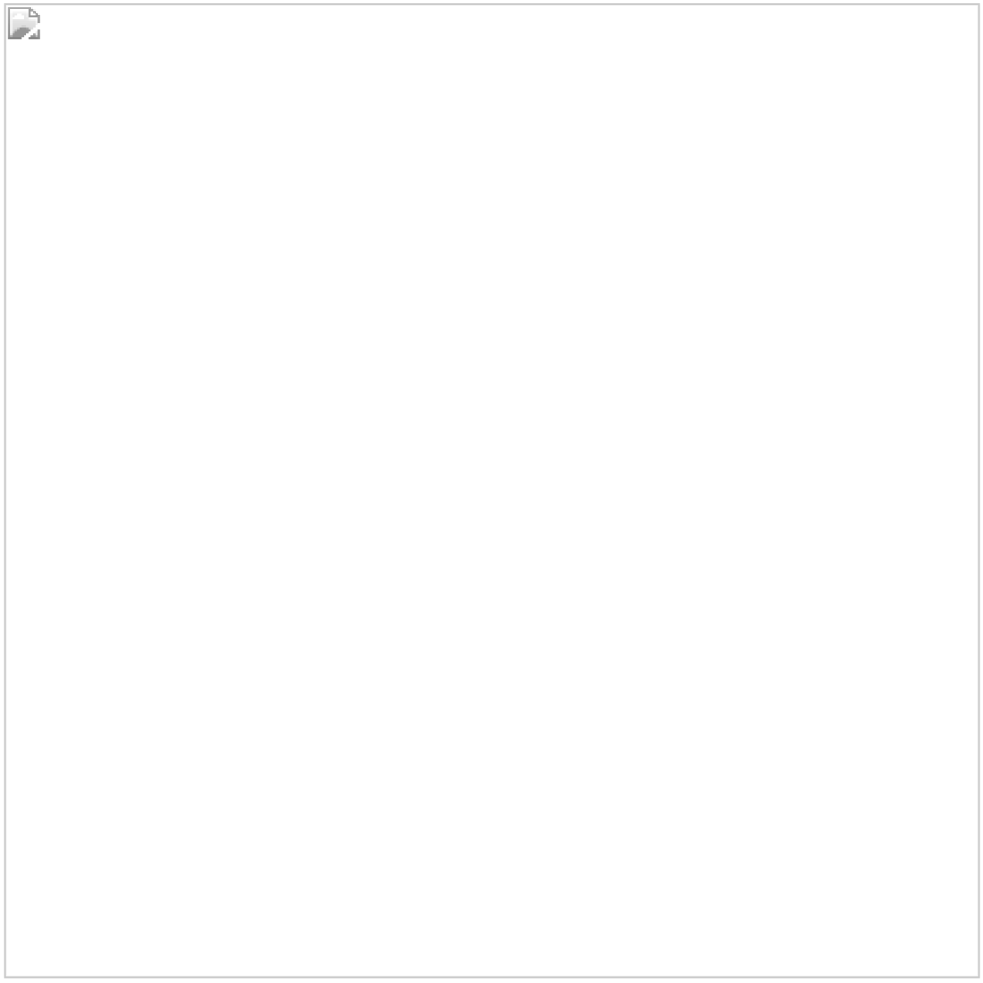
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The White Hare and the Crocodiles

A Tale from Japan



Long, long ago, when all the animals could talk, a little white hare lived on the island of Oki, in the province of Inaba in Japan. Just across the sea was the mainland of Inaba.

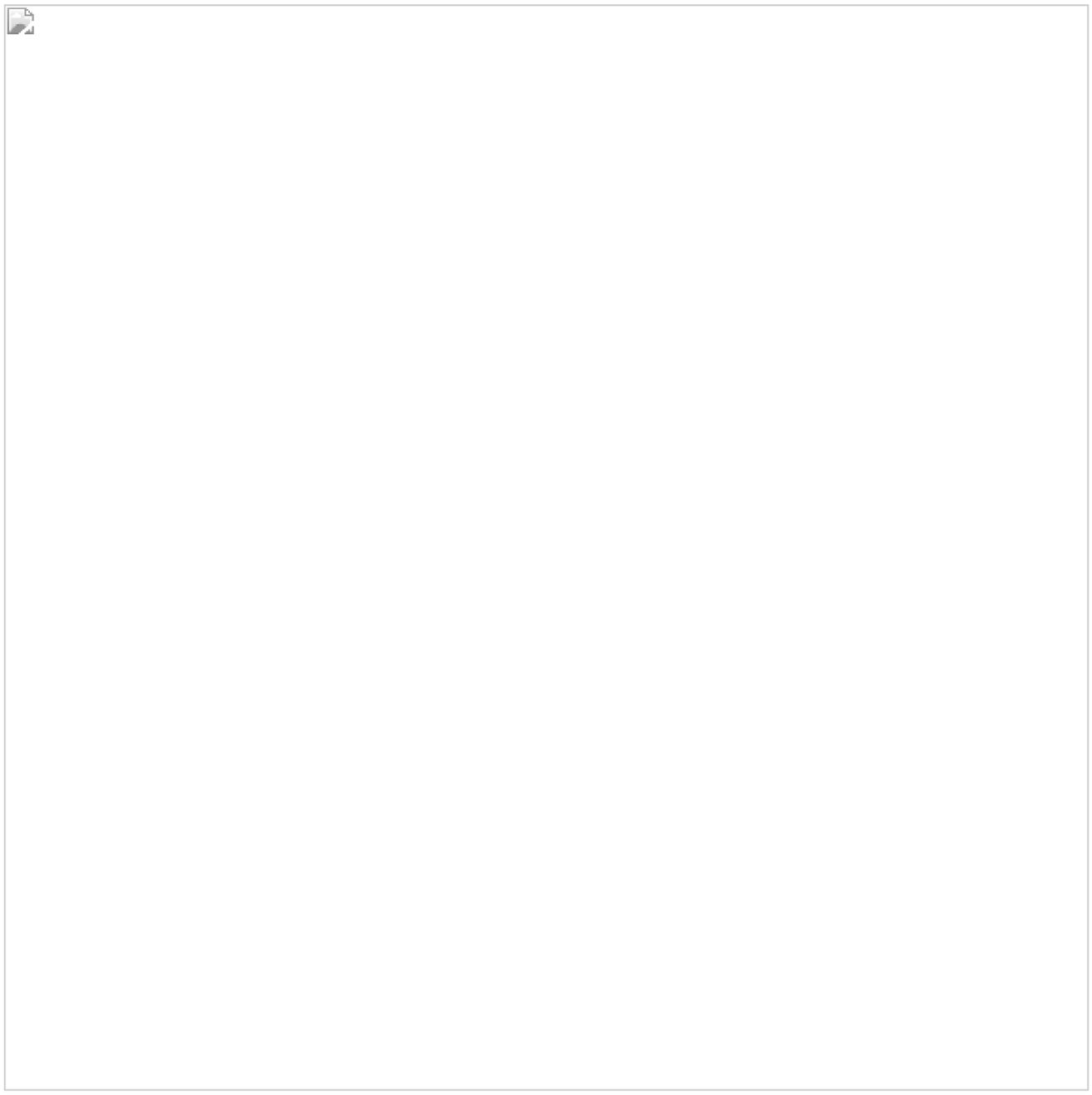
The hare wanted very much to cross over. Day after day he sat on the shore and looked longingly over the water.

TALK ABOUT IT

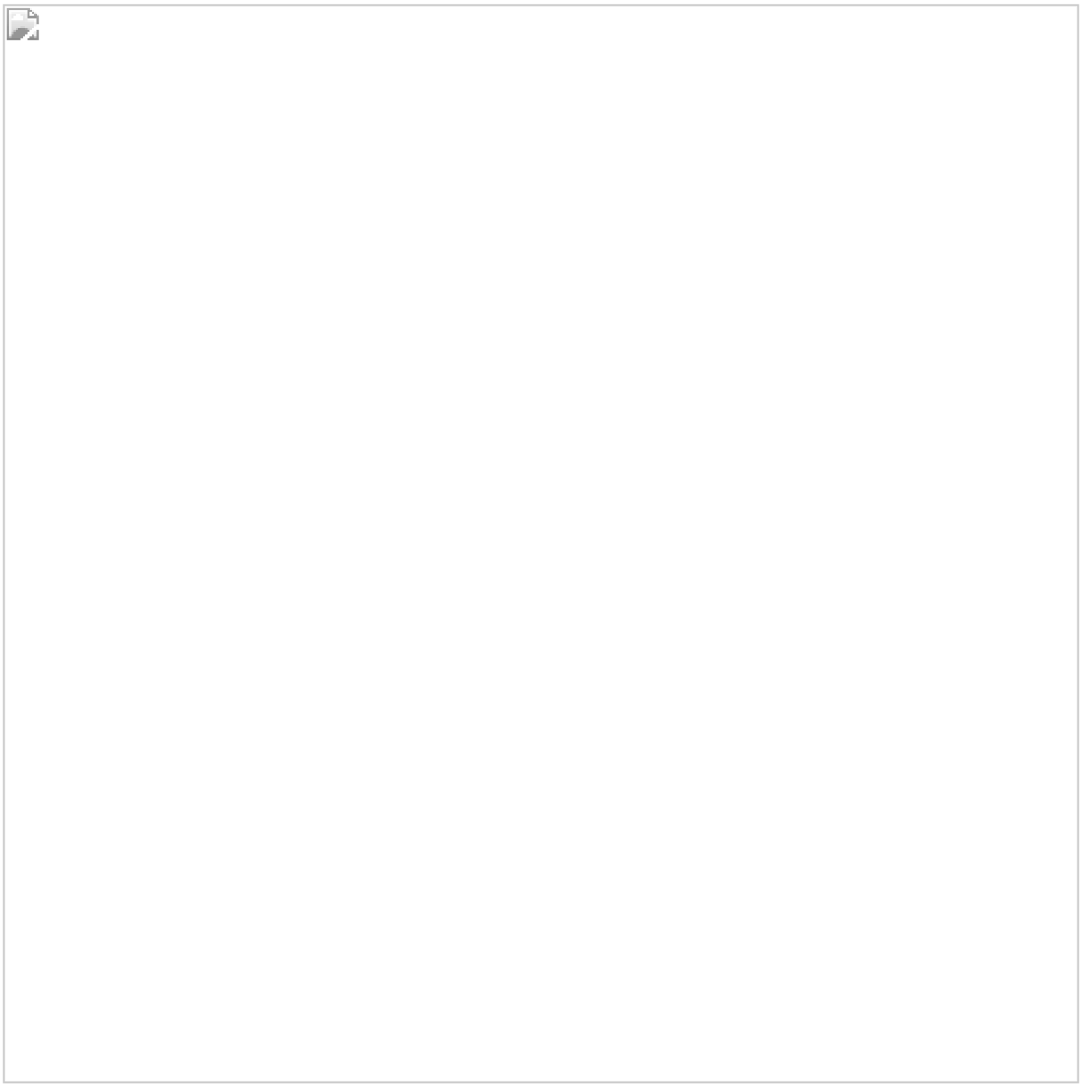
The hare sat and wished every day. Is there a place you wish you could go?

This book belongs to _____

The White Hare and the Crocodiles · another picture



A Great Crocodile



One day he saw a great crocodile swimming near the island. “This is very lucky!” thought the hare. But he doubted the crocodile would carry him across if he asked, so he decided to get what he wanted by a trick.

“Oh, Mr. Crocodile, isn’t it a lovely day?” he called.

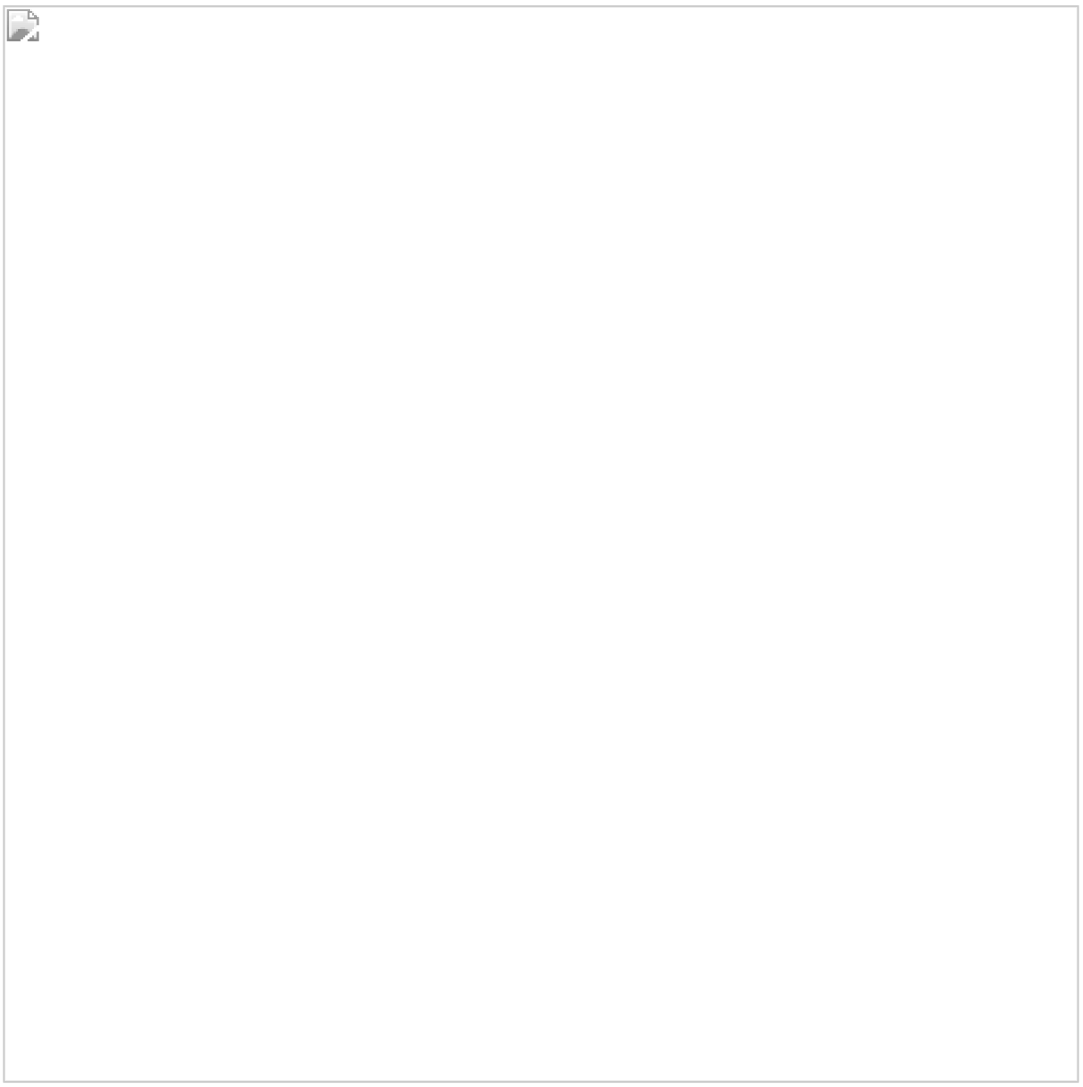
The crocodile had come out all by itself and was beginning to feel lonely. He swam nearer, pleased to hear someone speak. “You must be very lonely all by yourself!” he said.

“Oh, no, I am not at all lonely,” said the hare. “Won’t you stop and play with me a little while?”

TALK ABOUT IT

The crocodile was lonely, and the hare said he was not. Why do you think people sometimes say that?

A Great Crocodile · another picture

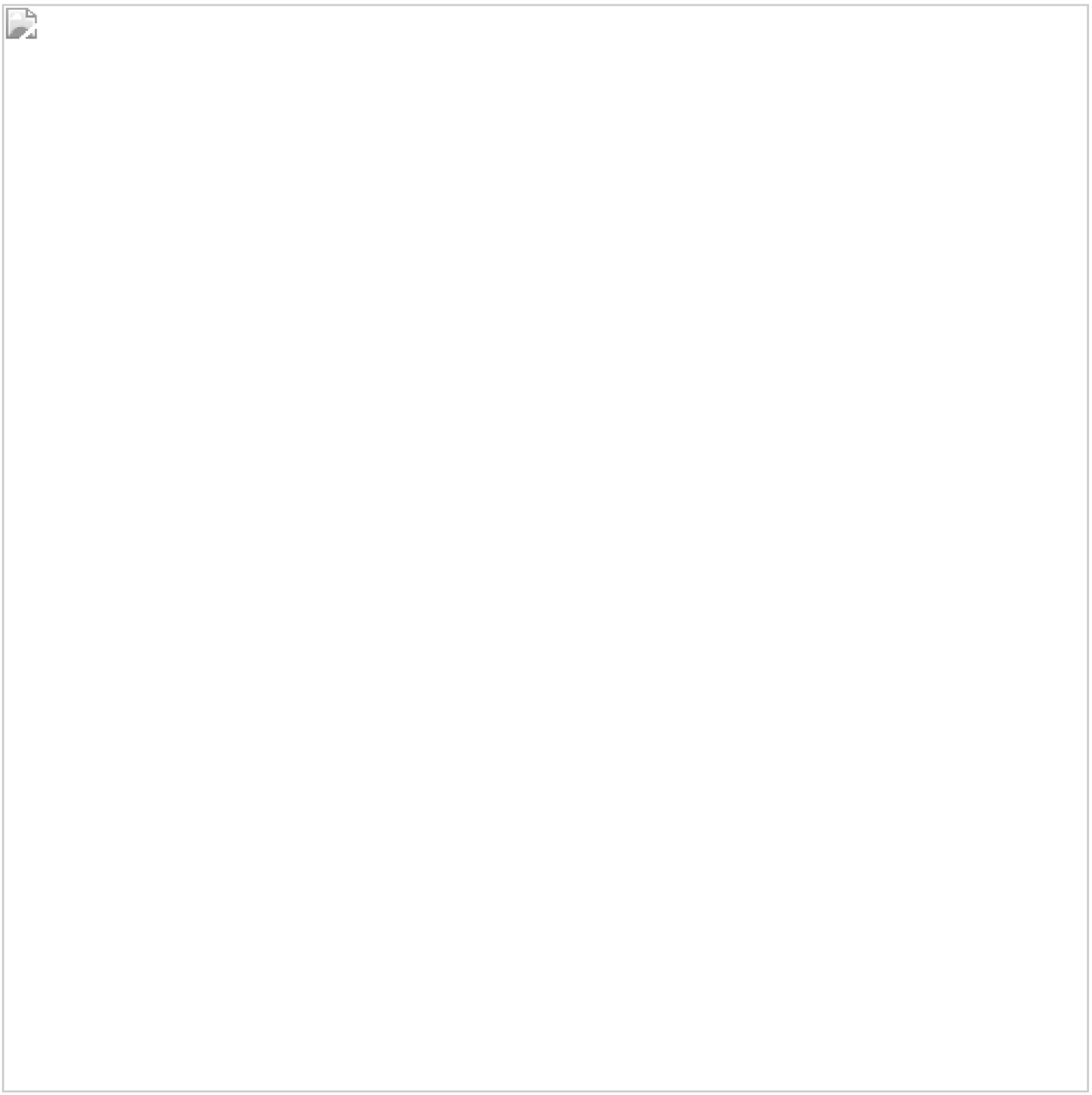


Think about it

1. How did the hare plan to get across the sea?

- ○ By asking the crocodile politely
- ○ By a trick
- ○ By building a boat

Counting the Crocodiles



The crocodile came out of the sea, and the two played together for some time. Then the hare asked, “Do you think the number of your company is greater than mine?”

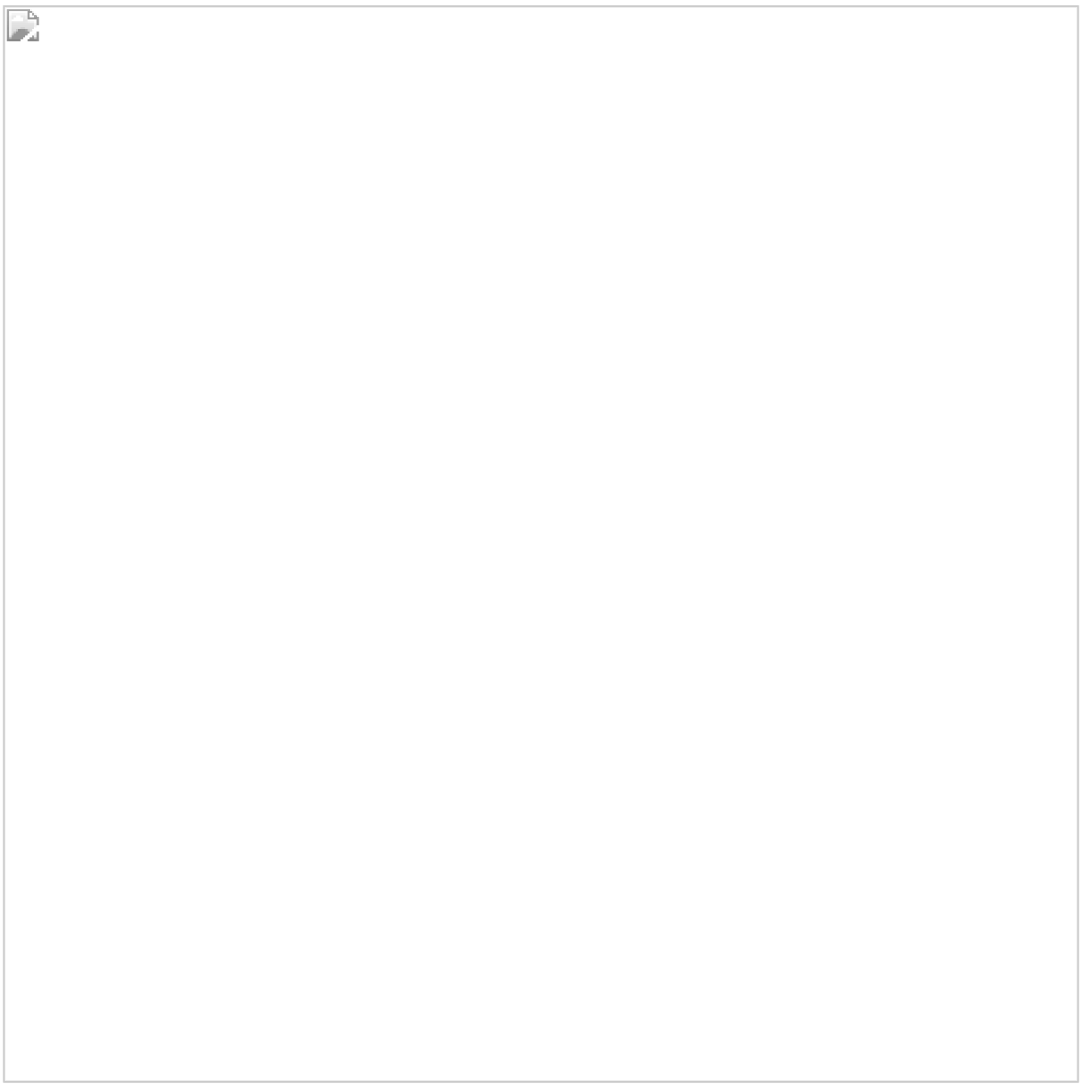
“Of course, there are more crocodiles than hares,” said the crocodile, who was very conceited. “If I call together all the crocodiles who dwell in the sea you hares will be as nothing compared to us!”

“Do you think it possible for you to call up enough crocodiles to form a line from this island across the sea to Inaba?” asked the hare. “Then do try,” said the artful hare, “and I will count the number from here!”

TALK ABOUT IT

The crocodile liked to boast. Do you know someone who likes to boast? What is that like?

Counting the Crocodiles · another picture

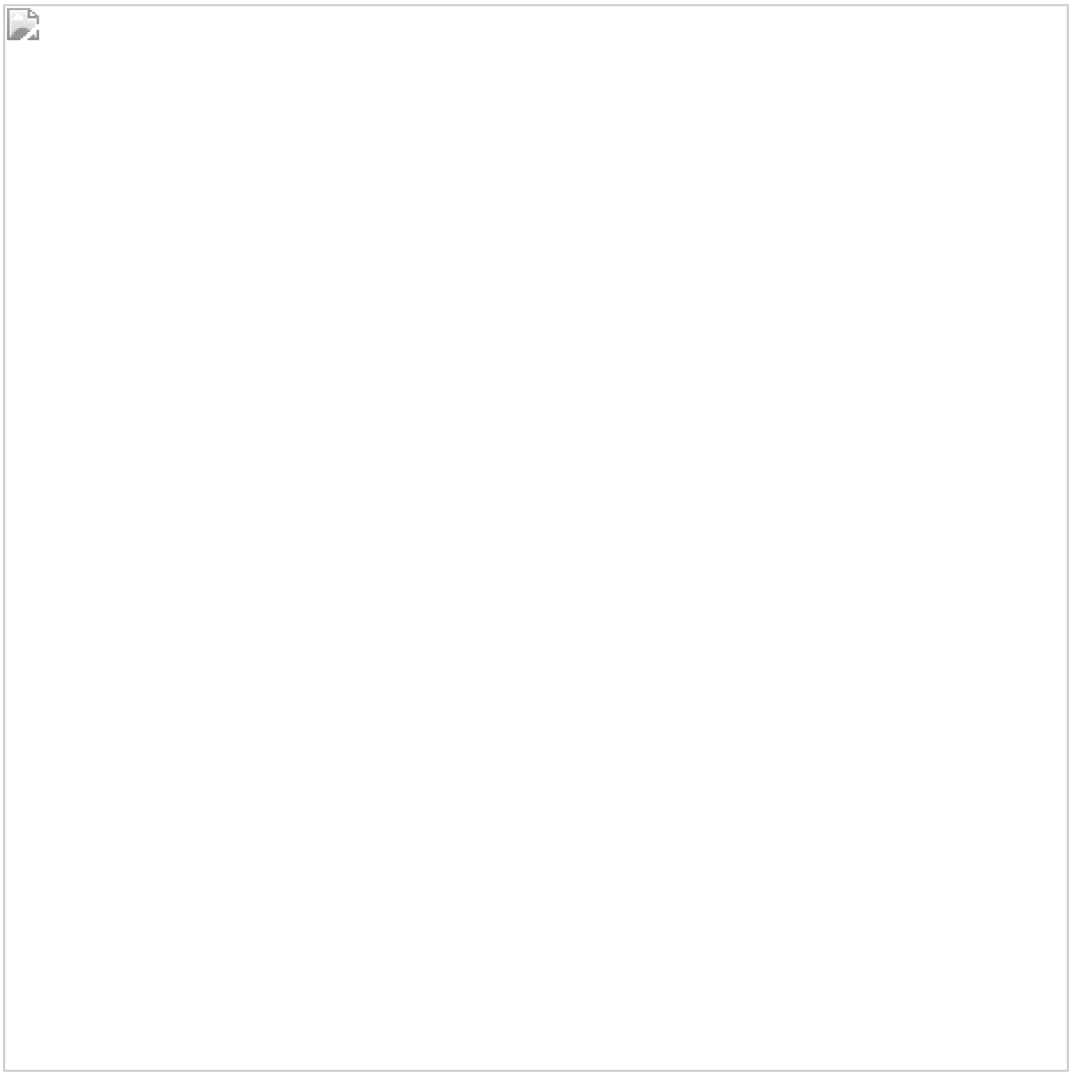


Think about it

1. What did the hare ask the crocodiles to do?

- ○ Make a line across the sea
- ○ Race him to the shore
- ○ Bring him fish

The Bridge of Crocodiles



The crocodile went into the sea and was gone some time. At last he came back with a great many other crocodiles. “Did you ever see so many crocodiles?” he said.

They lay in a line in the water, making a bridge from the island of Oki to the mainland of Inaba.

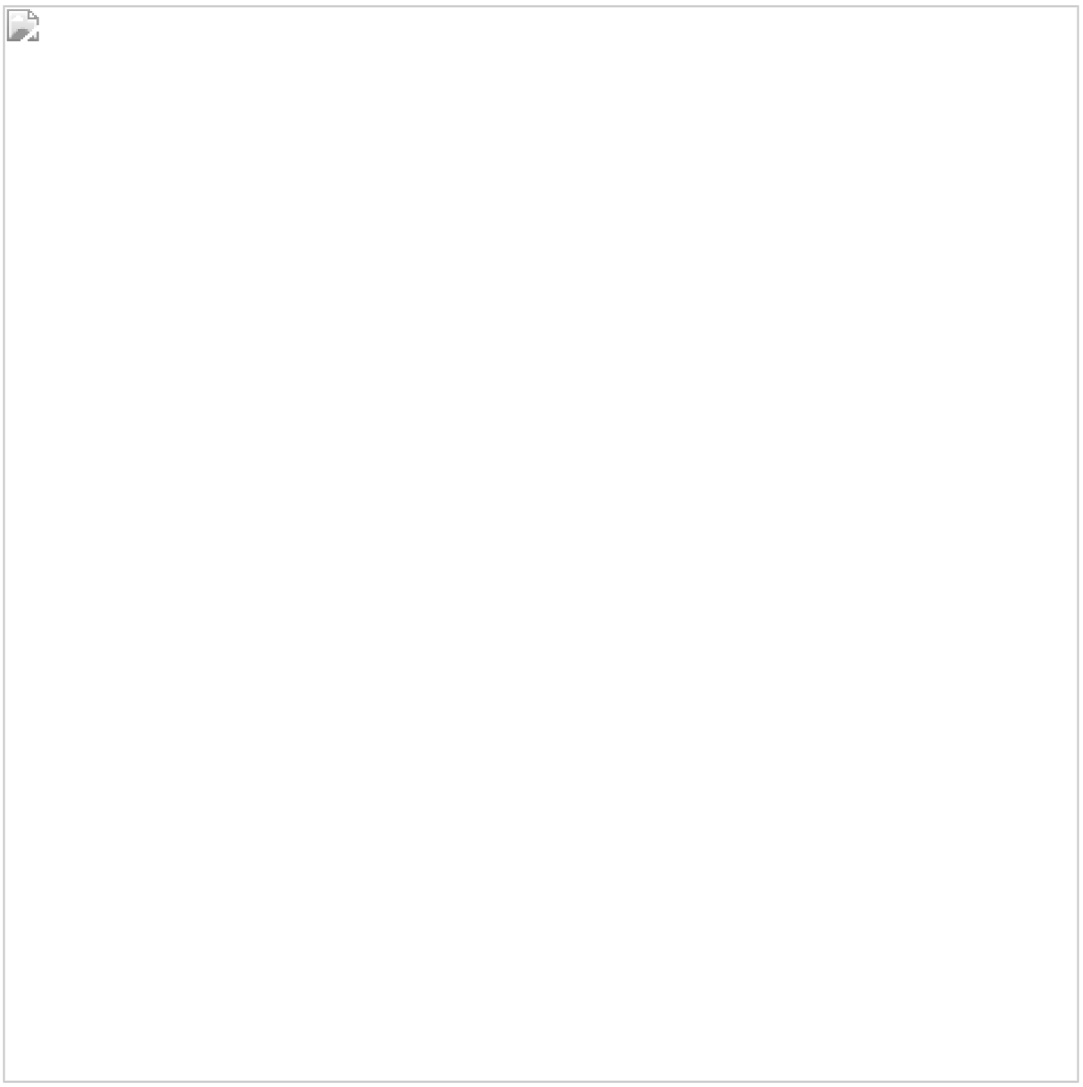
“How splendid!” said the hare. “Now let me count you all! Keep still while I walk over your backs.”

So the hare hopped from back to back, counting as he went: “Please keep quite still, or I shall not be able to count. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—”

TALK ABOUT IT

Did the crocodiles know what the hare was really doing? What would you have done?

The Bridge of Crocodiles · another picture

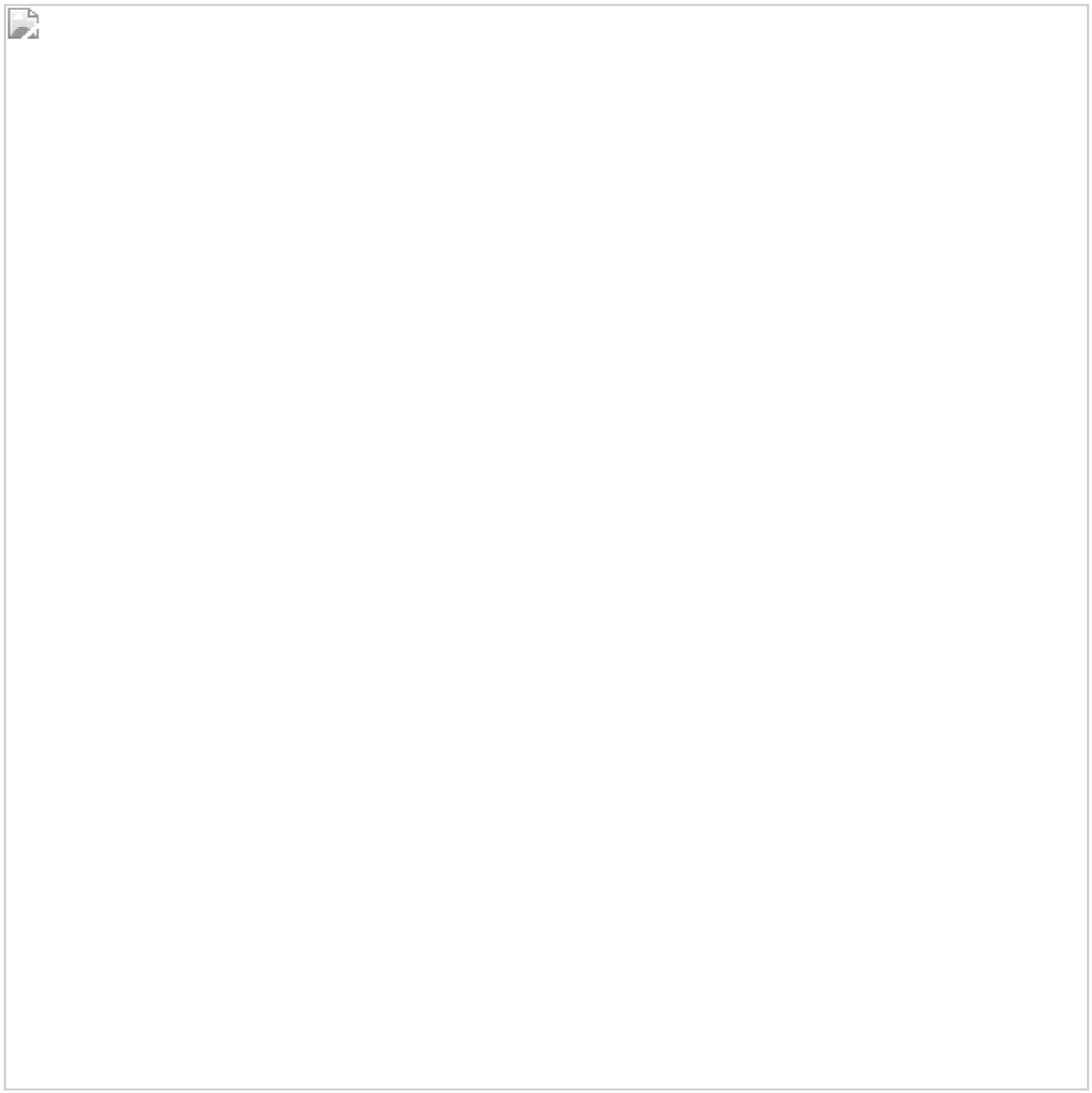


Think about it

1. How did the hare cross the water?

- ○ He swam
- ○ He walked on the crocodiles' backs
- ○ He rode on a wave

Serve You Right!



The hare walked right across to the mainland of Inaba. Instead of thanking the crocodiles, he jeered at them as he leapt off the last one's back. "Oh! you stupid crocodiles, now I have done with you!" he said.

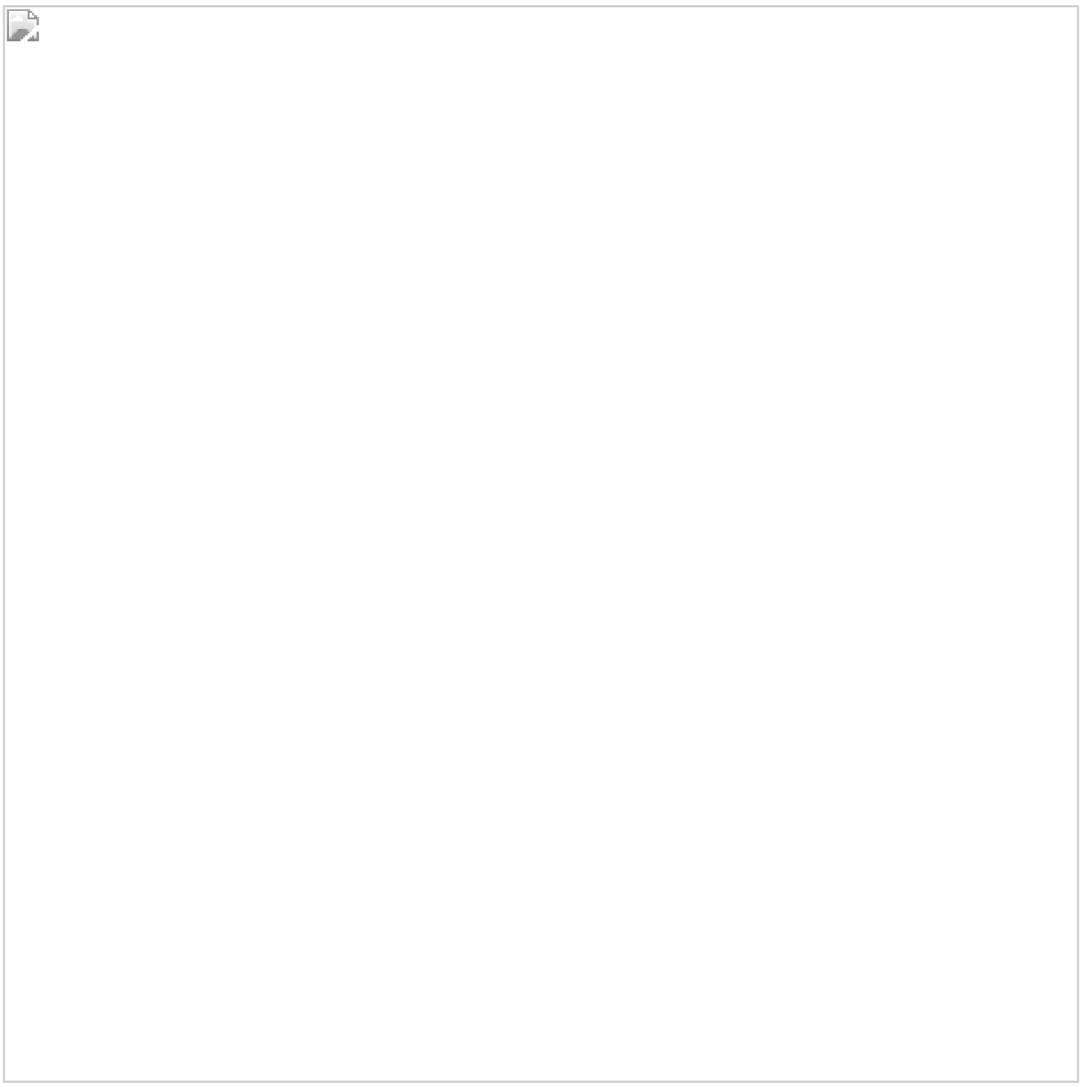
But he did not escape so easily. As soon as the crocodiles understood the trick, they became furiously angry. Some of them ran after the hare and caught him.

They pulled out all his fur. He cried out and begged them to spare him, but with each tuft they said, "Serve you right!"

Then they threw the hare on the beach and swam away laughing.

TALK ABOUT IT

The hare tricked the crocodiles, and then the crocodiles were cruel to him. What do you think about that?

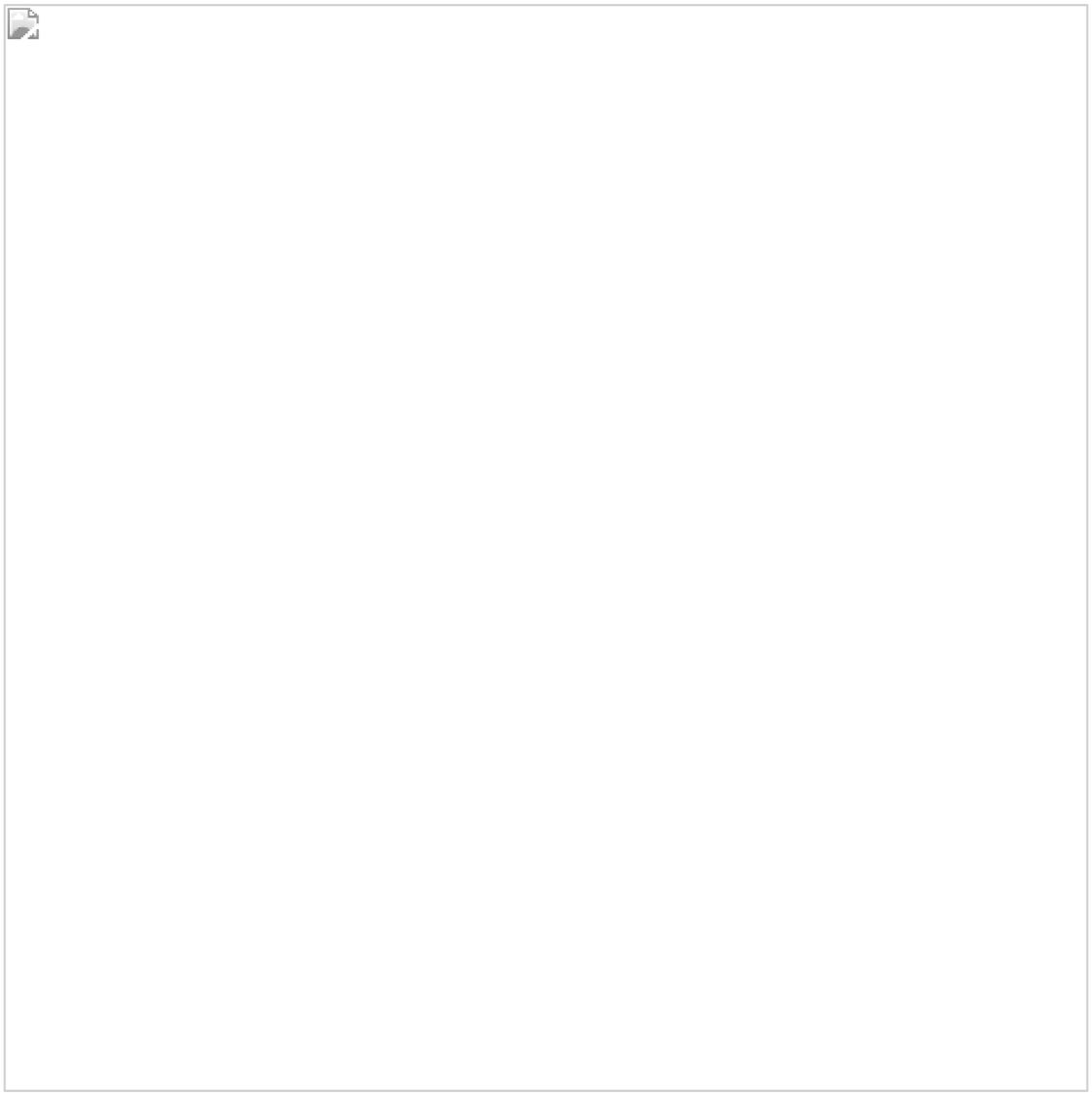


Think about it

1. What did the crocodiles say with every tuft of fur?

- ○ Come back!
- ○ Serve you right!
- ○ One, two, three!

A Hare Without Fur



The hare lay on the beach, all his beautiful white fur gone, in pain and quite helpless. He wept.

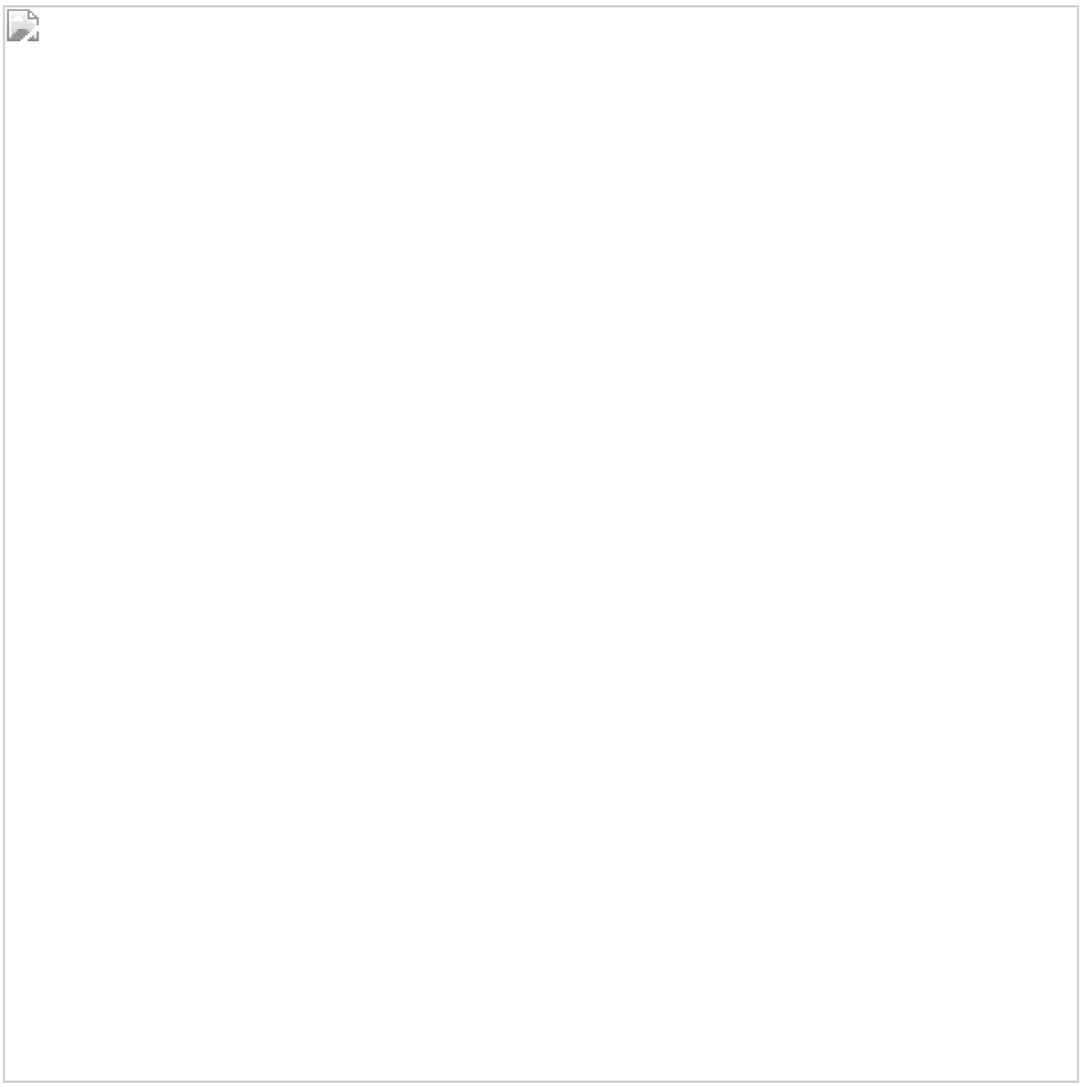
It was his own fault, but anyone who saw the poor little creature would have pitied him. The crocodiles had been cruel in their revenge.

Just then some men who looked like King's sons passed by. They stopped and asked what was the matter.

The hare lifted his head from between his paws. "I had a fight with some crocodiles, but I was beaten, and they pulled out all my fur and left me to suffer here—that is why I am crying."

TALK ABOUT IT

The hare did not tell the men the whole story. Why do you think he left something out?



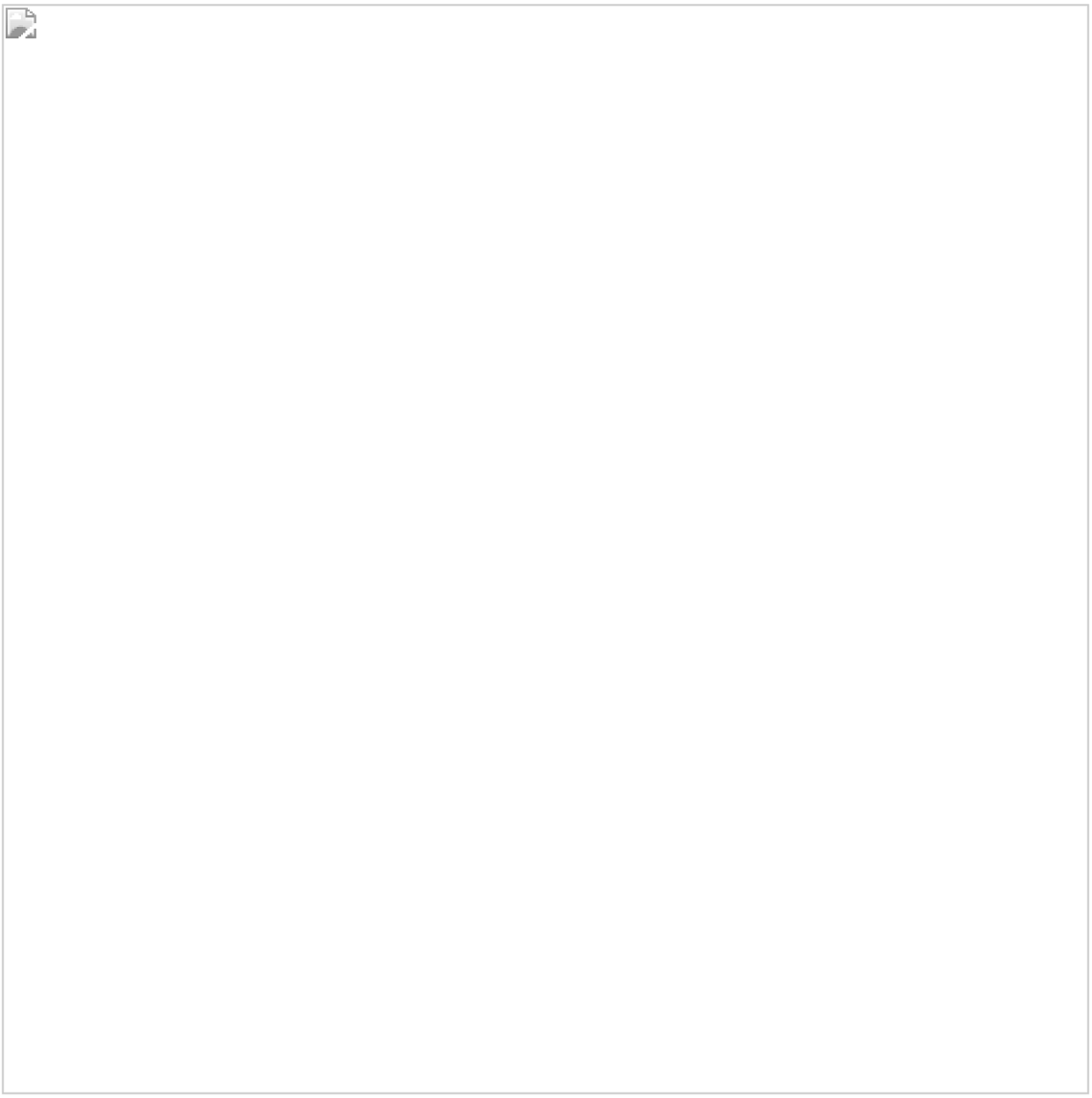
Think about it

1. Who stopped to ask the hare what was the matter?

- ○ A fisherman
- ○ Men who looked like King's sons
- ○ The crocodiles

2. Is what the hare told them the whole truth?

The Wrong Medicine



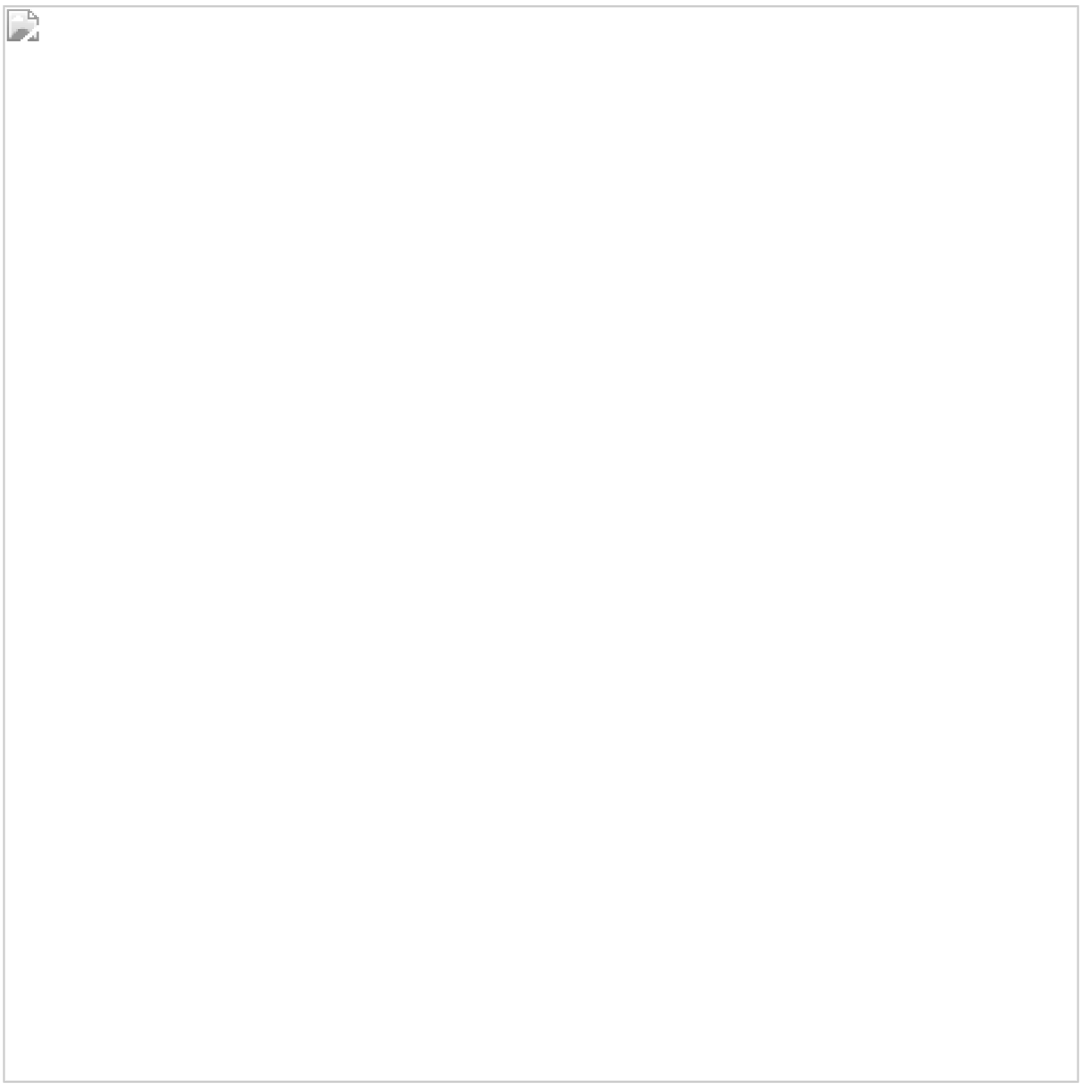
One of the young men was spiteful, but he pretended to be kind. “I feel very sorry for you,” he said. “Go and bathe yourself in the sea, and then come and sit in the wind. This will make your fur grow again, and you will be just as you were before.”

Then the young men went on. The hare, very pleased, bathed in the sea and sat where the wind could blow on him.

But as the wind dried him, his skin grew tight and hard, and the salt made the pain so much worse that he rolled on the sand and cried aloud.

TALK ABOUT IT

The man pretended to be kind but was not. How can you tell when someone is really being kind?

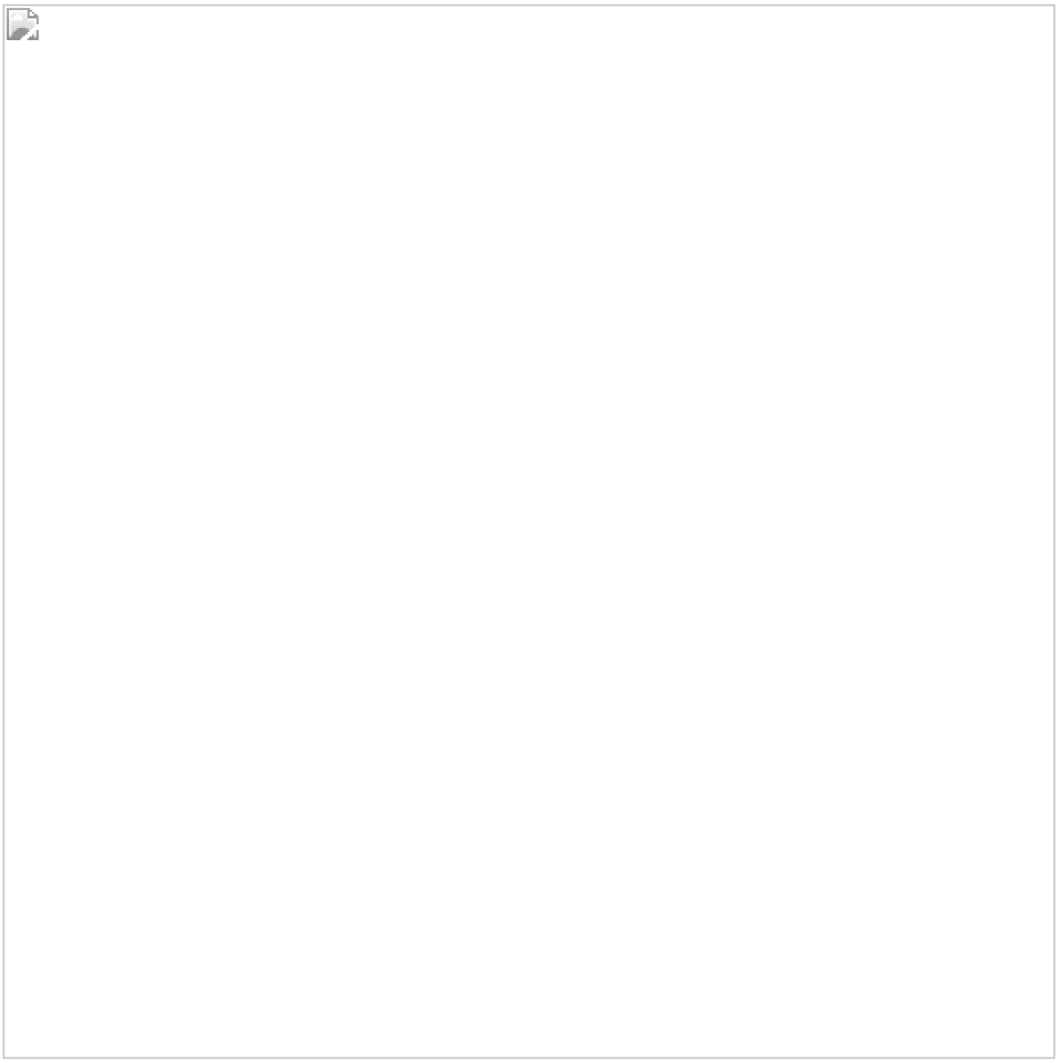


Think about it

1. What did the spiteful young man tell the hare to do?

- ○ Bathe in the sea and sit in the wind
- ○ Sleep in the sun
- ○ Hide in a cave

The Man With the Big Bag



Then another King's son came by with a great bag on his back. Tricked once already, the hare did not answer when the man asked why he cried.

But this man had a kind heart. "You poor thing!" he said. "Who can have treated you so cruelly?"

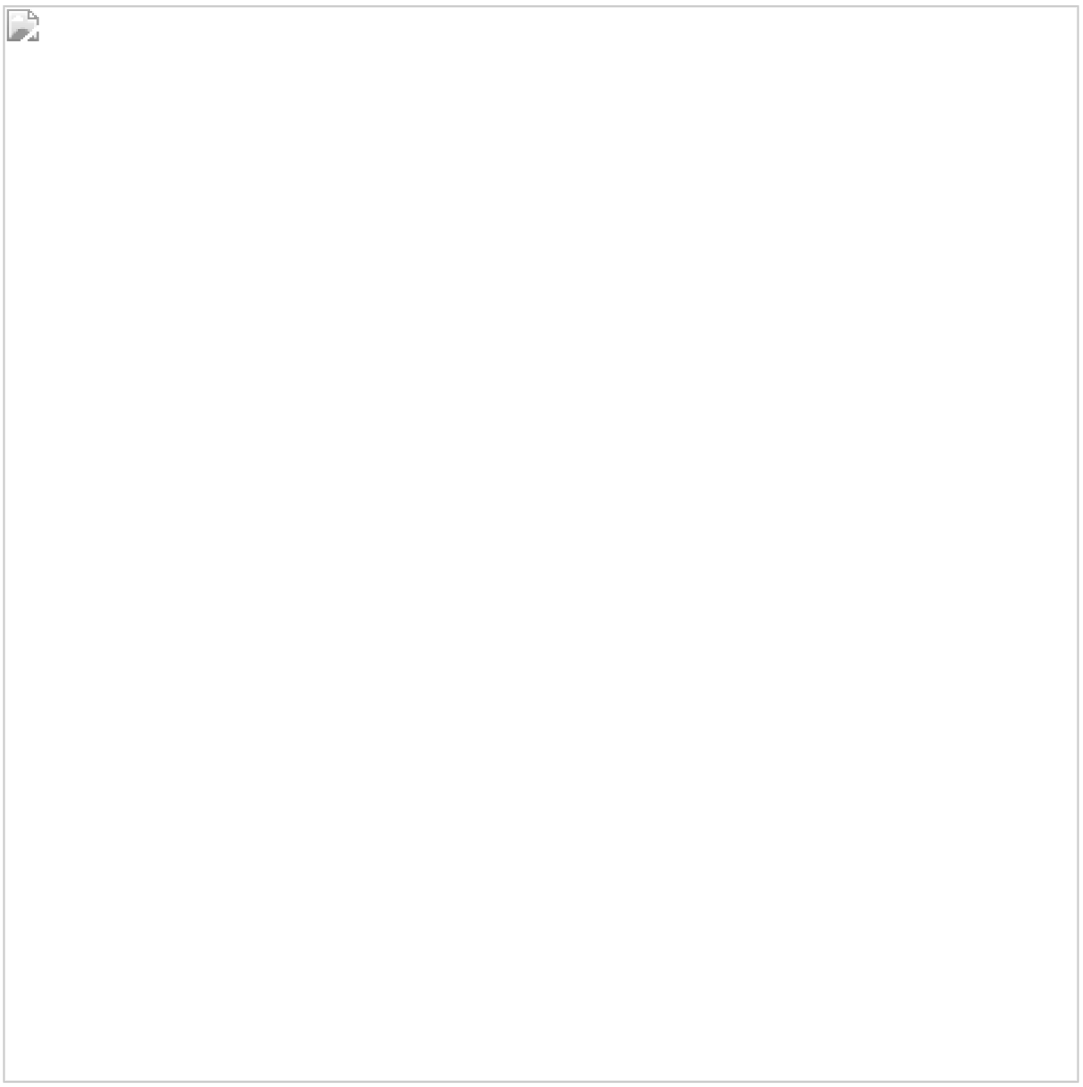
So the hare told him everything and hid nothing, not even his trick on the crocodiles.

"I am very sorry for all you have suffered," said the man, "but remember, it was only the consequence of the deceit you practiced on the crocodiles."

"I know," said the hare. "I have repented and made up my mind never to use deceit again."

TALK ABOUT IT

This time the hare told the whole truth. What do you think that was like for him?

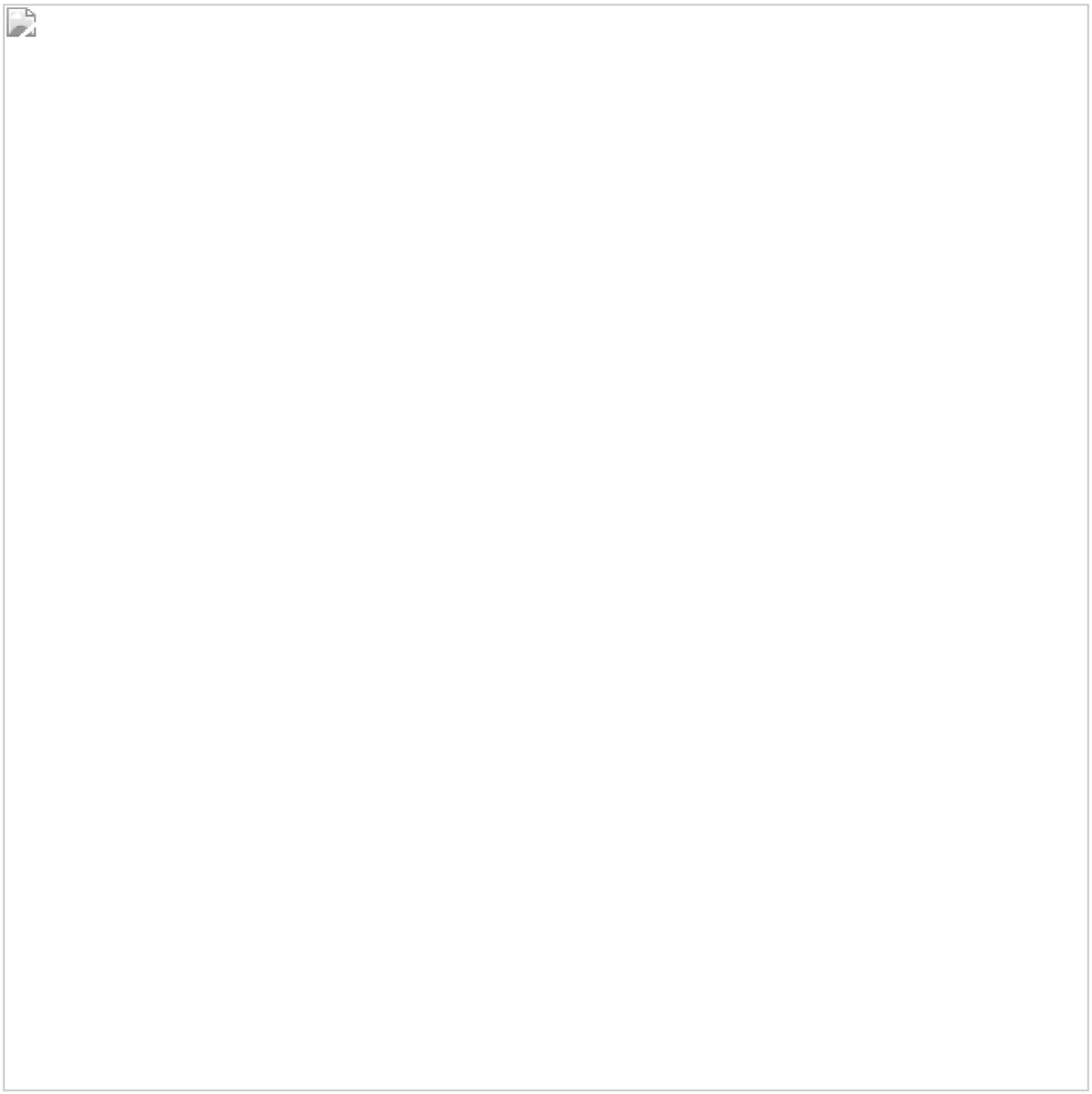


Think about it

1. What did the hare promise?

- ○ Never to go near the sea again
- ○ Never to use deceit again
- ○ To find the crocodiles and say sorry

The Kaba Flowers



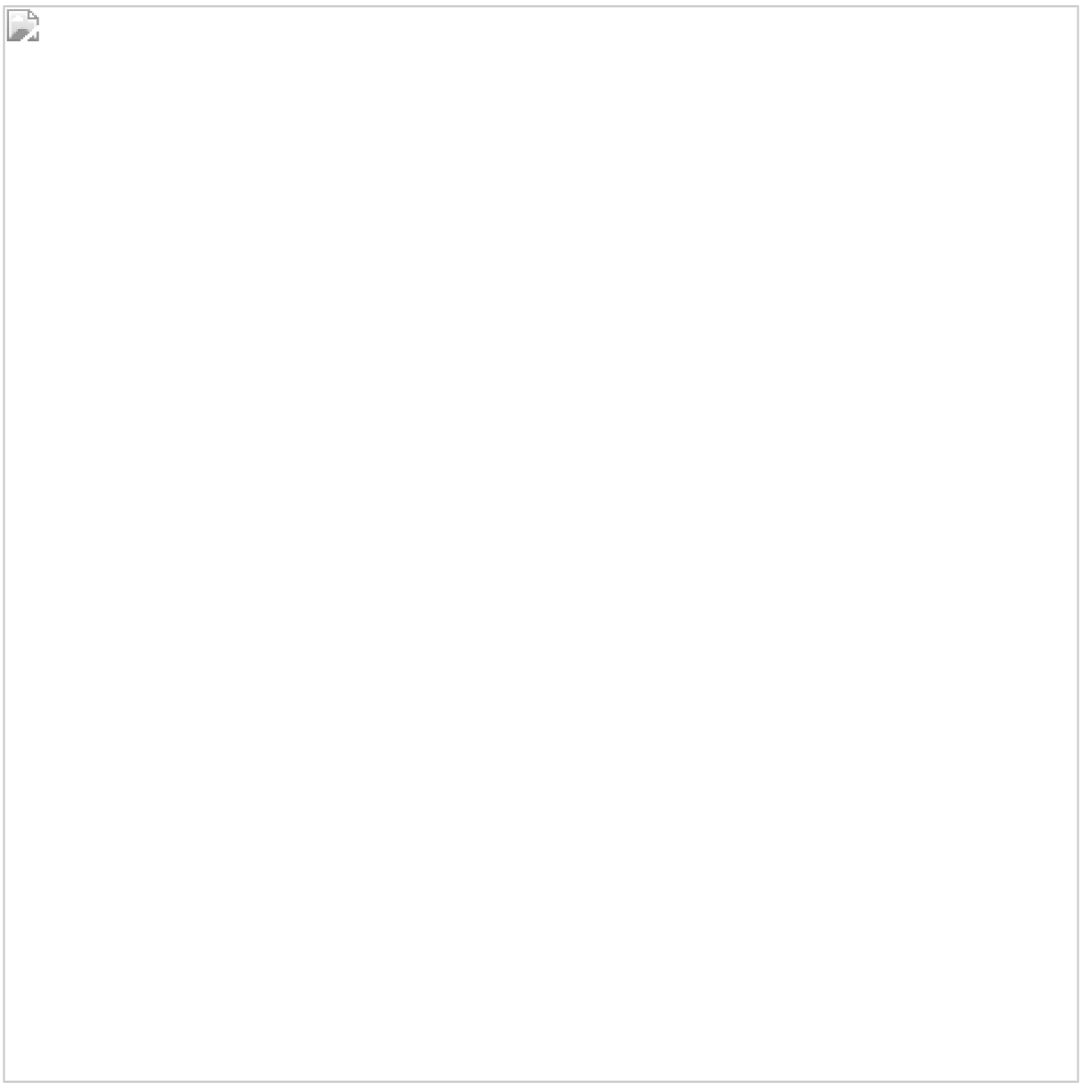
“Then I will tell you of a good remedy,” said the man. “First go and bathe well in that pond and wash all the salt from your body. Then pick some of those kaba flowers by the water, spread them on the ground and roll yourself on them.”

The hare did exactly this, and to his amazement, even as he rolled, his white fur grew again. The pain stopped, and he was himself again.

Overjoyed, he hopped to the young man and knelt at his feet. “I cannot express my thanks for all you have done for me!” he said. “Please tell me who you are?”

TALK ABOUT IT

The man helped the hare even though the hare had done wrong. Who has helped you when you had made a mistake?

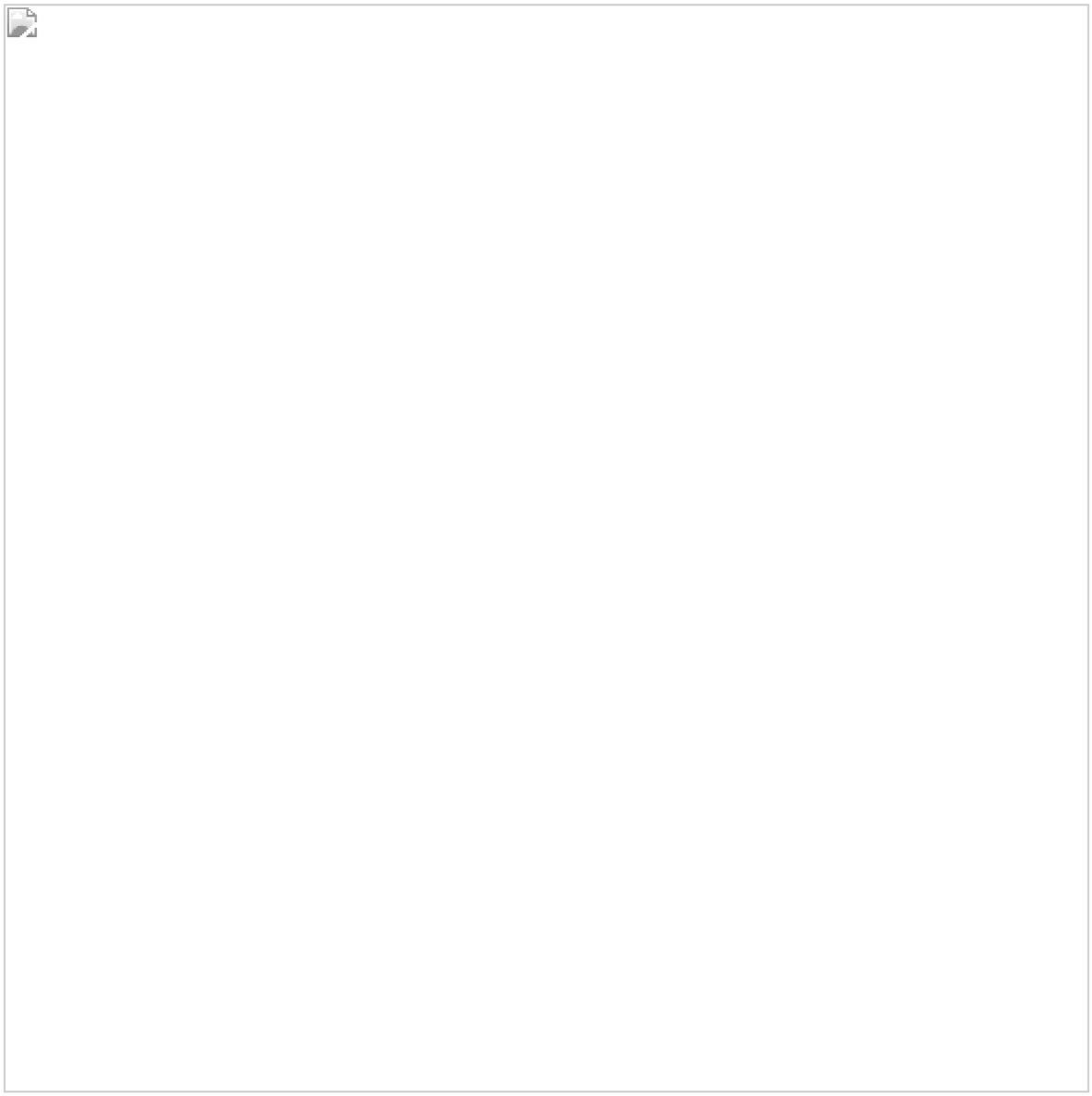


Think about it

1. What did the hare roll in to make his fur grow?

- ○ Sand
- ○ Kaba flowers
- ○ Seaweed

Okuni-nushi-no-Mikoto



“I am no King’s son as you think me. I am a fairy, and my name is Okuni-nushi-no-Mikoto,” said the man. The men who had passed before were his brothers, on their way to ask the beautiful Princess Yakami to marry one of them. He walked behind them as their attendant, carrying the great bag.

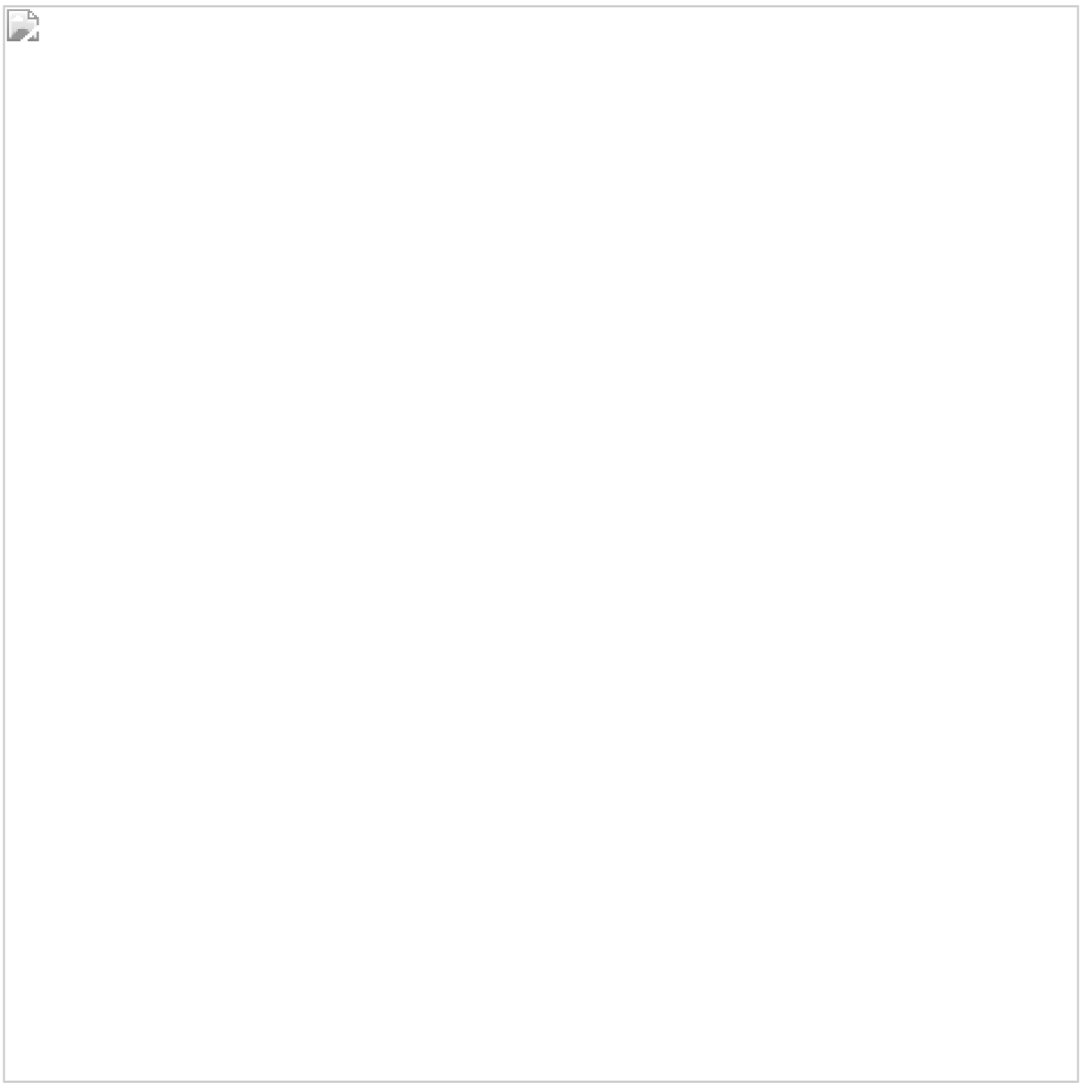
“How kind you have been to me!” said the hare. “The Princess will refuse all your brothers, and will prefer you for your goodness of heart.”

Okuni-nushi-no-Mikoto took no notice, said goodbye and hurried on. He overtook his brothers just as they were entering the Princess’s gate.

TALK ABOUT IT

The man carried the bag while his brothers walked ahead. What do you notice about him?

Okuni-nushi-no-Mikoto · another picture

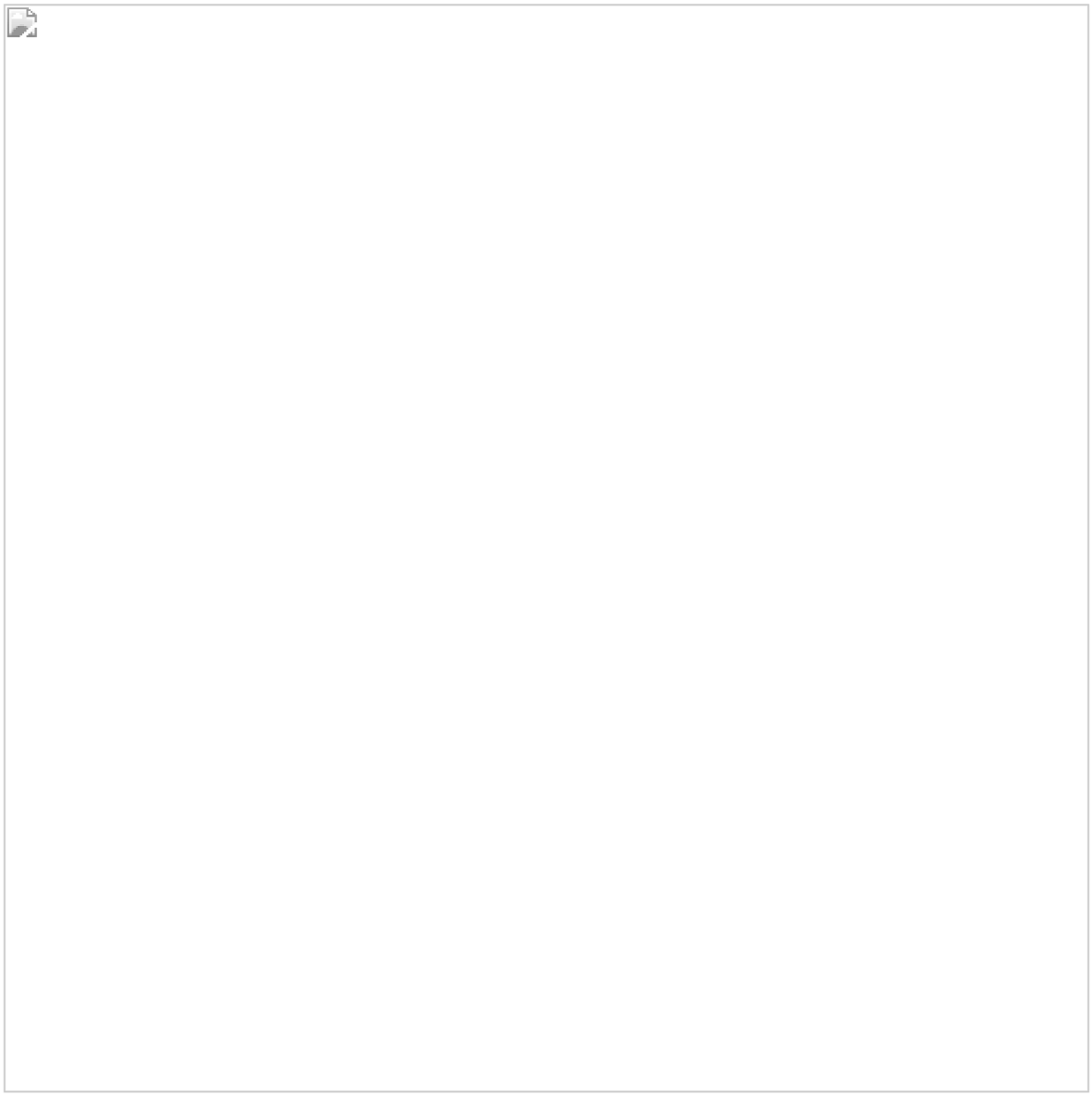


Think about it

1. Where were the brothers going?

- ○ To the Princess Yakami
- ○ To fight the crocodiles
- ○ Back to Oki

To You I Give Myself



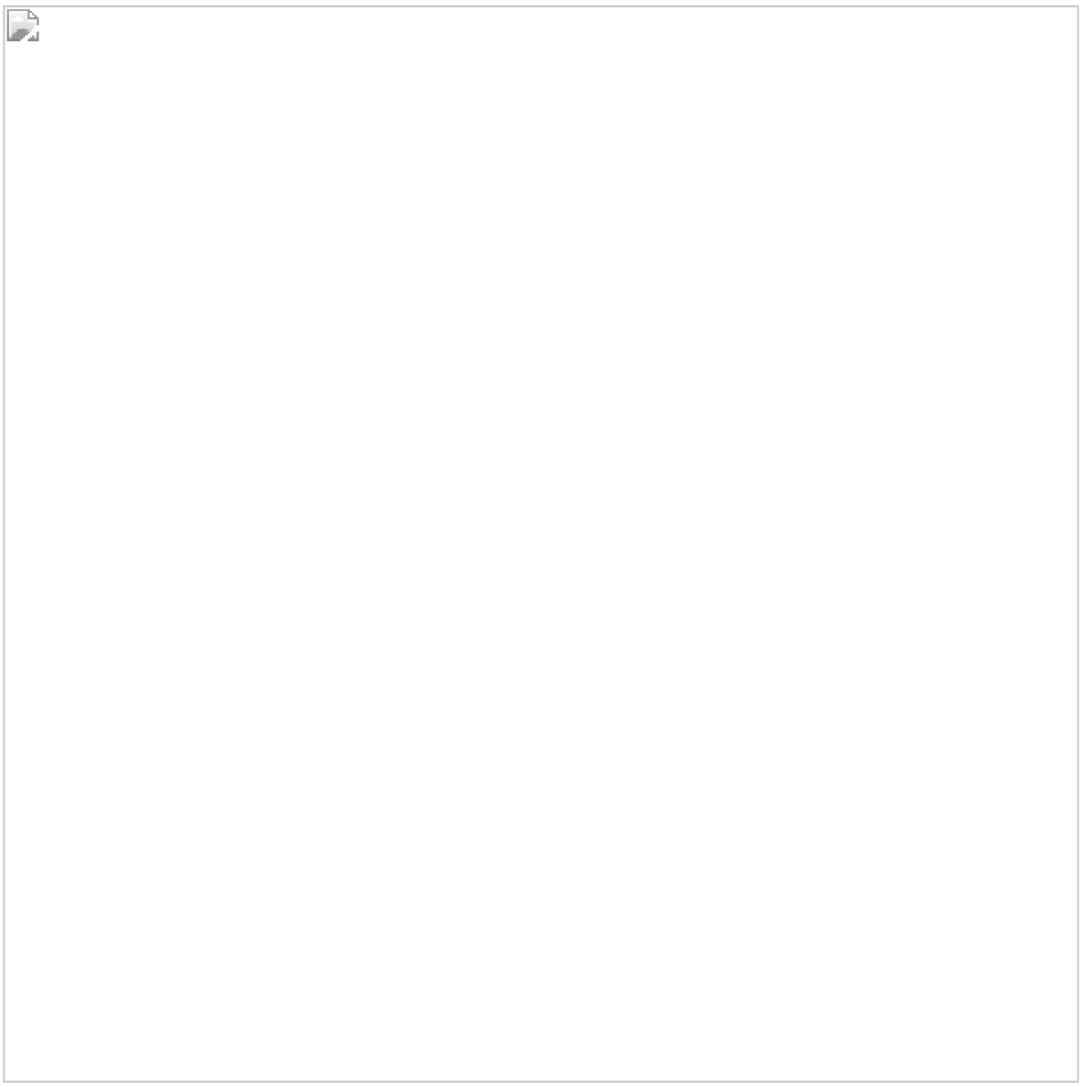
Just as the hare had said, the Princess could not be persuaded to become the bride of any of the brothers. But when she looked at the kind brother's face she went straight up to him and said, "To you I give myself," and so they were married.

This is the end of the story. Okuni-nushi-no-Mikoto is worshiped by the people in some parts of Japan as a god, and the hare has become famous as "The White Hare of Inaba."

But what became of the crocodiles nobody knows.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think happened to the crocodiles? What would you like to happen?



Think about it

1. Whom did the Princess choose?

- ○ The brother with the bag
- ○ The oldest brother
- ○ The hare

2. What would you have done if you were the hare, sitting on the beach?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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