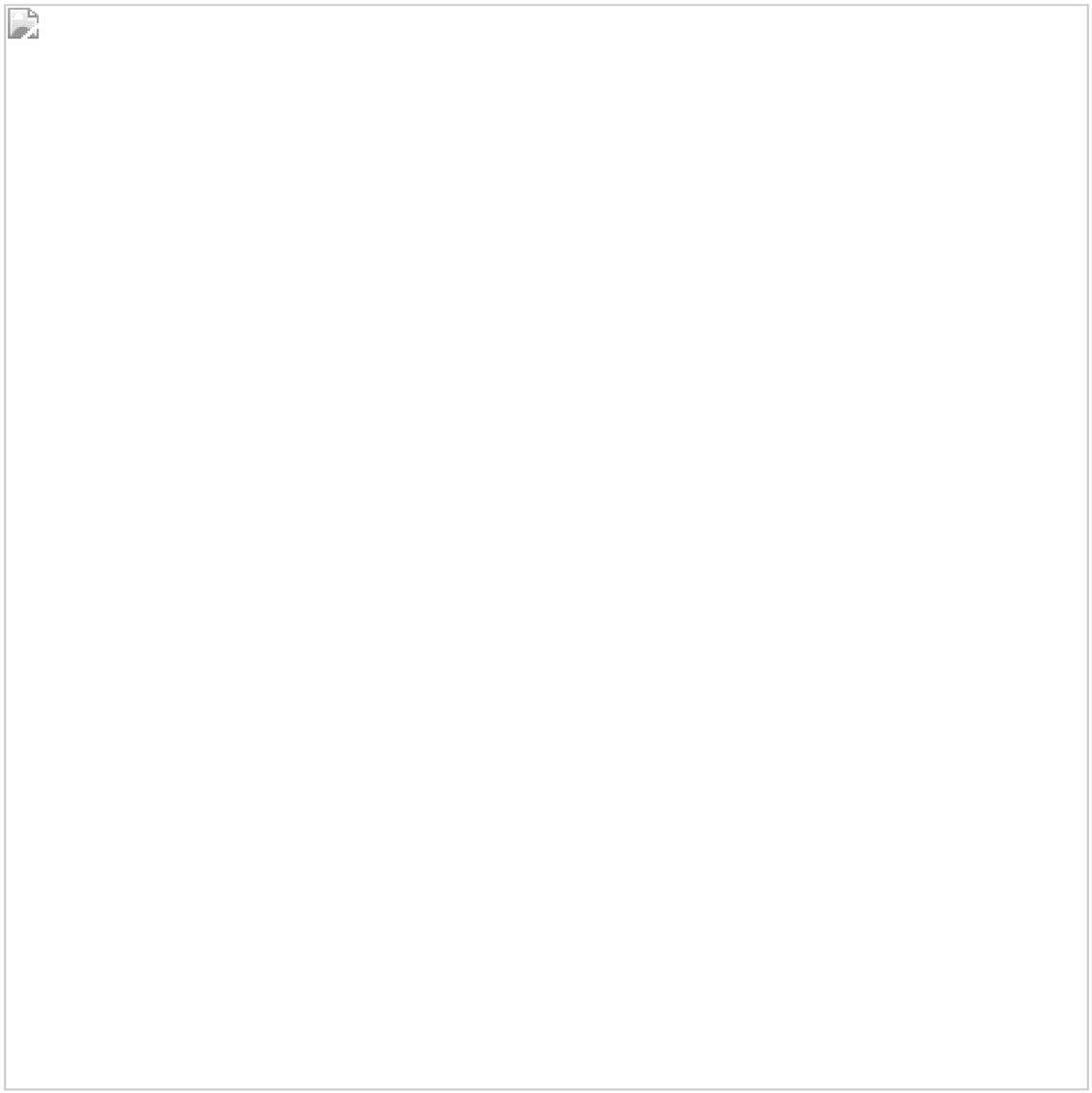
TALK ABOUT IT

Shiro means “white.” What would you name a white dog?

This book belongs to _____

The Old Man Who Made Withered Trees to Flower · another picture





They loved Shiro so much that whenever they had anything nice to eat, they gave it to Shiro instead.

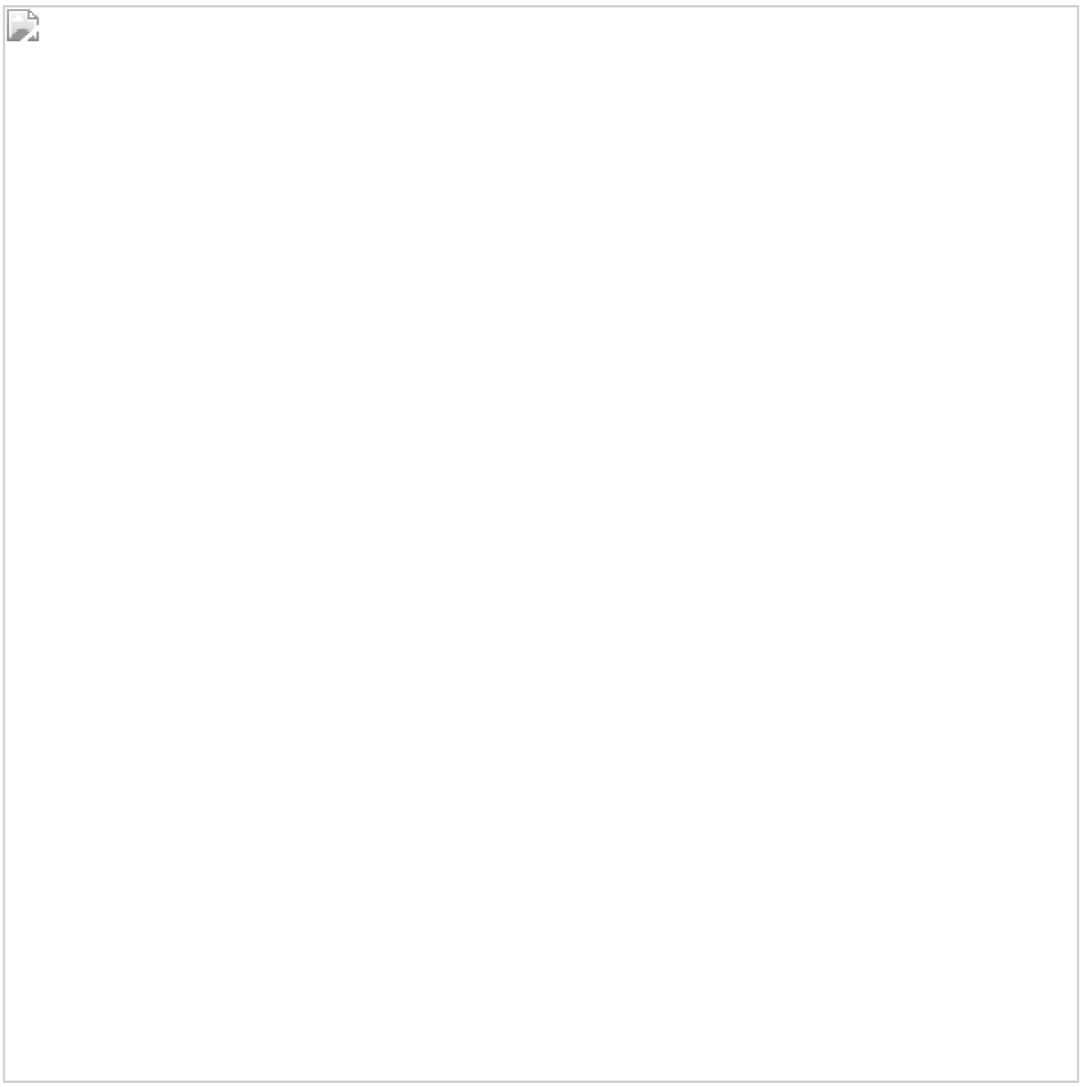
The happiest hour of the day was when the old man came home from the field and ate his supper. He took what he had saved out to the veranda. Shiro was waiting. The old man said “Chin, chin!” and Shiro sat up and begged, and was given the food.

Next door lived another old man and his wife. They were wicked and cruel, and hated their good neighbors and the dog Shiro. If Shiro looked into their kitchen, they kicked him or threw something at him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Shiro sat up and begged for his food. What does your pet, or a pet you know, do to say hello?

Shiro · another picture

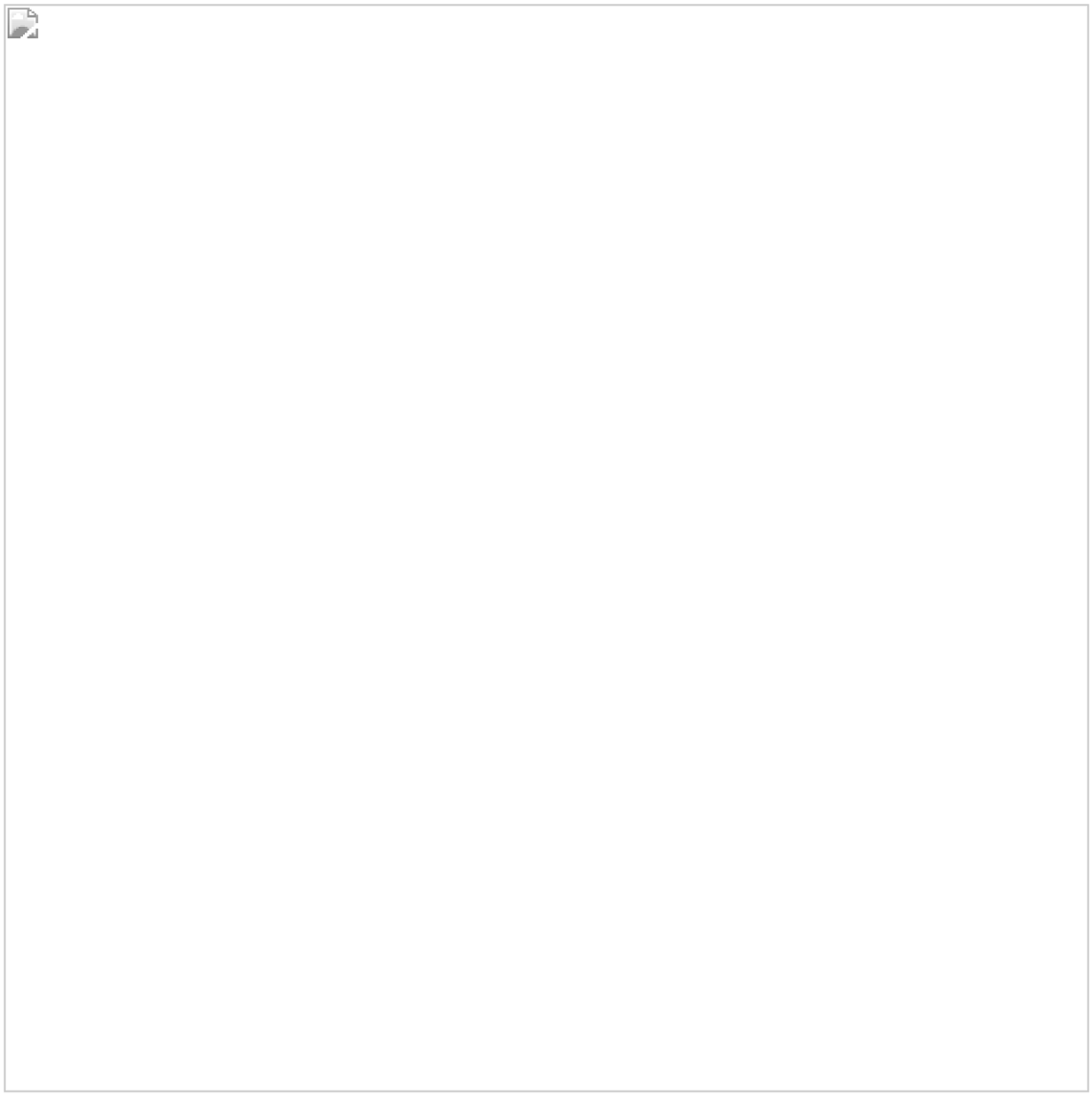


Think about it

1. What did the old man say to make Shiro sit up?

- ○ “Chin, chin!”
- ○ “Come here!”
- ○ “Roll over!”

Shiro Digs



One day Shiro barked for a long time in the field behind the house. The old man hurried out. Shiro ran to meet him, wagging his tail, and dragged him by his kimono to a large yenoki tree, where he began to dig, yelping with joy.

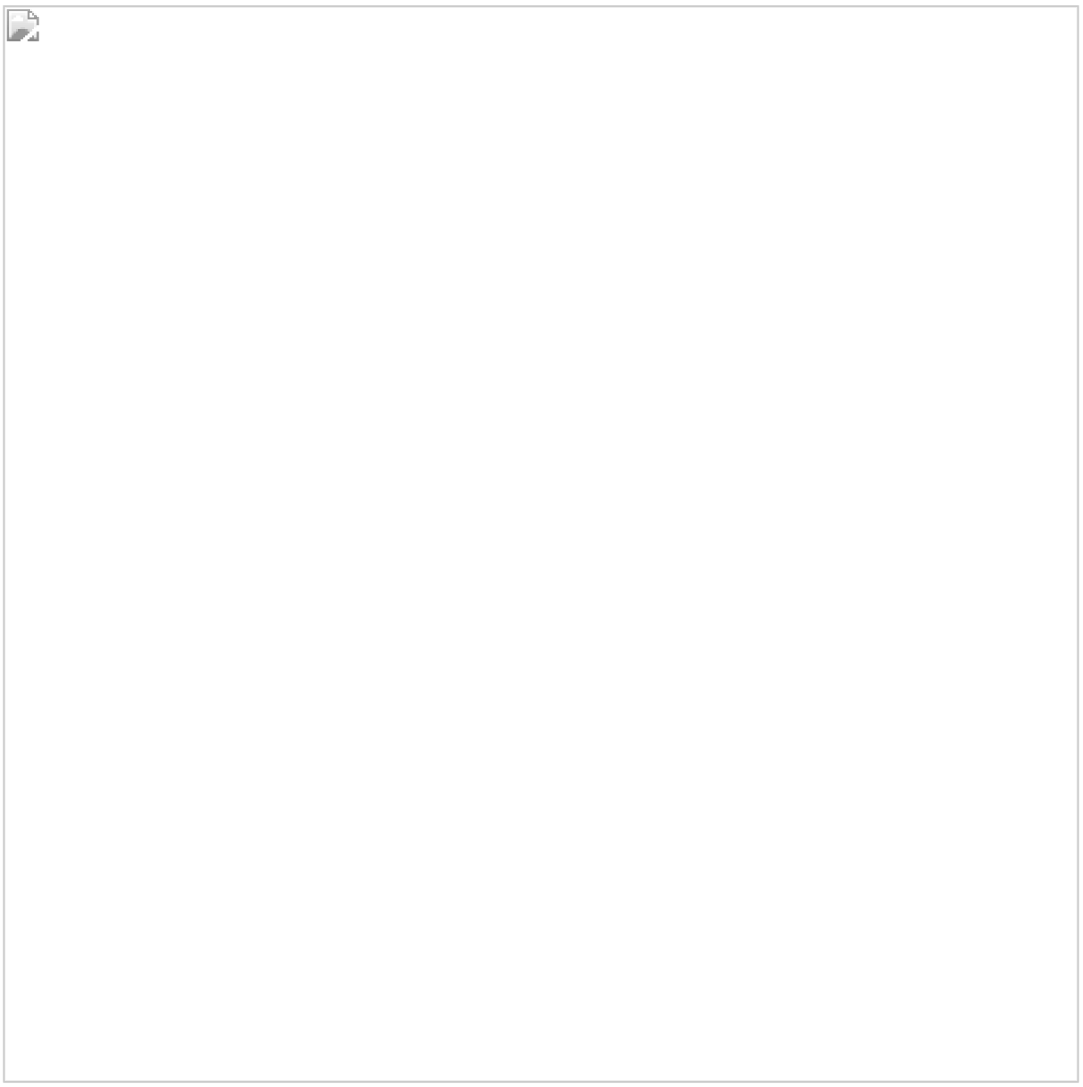
The old man fetched his spade and dug, and came upon a heap of old and valuable gold coins. He never saw the cross face of his neighbor peering through the bamboo hedge.

Shiro sat by with pride, as if to say, “You see, though only a dog, I can make some return for all the kindness you show me.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Shiro wanted to give something back. Who has been kind to you? What could you give back?

Shiro Digs · another picture

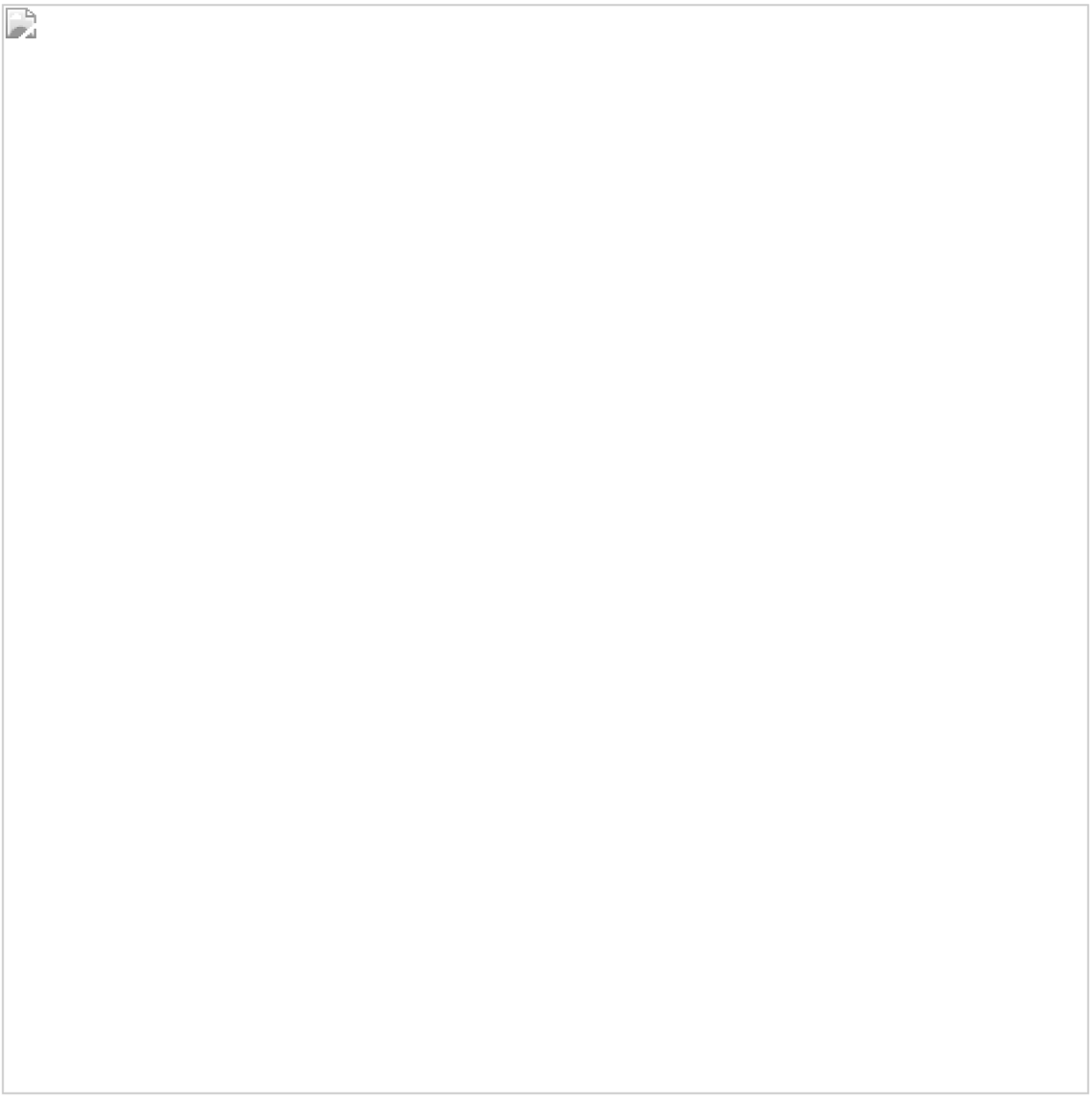


Think about it

1. What did Shiro help the old man find?

- ○ A heap of gold coins
- ○ A lost kimono
- ○ A buried bone

The Neighbor Borrows Shiro



The cross neighbor had watched. A few days later he came and very politely asked to borrow Shiro for a short time.

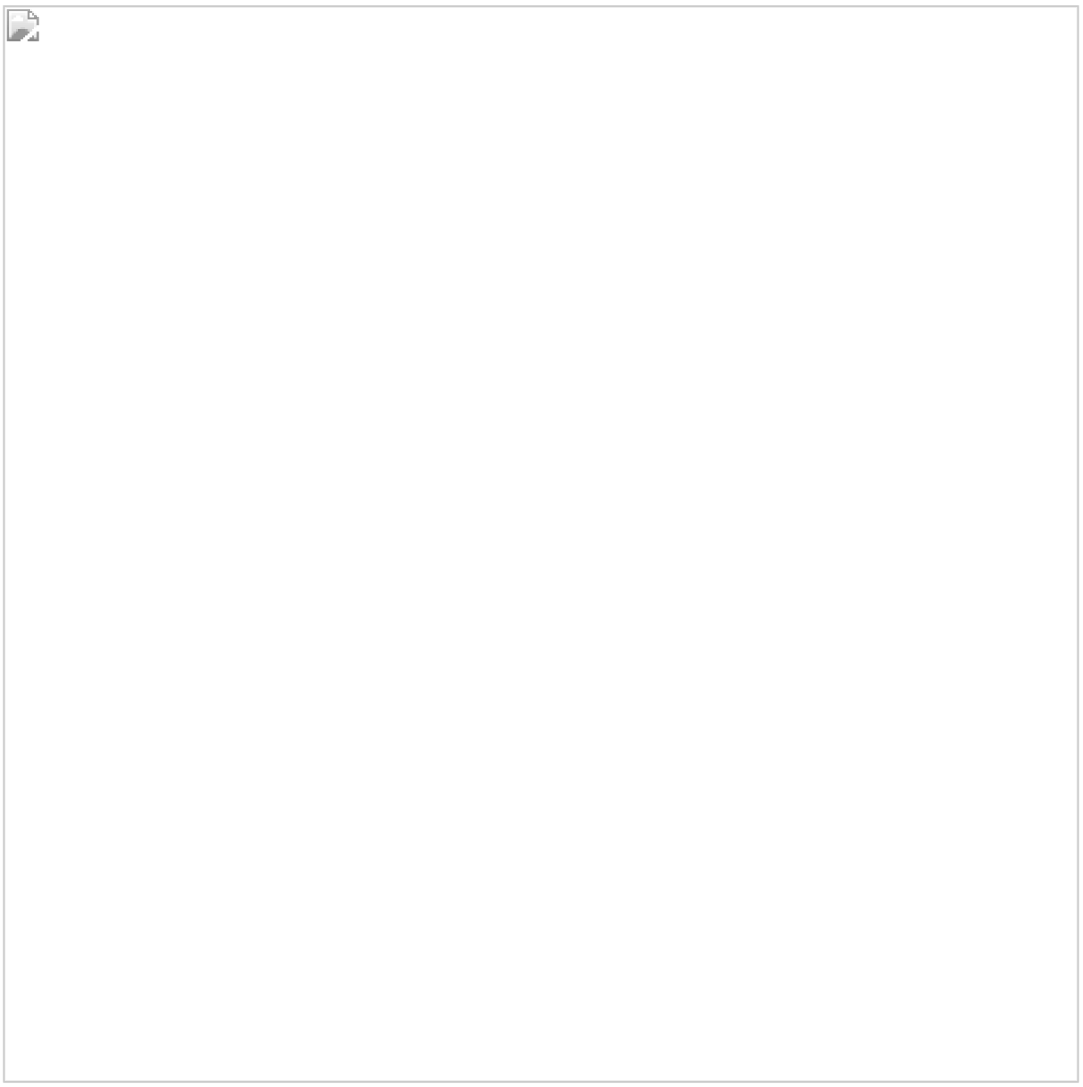
Shiro's master thought this strange, since the neighbor never lost a chance to hurt the dog. But he was too kind-hearted to refuse. He lent Shiro on condition that he should be taken great care of.

The neighbor took Shiro to his own field, held the dog's head to the ground, and said, "You must find them for me! Where are they? Where?" Shiro began to dig to free himself. But the old man found only a refuse heap, with a foul smell.

TALK ABOUT IT

The good old man said yes, though he did not want to. Was that a good idea? What would you have done?

The Neighbor Borrows Shiro · another picture



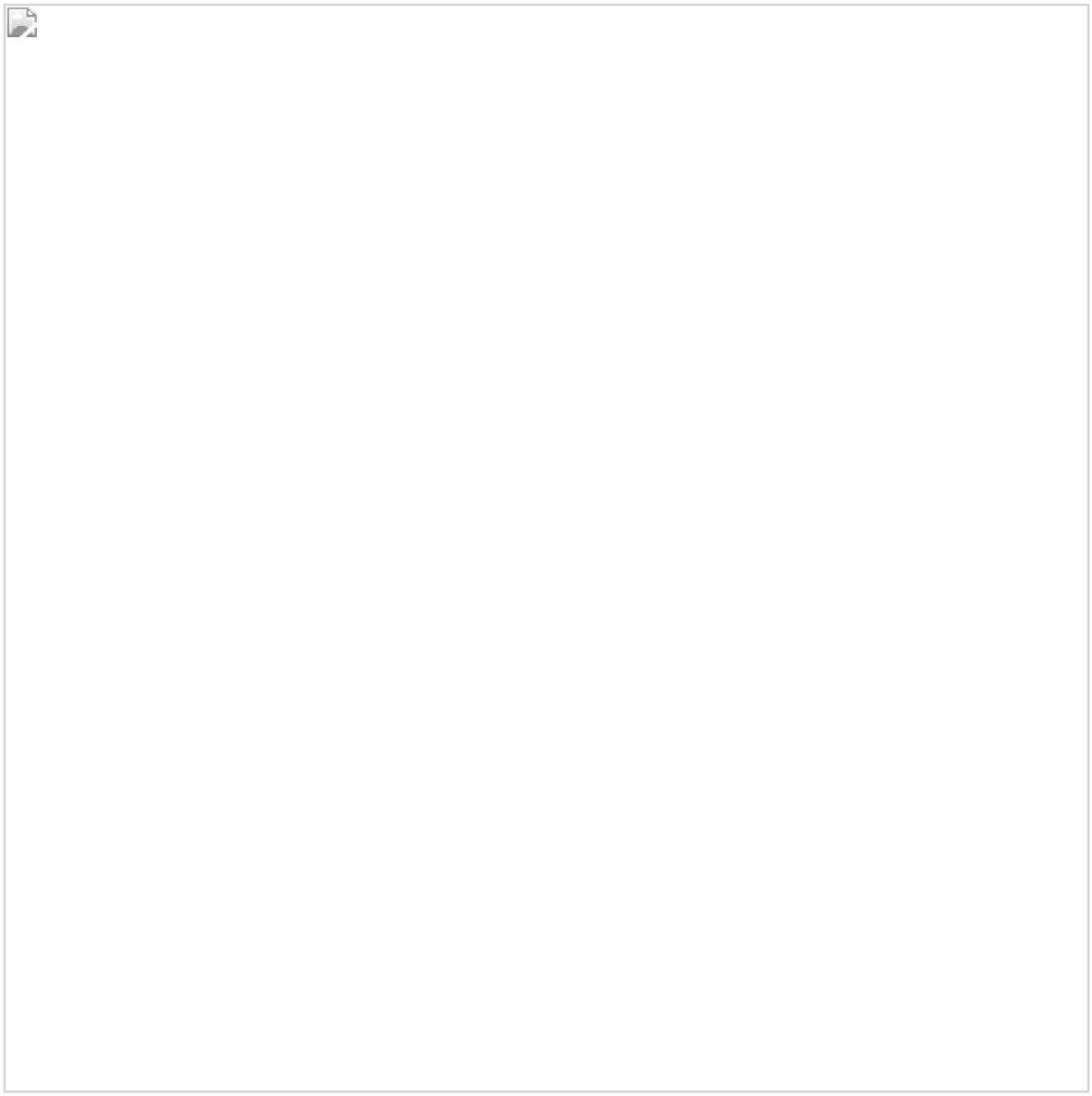
Think about it

1. What did the neighbor find when he dug?

- ○ More gold
- ○ A refuse heap
- ○ Another dog

2. Why do you think the neighbor wanted to borrow Shiro?

Shiro Is Gone



The neighbor blamed the poor dog instead of his own greed. In his anger he struck Shiro with the spade, and Shiro died. He buried him in the hole and told no one.

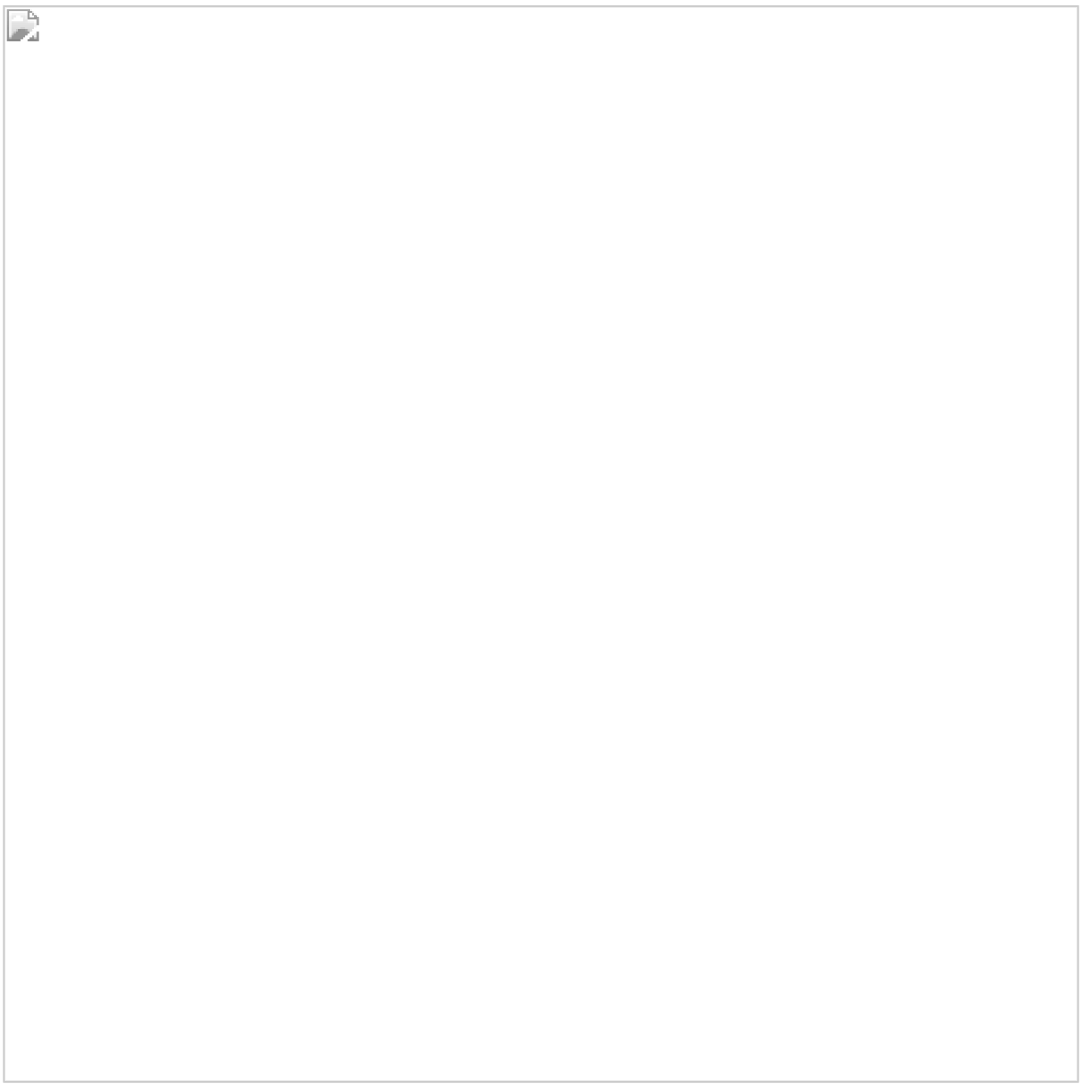
Days went by, and Shiro did not return. His master went to the neighbor to ask for him. Without shame, the wicked neighbor said he had killed Shiro. The good old man wept many bitter tears, but he was too gentle to reproach his neighbor.

He only asked for the tree under which Shiro lay buried, in remembrance of his dog. The neighbor agreed. The old man cut the tree down and carried it home.

TALK ABOUT IT

Shiro's master was very sad. What do you do when you are sad?

Shiro Is Gone · another picture

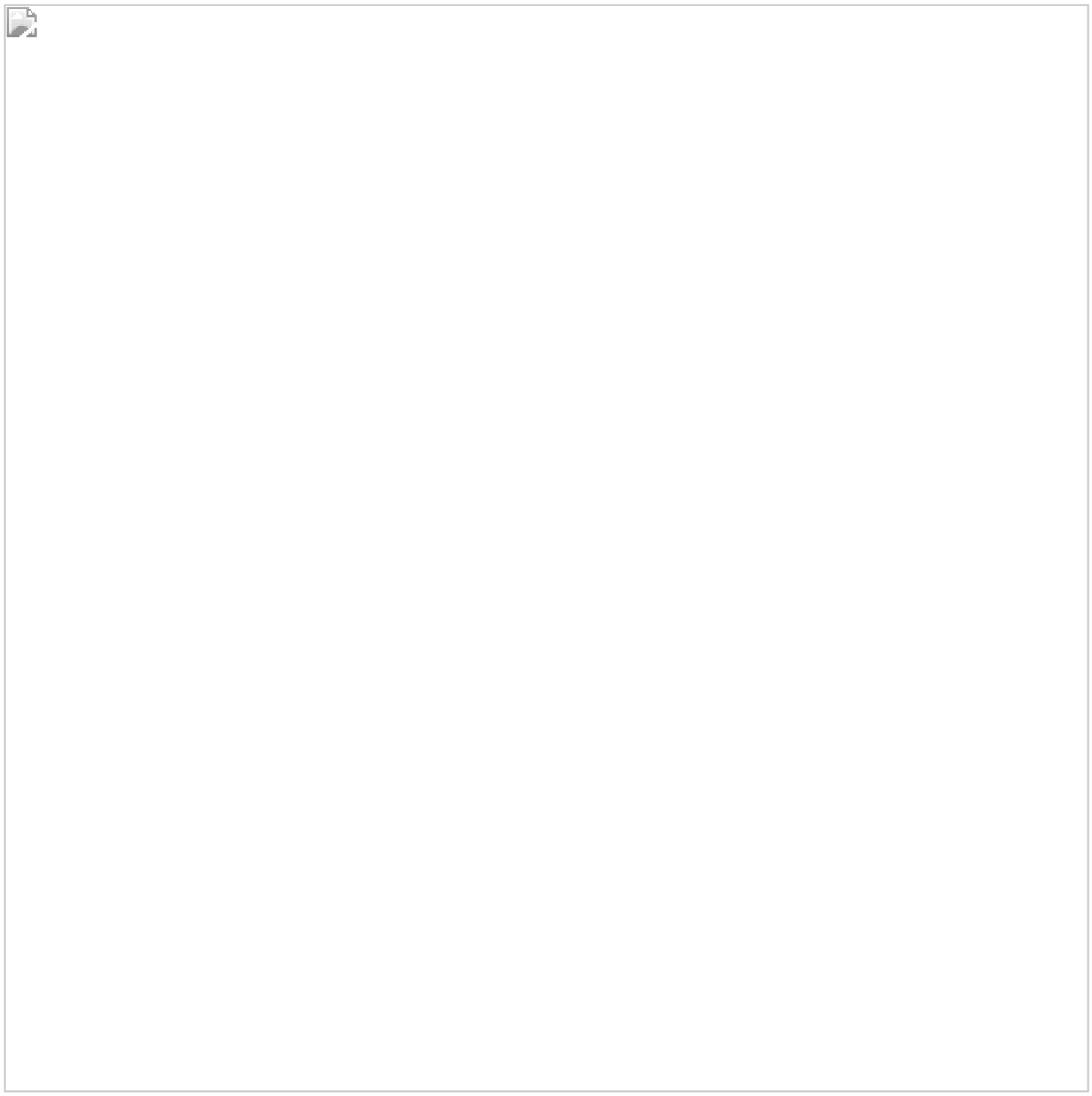


Think about it

1. What did the old man ask for in memory of Shiro?

- ○ The spade
- ○ The tree where Shiro was buried
- ○ The neighbor's field

The Magic Mortar



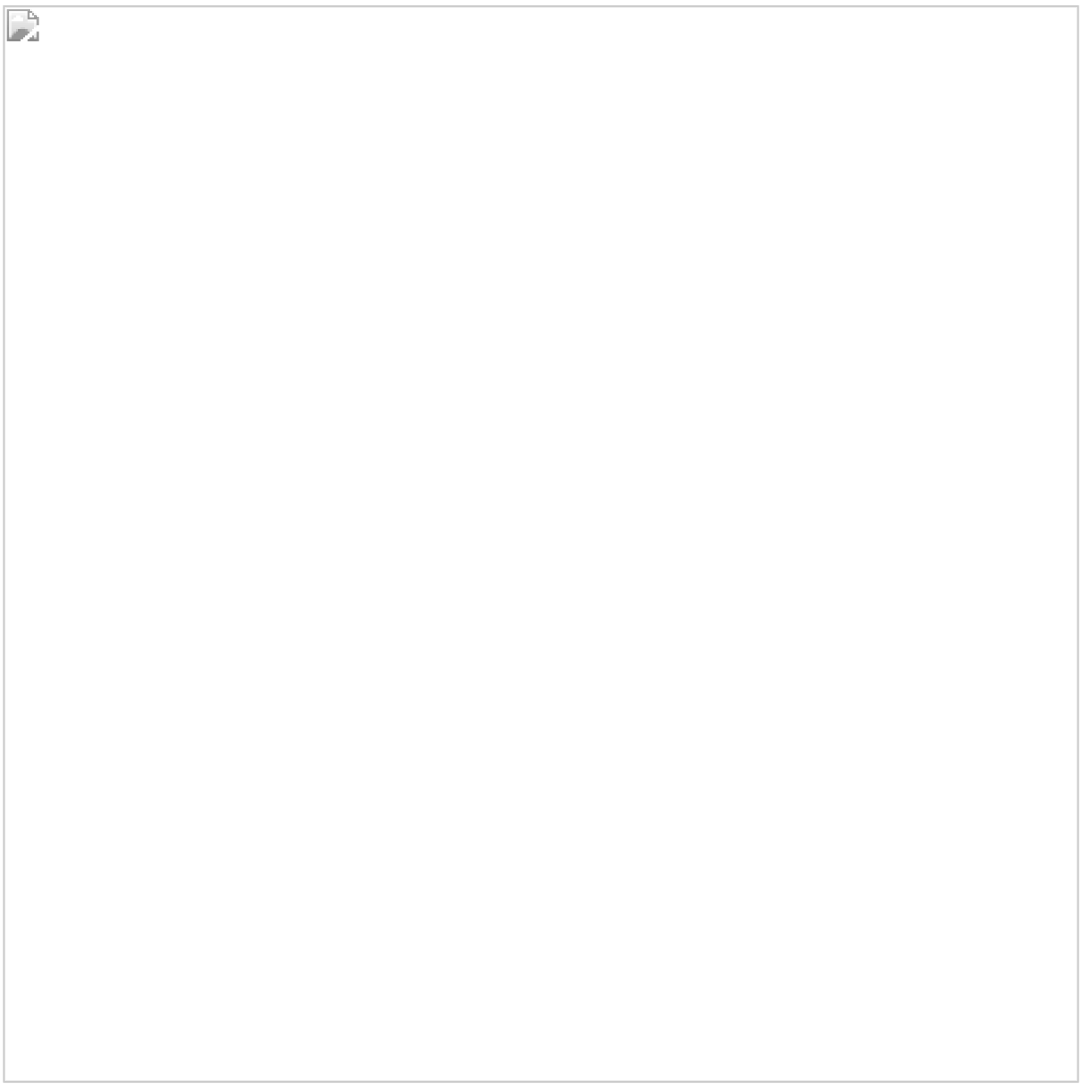
Out of the trunk the old man made a mortar. His wife put in some rice, and he began to pound it to make cakes for a festival in memory of Shiro.

A strange thing happened! The rice began to grow in quantity until it was about five times the original amount. The cakes came out of the mortar as if an invisible hand were at work.

They understood that it was a reward from Shiro for their faithful love. They tasted the cakes and found them nicer than any other food. From then on they never troubled about food.

TALK ABOUT IT

Their love for Shiro came back to them. Can love come back to you? When?

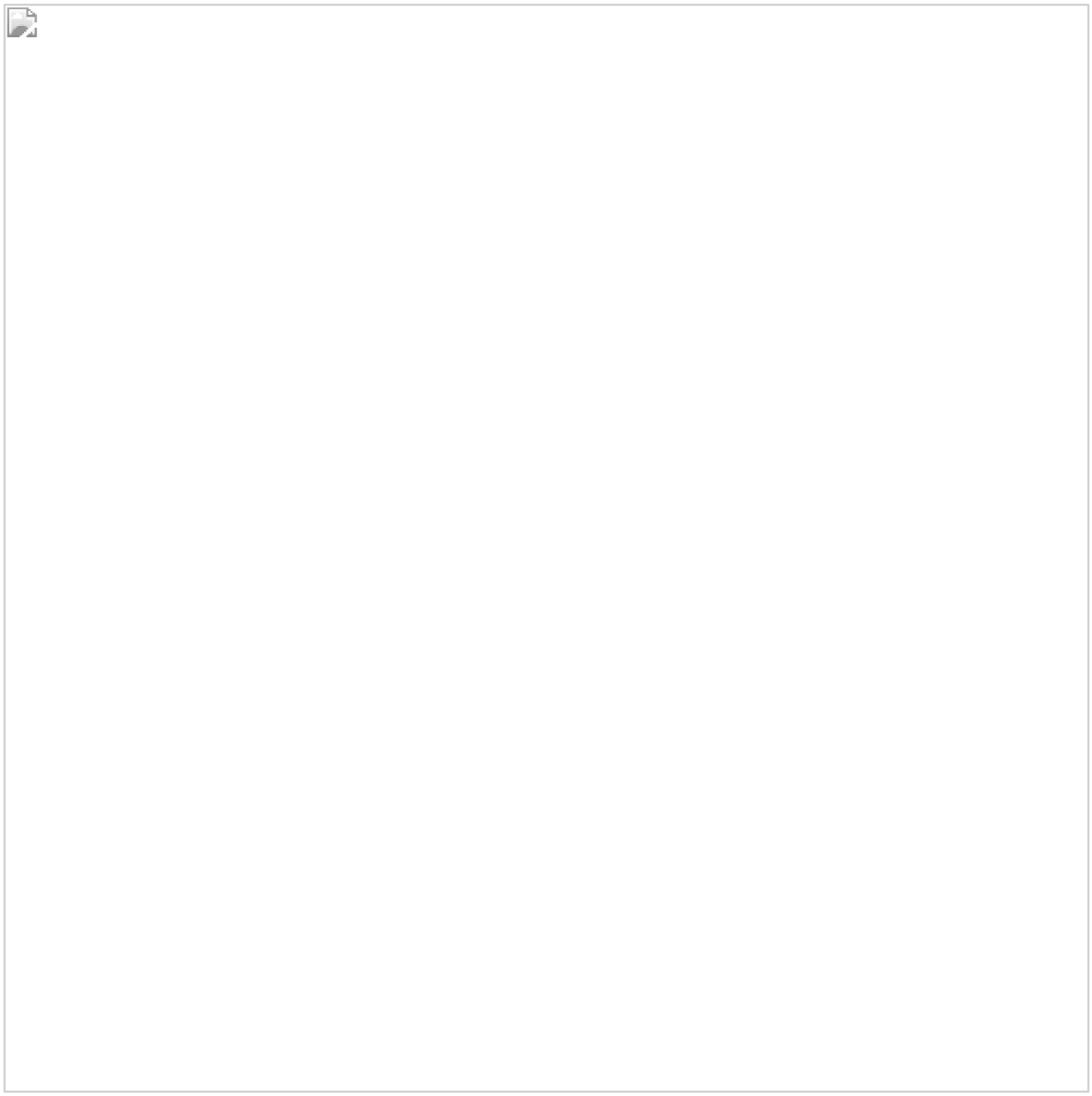


Think about it

1. What did the mortar make?

- ○ Gold coins
- ○ Cakes, more than they put in
- ○ Tea

The Broken Mortar



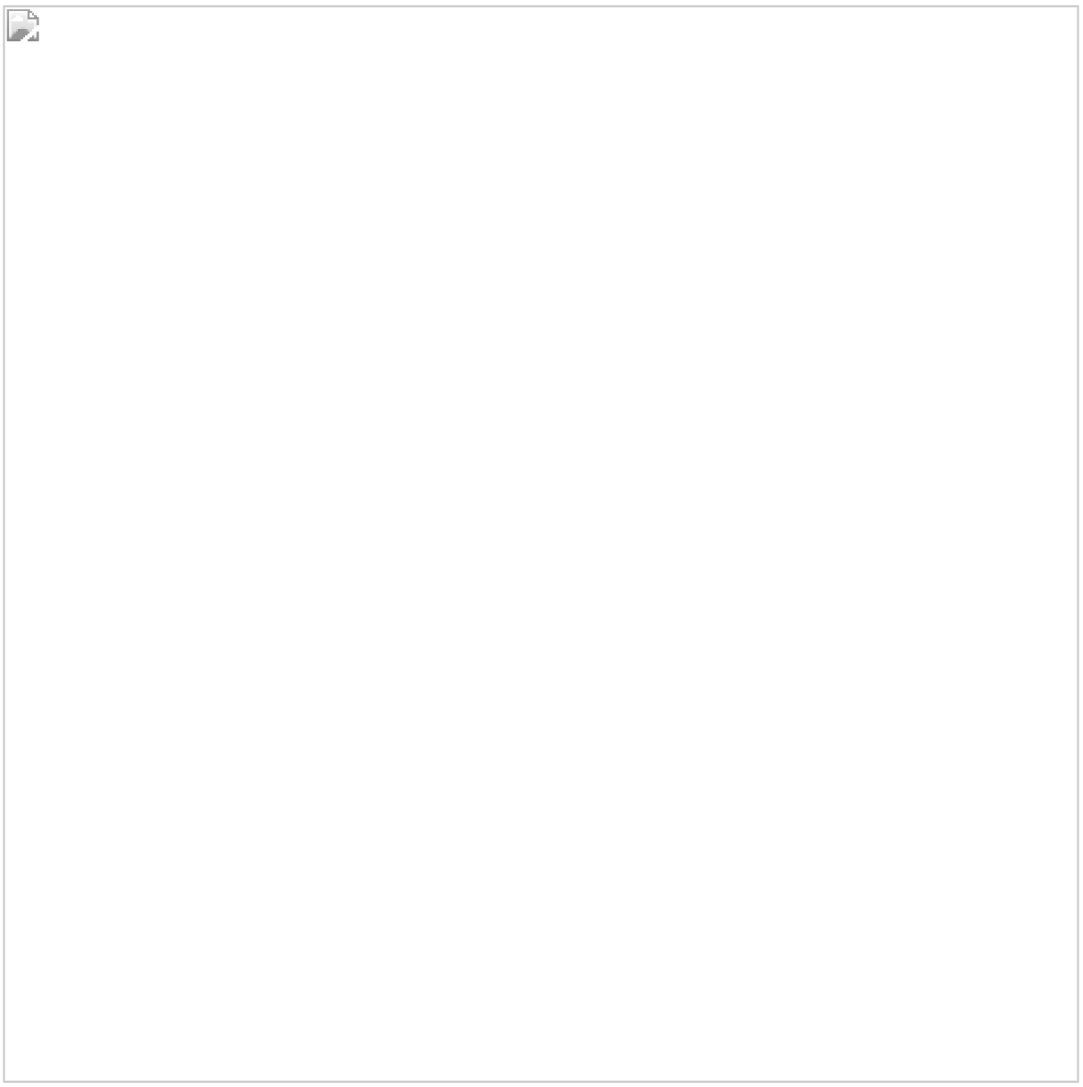
The greedy neighbor asked to borrow the mortar. The old man did not wish to lend it, but was too kind to refuse.

When the old man went for it, the neighbor was sitting by a fire. “I broke it to pieces,” he said, “and now I am making a fire of the wood.” Only horrid stuff had come out for him.

The good old man said, “It is a great pity you did not ask me for the cakes if you wanted them. I would have given you as many as ever you wanted.” Then he carried home a basket of the ashes, to remember his dog.

TALK ABOUT IT

The old man would have shared the cakes. Why do you think the neighbor did not ask?

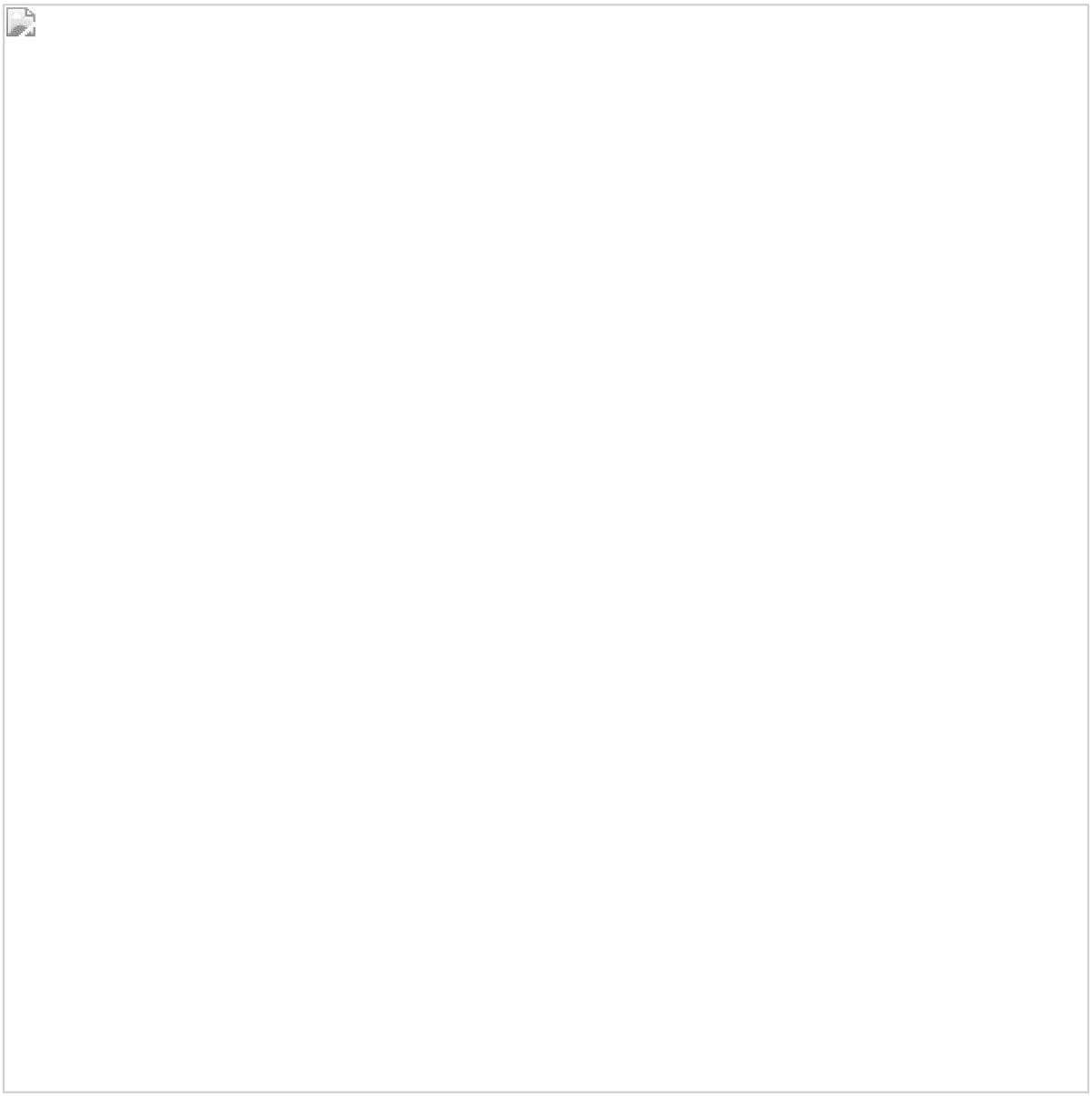


Think about it

1. What did the old man take home from the fire?

- ○ A basket of ashes
- ○ A new mortar
- ○ More rice

The Ashes Bloom

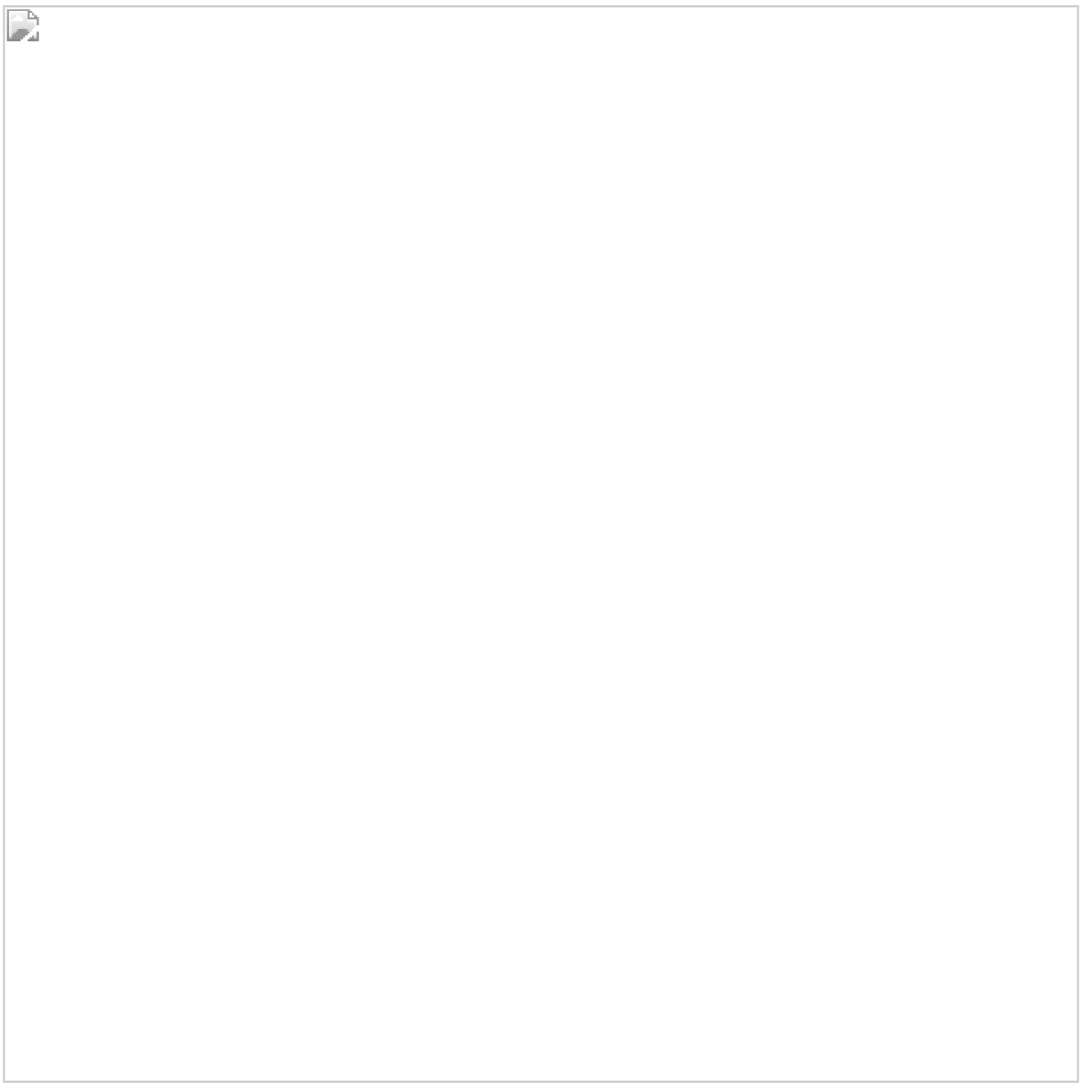


Not long after, the old man scattered some of the ashes on the trees in his garden. It was late in autumn, and all the trees had shed their leaves. But no sooner did the ashes touch the branches than the cherry trees, the plum trees and all the other blossoming shrubs burst into bloom.

The garden was suddenly a beautiful picture of spring. The old man was delighted, and he kept the remaining ashes carefully. The story spread far and wide, and people came from far and near to see the wonderful sight.

TALK ABOUT IT

It was autumn, and the old man's garden turned to spring. What would you ask for in a garden like that?

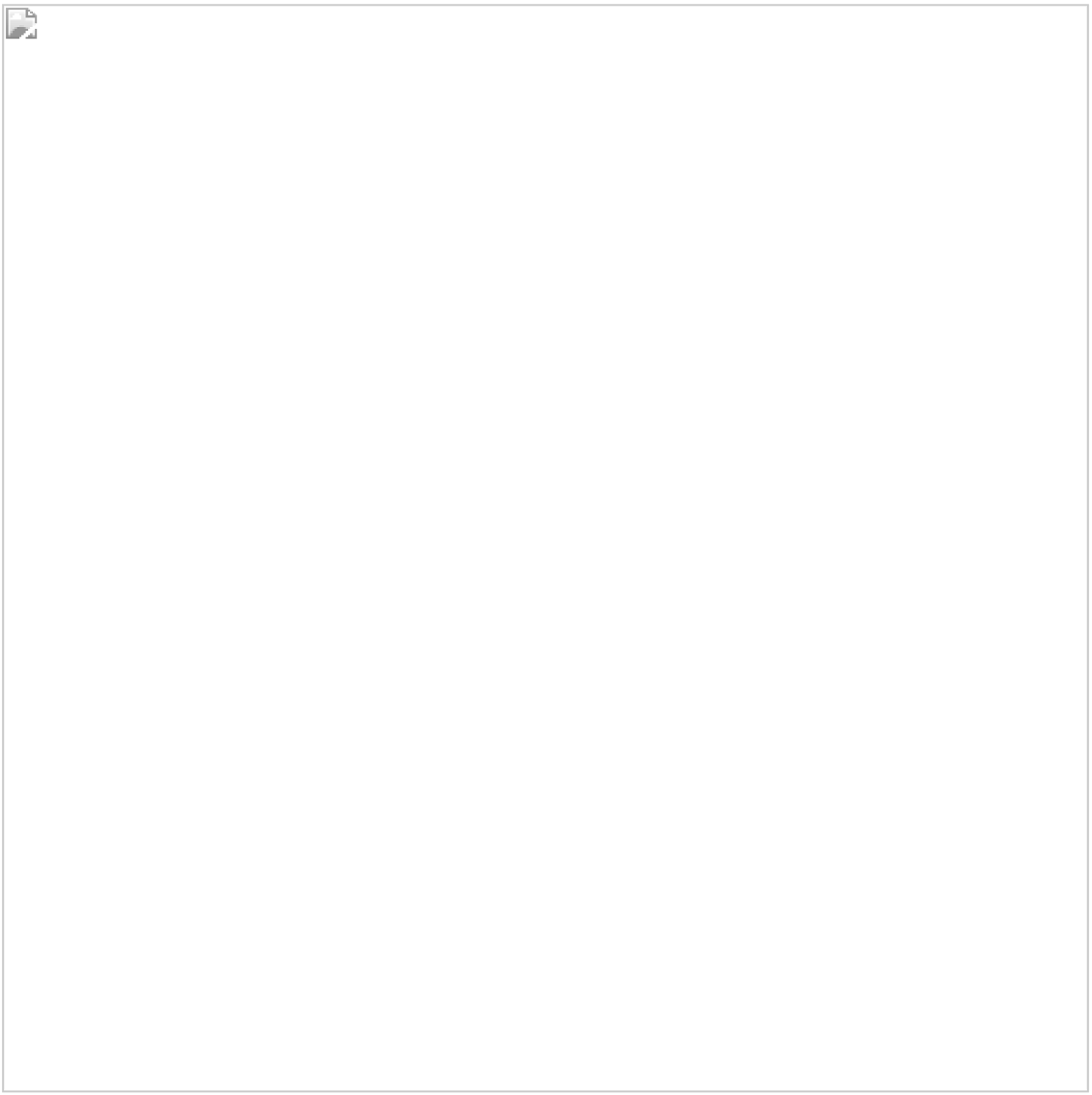


Think about it

1. What season was it when the trees burst into bloom?

- ○ Early spring
- ○ Late autumn
- ○ Midsummer

The Daimio's Cherry Tree



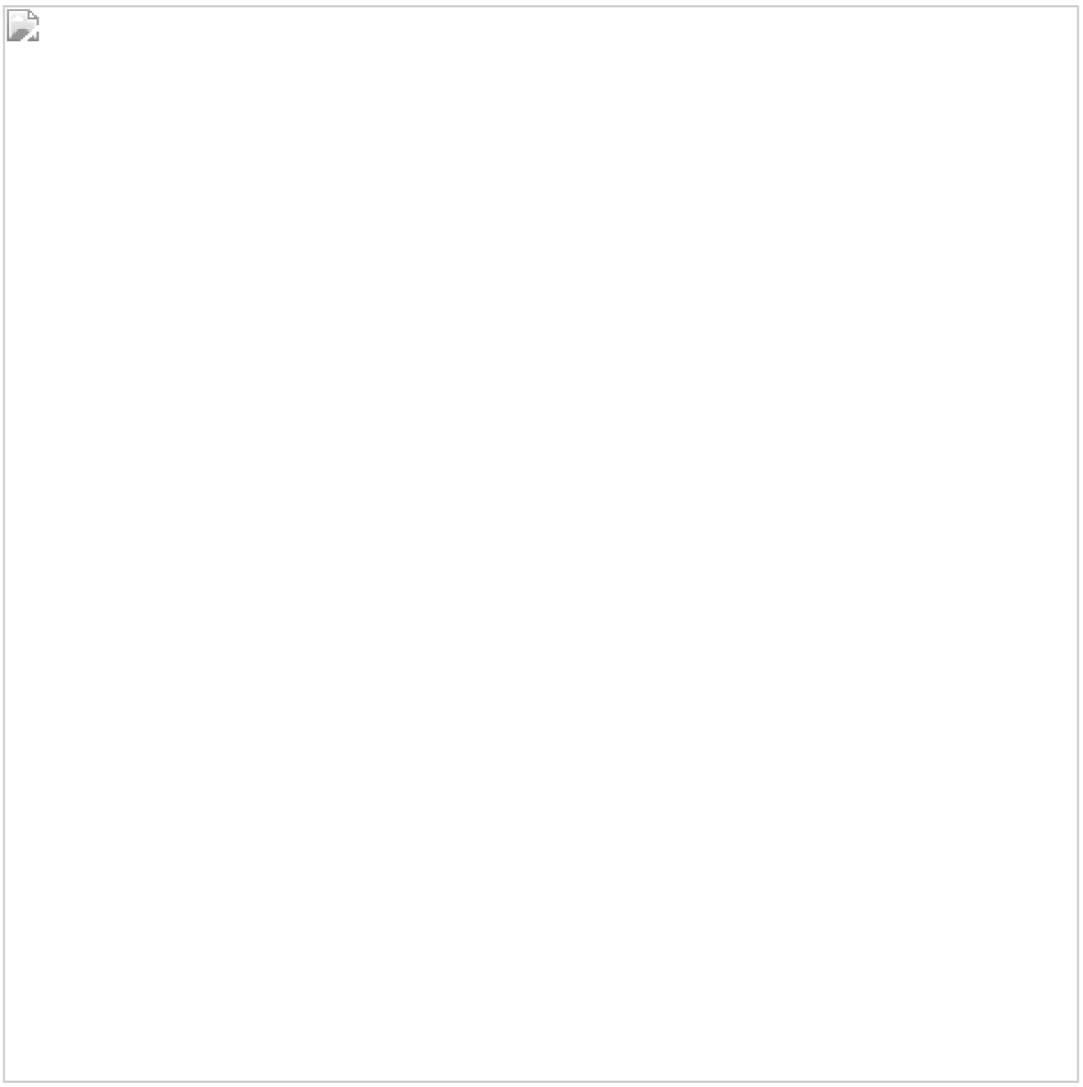
One day a Knight came from a great Daimio, a lord whose favorite cherry tree had withered. Nothing anyone tried had worked, so the Knight asked the old man to come at once.

The Daimio asked, “Are you the old man who can make withered trees flower even out of season?” “I am that old man!” the old man replied.

The old man climbed the tree and scattered the ashes right and left. The withered tree at once burst into full bloom! The Daimio rewarded him with much silver and gold, and ordered that he should henceforth be called Hana-Saka-Jijii, “The Old Man who makes the Trees to Blossom.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The Daimio gave the old man a new name. What name would you give him? Why?

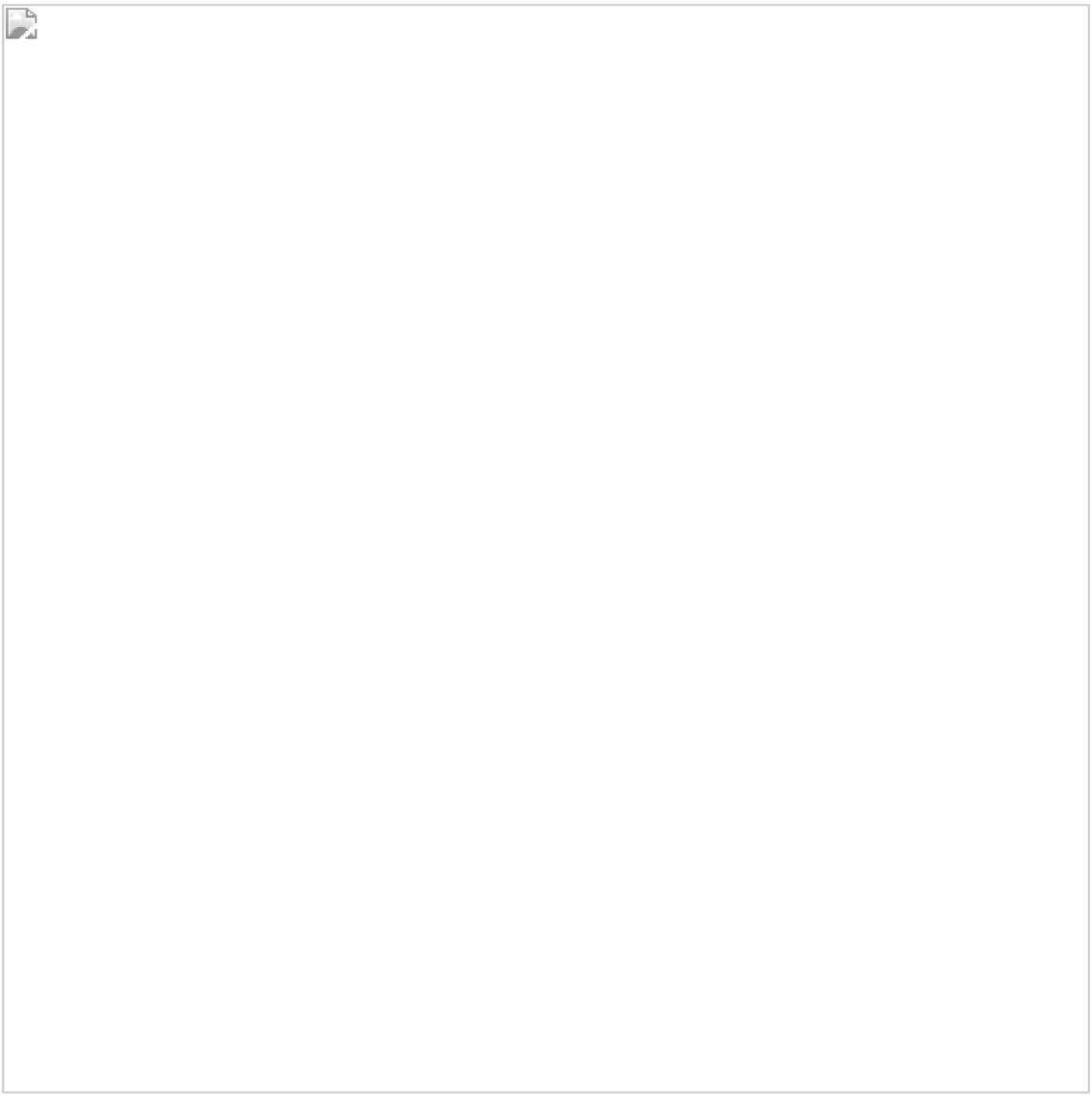


Think about it

1. What did the Daimio call the old man?

- ○ Shiro
- ○ Hana-Saka-Jijii
- ○ Yenoki

The Neighbor's Turn



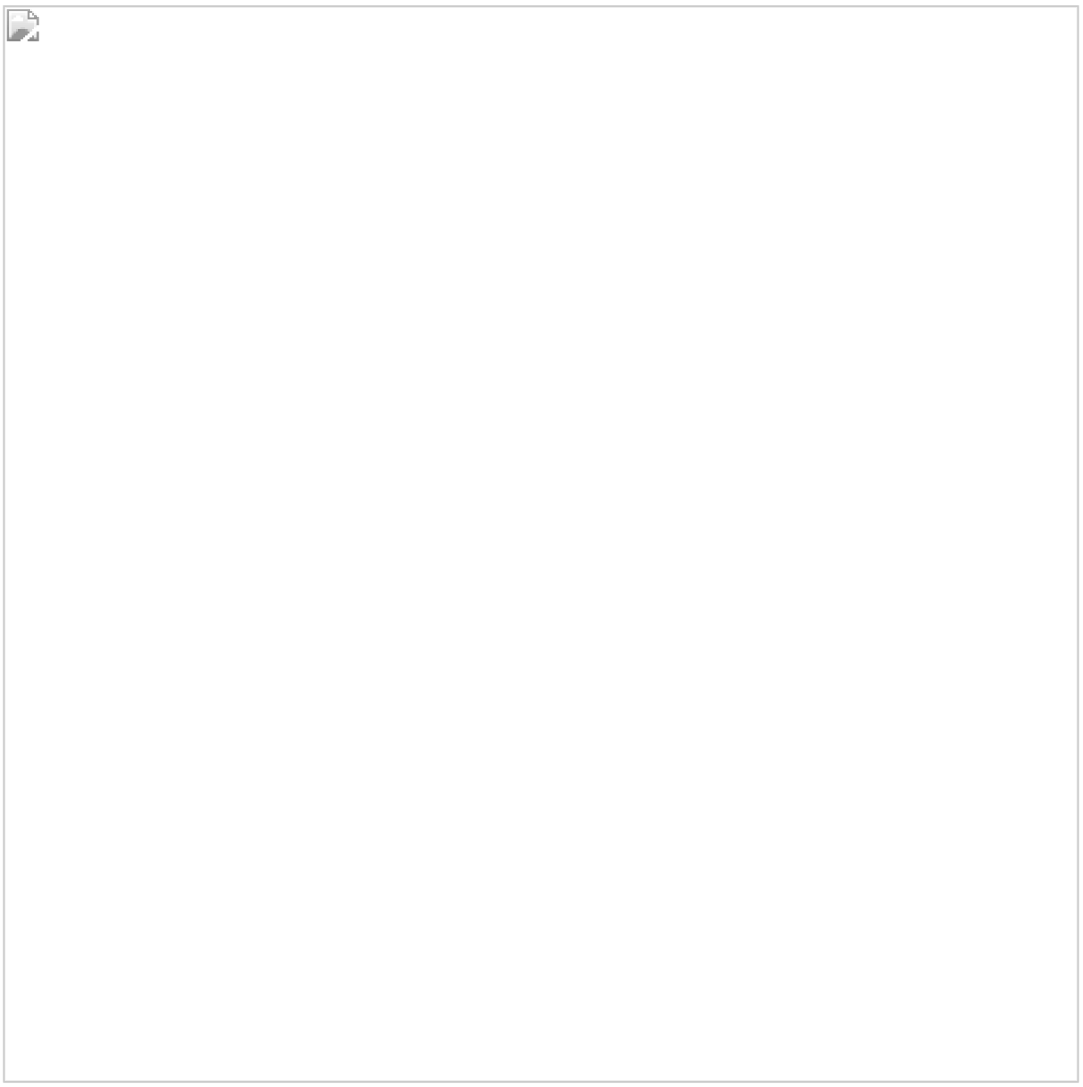
The neighbor heard of all this and was filled with envy. This time, he thought, he would surely succeed. He gathered up the ashes left over from the mortar he had burned. He set out calling, “Here comes the wonderful man who can make withered trees blossom!”

The Daimio heard and said, “That must be the Hana-Saka-Jijii passing.” His servants brought the neighbor in. But the Daimio thought the man did not look like the old man he had seen before.

“Are you the man whom I named Hana-Saka-Jijii?” he asked. The neighbor answered with a lie: “Yes, my Lord!” He said the other man was only his disciple.

TALK ABOUT IT

The neighbor told a lie. Why do you think he did?

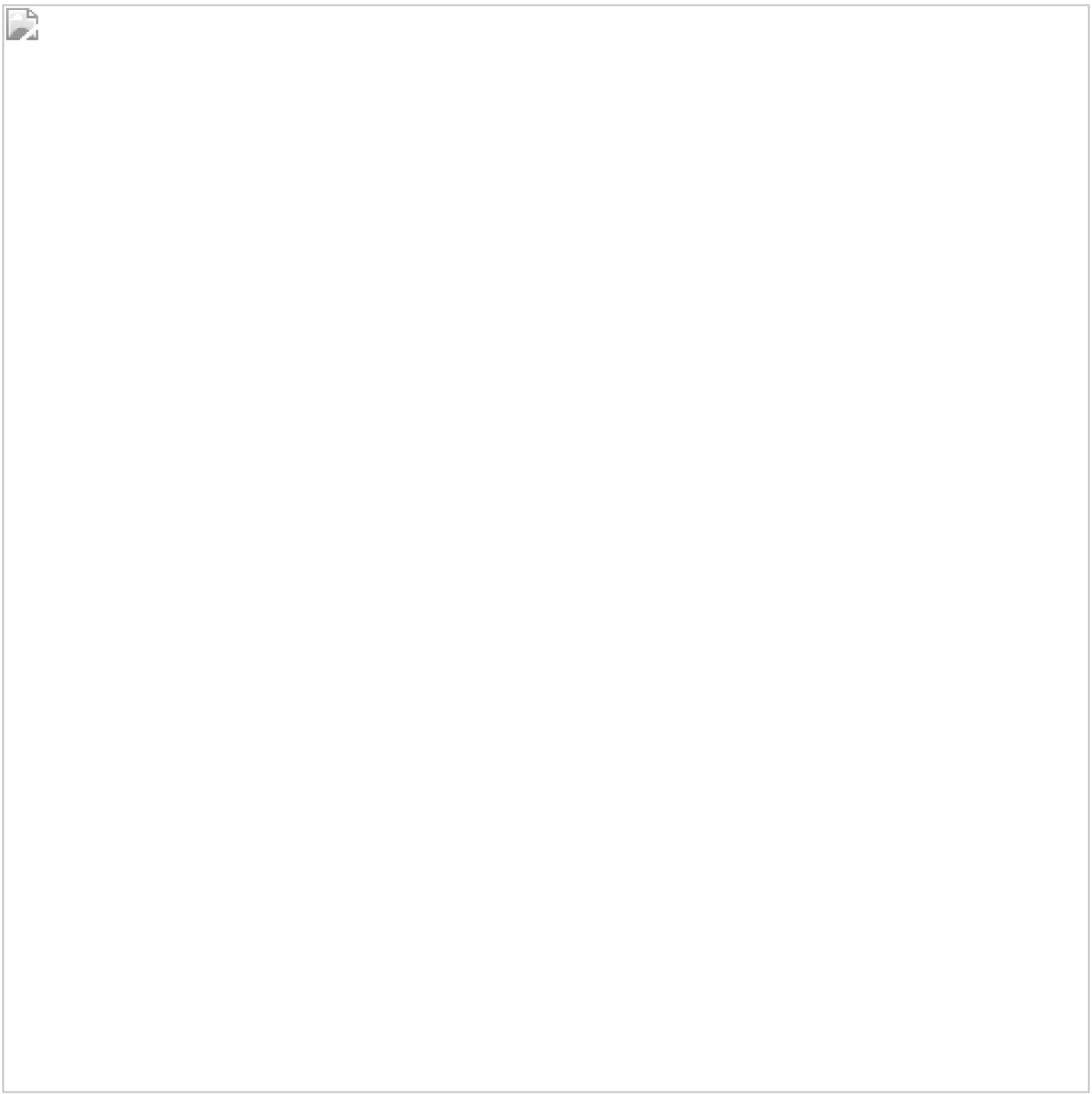


Think about it

1. What did the Daimio notice about the neighbor?

- ○ He looked different from the old man he had seen
- ○ He was wearing a crown
- ○ He had a dog

No Blossoms



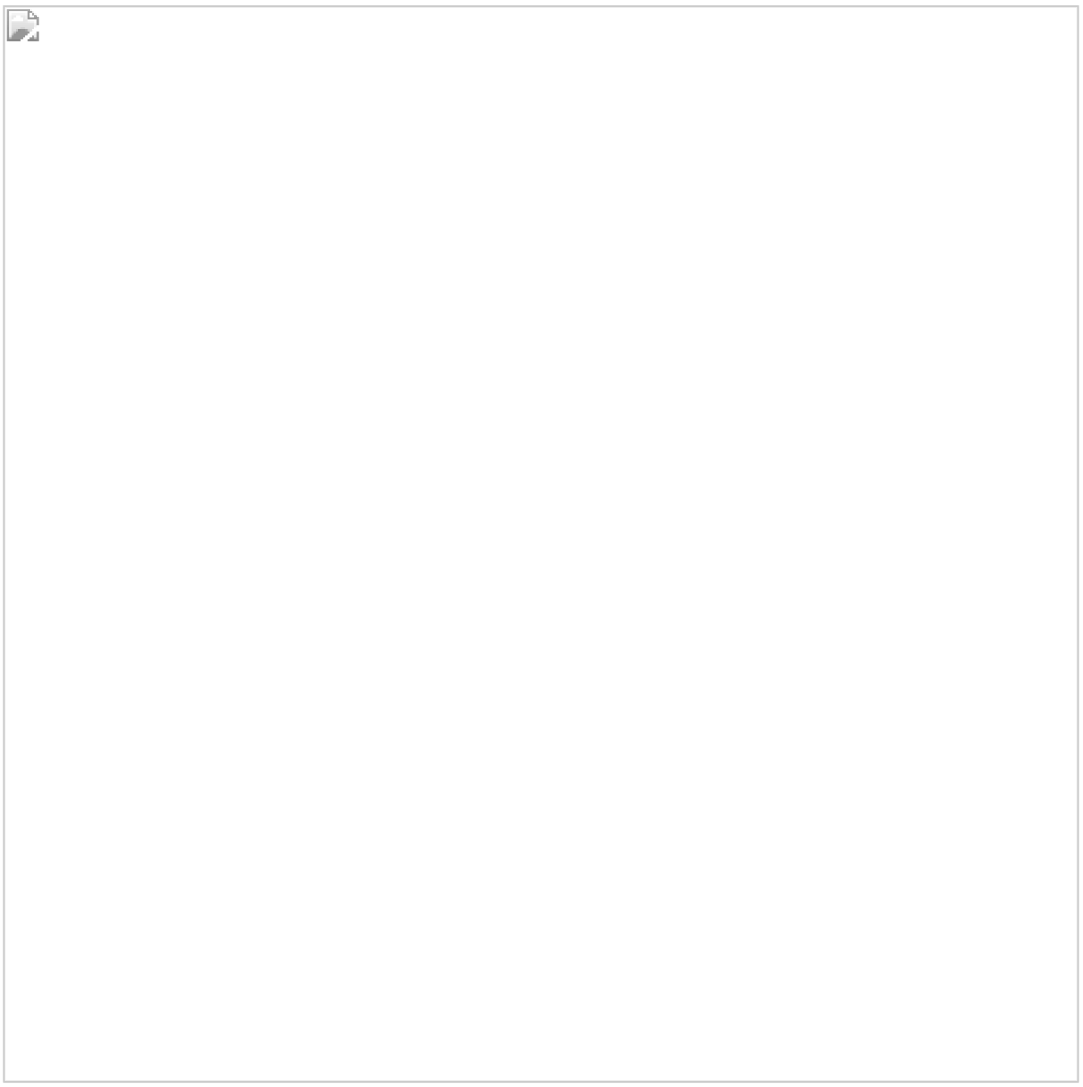
In the garden the neighbor scattered the ashes over a dead tree, but not even a bud came forth. He tried again and again, until at last the ashes blew into the Daimio's eyes.

The Daimio was very angry and ordered his retainers to arrest the false Hana-Saka-Jijii and put him in prison for an impostor. He was never freed from that prison.

The good old man, with the gold coins Shiro had found and all the silver and gold the Daimio had given him, became rich in his old age. He lived a long and happy life, beloved and respected by all.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think of how the story ended for the neighbor? Was it fair? What would you have done?



Think about it

1. What happened to the neighbor in the end?

- ○ He became rich
- ○ He was put in prison as an impostor
- ○ He moved away

2. How did the old man treat Shiro, and how did the neighbor treat him?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

Free to read, color, and print in the Book Library

Made with love by Love is a Habit