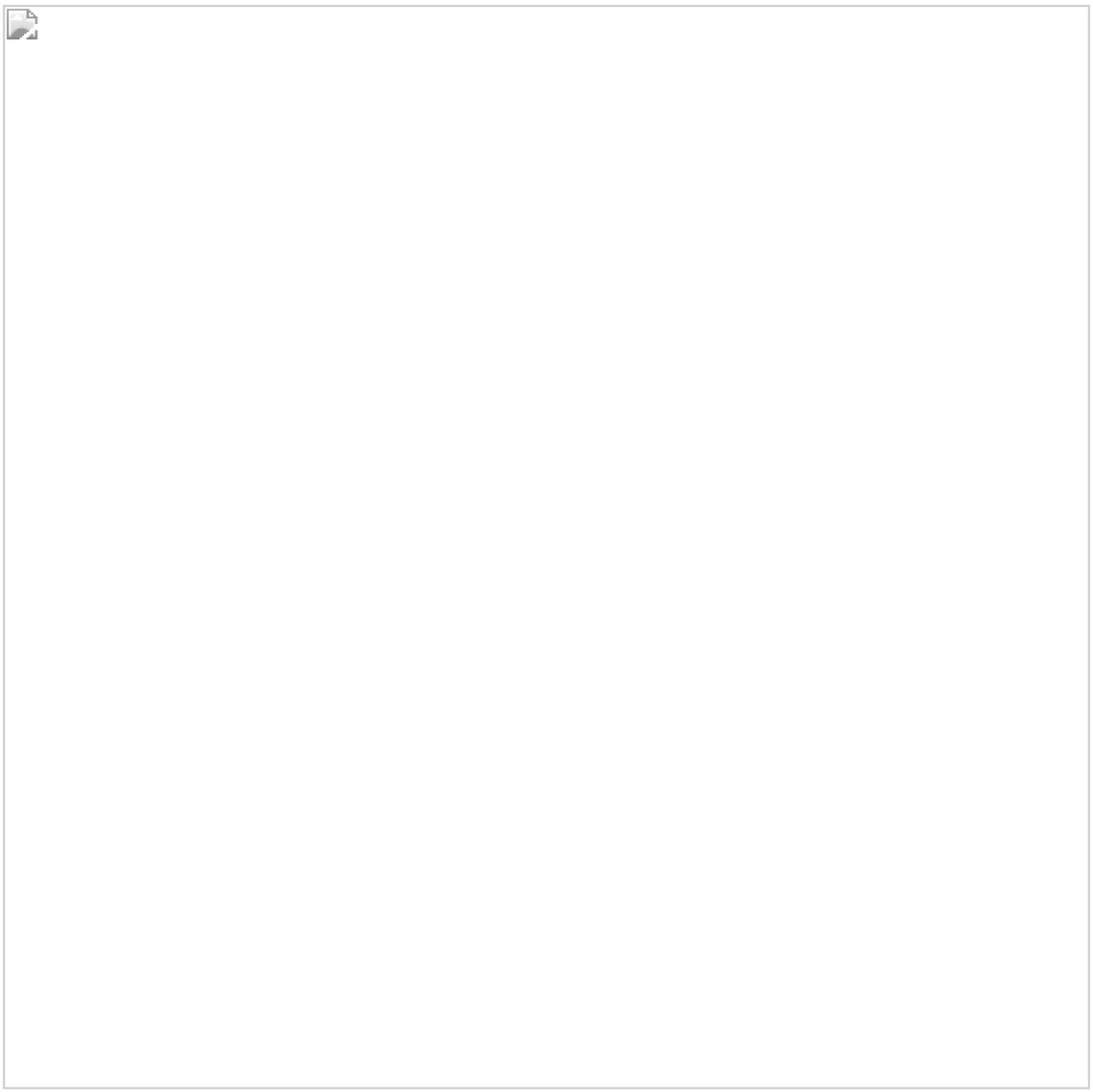
COLORING THE CLASSICS

William Tell

A Hero of Switzerland



Far away in the heart of Europe lies a little country called Switzerland. When great kings and princes swept over the world, fighting and conquering, little Switzerland was not swallowed up by any of them.

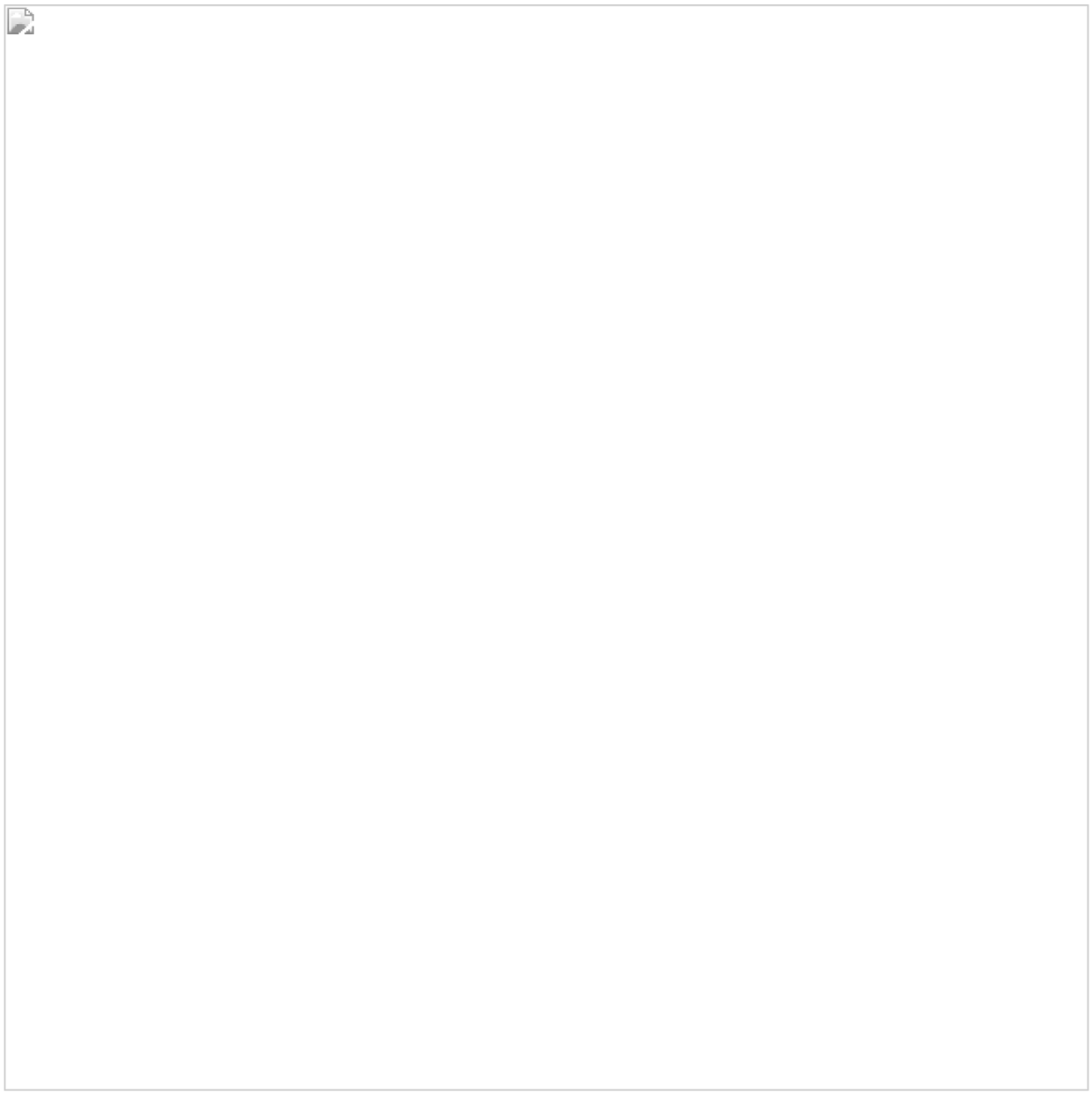
The Swiss have always been a brave and fearless people.

TALK ABOUT IT

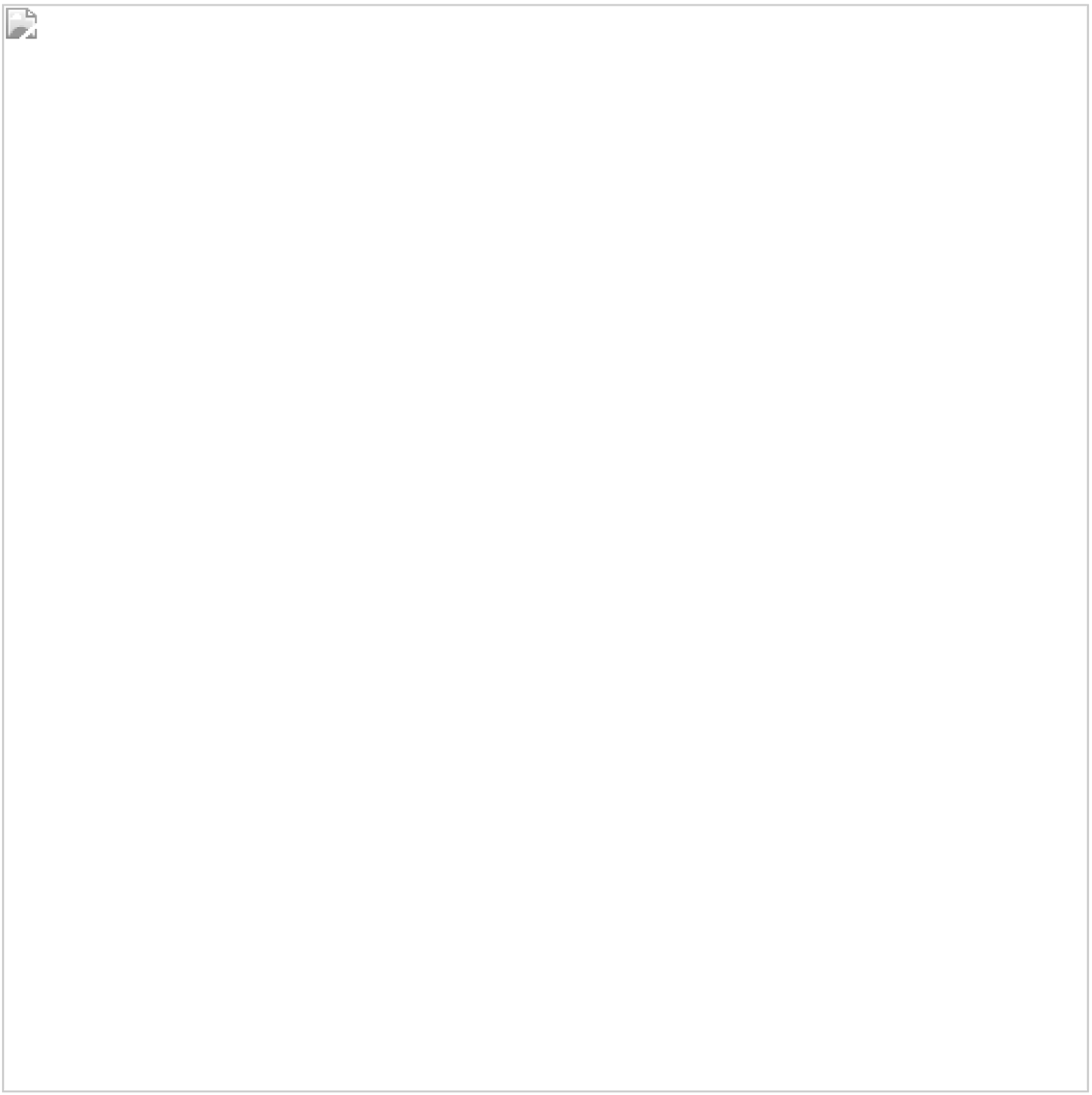
Switzerland is a small country, but it stayed free. What do you think it takes for a small place to stay free?

This book belongs to _____

William Tell · another picture



A Duke Who Wanted It All



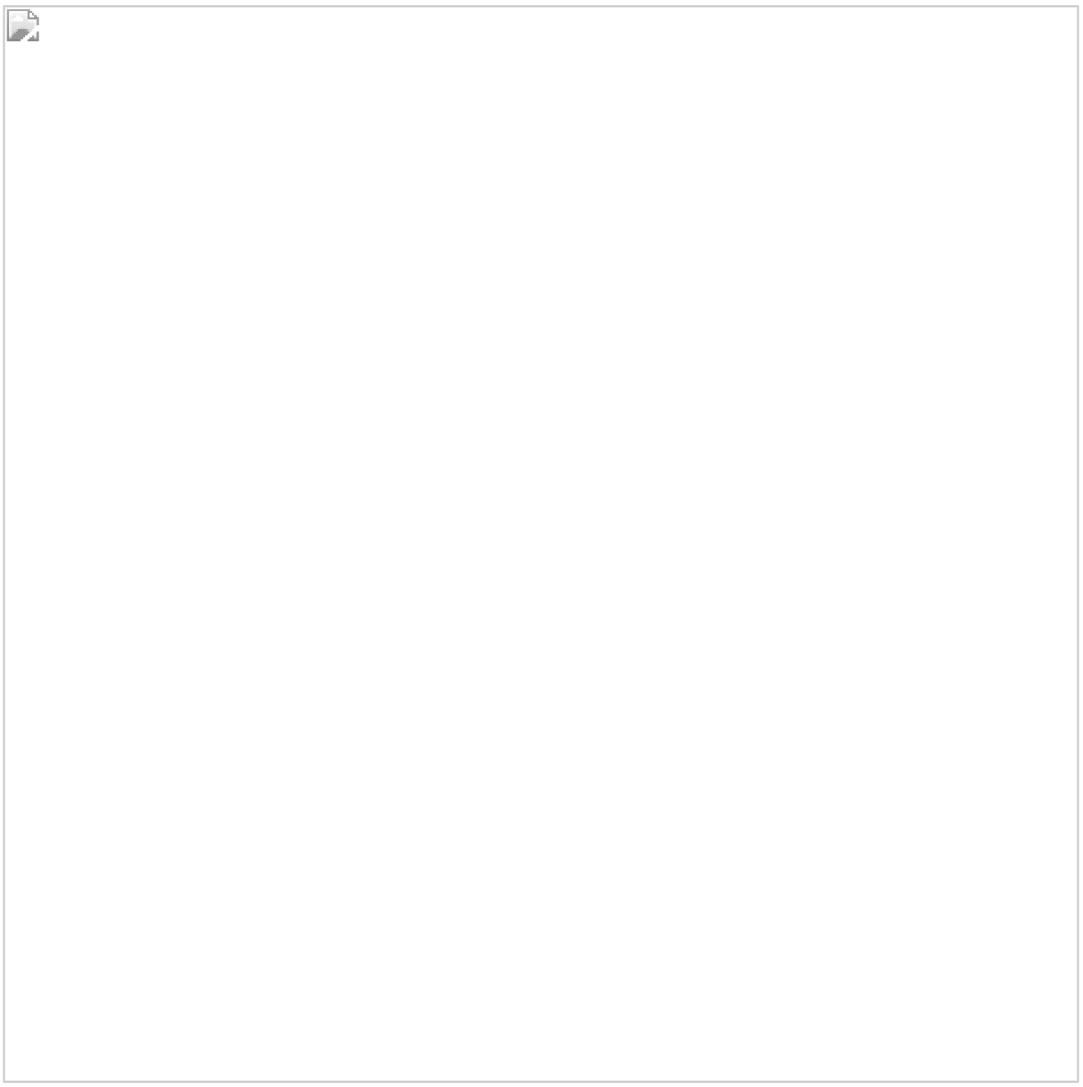
In those times, the Swiss belonged to a great empire with an Emperor over it, but they were a free people. They had no king or prince, only a governor chosen by the Emperor.

A Duke of Austria looked at Switzerland's beauty and wanted it all for himself. But the Swiss would not give up their freedom. Three cantons, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, swore to stand by each other and never to submit to Austria.

The Duke, Albrecht, later became Emperor. He wanted the Swiss to call him their king, and some did. But the people of the free cantons said they wished to remain free.

TALK ABOUT IT

The three cantons promised to stand by each other. Who stands by you?

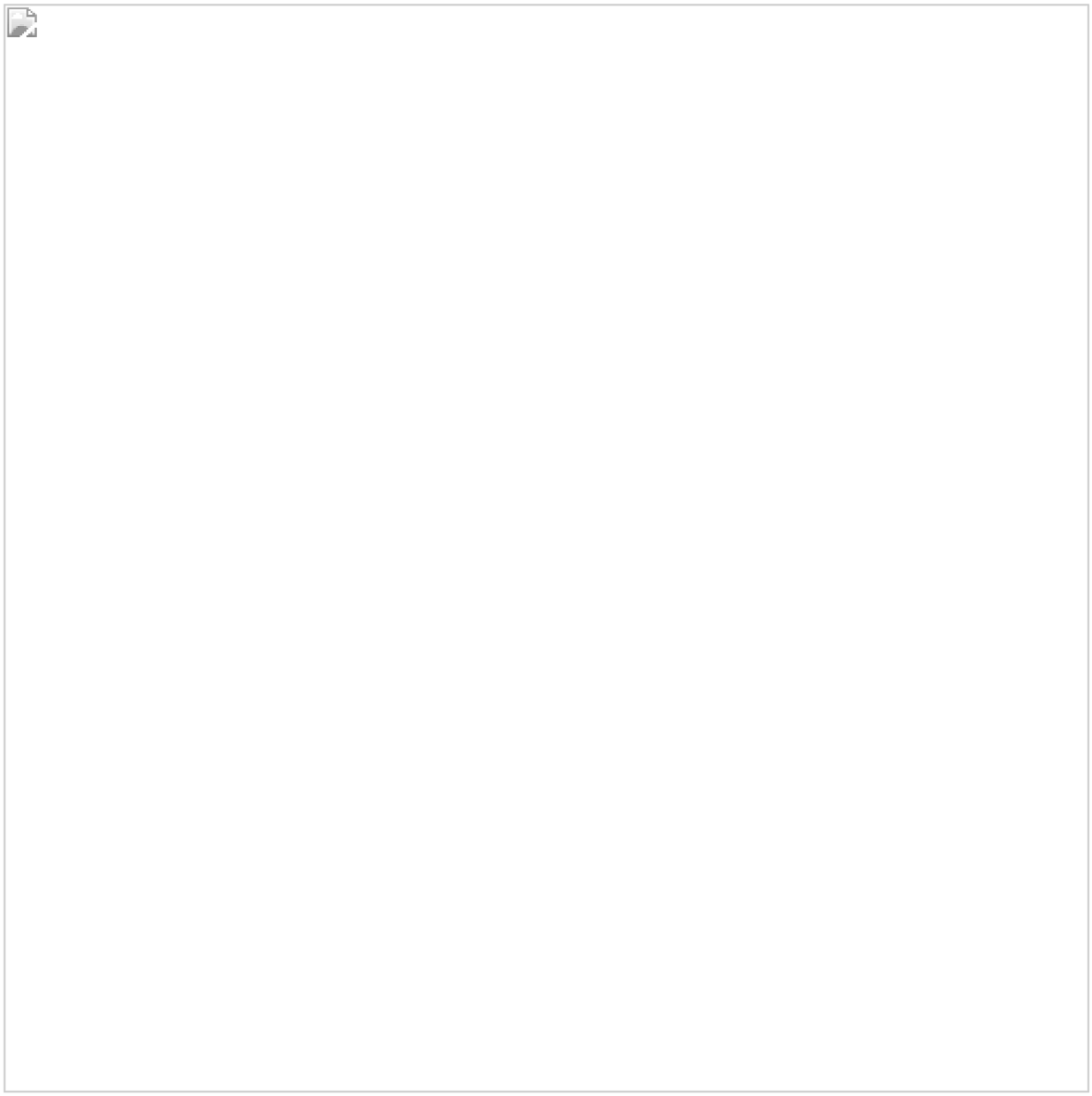


Think about it

1. What did the three cantons promise each other?

- ○ To pay taxes
- ○ To stand by each other and never submit to Austria
- ○ To move away

A Hard Governor



Albrecht sent two governors, Gessler and Landenberg, along with soldiers. They loaded the people with taxes, and punished the slightest fault with heavy fines.

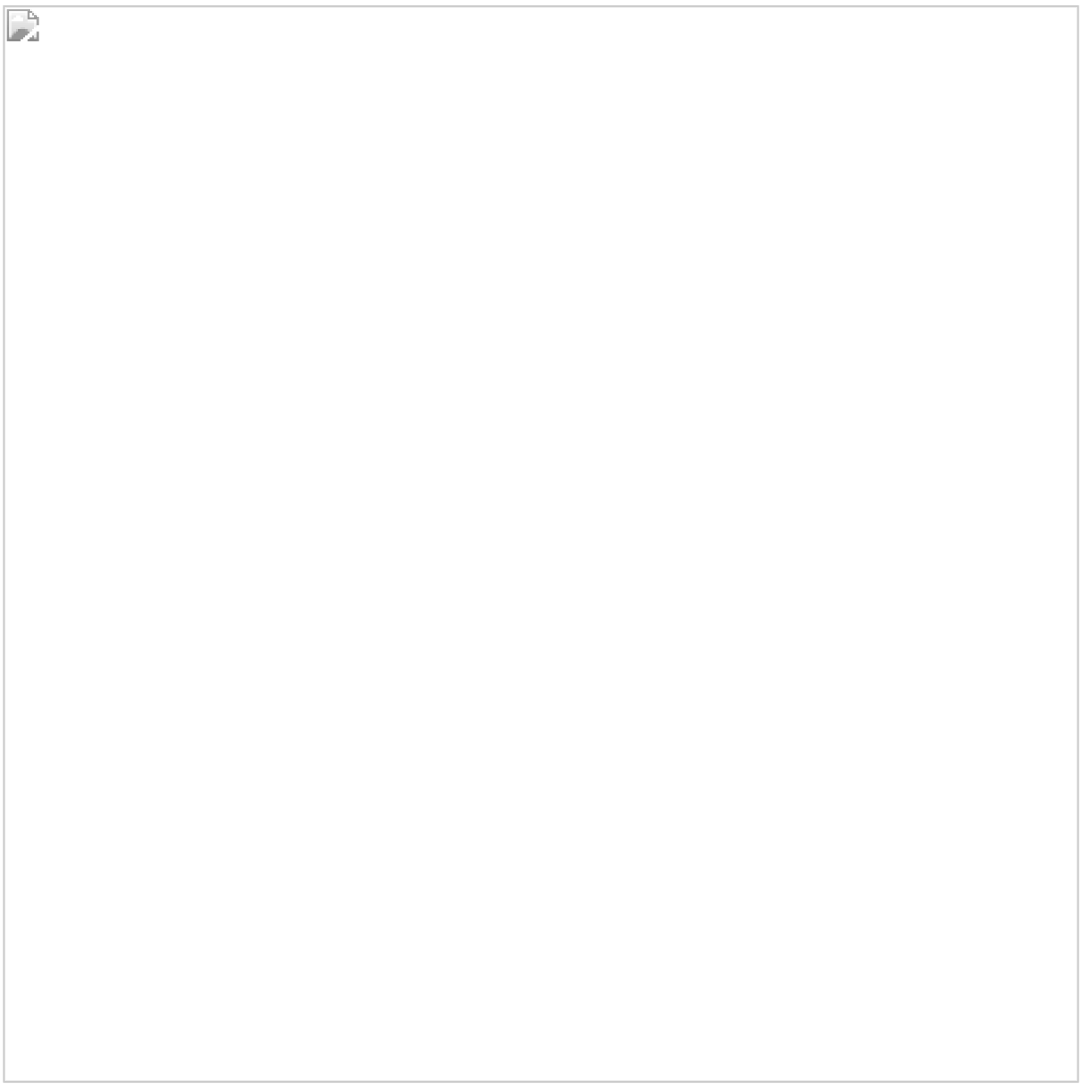
Gessler made the men of Uri build him a new castle, which he called “the Curb of Uri.” He meant it to curb the proud spirit of the people.

One day he rode past the new house of a man named Werner Stauffacher, and said he would not allow peasants to build houses without asking leave. Stauffacher answered quietly and went home. His wife told him to call a secret meeting of his friends.

TALK ABOUT IT

Gessler wanted people to be afraid of him. Why do you think some people want that?

A Hard Governor · another picture

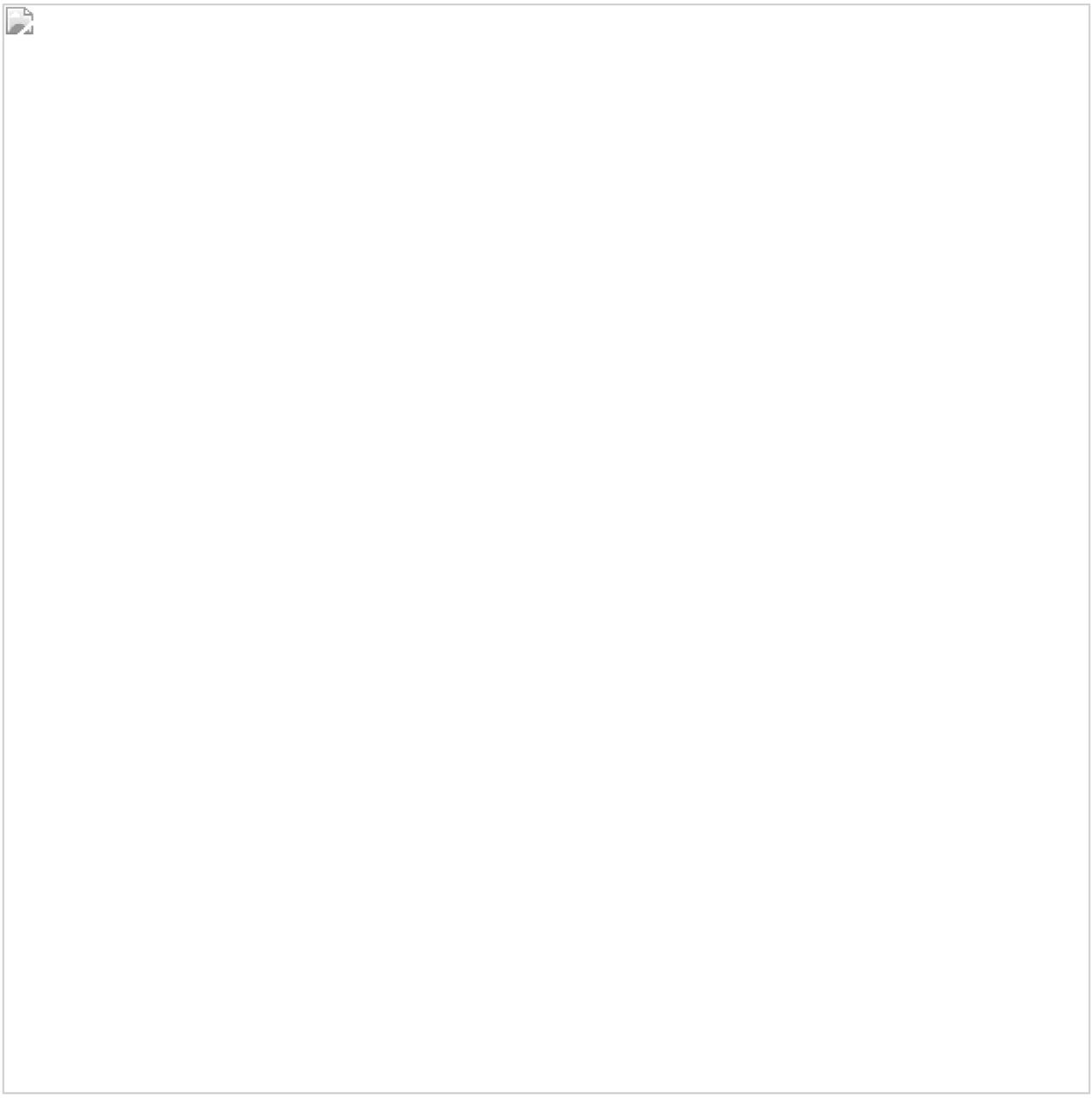


Think about it

1. What did Gessler call his new castle?

- ○ Fort Freedom
- ○ The Red Tower
- ○ The Curb of Uri

A Hat on a Pole



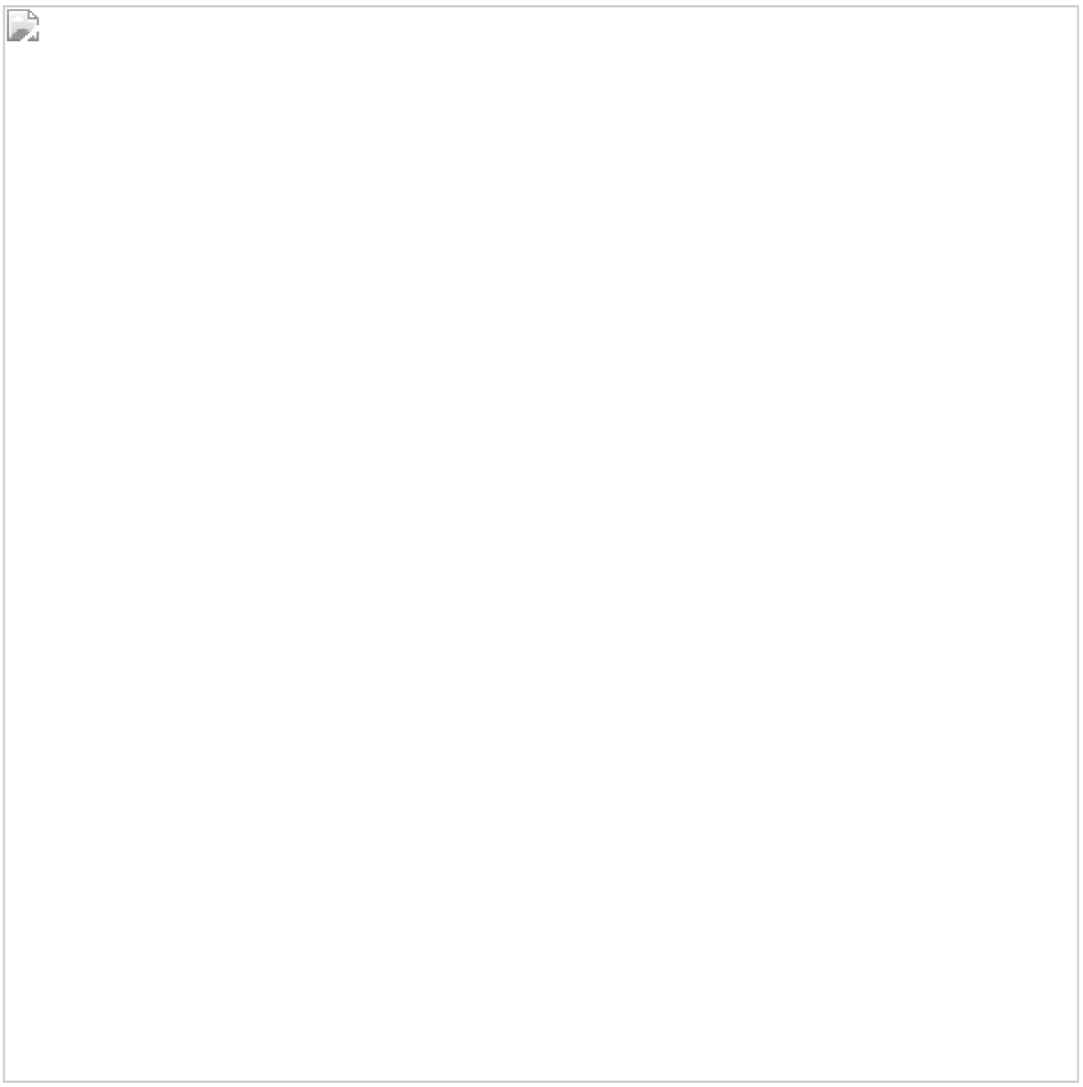
In the market-place of Altorf, soldiers marched in with a long pole, and set it up in the ground. On top of it they hung a red cap with a peacock's feather.

A herald blew his trumpet and announced that everyone must bow to the cap as they passed it. That was the governor's order.

Stauffacher heard of it, and met his friends Walter Fürst and Arnold of Melchthal. This was one more insult to a free people.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Gessler wanted people to bow to a hat?

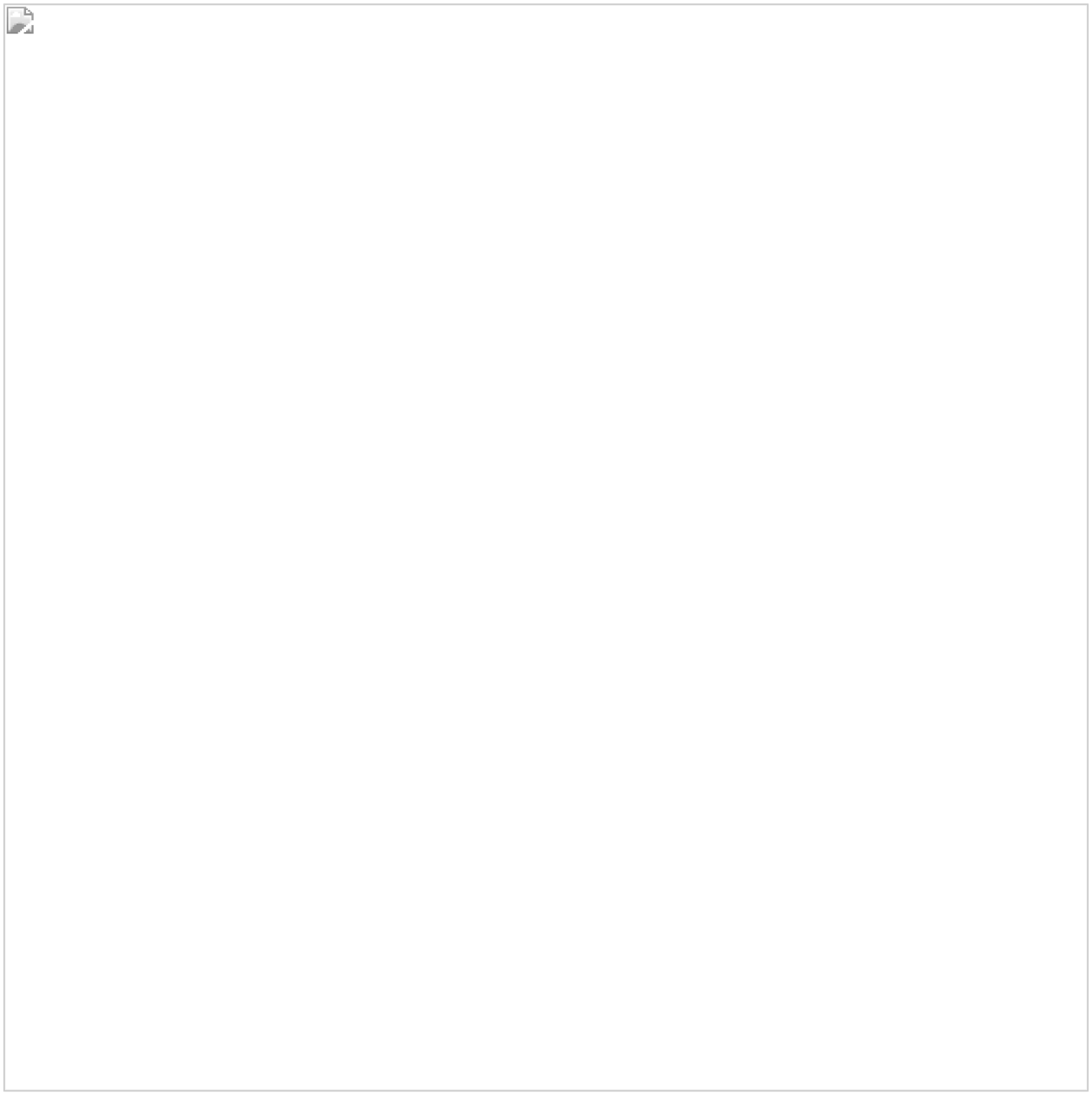


Think about it

1. What was on top of the pole?

- ○ A red cap with a feather
- ○ A flag
- ○ A lantern

A Secret Meeting in the Meadow



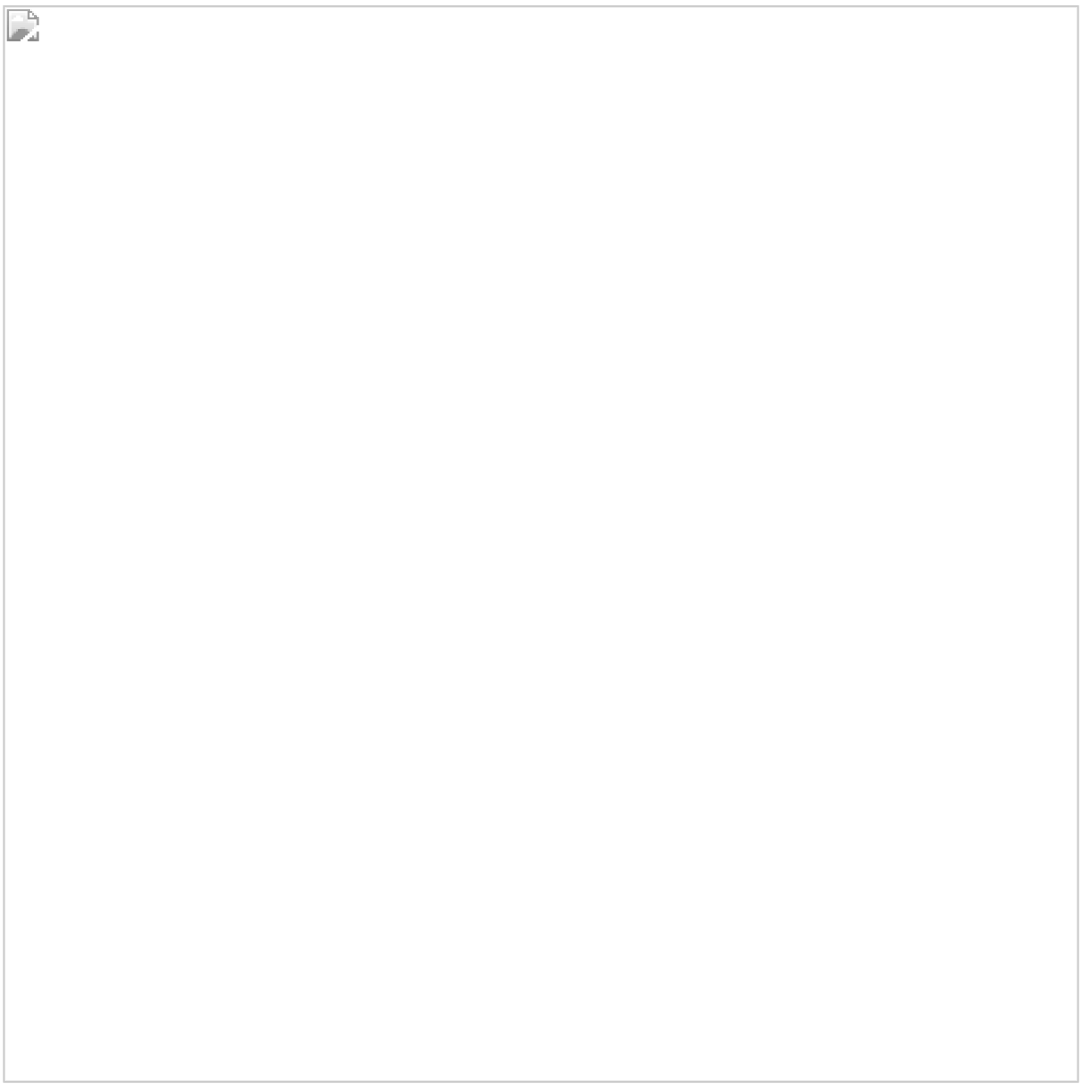
Three weeks later, in the darkness and quiet, the friends of freedom crept to a little meadow called the Rütli. They swore never to betray each other.

Near Walter Fürst stood a young man, straight and tall, with clear and honest eyes. “William Tell,” said Arnold, “and the best shot in all Switzerland. I have seen him shoot an apple from a tree a hundred paces off.”

TALK ABOUT IT

They met in secret and made promises to each other. Why do you think promises make people braver?

A Secret Meeting in the Meadow · another picture

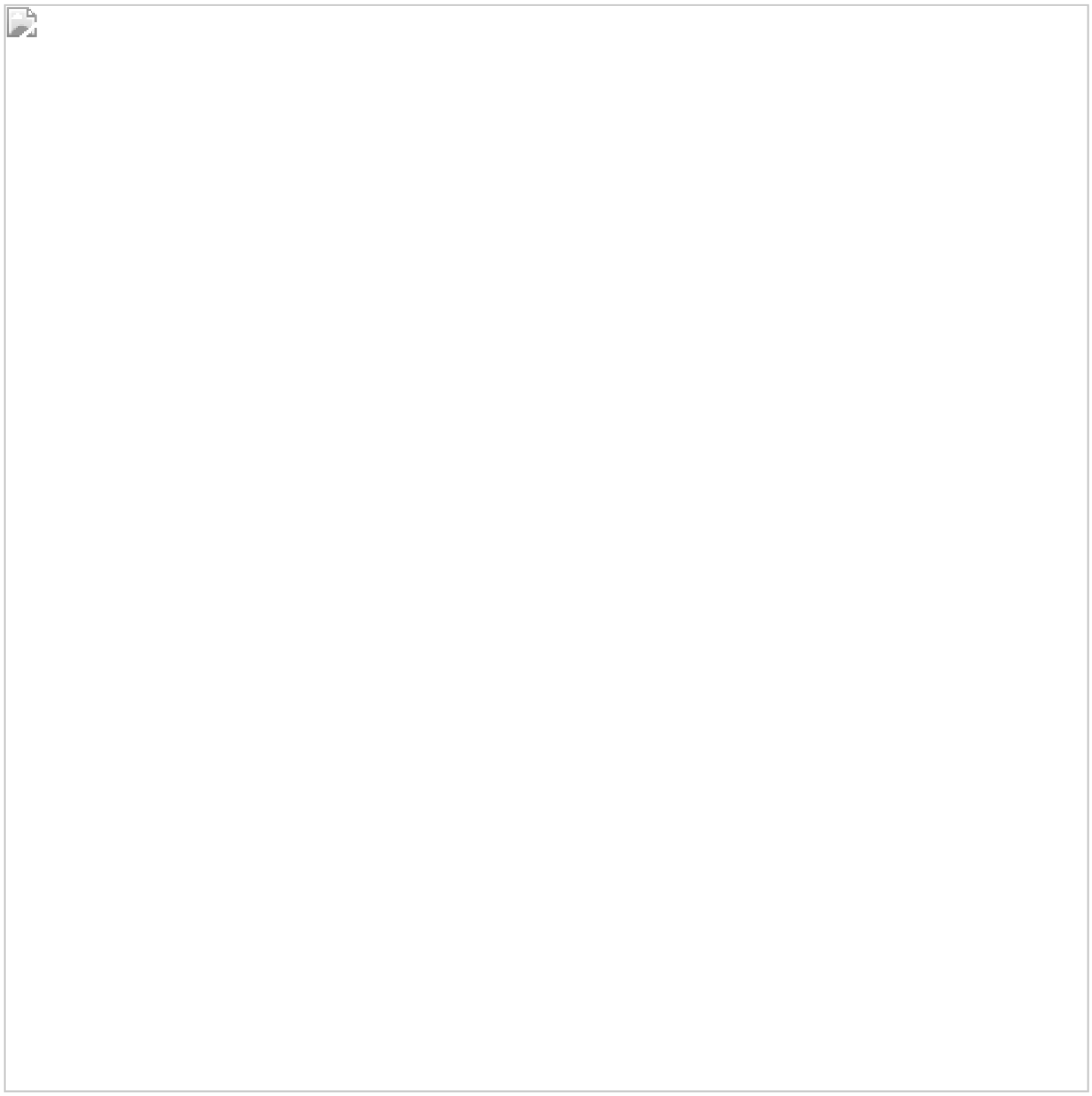


Think about it

1. What was Tell famous for?

- ○ Baking
- ○ Being the best shot in Switzerland
- ○ Singing

Tell and His Family



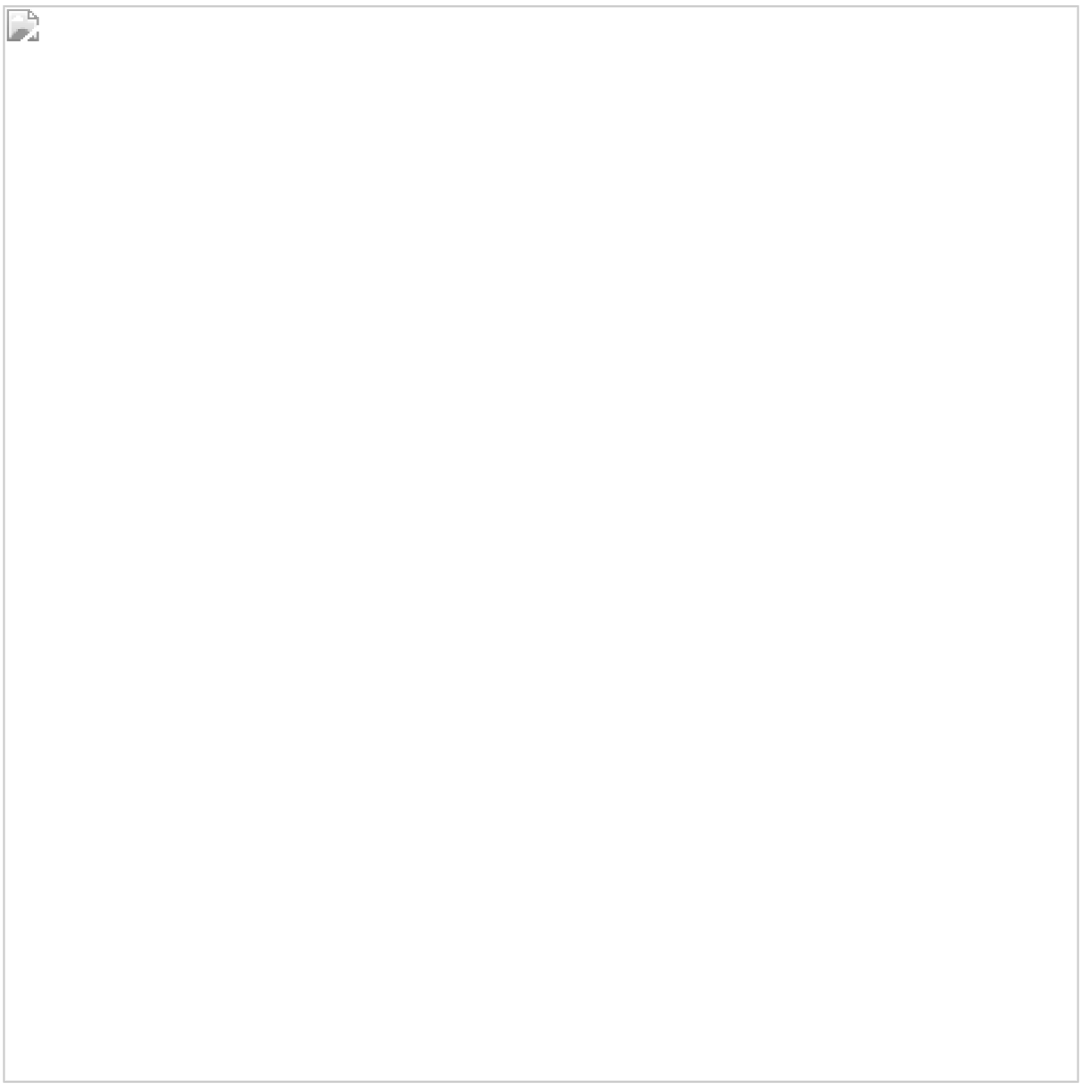
William Tell lived in a pretty cottage at Bürglen, with his wife Hedwig and their two sons, William and Walter. Walter, the younger, was about six years old. Tell loved them very much.

One morning Tell said he must go to Altorf to see Hedwig's father. “Do be careful, William,” said Hedwig. “You know the governor is there just now.” She asked him to leave his crossbow at home. But Tell said he felt lost without it.

Little Walter asked to come along. “It's all right, mother,” he said, “I will take care of father.” And off they went.

TALK ABOUT IT

Walter said he would take care of his father. What do you think about that?

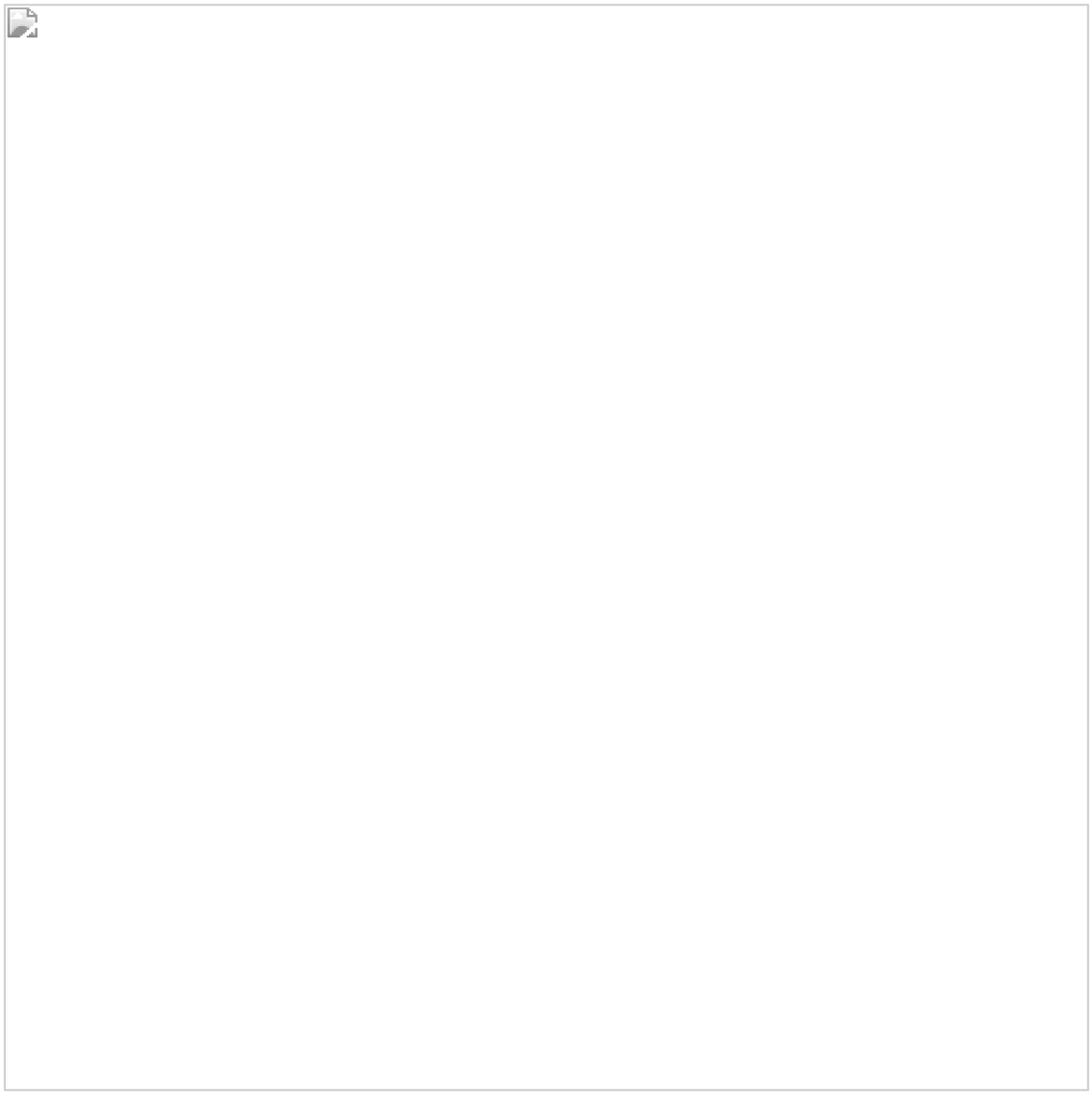


Think about it

1. How old was Walter?

- ○ About six
- ○ About sixteen
- ○ About two

Tell Will Not Bow



Walter chattered all the way. He asked how far his father could shoot, and whether he could shoot as high as the sun. Tell was so busy answering that he forgot to go round by another way. He walked right through the market-place.

“Father, look,” said Walter, “there is a hat stuck up on a pole.”

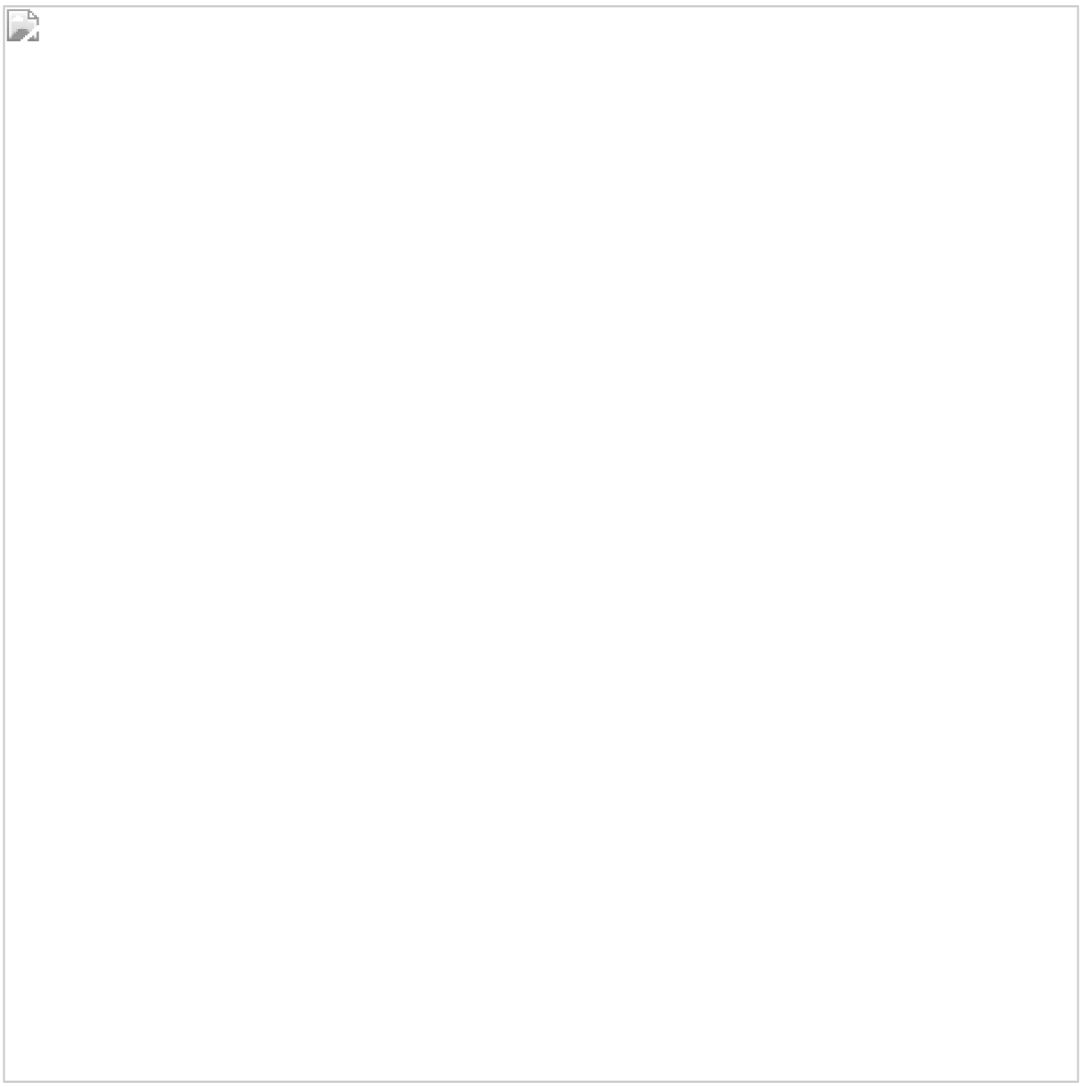
A soldier stopped Tell with his spear. “Bow to the cap!” “Why should I bow to a cap?” said Tell. “Were the Emperor himself here, then would I bend the knee and bow my head to him with all reverence. But to a hat! Never!”

A crowd gathered, and the soldier shouted for help.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell would bow to a king but not to a hat. Why do you think he felt that way?

Tell Will Not Bow · another picture

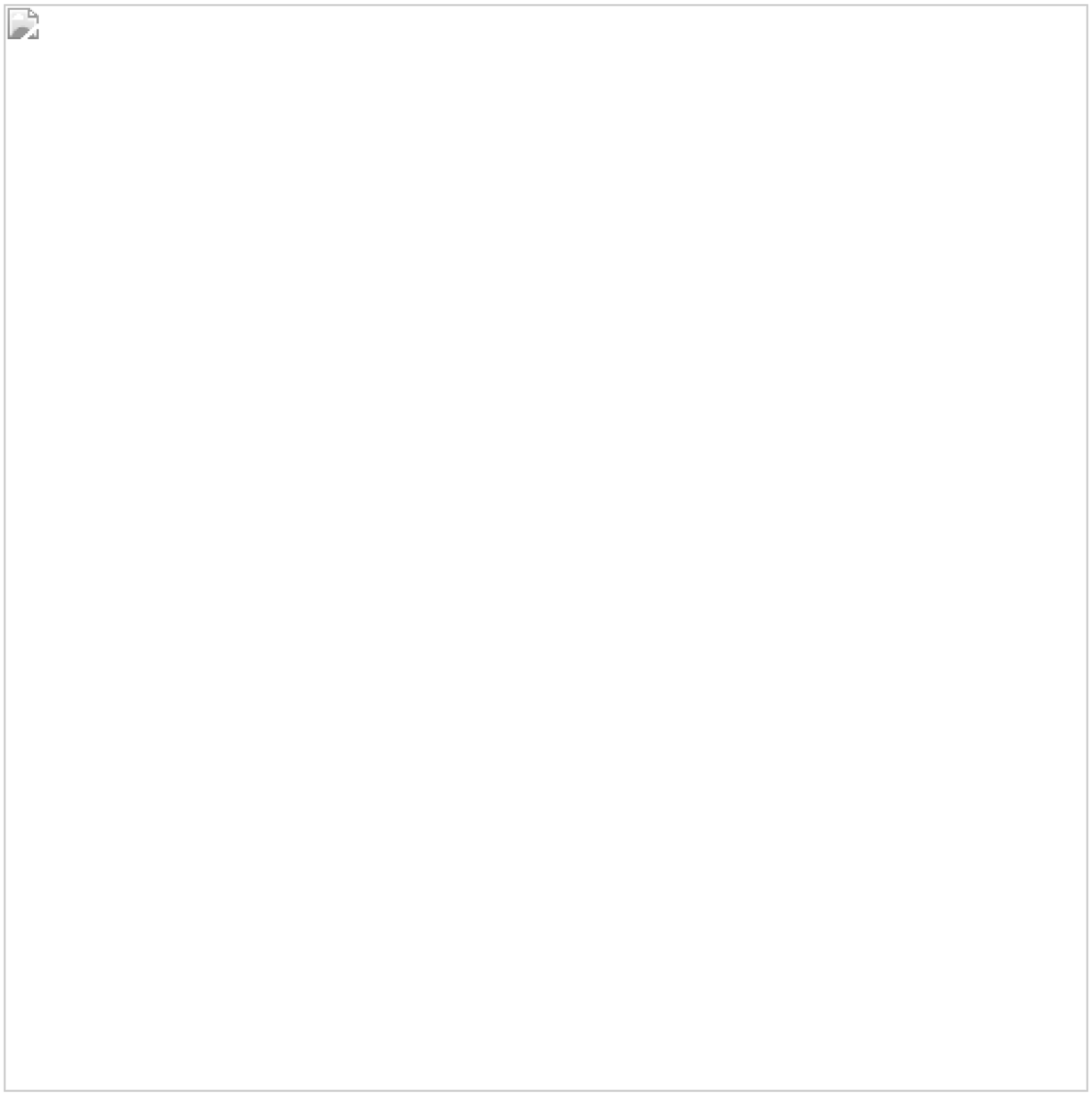


Think about it

1. What did Tell refuse to bow to?

- ○ The Emperor
- ○ A flag
- ○ A hat on a pole

Gessler Rides In



Gessler rode through the crowd. “I hear you are a great shot, Tell,” he said. “They say you never miss.”

“That is quite true,” said little Walter eagerly, for he was proud of his father. “He can hit an apple on a tree a hundred yards off.”

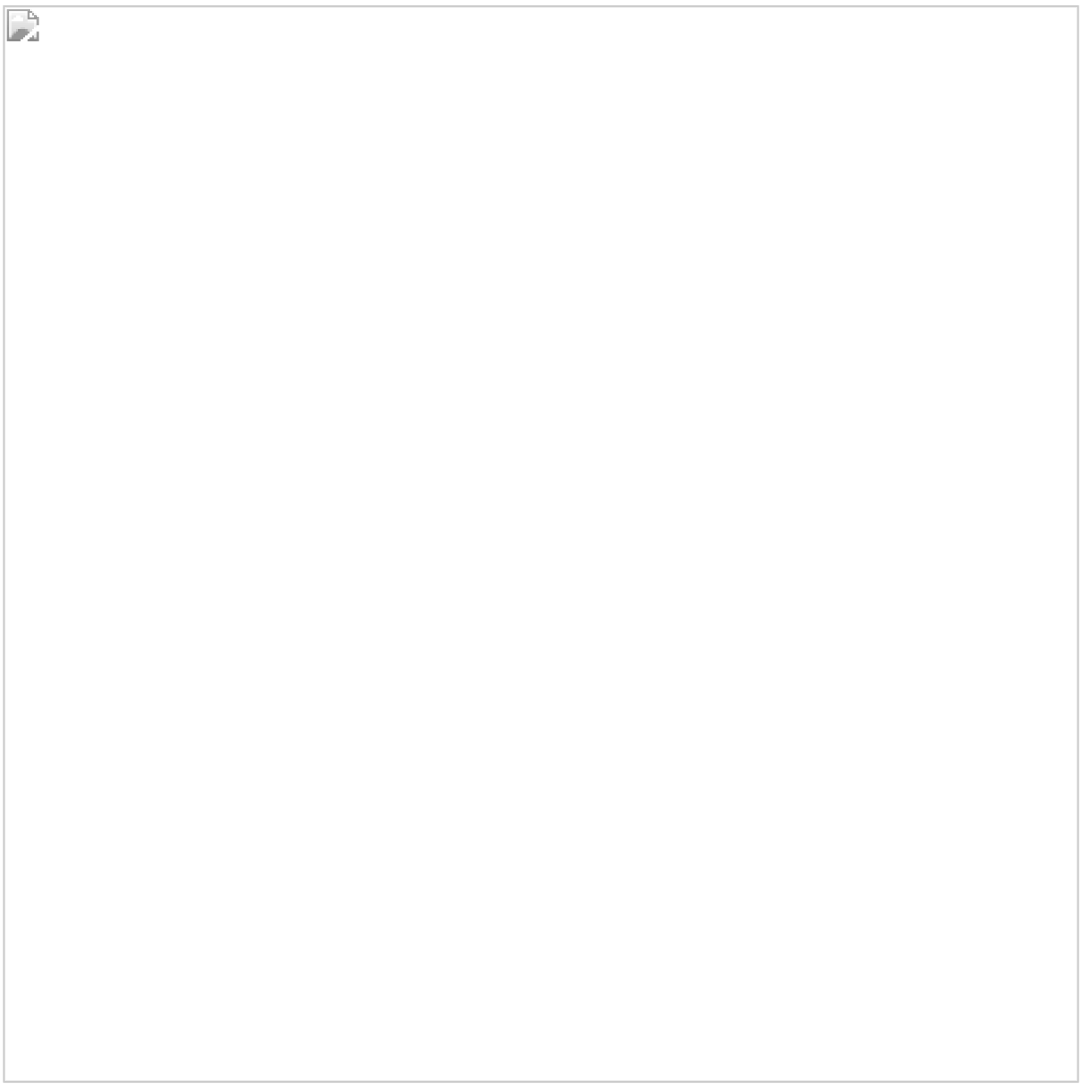
“Is that your boy?” said Gessler, with an ugly smile. “Which of them do you love best?” “I love them both alike, my lord,” said Tell.

Then Gessler said, “You shall shoot an apple off your boy's head.” “My lord,” said Tell, turning pale, “you do not mean that? It is horrible. I will do anything rather than that.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Gessler used Tell's love for his children to hurt him. What do you think of that?

Gessler Rides In · another picture

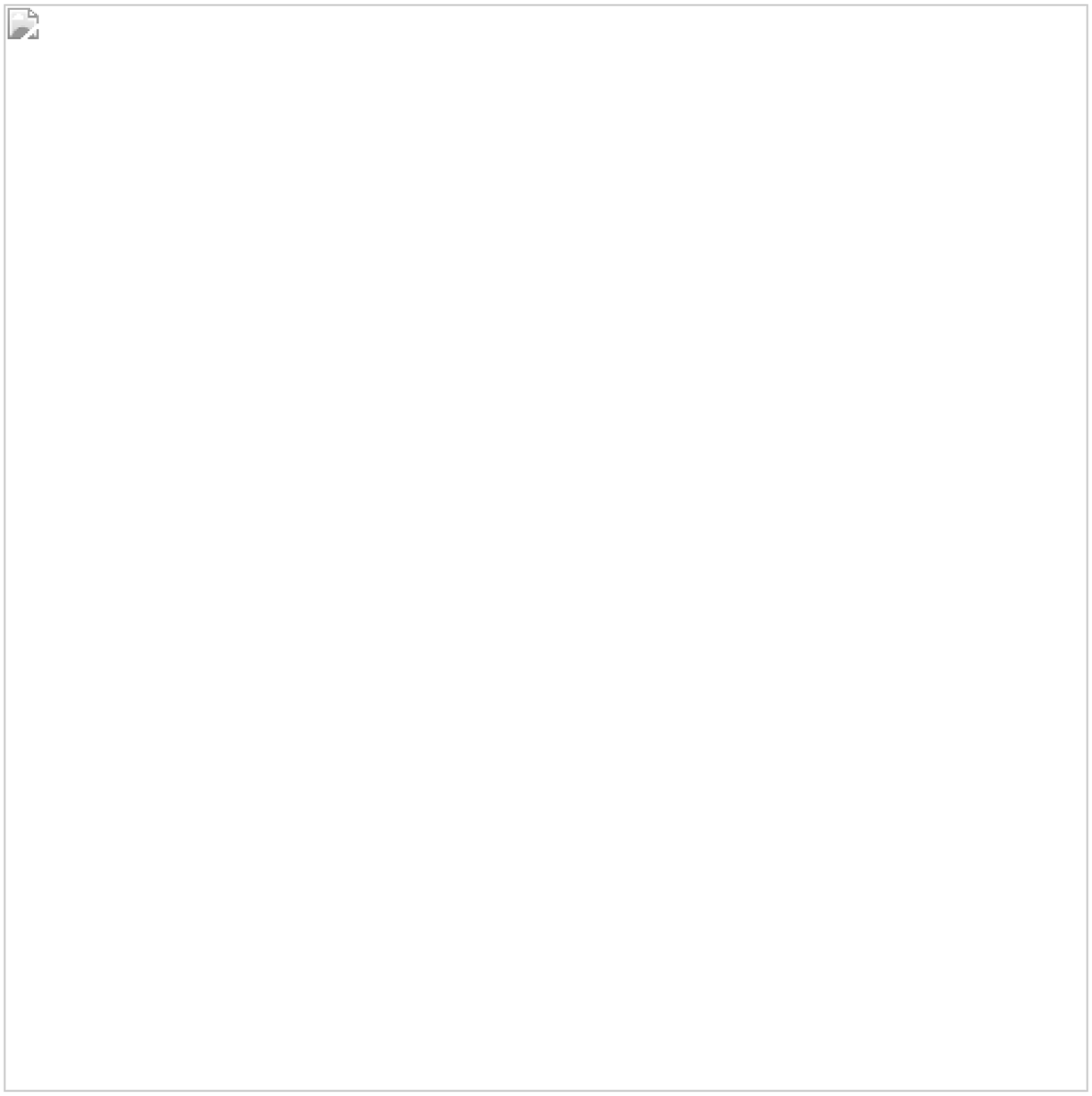


Think about it

1. What did Gessler tell Tell to shoot?

- ○ A target
- ○ A deer
- ○ An apple off his boy's head

Walter Is Not Afraid



Gessler said Tell must shoot, or both of them would die. Tell begged him to forgive him just this once. But Gessler would not change his mind.

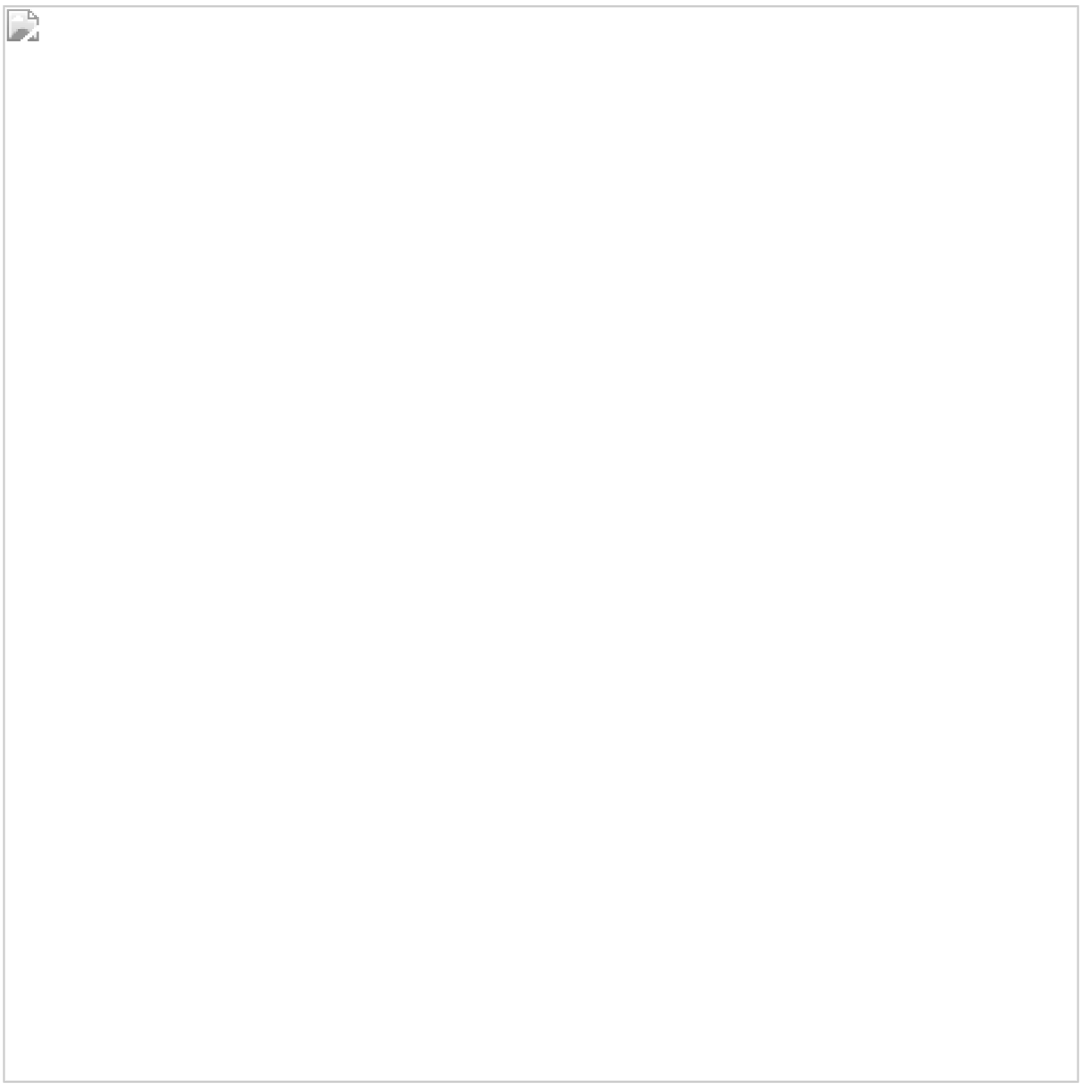
Soldiers bound Walter to a lime-tree. Walter was not afraid. He stood straight and quiet against the trunk. Gessler himself put the apple on his head.

Tell took two arrows from his quiver. He stuck one in his belt, and fitted the other to his bow. But his arm shook, and the bow dropped from his hand. He could not shoot.

Then Walter's voice came across the square: “Shoot, father, I am not afraid. You cannot miss.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Walter was brave and trusted his father. Why do you think he was not afraid?



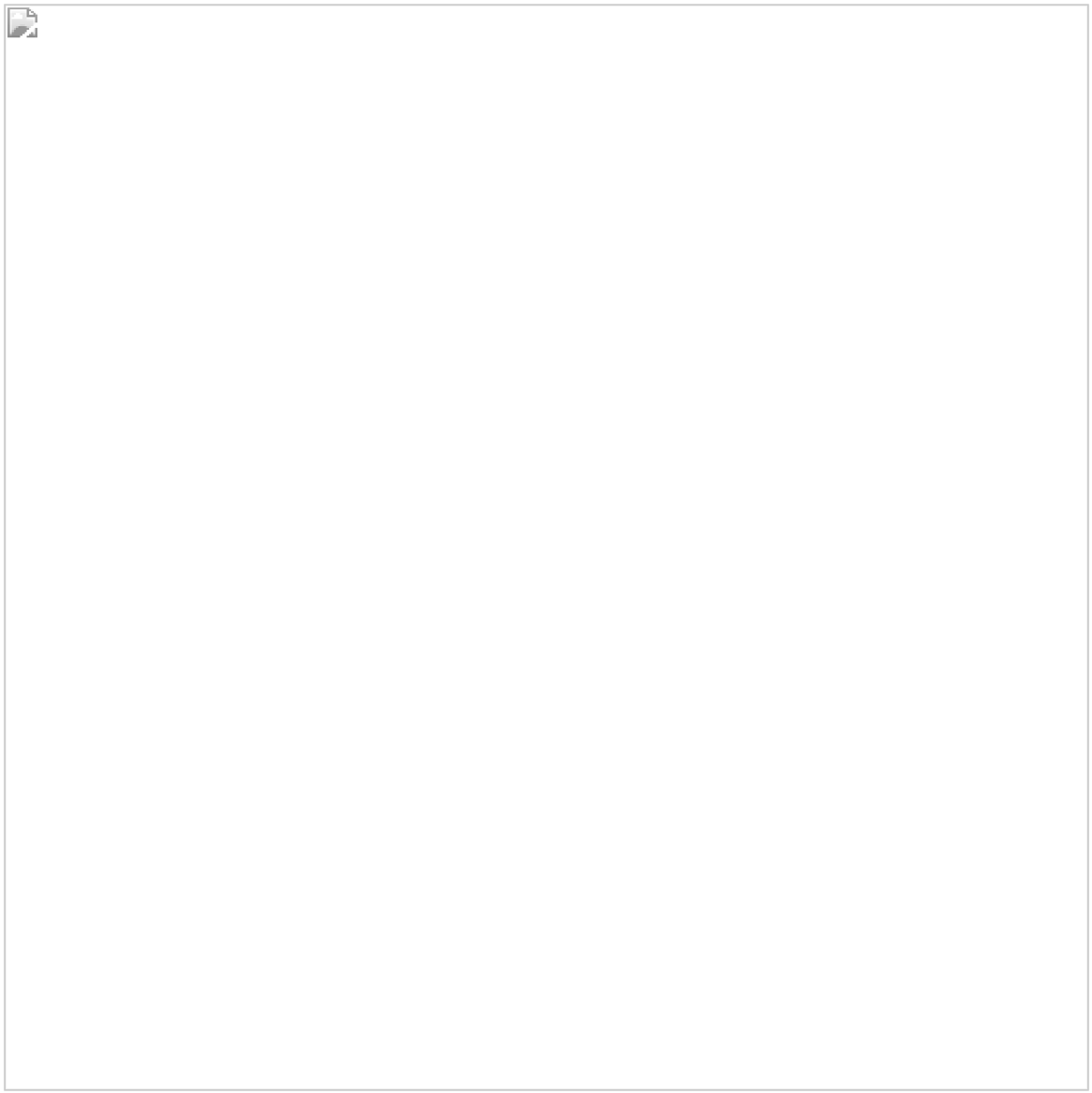
Think about it

1. What did Walter call out to his father?

- ○ Please stop!
- ○ Shoot, father, I am not afraid.
- ○ Take me home!

2. Who helps you be brave when you are scared?

The Shot



Tell lifted his bow again. The people held their breath.

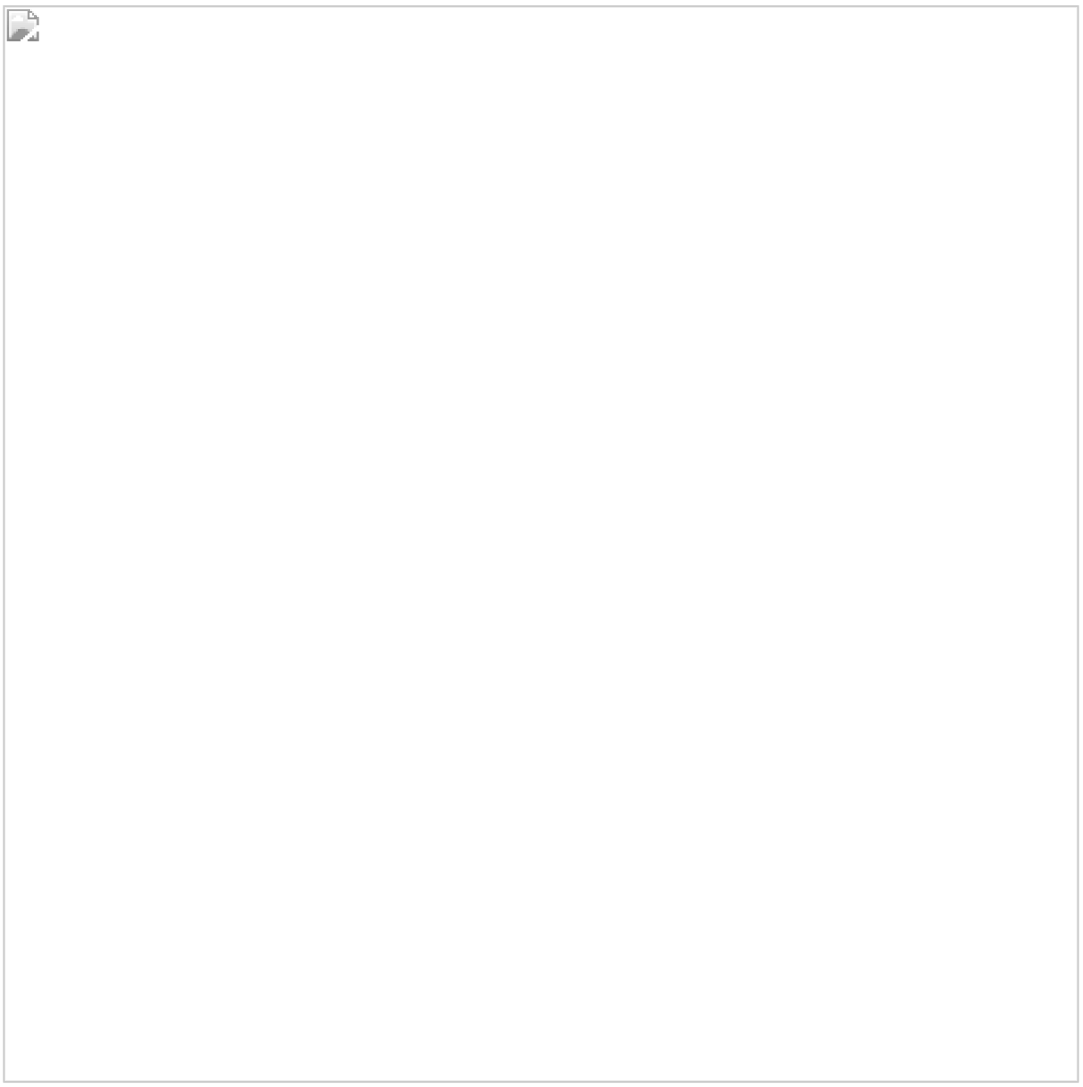
"Ping!" went the bowstring. The arrow flew through the frosty air, and the silence broke into cheering. The apple lay on the ground with the arrow through its center.

Someone cut the rope. Walter came running to his father. He said he had known his father could do it, and asked if it was not splendid.

Tell held Walter close and kissed him again and again. "You are safe, my boy. You are safe," was all he said. His eyes were full of tears.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell cried even though he was a strong man. What do you think made him cry?

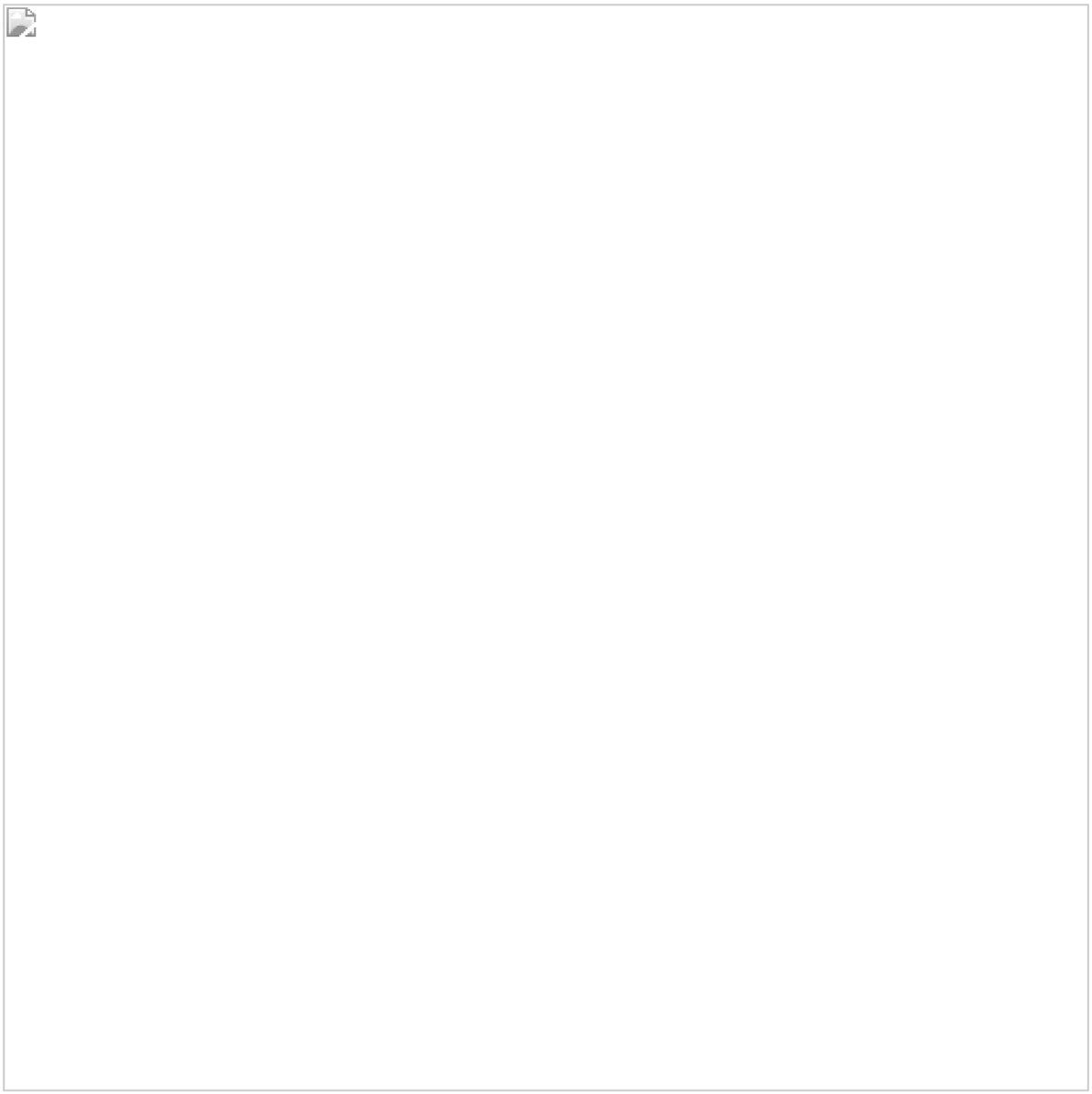


Think about it

1. Where did the arrow hit the apple?

- ○ Right through the center
- ○ The edge
- ○ It missed

The Second Arrow



But Gessler asked, “For what was the other arrow?” Tell said it was an archer's custom to have a second one ready. “Speak the truth,” said Gessler, and “if you speak the truth, whatever it may be, I promise you your life.”

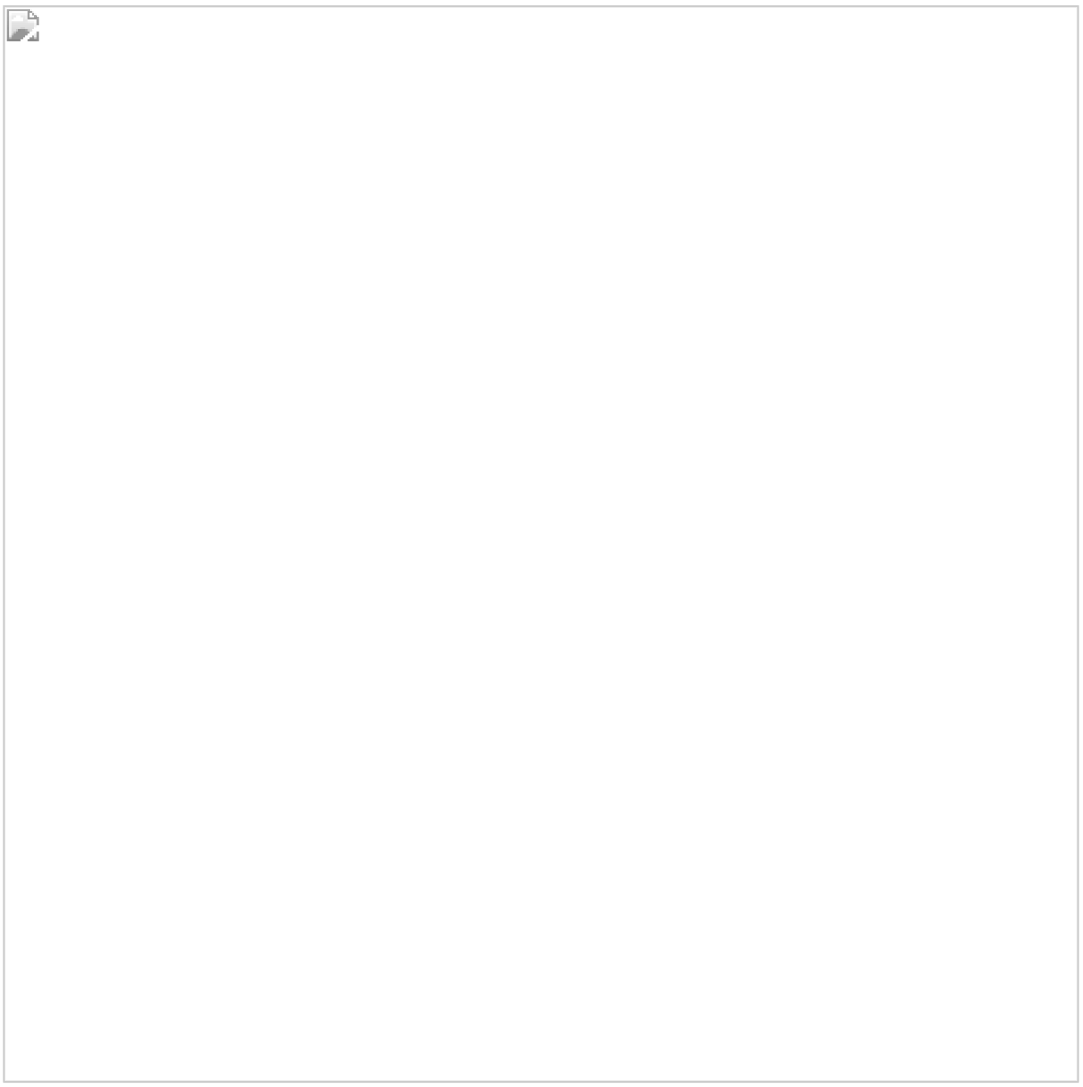
Tell threw back his shoulders and looked straight at Gessler. “If that first arrow had struck my child, the second one was meant for you.”

Gessler's face grew dark with rage. “Your life you shall have,” he said, “but you shall pass it in a dark and lonely prison.” His soldiers seized Tell and bound him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell told the truth even though it was dangerous. Is it ever hard for you to tell the truth? What helps?

The Second Arrow · another picture

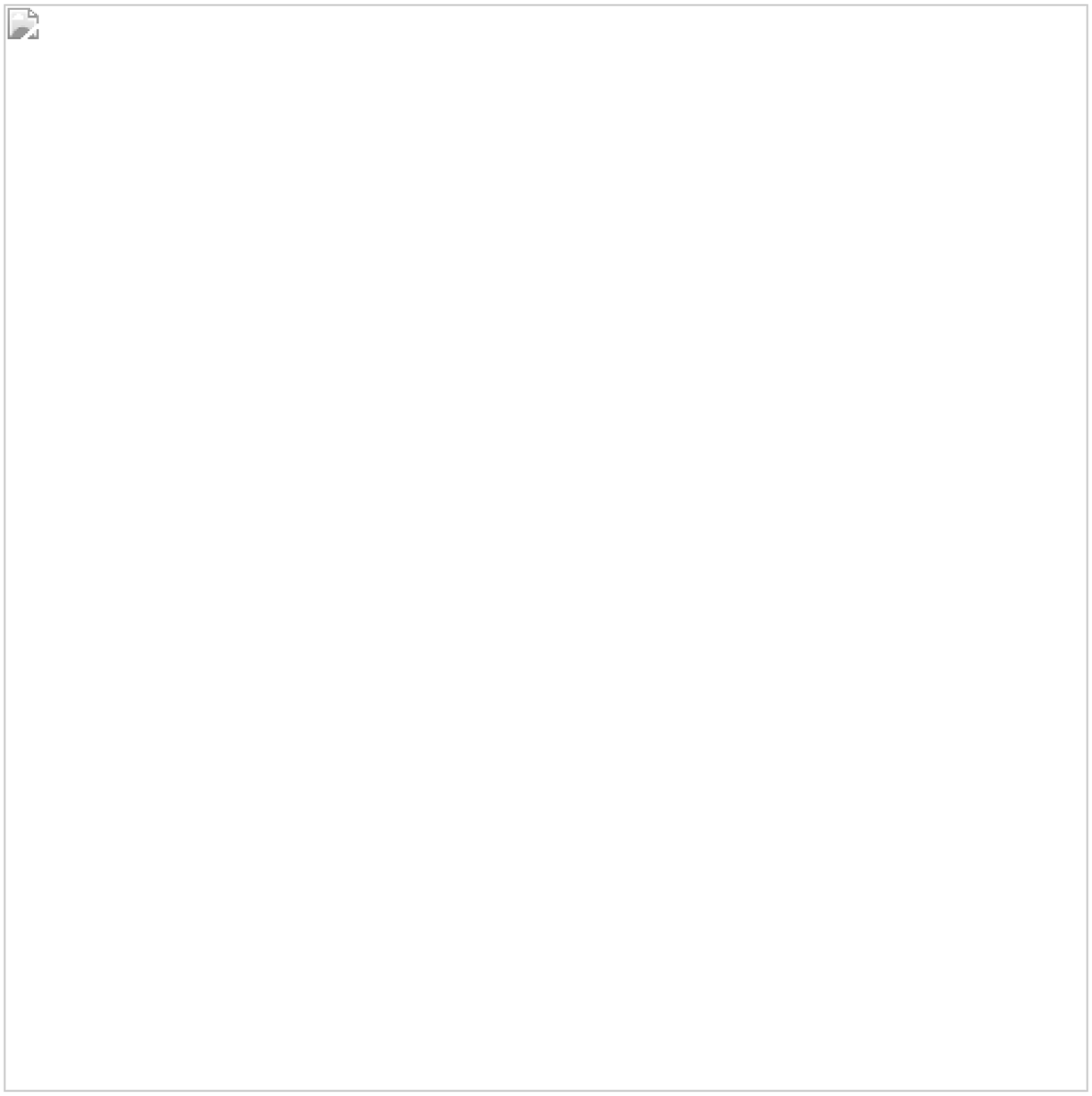


Think about it

1. What did Gessler promise if Tell told the truth?

- ○ A pot of gold
- ○ His life
- ○ His freedom

Goodbye, Little Walter



Gessler would not put Tell in the new castle at Altorf, where he had too many friends. He would take him across the lake in his own boat.

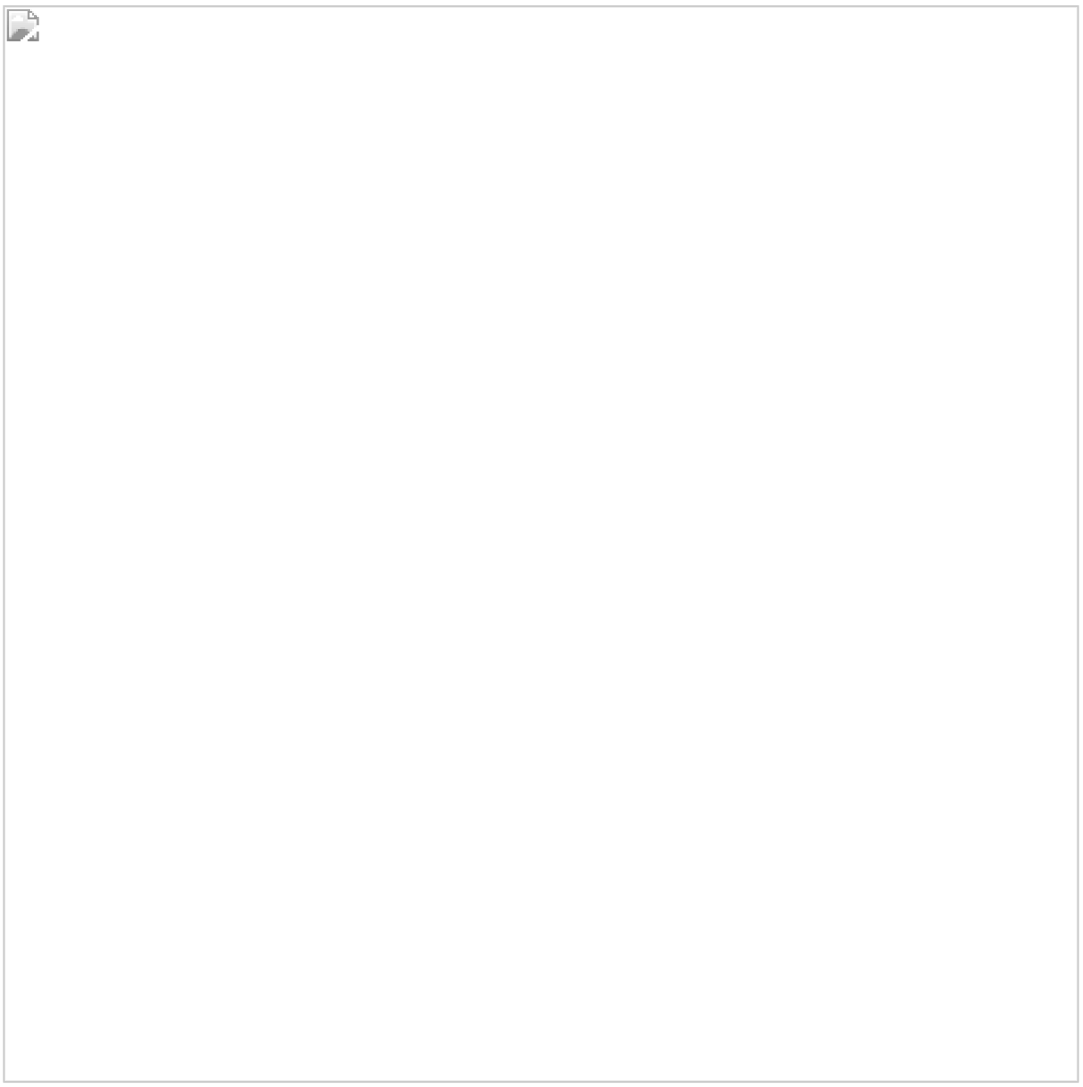
Walter Fürst said that by Swiss law no one could be locked up away from his own canton. But Gessler asked, “Who makes the law, you or I?”

Walter clung to his father, crying. Tell's hands were tied, but he bent and kissed him. “Little Walter, little Walter, be brave. Go with thy grandfather and comfort thy mother.”

The people watched the boat go. They had not known how much they trusted and loved Tell until he was gone.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell asked Walter to comfort his mother. Who do you comfort when you are sad yourself?

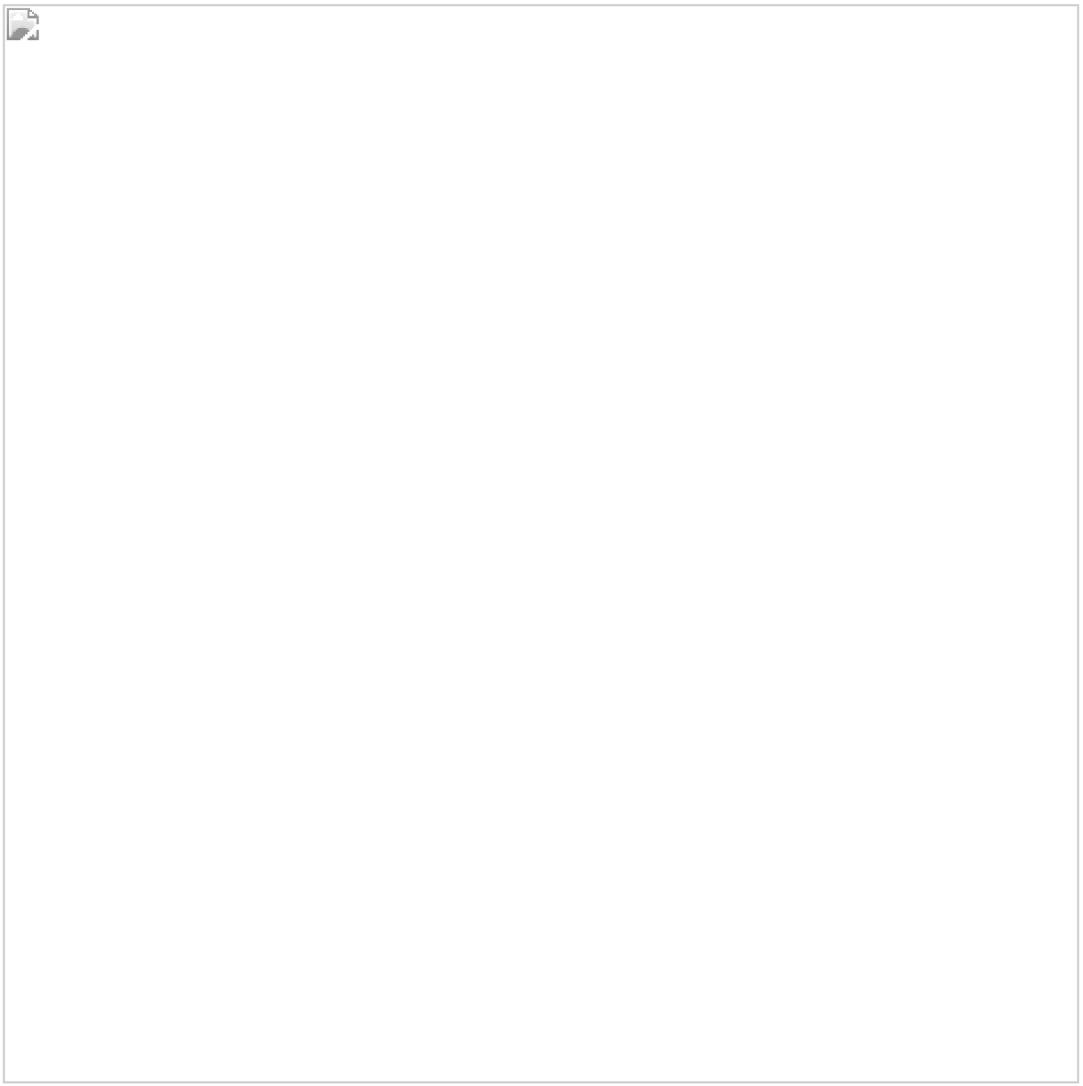


Think about it

1. Whom did Tell tell Walter to comfort?

- ○ Gessler
- ○ The soldiers
- ○ His mother

A Storm on the Lake



On the lakes of Switzerland, storms come up very fast. A fierce south wind, the Föhn, began to blow. The waves rose, and the boat tossed wildly. Water broke over the sides.

The captain was an Austrian who knew nothing of Swiss lakes. He stood pale with fear. He was helpless.

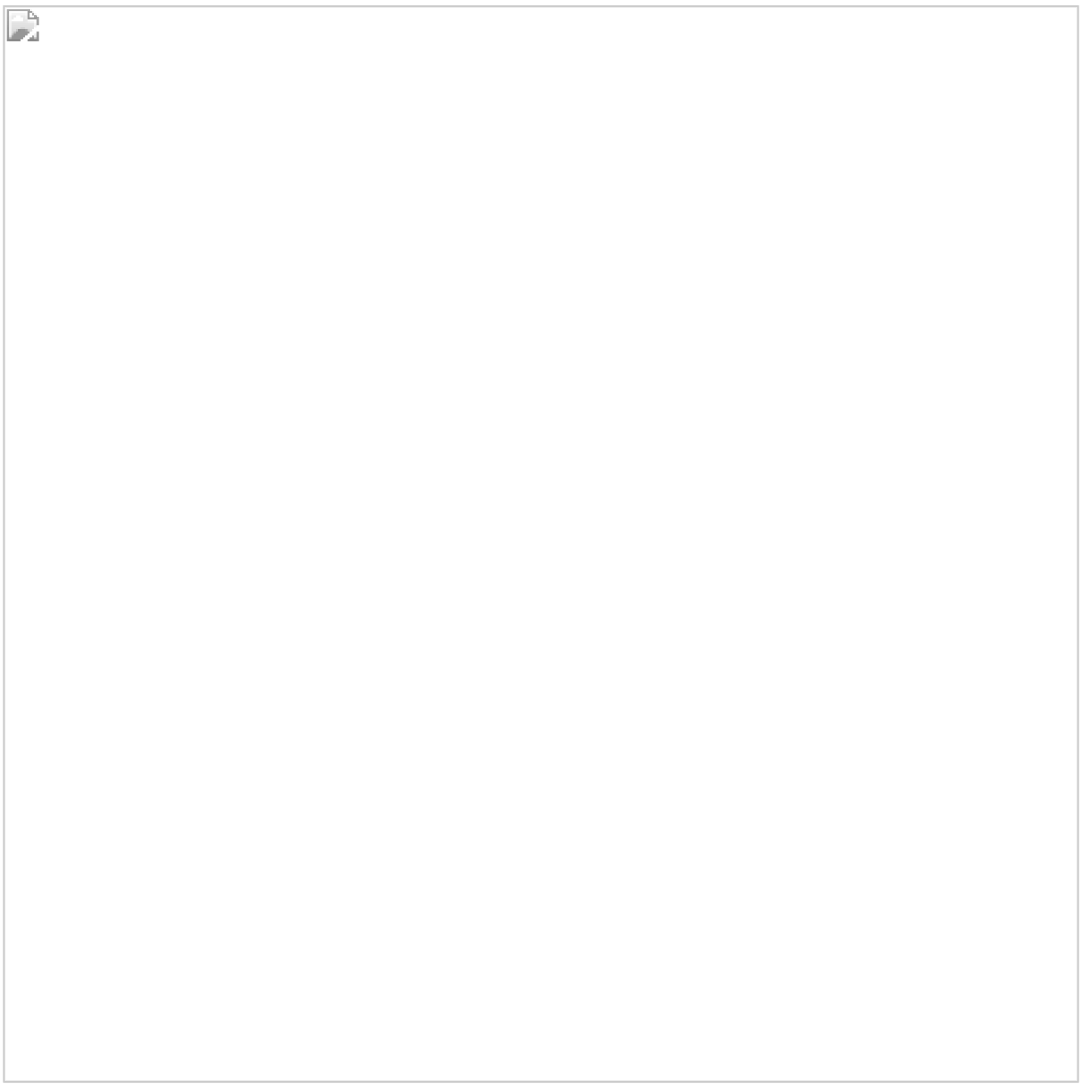
A servant came to Gessler. “My lord,” he said, there is one man on board who could save us: “William Tell, your prisoner.” He is known to be one of the best sailors on this lake.

“Unbind him,” said Gessler. “But mark you, Tell, you go not free.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell was a prisoner, and the men on this boat had been unkind to him. Do you think he should help them? What would you do?

A Storm on the Lake · another picture



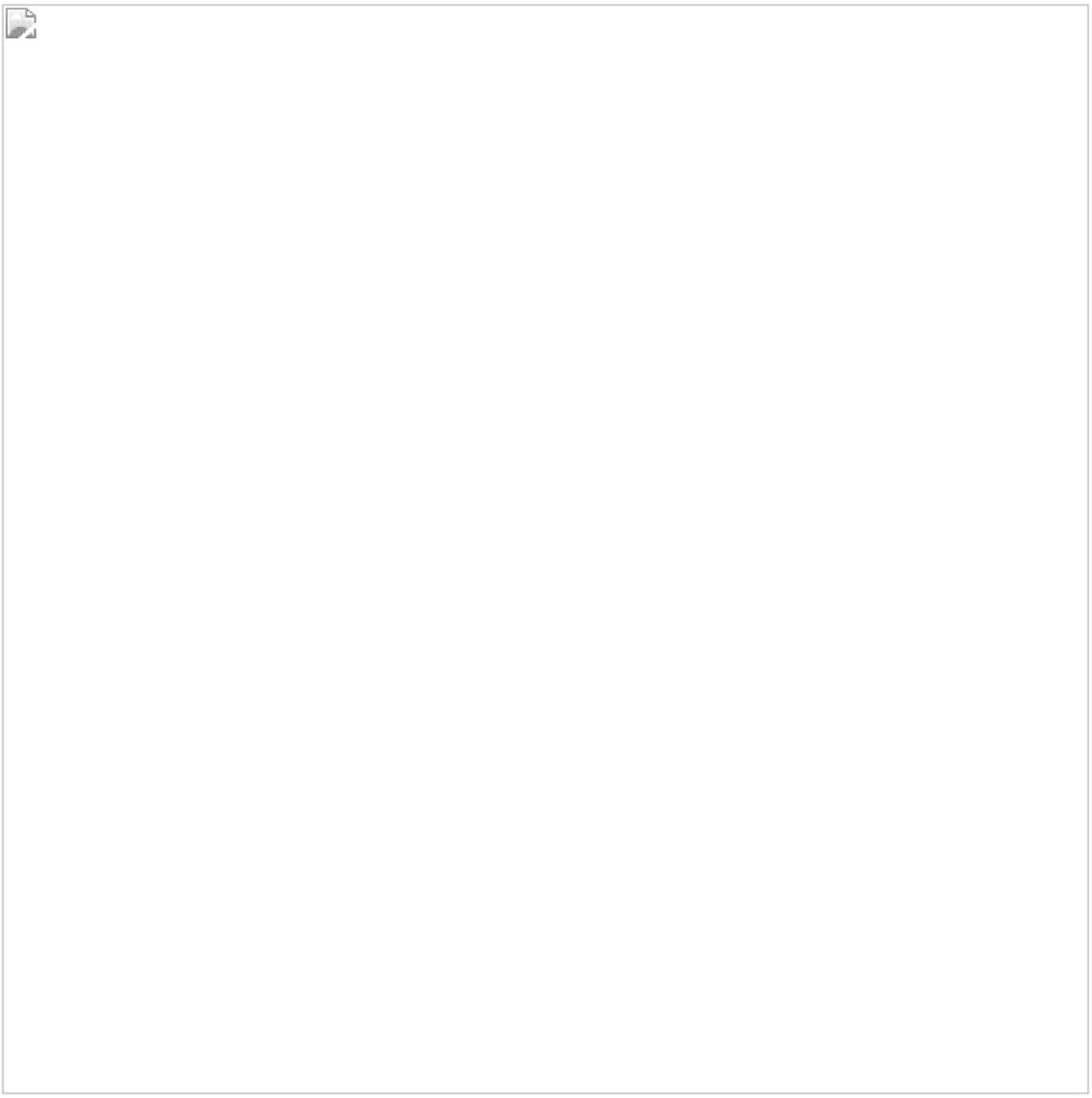
Think about it

1. Who knew the lake well enough to save the boat?

- ○ William Tell
- ○ The captain
- ○ Gessler

2. Would you help someone who had been unkind to you, if they were in trouble?

Tell Is Free



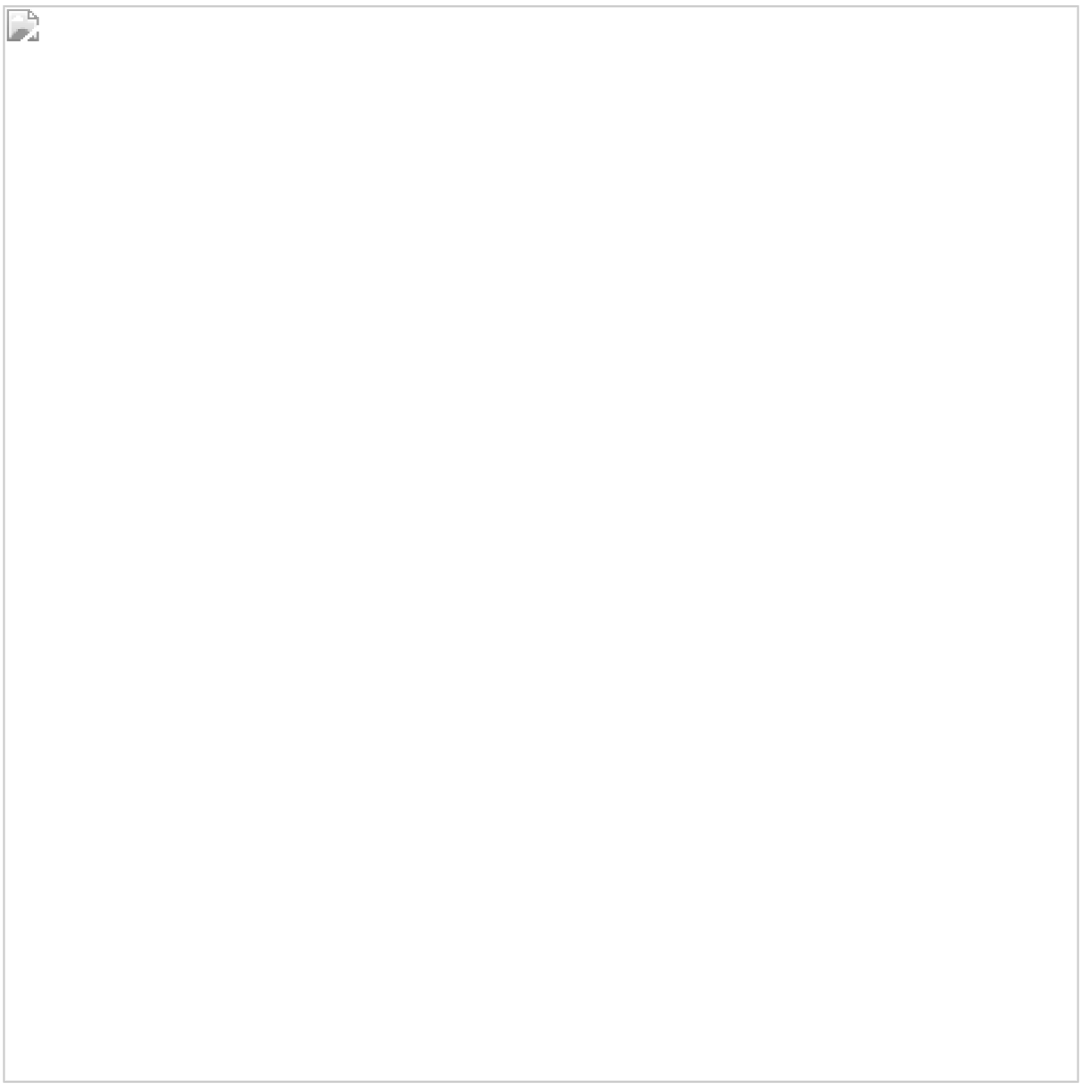
Tell took the helm, and the rope that bound his hands was cut. The boat steadied, and the rowers bent to their oars with new courage.

Tell peered through the darkness and the spray. He knew one place where a bold man could land. He steered nearer and nearer. Then he seized his bow and arrows, leaped ashore, and gave the boat a push back out onto the stormy water.

He was free. Quickly he climbed the mountain-side and vanished among the trees. The boat drifted, but after a while the wind fell, and Gessler and his company landed safe on the other shore.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell saved everyone on the boat, and then he went free. How do you think the people in the boat felt about him? What would you want to say to Tell?



Think about it

1. What did Tell do with the boat when he leaped ashore?

- ○ Tied it up
- ○ Pushed it back out onto the water
- ○ Sank it

2. What do you think was the bravest thing Tell did in this story?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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