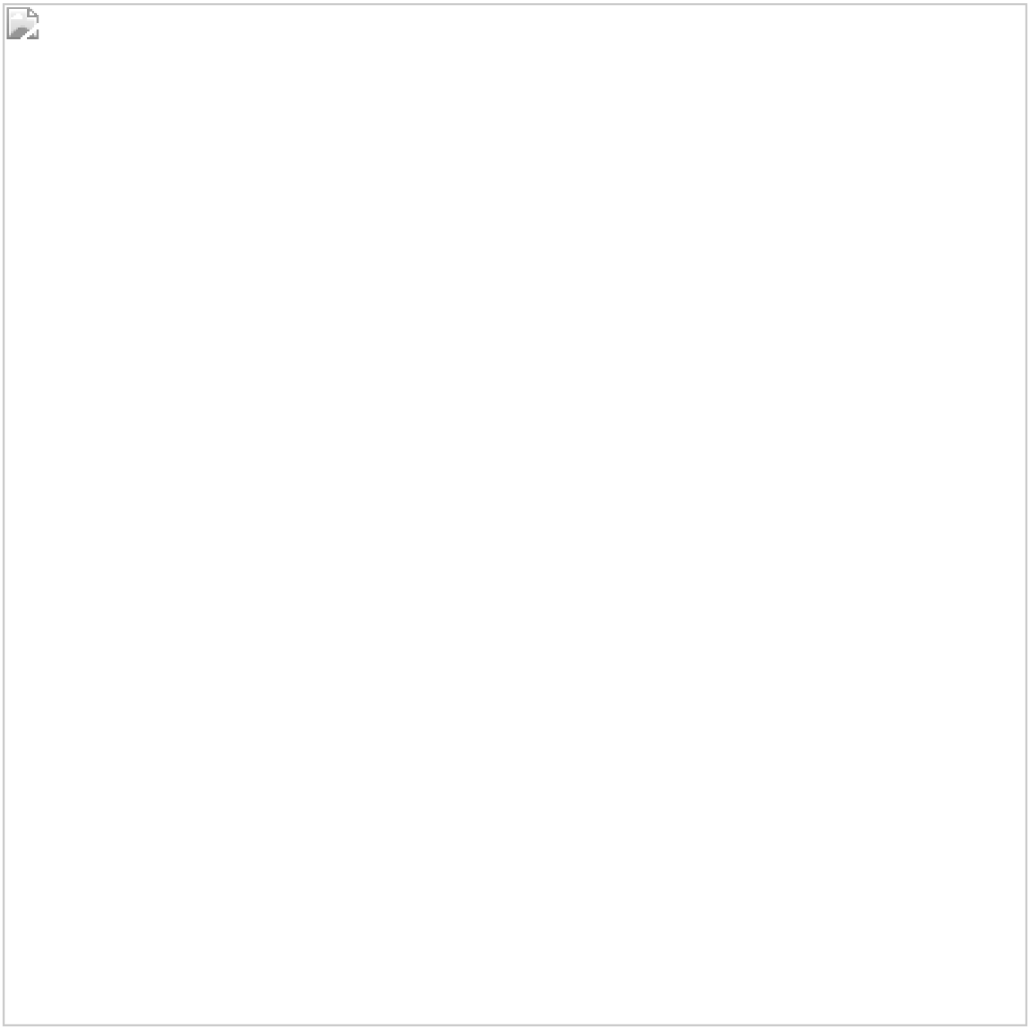
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Urashima Taro, the Fisher Lad

A Tale from Japan



Long, long ago, in the little fishing village of Mizu-no-ye in the province of Tango, there lived a young fisherman named Urashima Taro.

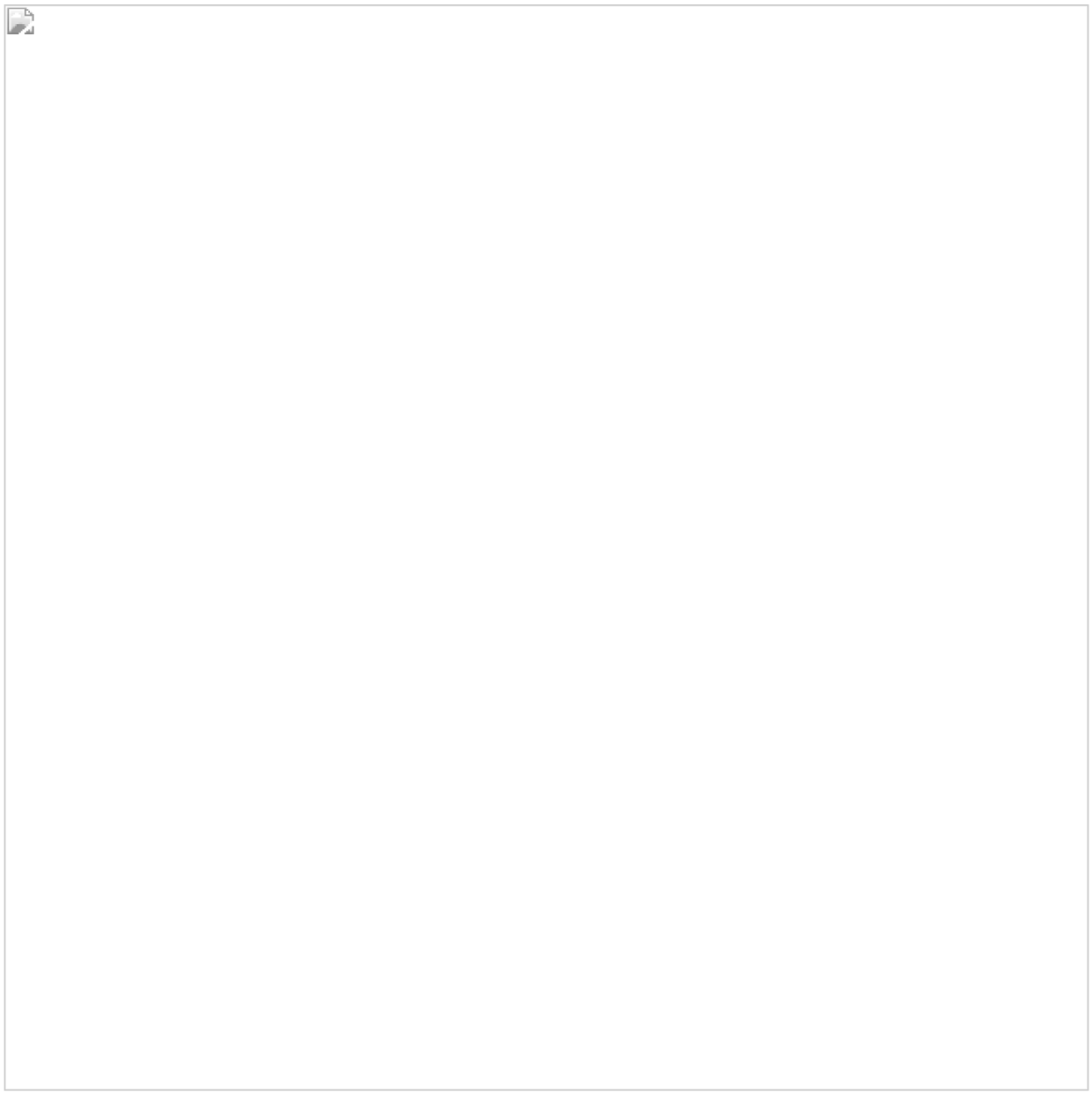
He was the most skillful fisher in all that country side. But more than for his skill, he was known for his kind heart.

TALK ABOUT IT

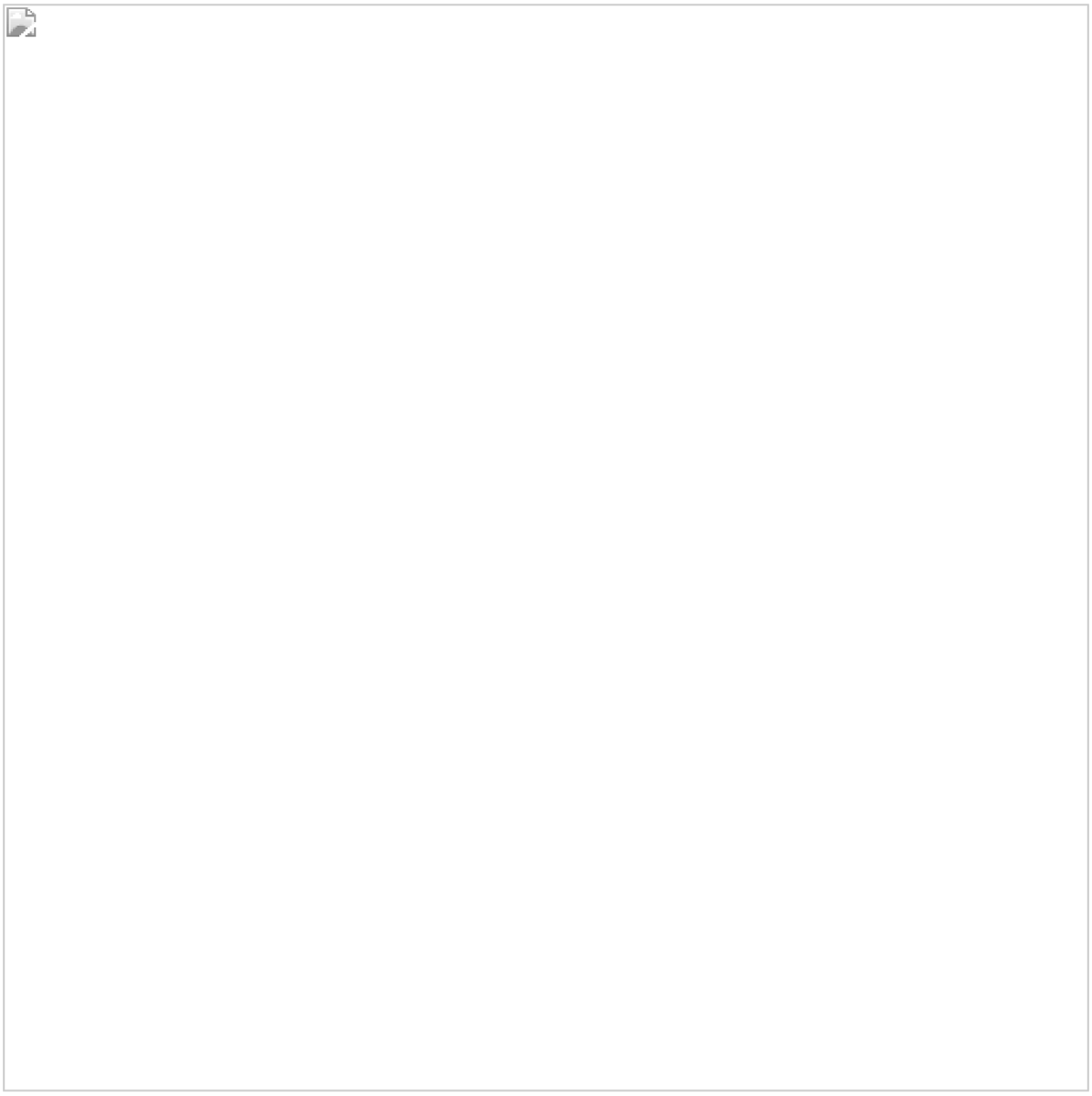
Urashima was known for being kind. What would you like to be known for?

This book belongs to _____

Urashima Taro, the Fisher Lad · another picture



The Tortoise and the Boys



One soft summer evening, Urashima was going home from fishing when he came upon a group of children. They were shouting and tormenting a tortoise. First one boy pulled it this way, then another pulled it that way.

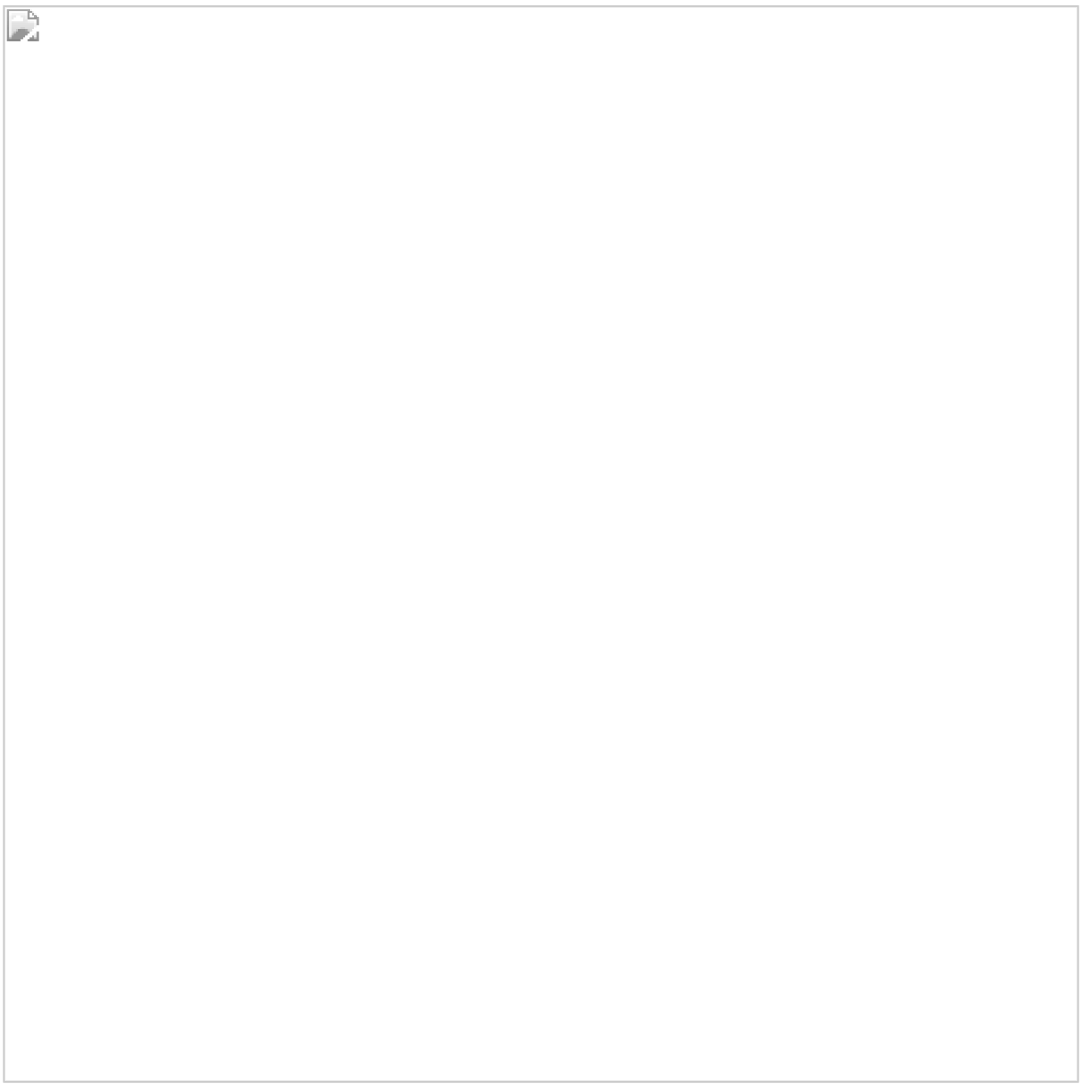
Urashima felt very sorry for the poor tortoise. “Look here, boys, you are treating that poor tortoise so badly that it will soon die!” he said.

The boys took no notice. “Who cares whether it lives or dies?” said one of the older boys. “We do not.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Urashima spoke up for the tortoise. Has anyone ever spoken up for you? Have you ever spoken up for someone else?

The Tortoise and the Boys · another picture

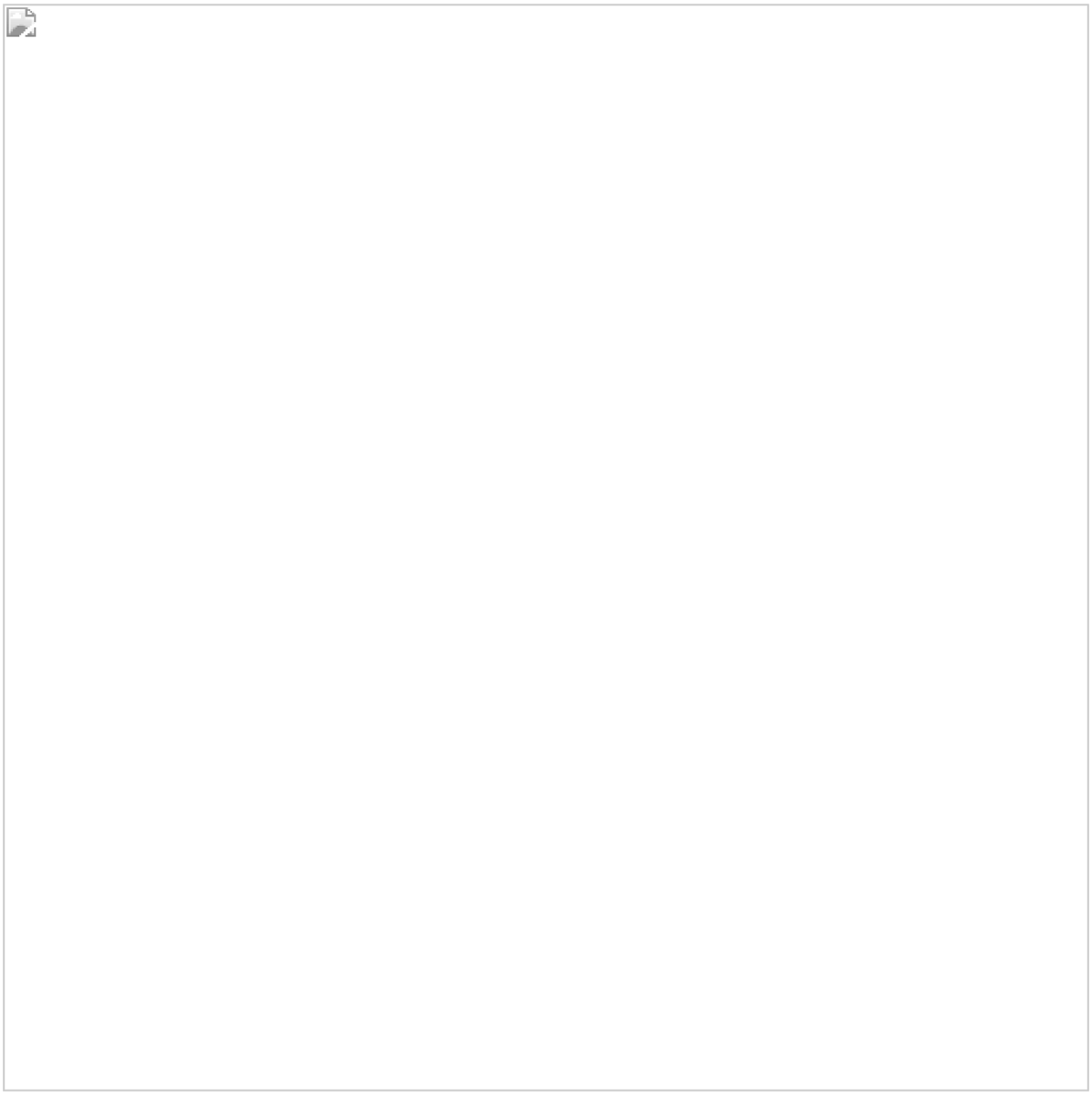


Think about it

1. What were the boys doing?

- ○ Feeding a tortoise
- ○ Tormenting a tortoise
- ○ Racing a tortoise

A Kind Bargain



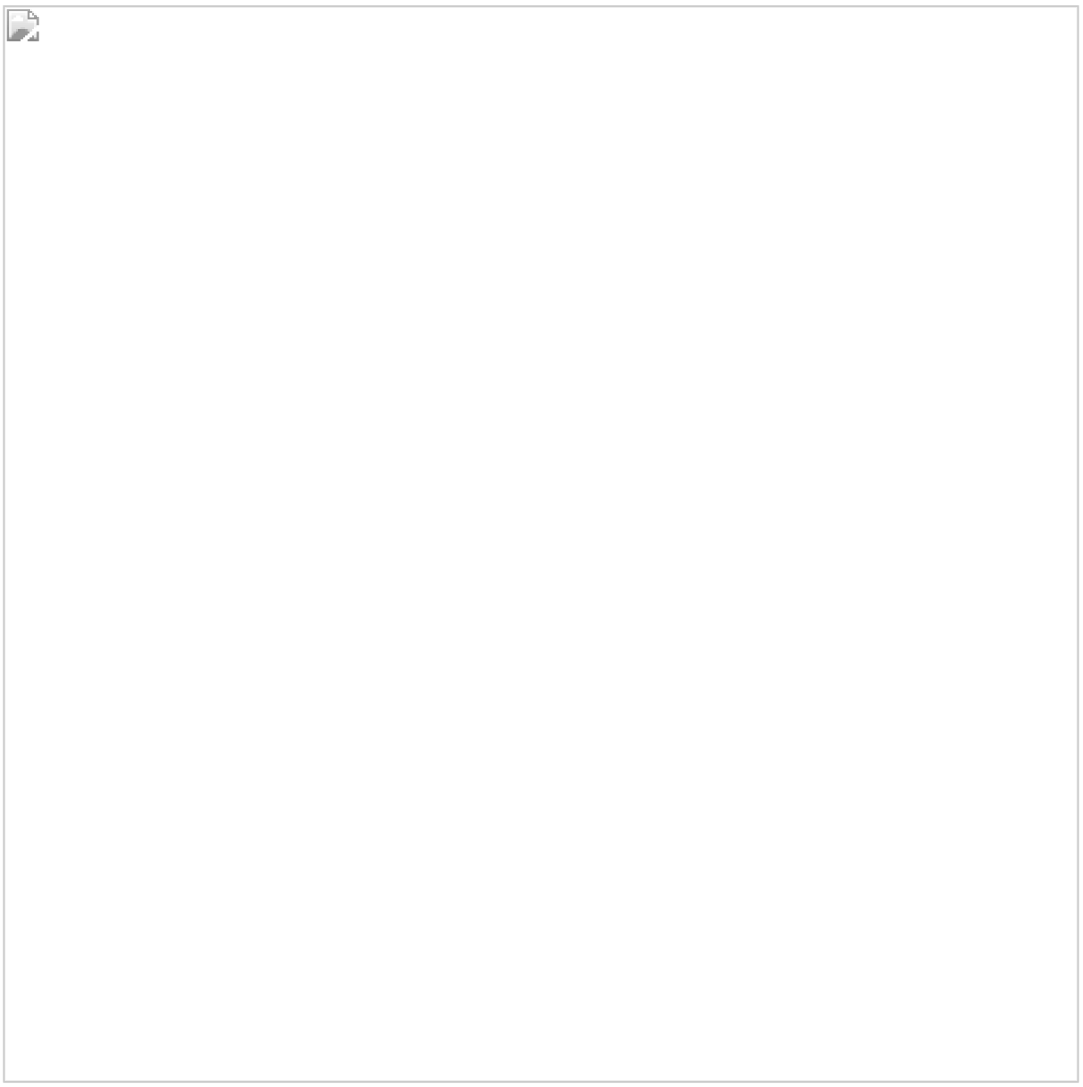
Urashima thought about the best way to help. He smiled at the boys and said, "Now won't you give me the tortoise?"

"Why should we?" said one. "We caught it ourselves." So Urashima offered them money for it, strung on a piece of string. The boys were not bad boys at all, only mischievous. They were won by his kind smile and gentle words.

"Very well, Ojisan, we will give you the tortoise if you will give us the money!" said the ringleader. Urashima took the tortoise, and the boys scampered away.

TALK ABOUT IT

Urashima did not shout and he did not fight. He smiled and found another way. What do you think of that?

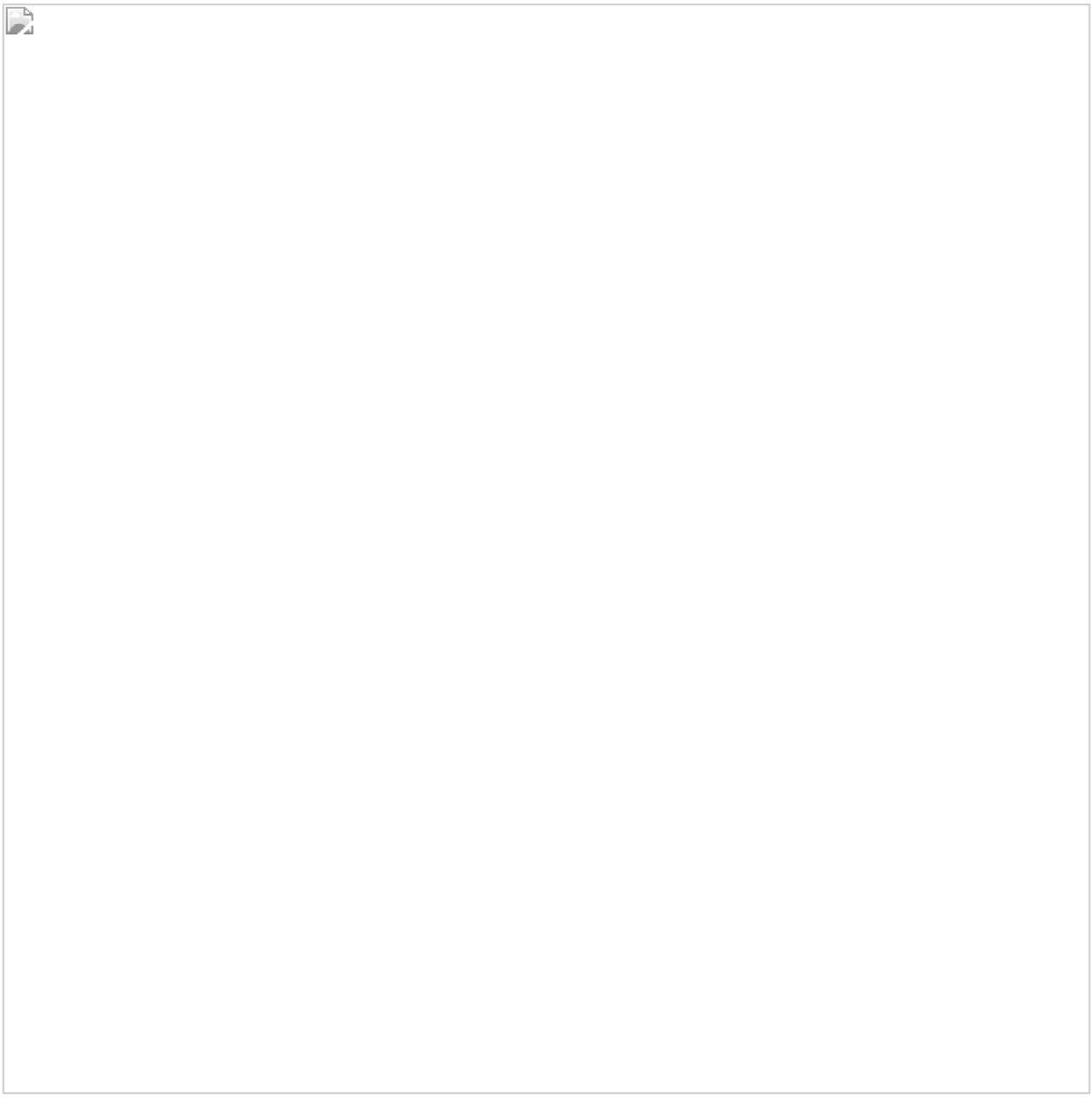


Think about it

1. How did Urashima get the tortoise?

- ○ He took it by force
- ○ He paid the boys with money
- ○ He traded his fishing rod

Back to the Sea



Urashima stroked the tortoise's back. "Oh, you poor thing!" he said. "You are safe now!"

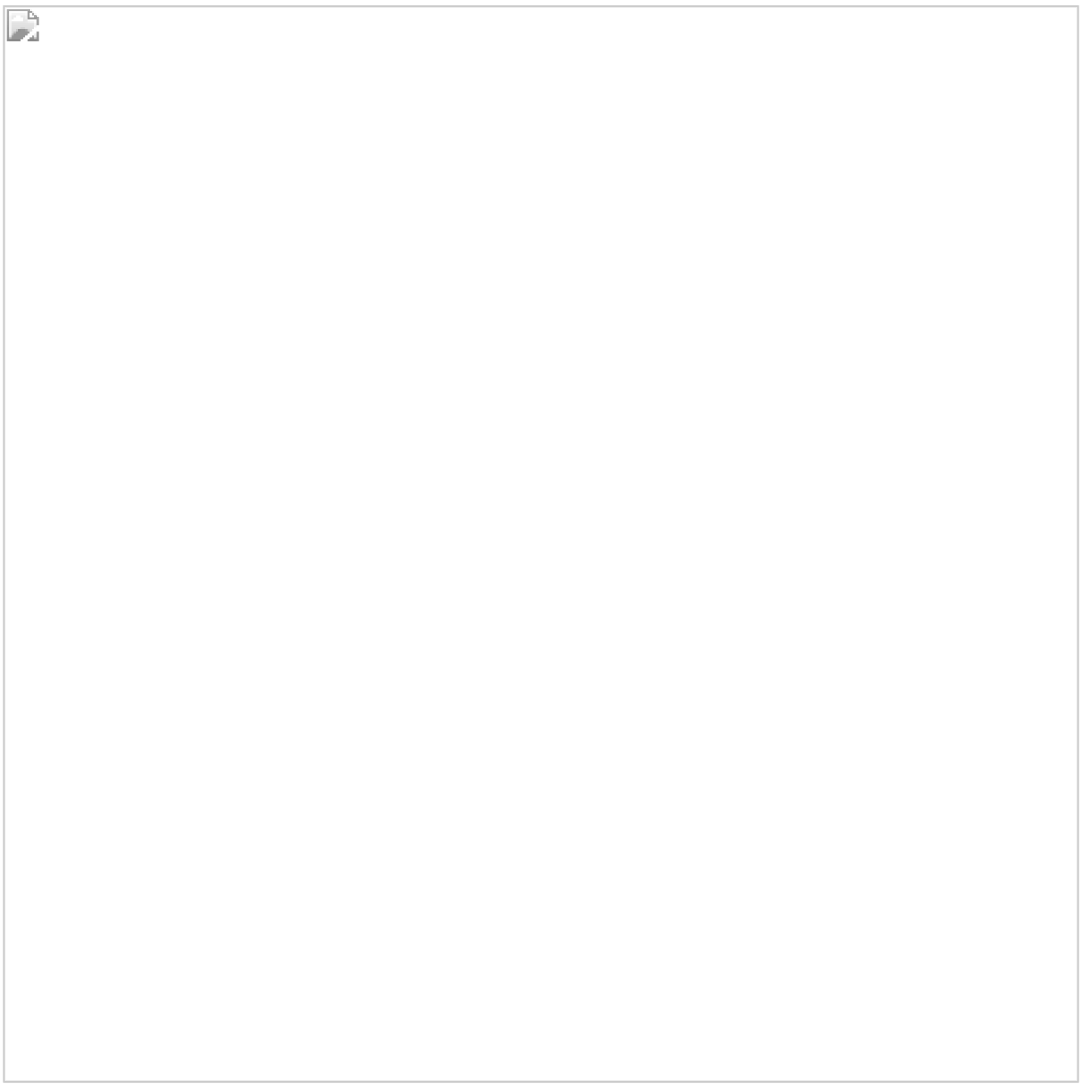
He told the tortoise it had the longest life of any creature in the world, and it had nearly lost it. "Now I am going to take you back to your home, the sea, at once."

He walked to the shore, put the tortoise into the water, and watched it disappear. Then he went home, for he was tired and the sun had set.

TALK ABOUT IT

Where is your home? How do you feel when you get back to it?

Back to the Sea · another picture

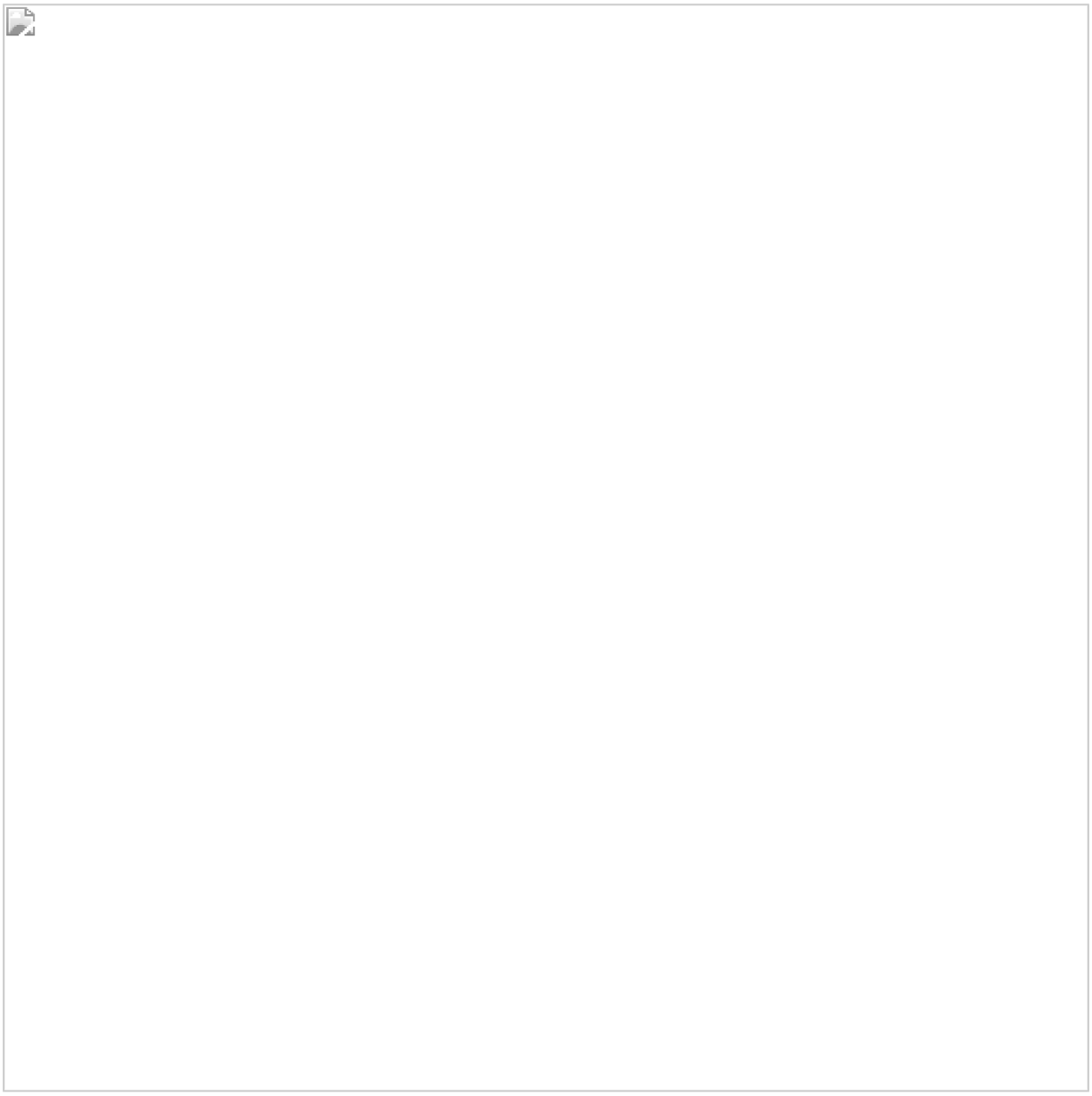


Think about it

1. Where did Urashima take the tortoise?

- ○ To his house
- ○ Back to the sea
- ○ To the market

A Voice on the Sea



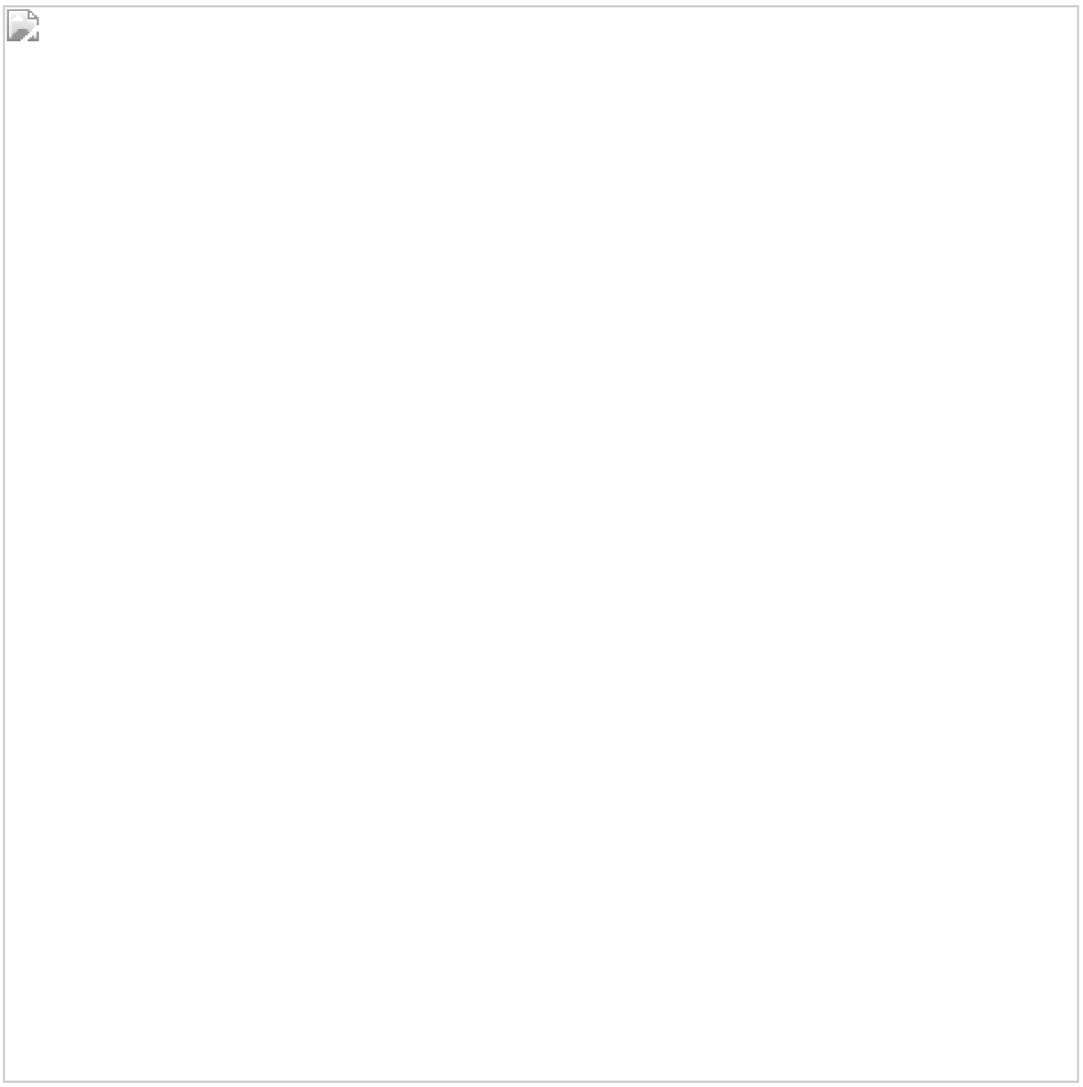
The next morning Urashima went out in his boat. The sea and sky were soft and blue. He drifted far out, farther than any of the other boats.

Suddenly he heard his own name, clear as a bell. “Urashima, Urashima!” He looked in every direction. There was no other boat. But beside his own boat was a tortoise. It was the very tortoise he had saved the day before.

“Yes, it was I,” said the tortoise. “I have come to offer you my thanks and to tell you how grateful I am for your kindness to me.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The tortoise came back to say thank you. Who would you like to thank?

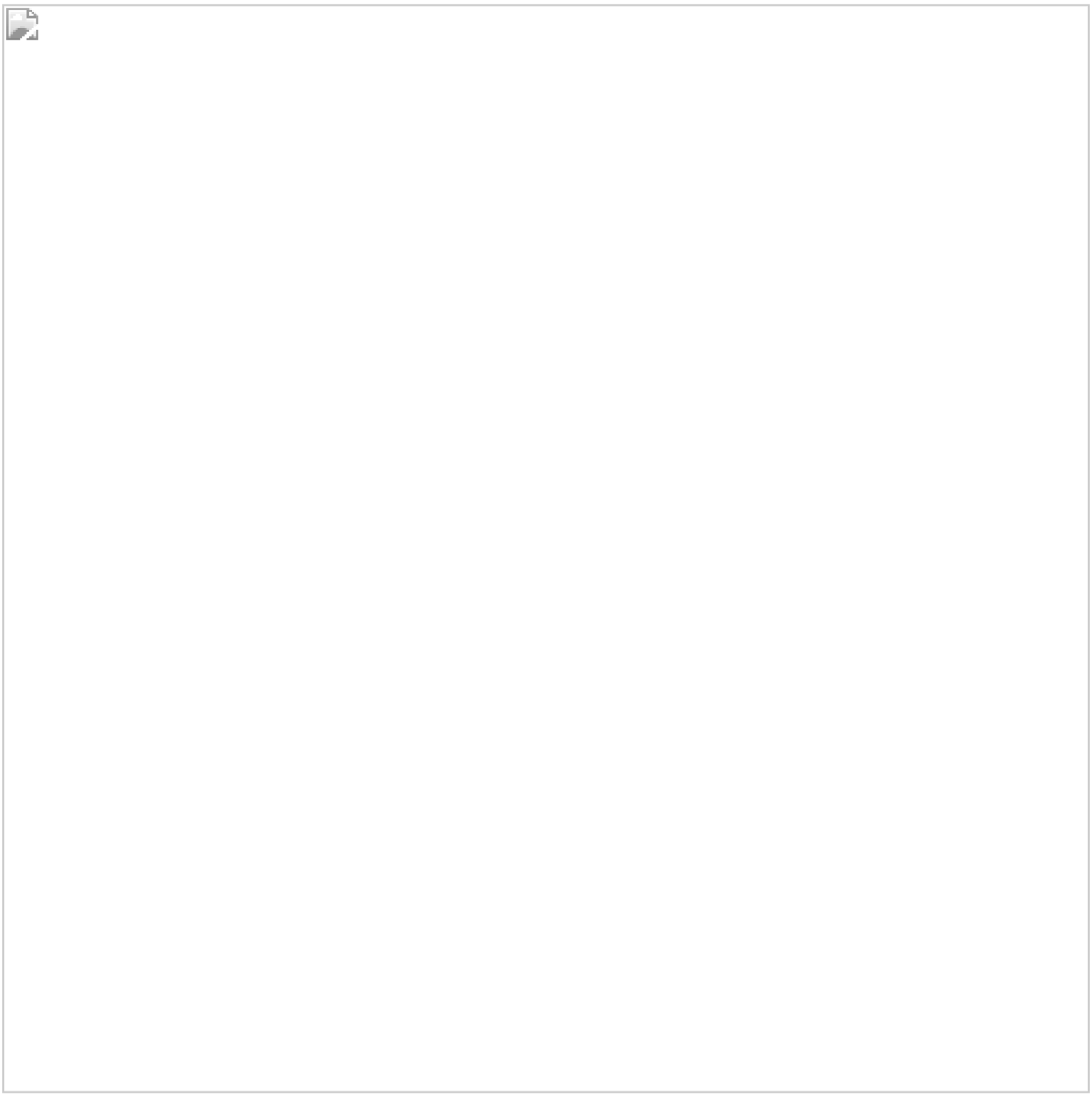


Think about it

1. Why did the tortoise come back?

- ○ To say thank you
- ○ To ask for food
- ○ To get lost

The Ride to the Dragon King



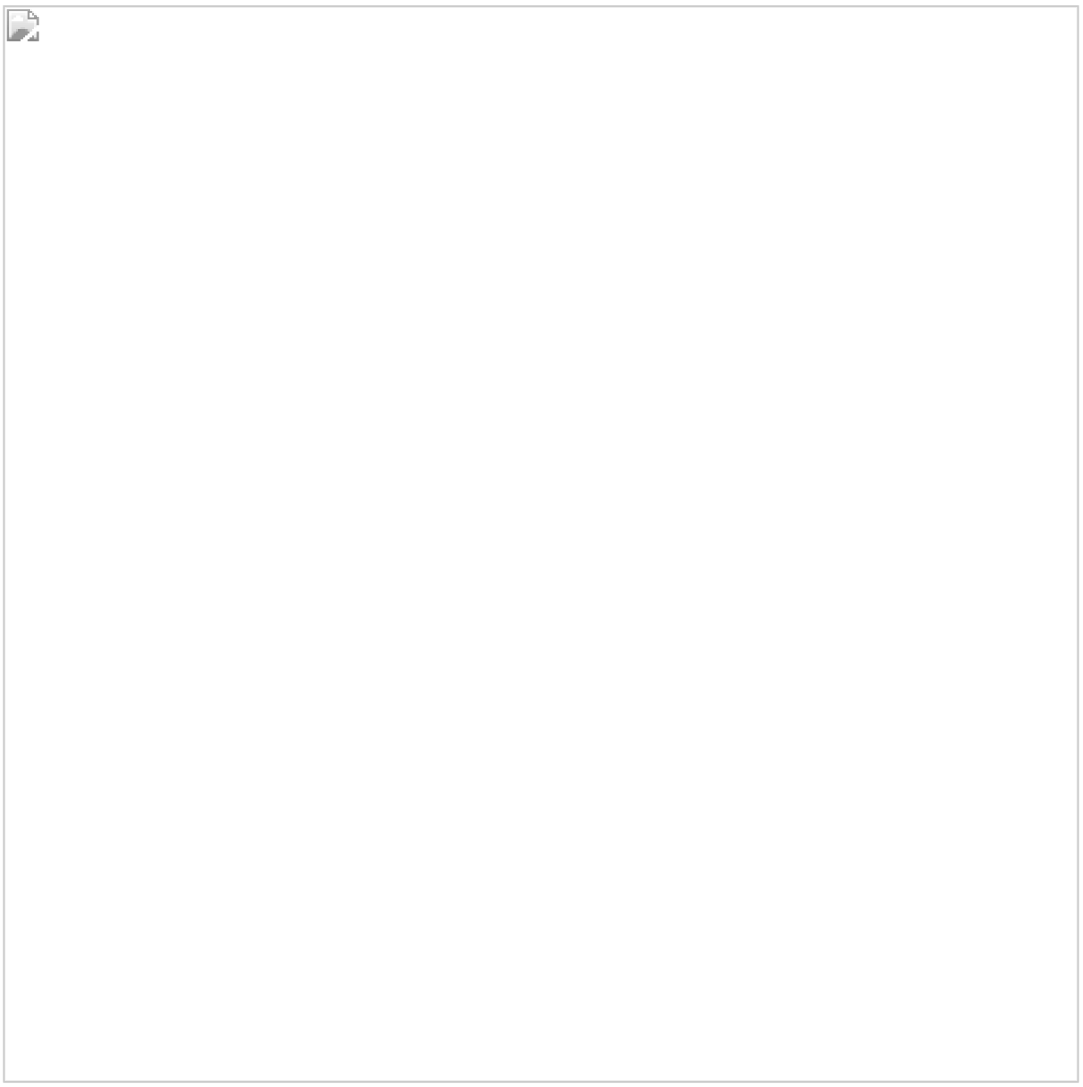
“Have you ever seen Rin Gin, the Palace of the Dragon King of the Sea, Urashima?” asked the tortoise.

Urashima said he had heard of it, but never seen it. The tortoise said, “If you would like to see the Sea King’s land I will be your guide.” Urashima said he could not swim like a sea creature. The tortoise said he need not swim himself, for he could ride on its back.

Urashima looked, and the tortoise had grown so big that a man could sit on its back. Down through the water they went. Urashima never grew tired, and his clothes did not get wet.

TALK ABOUT IT

If a tortoise offered you a ride to the bottom of the sea, would you go? What would you hope to see?

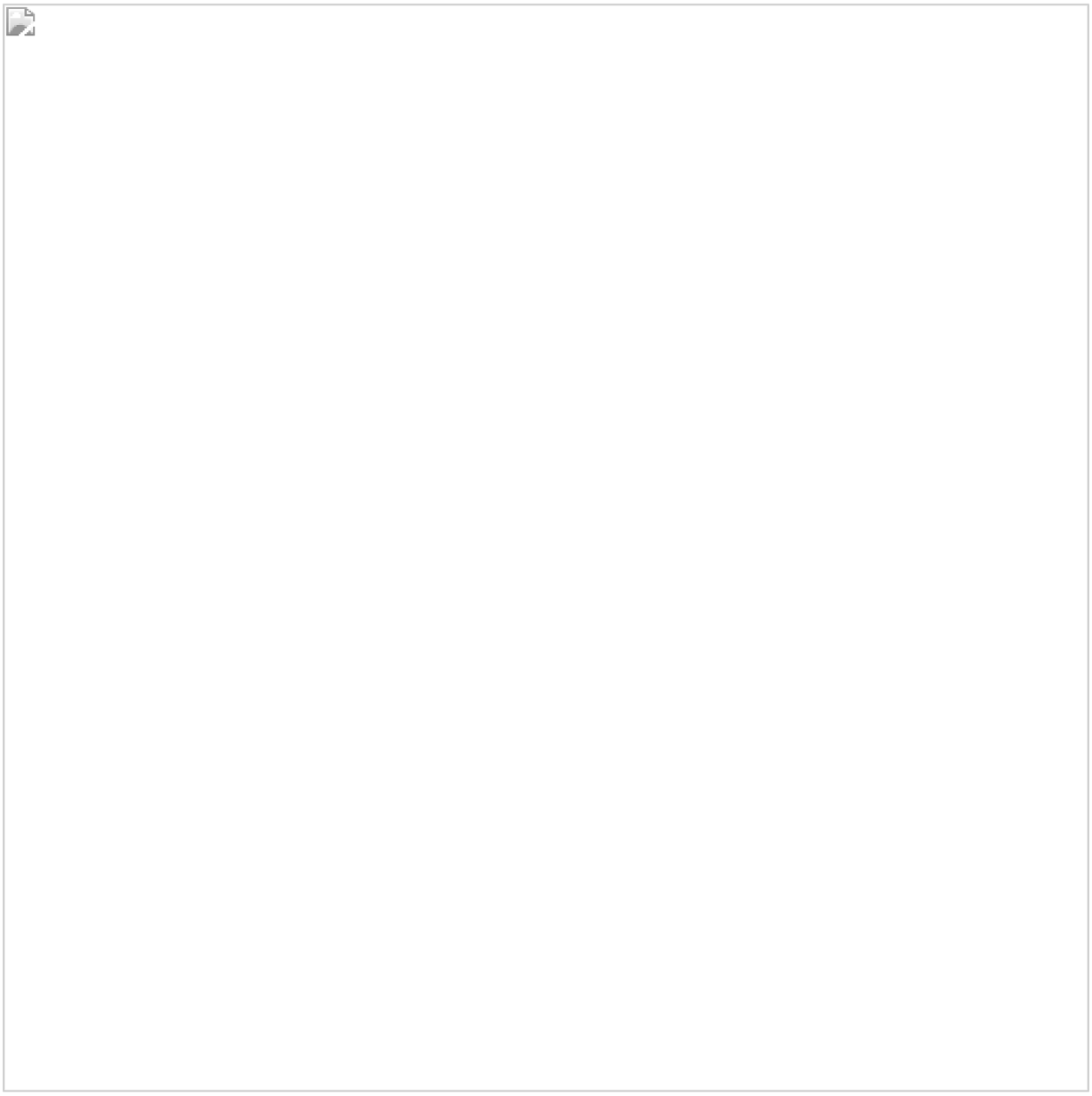


Think about it

1. What happened to the tortoise's shell?

- ○ It turned gold
- ○ It grew big enough to ride on
- ○ It broke

The Sea King's Palace



At last a magnificent gate appeared, and behind it the long, sloping roofs of the Sea King’s Palace. The gatekeeper, who was a fish, led the way. The red bream, the flounder, the sole and the cuttlefish all came out with courtly bows.

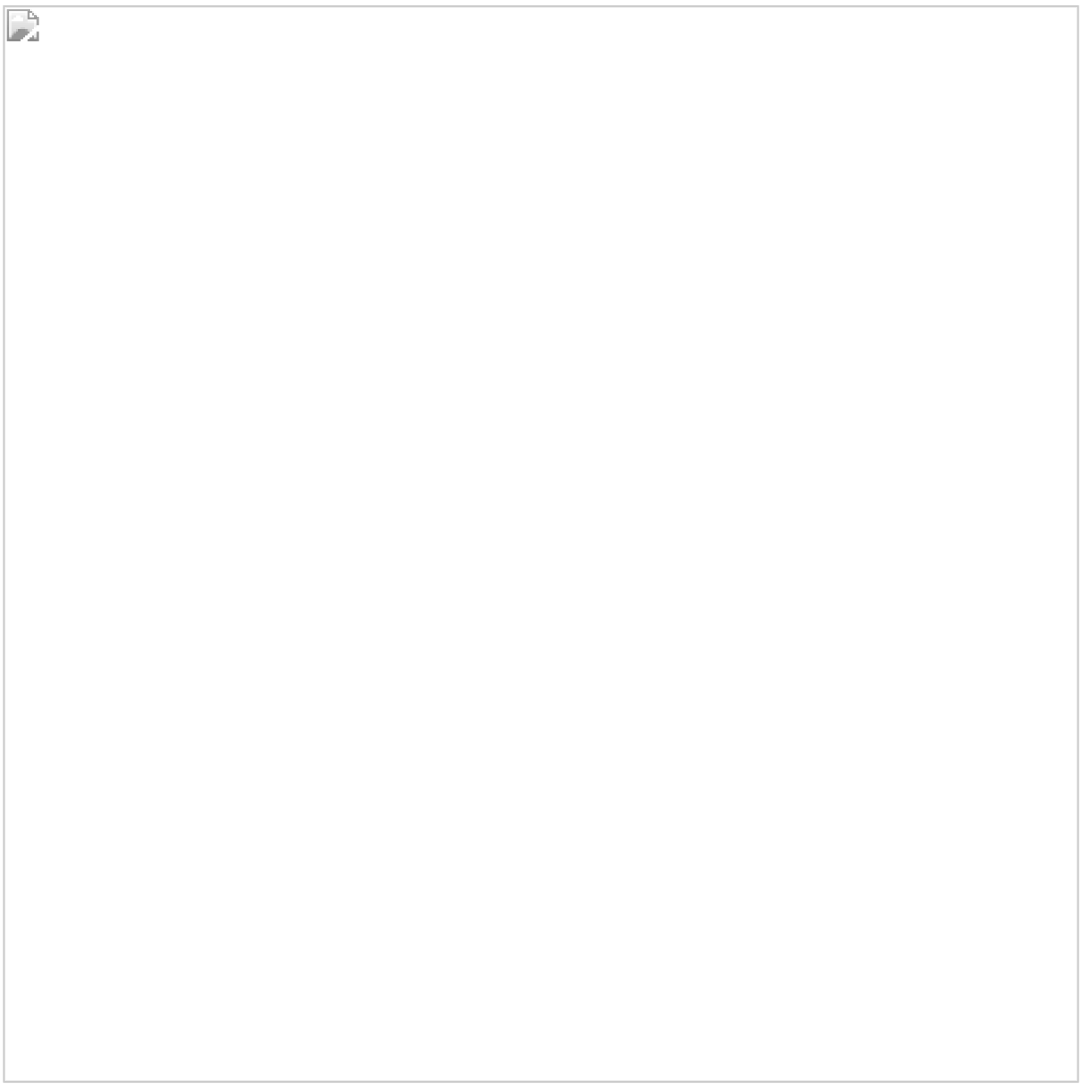
“Urashima Sama, Urashima Sama! welcome to the Sea Palace,” they said.

At the inner palace a beautiful Princess came out to meet him. Her gown was red and soft green, like the under side of a wave, and her voice sounded like music over the water.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think the Sea King's palace looks like inside?

The Sea King's Palace · another picture

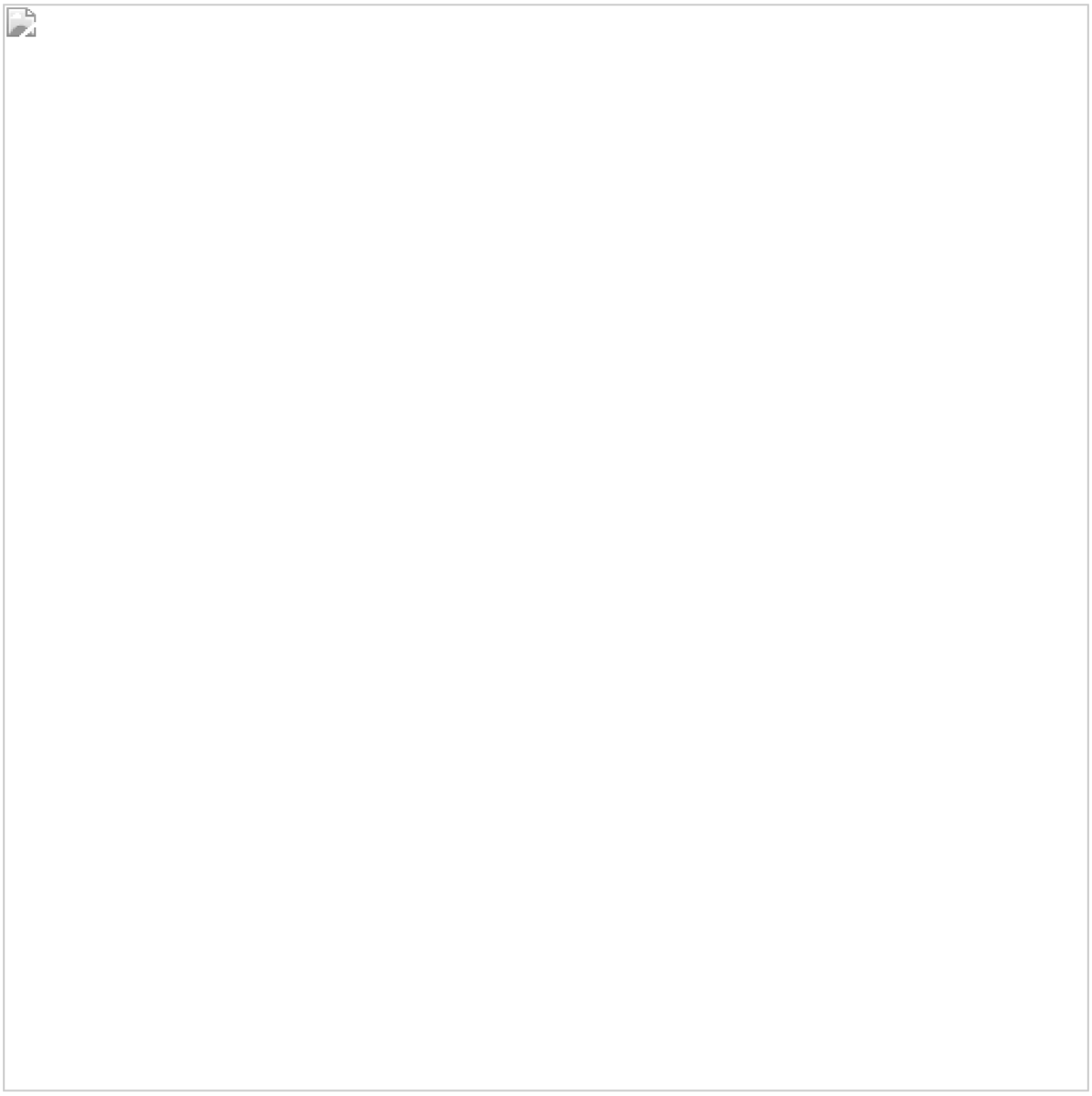


Think about it

1. Who was the gatekeeper at the palace?

- ○ A crab
- ○ A fish
- ○ A dragon

The Princess



The Princess led him to the seat of honor. “Yesterday you set free a tortoise, and I have sent for you to thank you for saving my life, for I was that tortoise.”

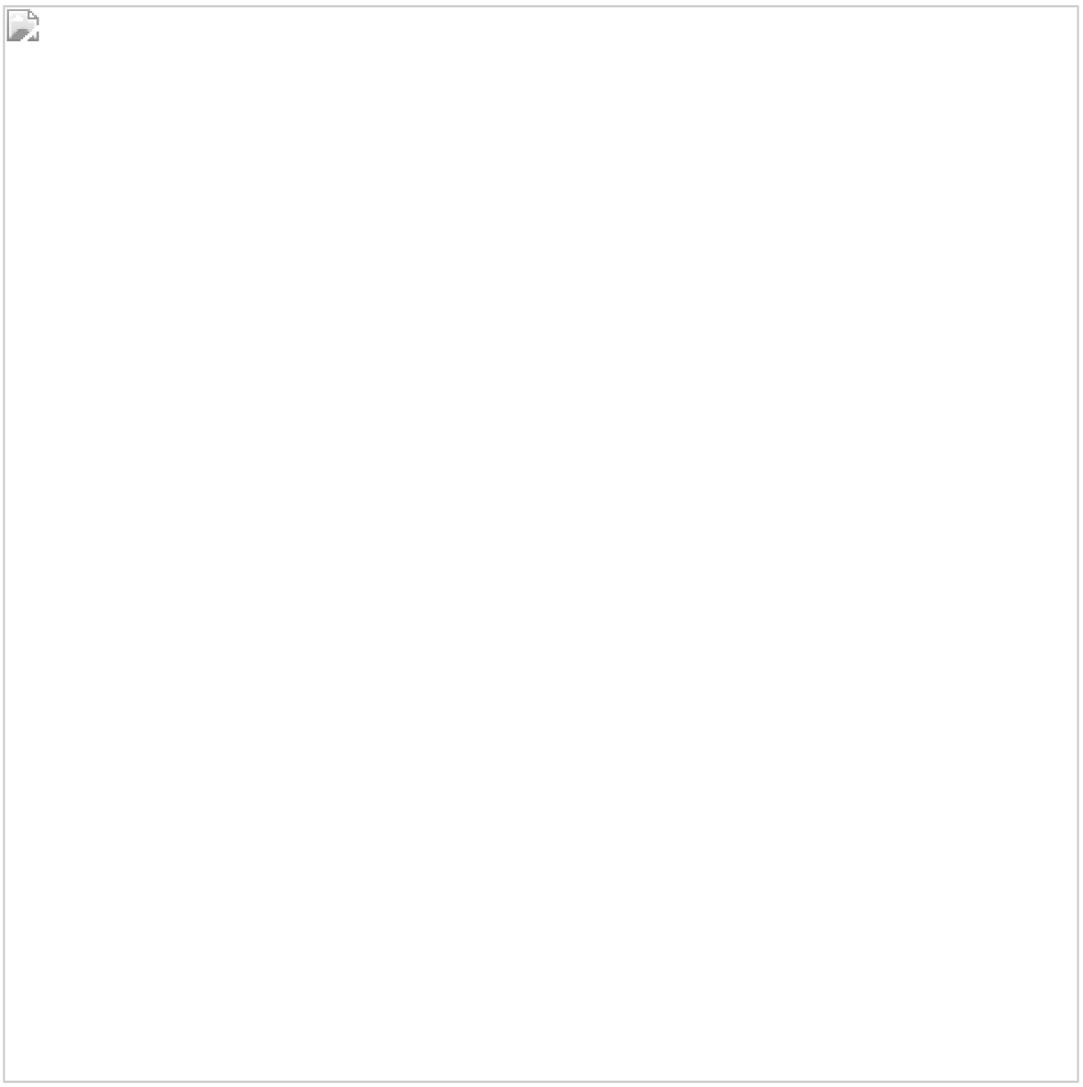
She said that if he liked, he could live there in the land of eternal youth, and she would be his bride. Urashima could hardly believe it. He said there was nothing he wished for more.

There was a great feast and a wedding. Fishes with silver scales and golden tails came in from the waves and danced.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Princess was the tortoise! Were you surprised? Have you ever found out someone was not who you thought?

The Princess · another picture

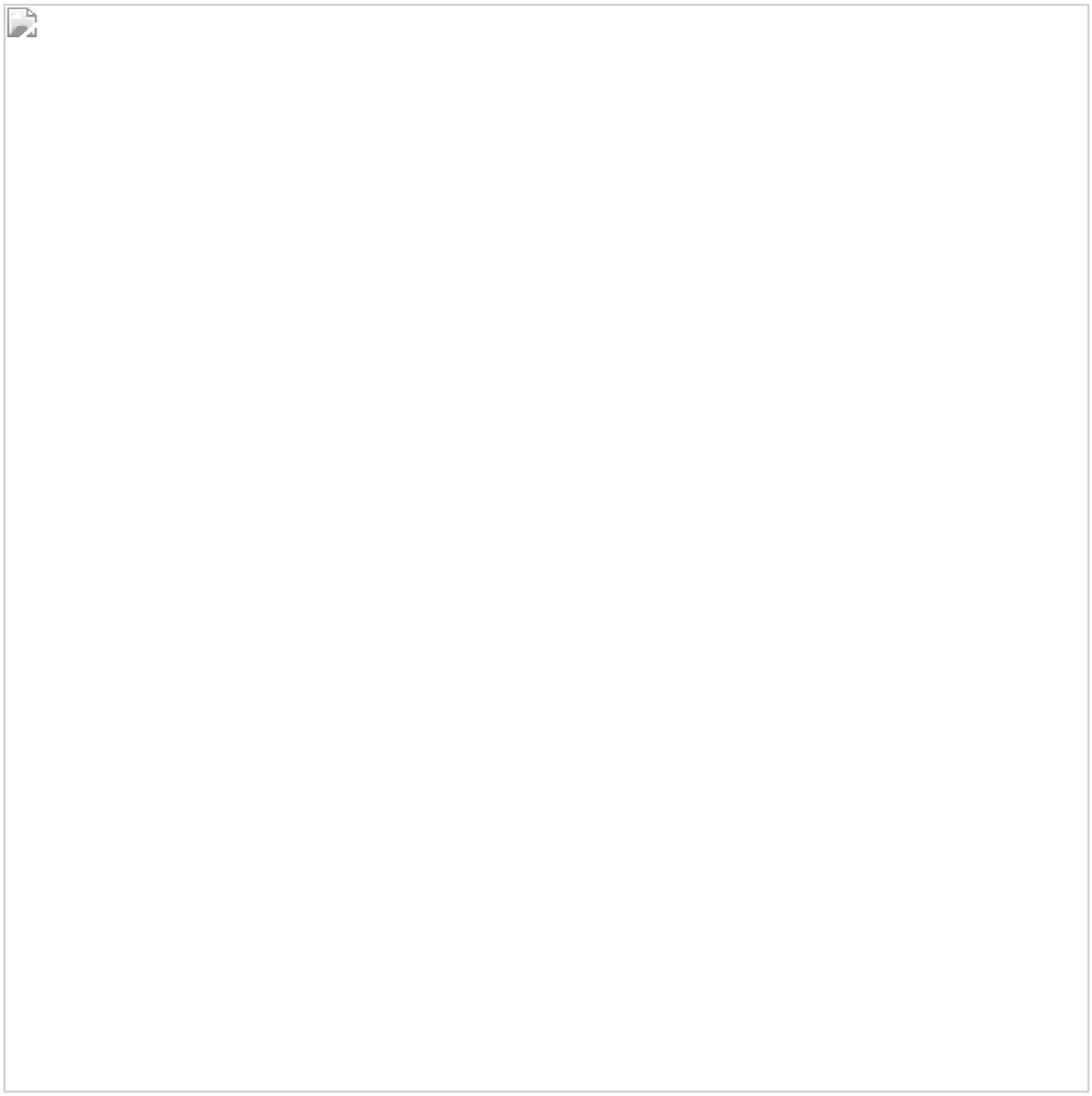


Think about it

1. Who was the Princess?

- ○ The tortoise Urashima saved
- ○ The Dragon King's cook
- ○ A girl from his village

The Garden of Four Seasons



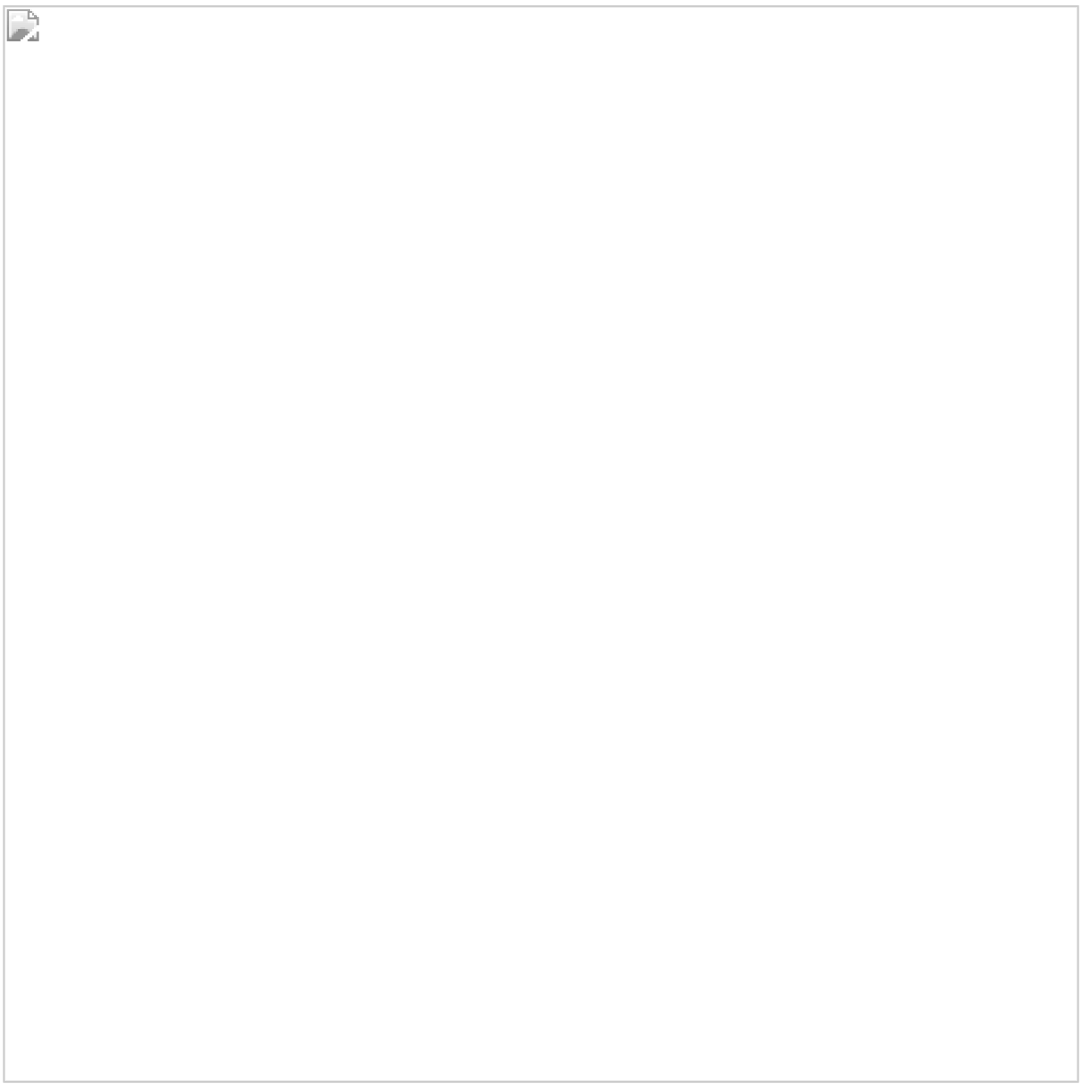
The palace was built of coral and adorned with pearls. But more wonderful to Urashima was the garden. Here he could see all four seasons at once.

To the east, plum and cherry trees were in bloom and nightingales sang. To the south, the trees were green and the crickets chirped. To the west, the autumn maples blazed like a sunset sky. To the north, the ground was white with snow and the pond was thick with ice.

Each day brought new joys. Urashima was so happy that he forgot his home and his parents. Three days passed without his thinking of them.

TALK ABOUT IT

Which side of the garden would you walk to first: spring, summer, autumn, or winter?

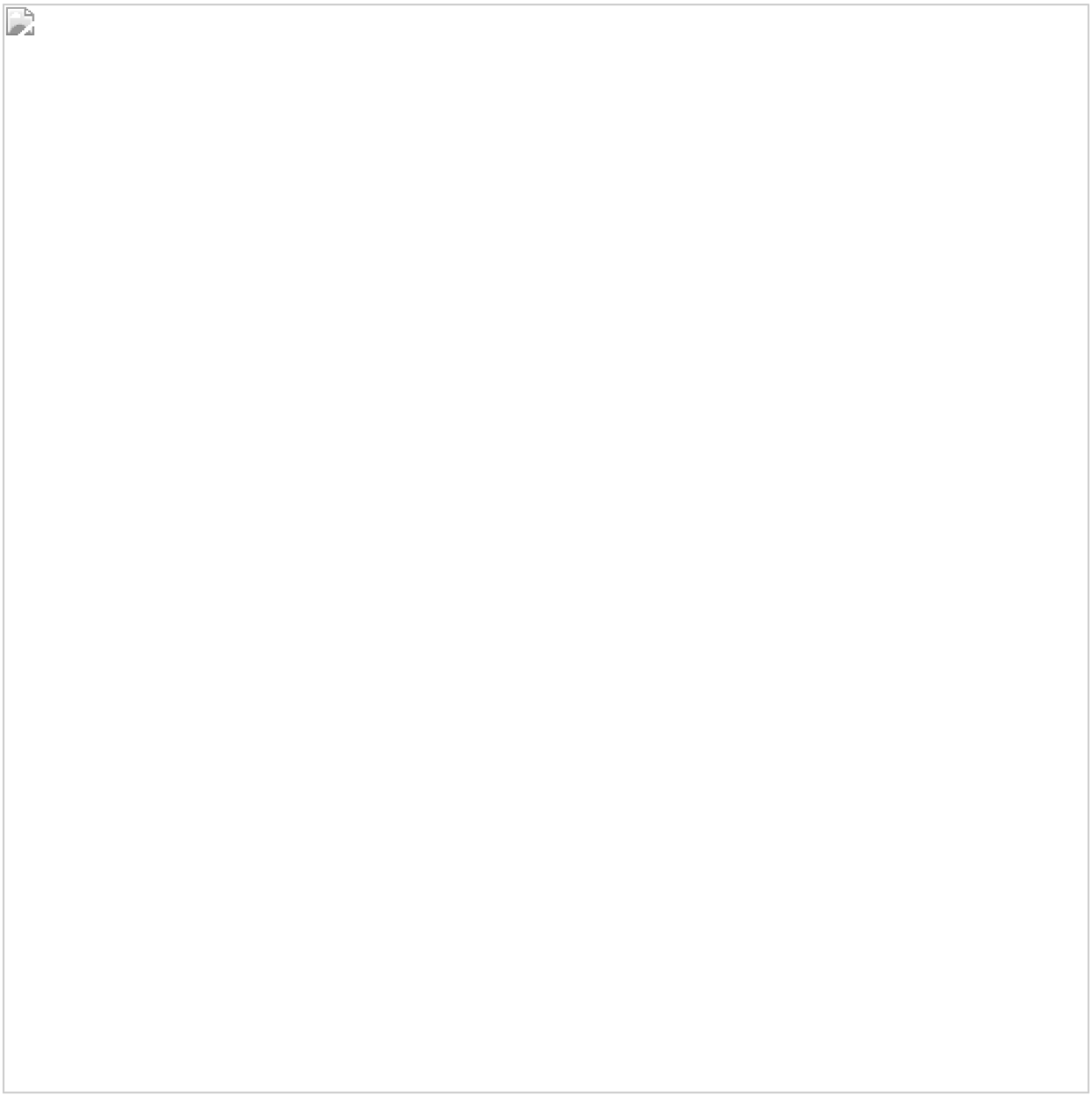


Think about it

1. Which season was in the north of the garden?

- ○ Summer
- ○ Spring
- ○ Winter

Remembering Home



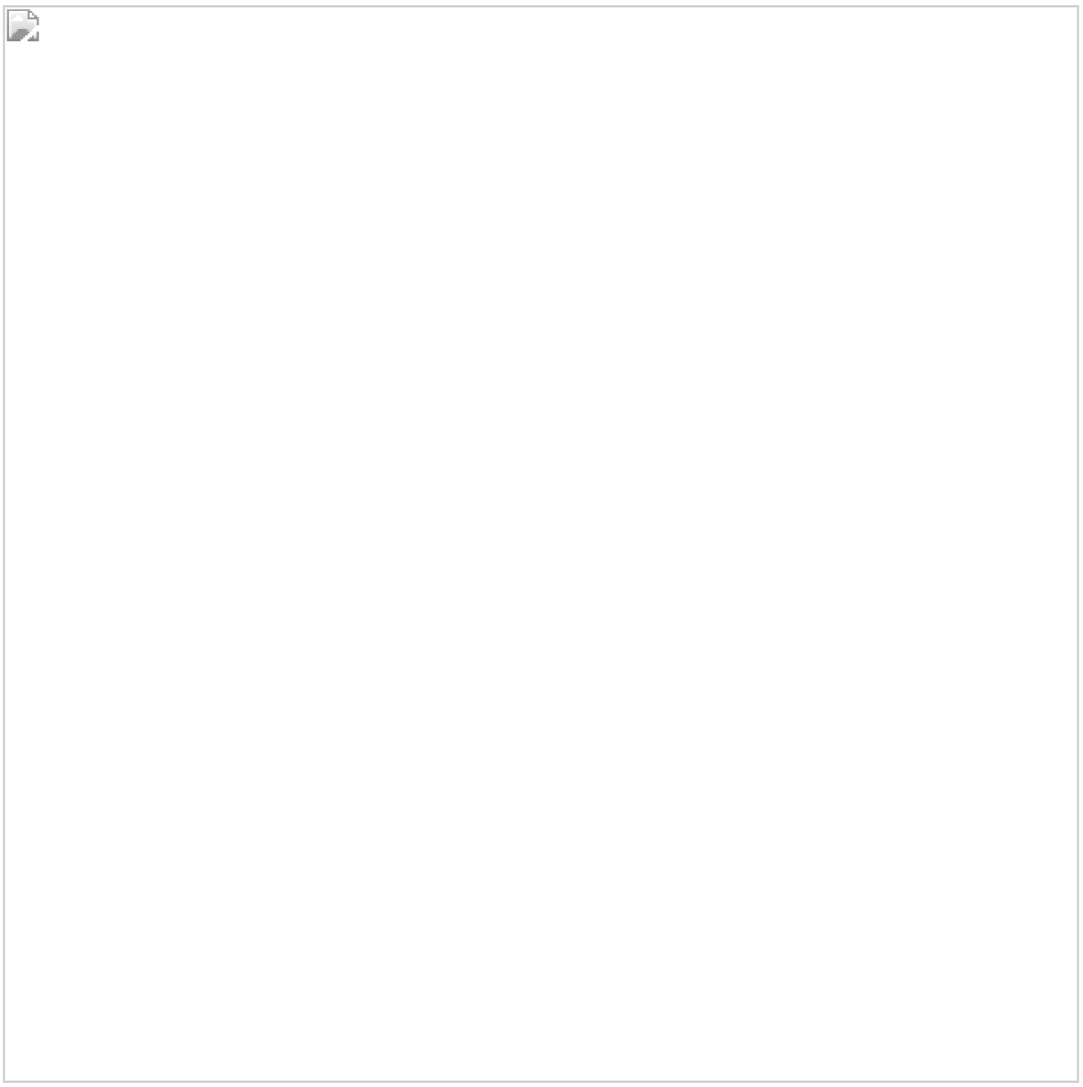
Then his mind came back to him. “I must not stay on here, for I have an old father and mother at home,” he said. “How anxious they must have been these days when I did not return as usual.”

He told the Princess, Otohime Sama, that he must say good-by. She wept. “Stay with me yet another day only!” she said.

But Urashima said, “Let me go for one day and I will come back to you.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Urashima left a wonderful place to go back to his parents. Who do you miss when you are away?

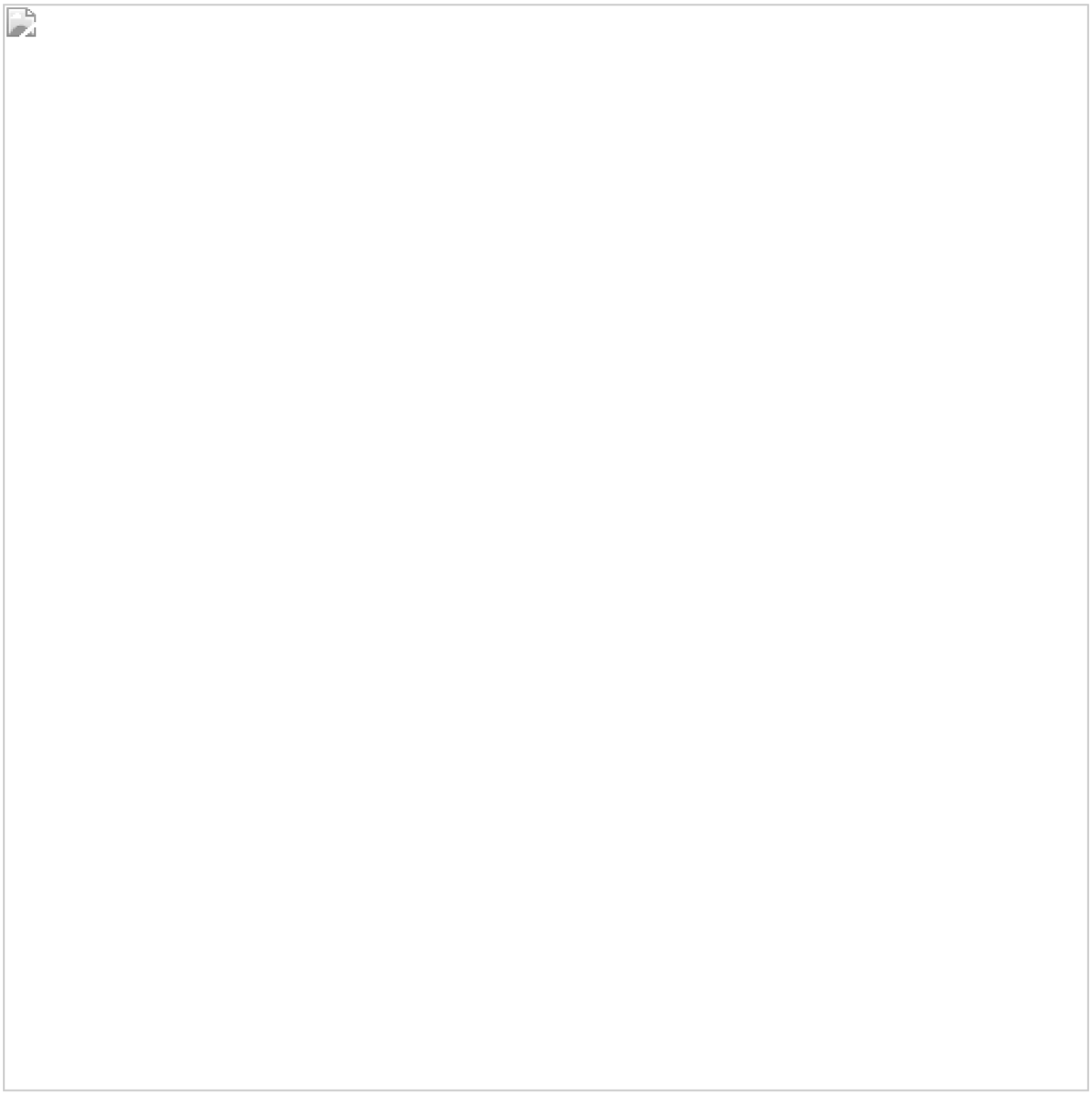


Think about it

1. Why did Urashima want to go home?

- ○ He was bored
- ○ He remembered his old parents
- ○ He had run out of food

The Box



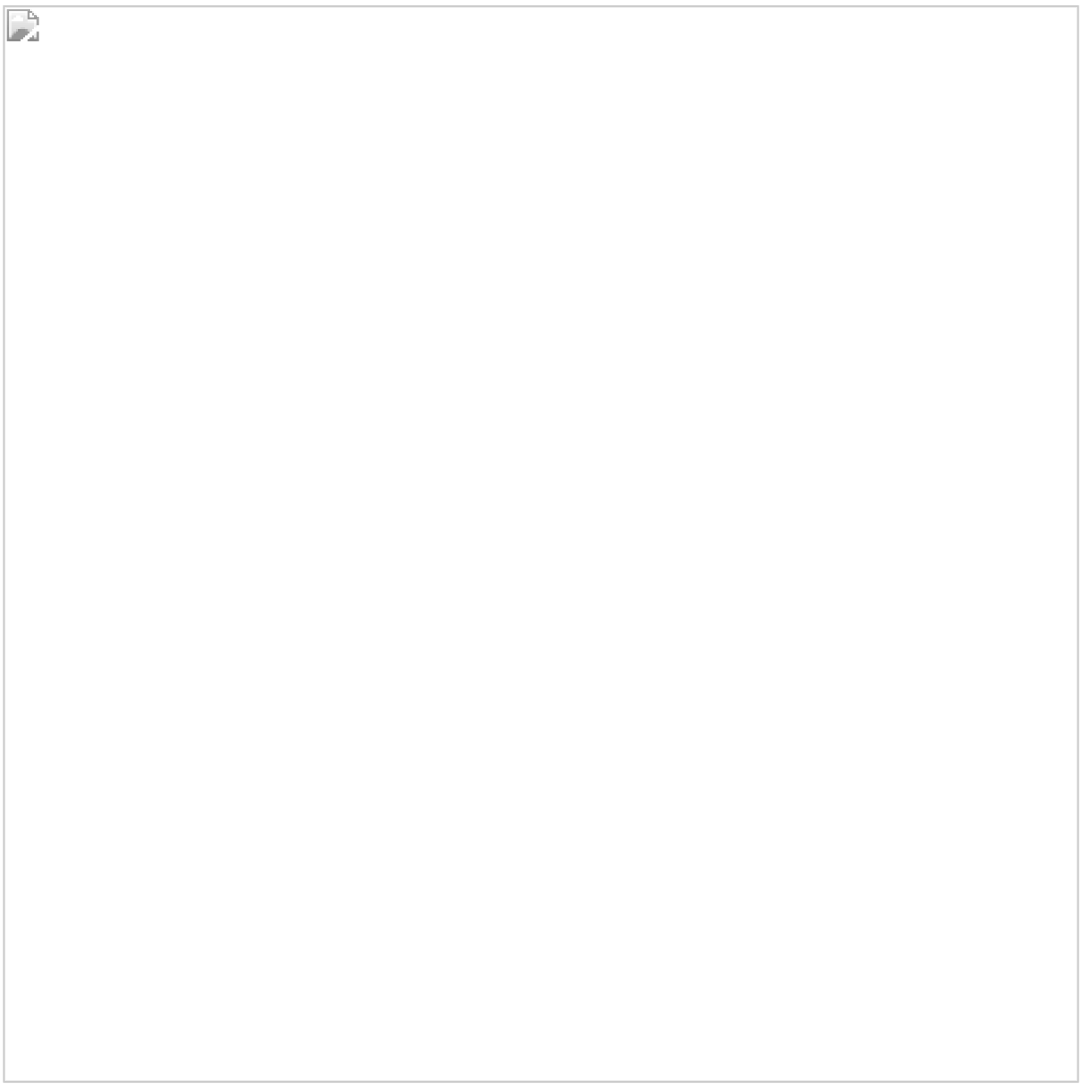
The Princess said sadly that there was nothing to be done. She gave him a beautiful lacquer box, tied with a silk cord and red silk tassels. It was the tamate-bako, the Box of the Jewel Hand.

“You must not open this box, whatever happens!” she said. “Now promise me that you will never open this box!” And Urashima promised.

He mounted the tortoise’s back and rode away over the shining sea. He waved until he could see her no more.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the Princess asked him to promise? What would you do with a box you were told never to open?



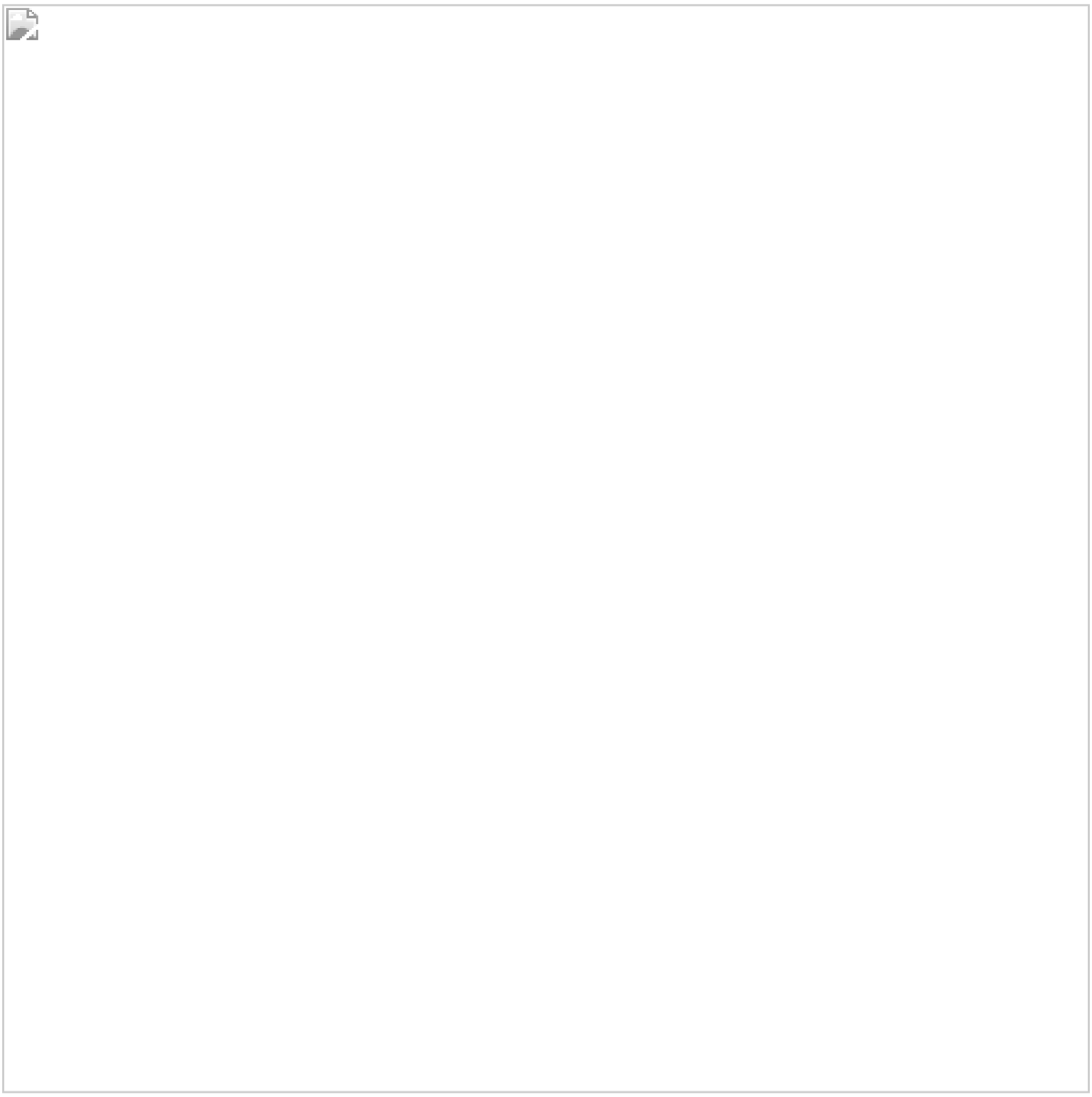
Think about it

1. What did Urashima promise?

- ○ To visit every year
- ○ Never to open the box
- ○ To bring back a fish

2. What do you think was in the box?

A Strange Home



At last the tortoise carried him into the bay he knew so well. The shore was the same and the hills were the same. But the people who passed him by had very different faces.

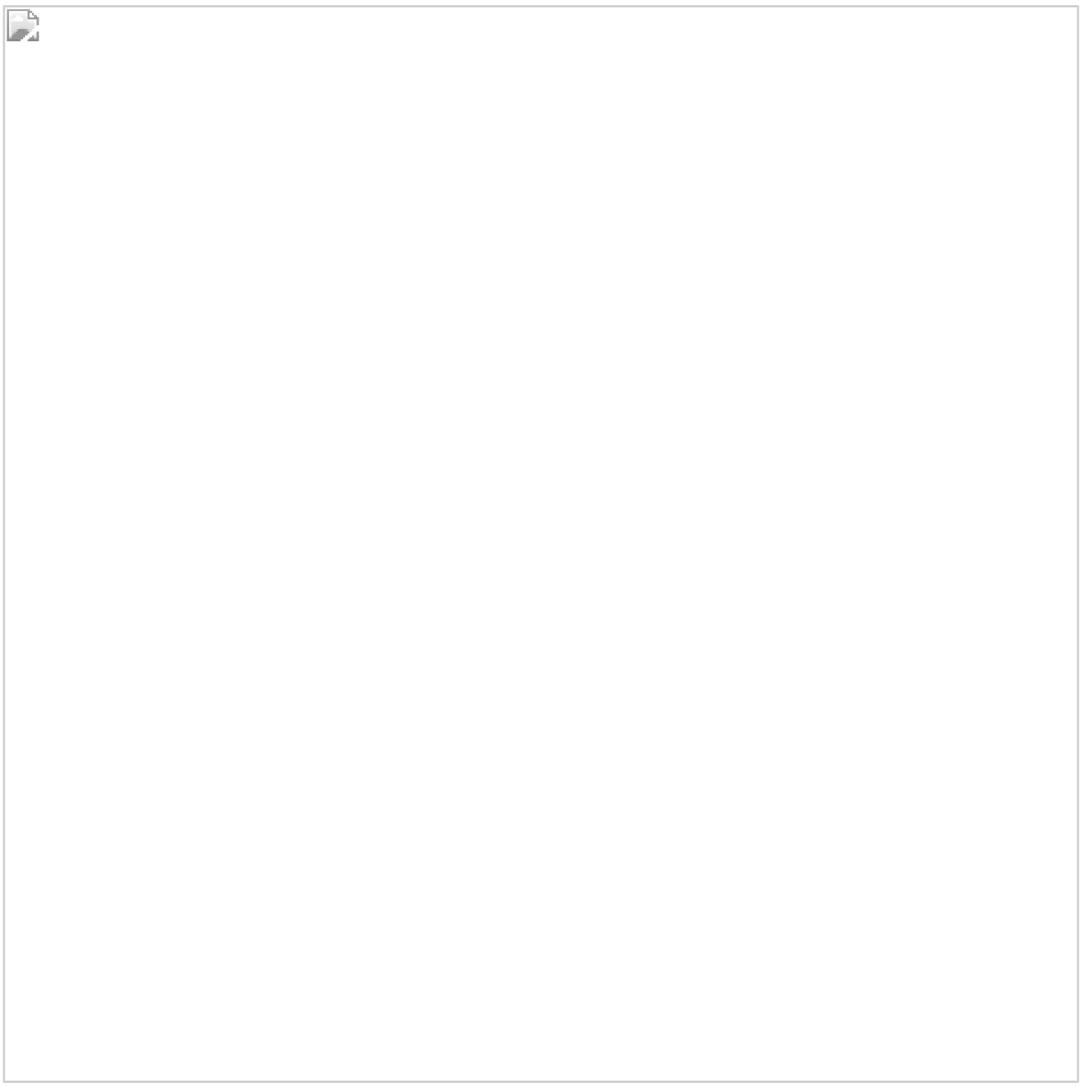
He walked to his old home and called, “Father, I have just returned!” A strange man came out. When Urashima said his name, the man laughed. “That is a story three hundred years old,” he said.

The man said, “it is written in the village chronicles.” Urashima stood in bewilderment. The few days in the Sea King’s palace had been hundreds of years. His parents and everyone he had known were gone.

TALK ABOUT IT

How would you feel if you came home and everything had changed? What would you do first?

A Strange Home · another picture

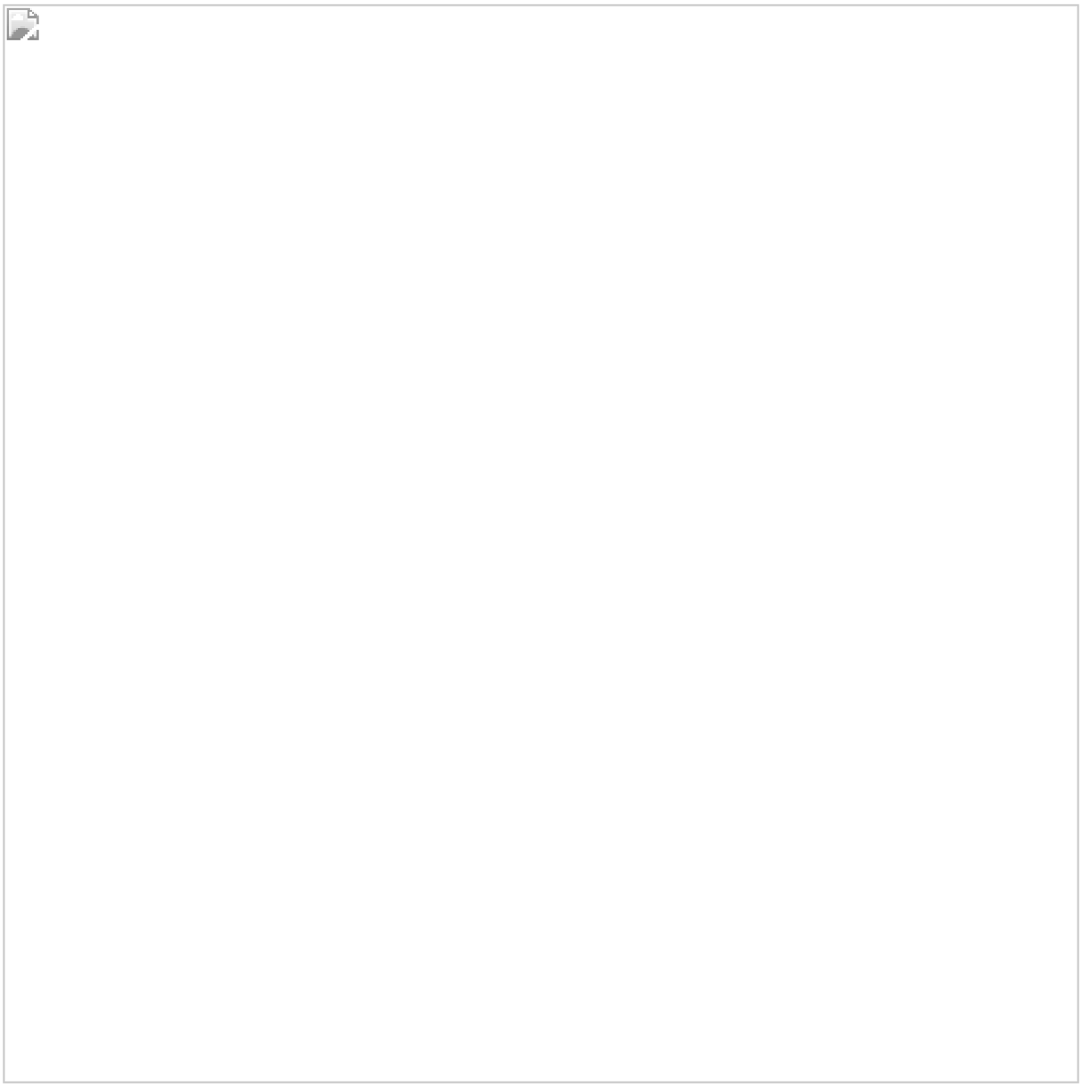


Think about it

1. How long did the man say had passed?

- ○ Three days
- ○ Three hundred years
- ○ Thirty years

The Box Opened



Urashima went back to the beach. But he could not find the way back to the sea alone. Then he remembered the box.

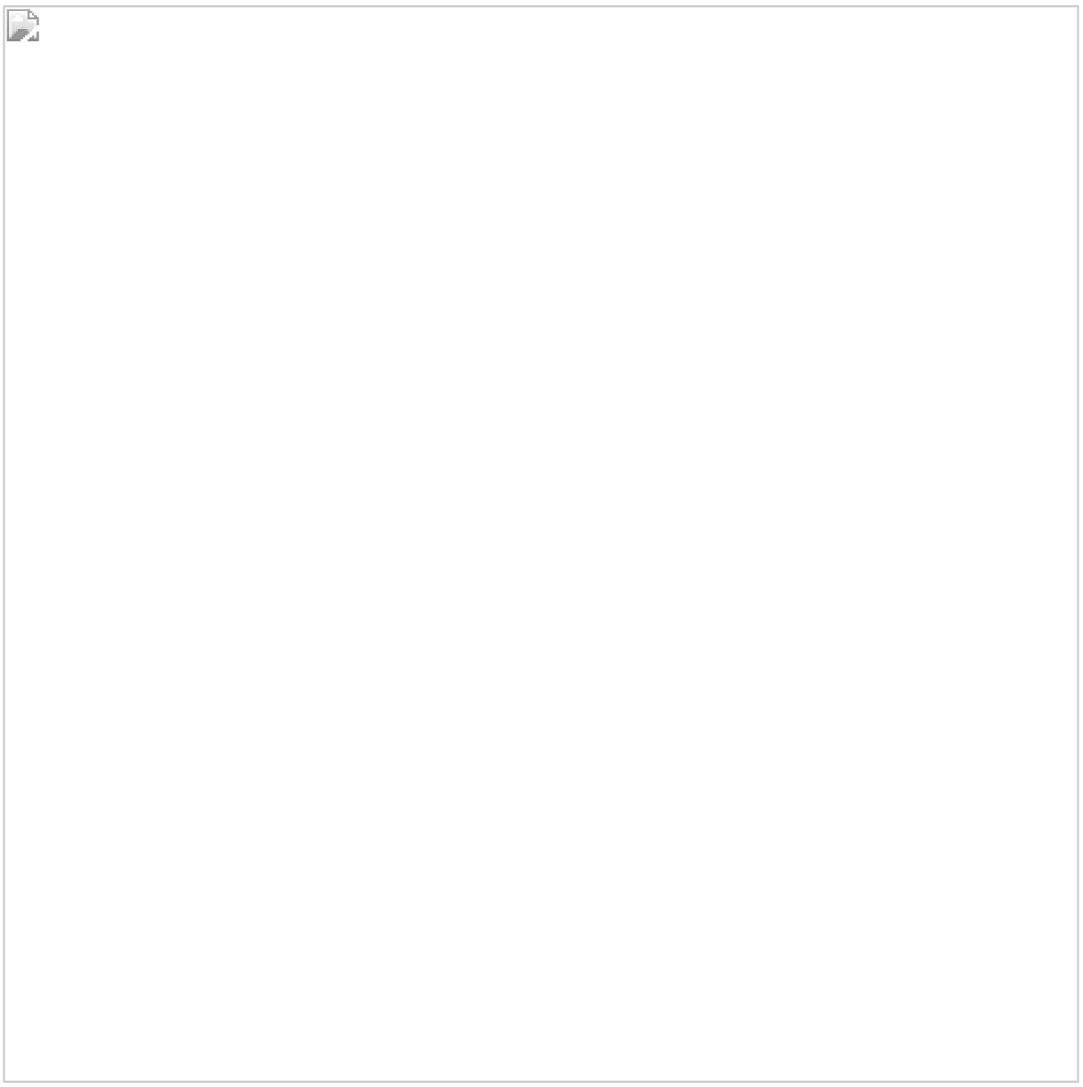
Surely, he thought, it held something to help him find his Princess. So he broke his promise. Slowly he untied the red silk cord and lifted the lid.

Only a little purple cloud rose out in three soft wisps. It covered his face for a moment and floated away over the sea. Urashima suddenly became very, very old. His back bent, his hair turned snowy white, and his life ended there on the beach.

Poor Urashima! He could never return to the Princess beyond the sea.

TALK ABOUT IT
Urashima was alone and sad when he opened the box. What do you think could have helped him instead?

The Box Opened · another picture



Think about it

1. What came out of the box?

- ○ Gold coins
- ○ A purple cloud
- ○ A fish

2. Was there anything Urashima could have done differently?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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