

# Stories to Share

Story telling is an art which can be traced back thousands of years. Some stories told today are original, others have been passed from generation to generation.

People of all ages from six different places of worship were asked to choose a story that they would like to share with children of other faiths or with none. Members of The Arts Society Birmingham were also invited to choose a story which became a favourite in their families for them to share with their grandchildren.

## A Hindu story

**An original story written especially for this Faith Visits' project by Ram Aithal, a Hindu Faith Guide and trustee of Balaji Temple.**

# The Mango Tree

A true story with a valuable lesson

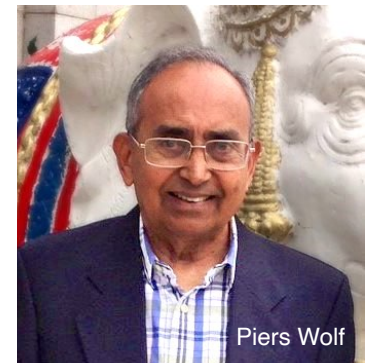
It was a boiling hot early afternoon in mid-April, like any other day for that matter, in a small town, Udupi, in South India. I was walking bare-footed with my father along the red, dusty, rough footpath out of town.



By Charlie (aged 13)

Charlie

We were on our way back home three miles away having had our lunch at my uncle's place in Udupi. Although, as an eight-year-old boy, I was confident enough to find my own way back home, my father kept a watch on me to make sure that I did not trip over the stones or carelessly step over any snakes unexpectedly emerging from the thorny hedge and slithering across our path. Of course, he had warned me of this danger many times, although I thought that I was grown up enough not to need to be told.



Piers Wolf

Ram Aithal  
Balaji Hindu Temple

It was the height of mango season and there was a mango tree by the footpath. The low branches were heavily laden with ripe, golden, mouth watering mangos. I asked my father, without hiding my deep desire, if I could pick a mango and eat it. Being a staunch disciplinarian, my father said "No" in a firm tone of voice. I timidly asked, 'Why'? He replied: "In the first place, you cannot be hungry since you had a big lunch only a couple of hours ago. Secondly, as I had said many times before, one should eat only when one is hungry".



By Jocelyn (aged 8)

However, I was not giving up so easily. I said, very persuasively “But, dad, all the ripe mangos will fall from the tree and go to waste”. Dad stopped by the tree and asked me to look up at the tree and tell him what I could see. I saw a flock of parrots merrily gorging on the ripe mangos at the top of the tree and a few minutes later they all flew away. My father explained that the birds ate the mangos not because the mangos were there, but because they were hungry and needed to eat. They then flew away leaving all the remaining mangos.

Of course, another flock of birds landed on the tree and pecked their share of the fruits and flew away. Not being convinced. I said, “Ah --but many over-ripe mangos will fall on the ground and go to waste”. Having realised that I was in an argumentative mood, my father asked me to carefully look around and said, “See those cows grazing in the field, they will eat some of the mangos on the ground. Any leftover fruit will be the food for the ants and other thousands of insects in the ground. They will convert what is left of the mangos into compost for the mango stones(seeds) to produce new trees. You see, my son, nature wastes nothing. The tree provides food and shelter for many forms of life, living in harmony with all its surrounding. Nature wastes nothing. Only the human beings are greedy and desire what they do not need. They remain discontented and often waste many precious things from nature out of sheer greed”.



By Jack (aged 10)

I went home having learnt an unforgettable lesson on nature. My father’s words are as true today as they were many decades ago.

Ram Aithal,  
Faith Guide and Trustee, Balaji temple, Birmingham  
2019

## Activity

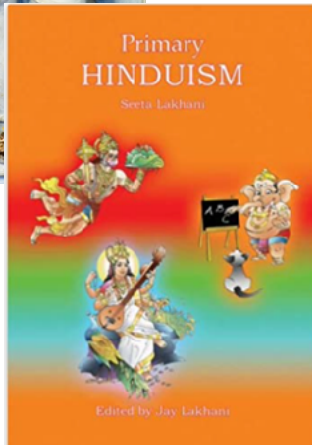
Teachers may like to lead a discussion with a class or group, about the messages in this story.

## Stories to Share: About Ganesh, chosen by Imogen (8) and Vishal (9) who are also Hindu



Imogen and Vishal have chosen stories which are very popular in the Hindu faith. They are about Ganesh. Ganesh is one of the favourite Hindu deities. Ganesh is the elephant-headed deity who is brave and wise. He removes obstacles and brings good luck.

Hindu families worship Ganesh before they start anything new or have an important decision to make. When children are nervous before they start at a new school or have important exams, they visit Ganesh to ask for support and protection.



Imogen and Vishal chose their stories from

'Primary Hinduism - by Seeta Lakhani,

edited by Jay Lakhani

published by Vivekananda Centre London Ltd.

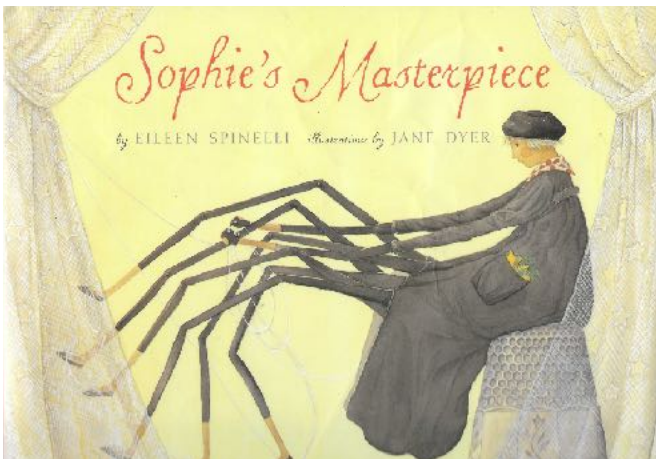
ISBN 0-9549567-1-0



Imogen

Ganesh

## Story chosen by Priti (11) who is Sikh



### Sophie's Masterpiece

Eileen Spinelli and Jane Dyer

Simon & Schuster

ISBN 0-689-80112-2

<http://storylineonline.net/>

This story was chosen because it is about the nasty feeling of not being wanted. Sophie, a spider, then has the nice feeling of being safe and able to do something kind for someone else even though no one will thank her for it.

Sophie is an artist who wants to spin beautiful creations all day long. She is hopeful that one day she will create her masterpiece.

Sophie has a hard time finding a place where she is welcome and she can be free to live and spin. Nobody wanted a spider so they tried to get rid of her. But one day Sophie finds a warm, comfortable and safe home which she had always wanted. Here she finds inspiration for her masterpiece.

Children can have great fun choosing just one published story which is not only a favourite, but a story which they would like to share with other children because it has a special message.

## Stories to Share: The Nativity, chosen by Christians

The story of the birth of Jesus was chosen by Christians of three generations as being central to the celebration of Christian faith.

The birth of Jesus is beautifully described in many of our well-loved carols. These should not be ignored as a means of telling the Christian story.

Away in a manger,  
no crib for a bed

Once in royal David's city

Silent night, holy night

While shepherds watched  
their flocks by night

'In the bleak midwinter' (a poem by Christina Rossetti published in 1872) was set to music by Gustav Holst a few years before Edward Burne-Jones designed the Nativity stained glass window in Birmingham Cathedral (1887).

*Her poem extends children's vocabulary and has fine examples of similes, metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia. The message for people of all faiths or of none is that giving the greatest gift of all, the gift of love, is central to our lives.*

Here are Rossetti's words:

In the bleak midwinter  
Frosty wind made moan  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter  
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him  
Nor earth sustain,  
Heaven and earth shall flee away  
When He comes to reign:  
In the bleak mid-winter  
A stable-place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty —  
Jesus Christ.



Photo: Alistair Carew-Cox

Nativity window in Birmingham Cathedral.

Designed by Edward Burne-Jones

Enough for Him, whom cherubim  
Worship night and day,  
A breast full of milk  
And a manger full of hay;  
Enough for Him, whom Angels  
Fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel  
Which adore.

Angels and Archangels  
May have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim  
Thronged the air;  
But only His Mother  
In her maiden bliss  
Worshipped the Beloved  
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am? —  
If I were a Shepherd  
I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man  
I would do my part, —  
Yet what I can I give Him, —  
Give my heart.

Children could listen to this carol, which has a beautiful simplicity, while following the words. There are several versions online. *Recommended: Tenebrae Dec 2022.*

## Stories to Share: Joseph, chosen by Malky (12) and Miny (9) who are Jewish

The inspirational and well-known story of Joseph is told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible which is also the first of the five books of the Torah ( the Jewish holy book). Joseph was his father Jacob's favourite son. Jacob gave Joseph a coloured coat. His eleven brothers were so envious of him that they sold Joseph into slavery. In spite of having some dark and difficult times, including being thrown into prison, Joseph remained faithful and trusted in God. When his life improved and he was reunited with his brothers, he forgave them and helped them through their own difficult times.



The fantastically popular musical version is a re-imagining of the trials and triumphs of Joseph. The musical version was first created by Tim Rice (lyrics) and Andrew Lloyd Webber (music) as a 20 minute production for a school of children 8 to 13 years in 1968. It is a good story, timeless and well-told bearing the message that it is important to forgive others and to continue to love and care about them.

The musical is very accessible. It is available in several formats to read, to watch, to listen to, to sing along and to perform in several formats.

***'He looked handsome, he looked smart, he was a walking work of art.'***

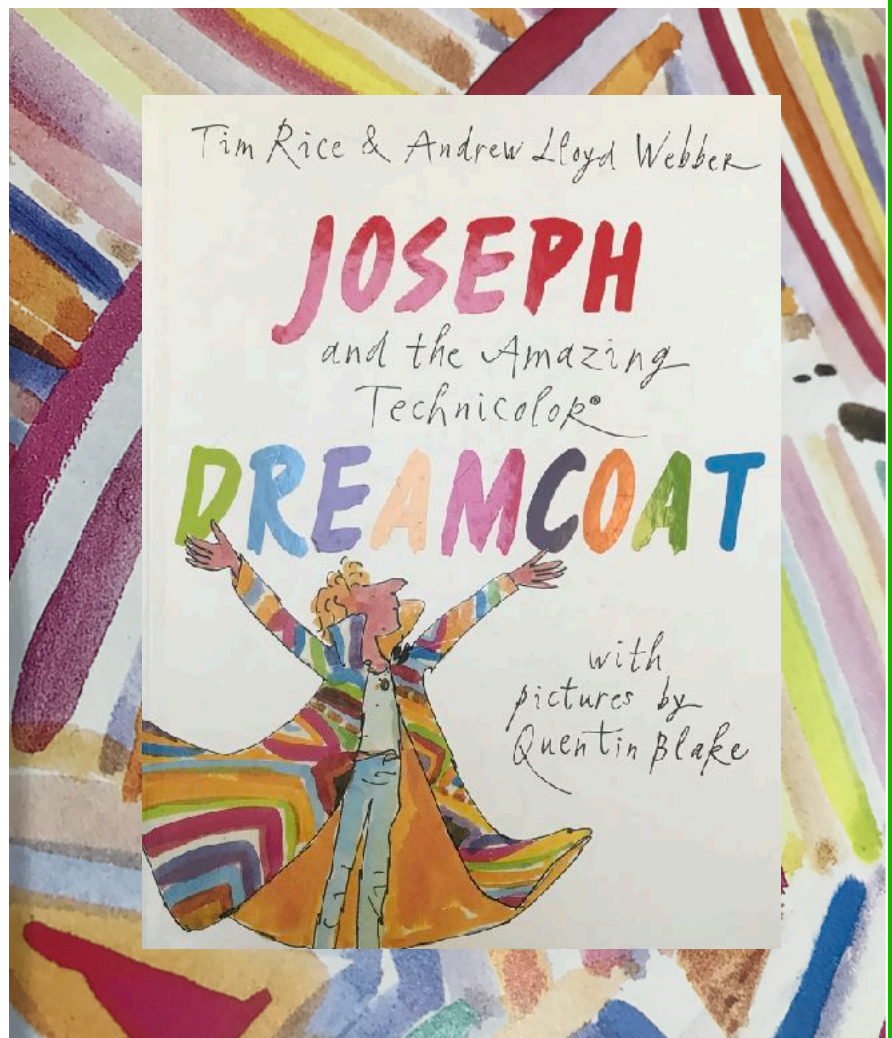
***Such a dazzling coat of many colours. How he loved his coat of many colours— —***

***It was red and yellow  
and green and brown  
And scarlet and black  
and ochre and peach  
And ruby and olive  
and violet and fawn  
And lilac and gold  
and chocolate and mauve  
And cream and crimson  
and silver and rose  
And azure and lemon  
and russet and grey  
And purple and white and pink  
and orange and blue!***

The story shown here is beautifully illustrated by Quentin Blake.

Published by Pavilion Children's Books

For performance enquiries, contact:  
[www.reallyuseful.com](http://www.reallyuseful.com)



## Stories to Share: The Story of the Buddha

 told by Theingi Thant.

*Theingi Thant works as Urgent Care Operations manager for the NHS. She was born in Burma and came to the UK in 2002. Theingi became a Buddhist in 2014 and completed her Buddhist studies to Masters level at Birmingham Buddhist Academy.*

*Theingi has a very busy life with family and friends and her NHS career. She is a trustee at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara.*



Theingi Thant

Everyone who is a follower of Buddhism can try to become a Buddha. 'Buddha' means 'enlightened'. People who have decided to aim to be a Buddha are known as 'Bodhisetta'. It requires very strong determination.

Firstly, the person must really believe that he or she will become a Buddha one day. Secondly, it is necessary to live a very good life, to meditate and achieve high outcomes. Thirdly, you have to make great sacrifices, to be generous, hardworking, patient, truthful and kind. You also have to look after others to free them from suffering.

Buddhists believe in a cycle of birth and death followed by re-birth. To become a Buddha will take more than one lifetime. A Buddhist's goal is to reach a peaceful state when there will be no more re-births because the devotee has reached enlightenment.

The story of the last Buddha explains enlightenment. The last Buddha was born as a prince named Siddhartha Gautama. He was born under a tree in Nepal, northern India, about 2500 years ago to a royal family. He was very gifted and Buddhists believe that this was because of all his achievements in his past lives. They believe that very gifted children who can do amazing things, without having had much teaching, is explained in the repeated cycle of birth and death until they reach enlightenment and the ultimate peace.

When the Buddha could walk as a tiny baby and do amazing things, he believed he would reach enlightenment and there would be no more re-birth. Every birth is a suffering according to Buddhism and the end of re-birth is what they are aiming to achieve.

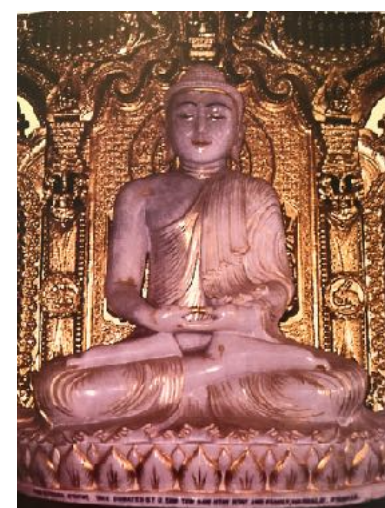
Siddhartha grew up in the royal palace, surrounded by riches. When he was 29, he left the palace four times. On his first trip he saw an old man. On the second trip he saw a very sick man. On the third trip he saw a dead man and on the fourth trip he met a monk. He asked himself 'How can I lie happily in luxury on silk cushions and not ease the suffering I have seen?' He made a very big decision. He left behind his life of luxury in the palace. Bodhisetta spent time meditating, searching for the meaning of life. He sat under the shade of the Bhodi tree.

On the full moon day of May, at the age of 35, he finally understood the cycle of birth and death and how to ease suffering. He understood his true nature and that of all human beings. He shared his knowledge with everyone he met and had a great following.

At the age of 80, after 45 years as a great teacher, surrounded by a large group of his disciples, Lord Buddha passed away. The event of someone dying, who has reached enlightenment, is known as Mahaparinibbana. 'Maha' means 'great'. 'Parinibbana' means the death of someone who has reached enlightenment during their lifetime and will not be born again.

His very last message to the monks who followed him was 'Appamādena sampādeṭha supadeṭha' which means 'Work diligently for your own enlightenment'

This is what devotees of Buddhism are trying to do.



## Stories to Share: A Story about Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Baker

told by Nasreen Kauser, a Muslim.

*This story was chosen by Nasreen who is the Faith Guide at Birmingham Central Mosque. She remembers this as being her favourite story from her arabic teacher, who also taught Nasreen's children. There are many versions of this story but this is the most well known version.*

*About 1200 years ago, there was a famous scholar in Iraq called Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. He was wise and clever and many people came to hear him teach about Islam.*



Nasreen Kauser

During his old age, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was travelling, when he stopped by a town.

After Isha salah (*evening prayer*), he wanted to stay the night in the Masjid (*mosque*). He was very humble and had not announced his name. He wanted to be anonymous because he was well known, and he knew he would be welcomed by many people.

Failing to recognise Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the caretaker, who came to the door of the mosque, refused to let him stay the night in the Masjid and sent him away.

A baker, whose shop was nearby, watched this scene and took pity on Imam Ahmad. He kindly invited the Imam to stay with him for the night.

Imam Ahmad watched as the baker worked hard. He mixed and kneaded the dough, tended the fire, and pulled hot loaves from the oven. As he worked he uttered dhikr (*a recited prayer*) asking Allah for forgiveness. In the morning, Imam Ahmad eagerly asked his host about his dhikr and the way he was seeking forgiveness.

The baker said, "It has come like second nature to me."

Imam Ahmad then asked "Have you experienced any reward from this practice?"

The baker answered, "By Allah! I am blessed but there is one dua (*a prayer when you ask for help*) which is not answered."

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal asked "What is that unanswered prayer?"

The baker responded, "To see the famous Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal."

At this, tears came to Ibn Hanbal's eyes. He told the baker, "I am Ahmad ibn Hanbal! By Allah! I was brought to your place, your dua has been answered and has come true!"

### **Moral of the story**

*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) states that Allah looks upon asking for forgiveness as the most important deed. People who genuinely seek forgiveness will be rewarded.*

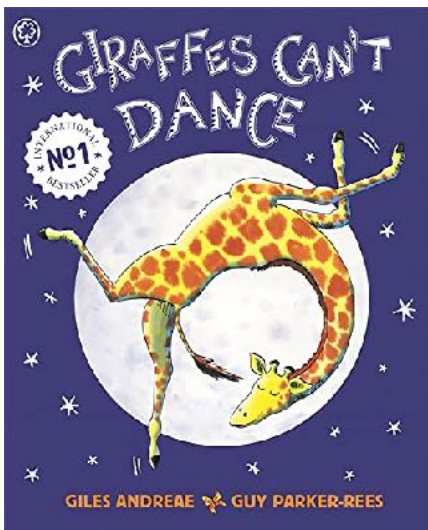
*This story reminds Nasreen to remember and to be thankful to God for everything and appreciate all the blessings he has given us.*

# Some stories with a moral for children in KS2 to share with KS1.

These all time favourites were chosen by five members of The Arts Society who have read them many times with their young grandchildren.

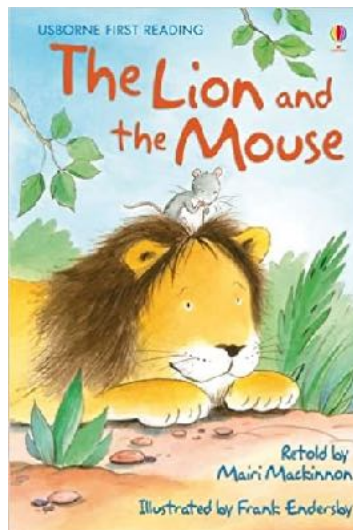
The idea of this activity is that KS2 children read and discuss the meaning of the stories in class. They then choose a story to share with children in KS1 either one to one or in a very small group. This helps to develop oracy skills and boost confidence and self esteem.

There are , of course, many more suitable titles available on the web and in curriculum documents.



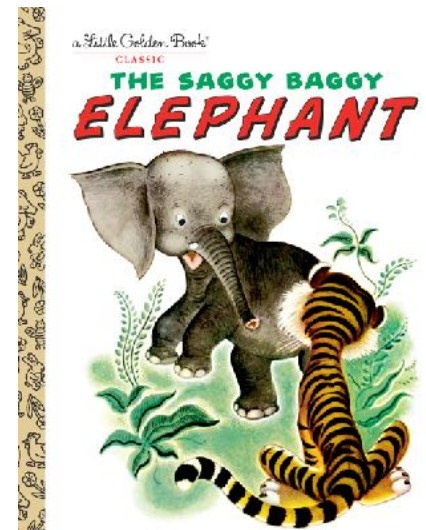
## Giraffes can't Dance

Giles Andreae and Guy Parker Rees  
Orchard Books  
ISBN 978-84121-565-5



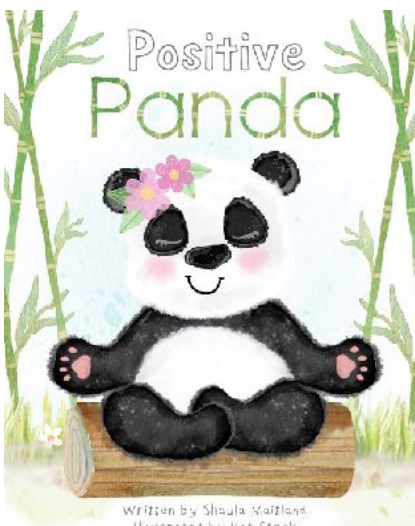
## The Lion and the Mouse

Retold by Mairi  
McKinnon.  
Illus. Frank Enderby  
Usborne  
ISBN 978-0-7480-9660-4



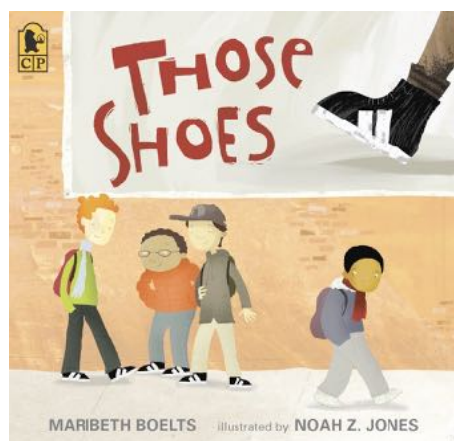
## The Saggy Baggy Elephant

K & B Jackson, Tehggren  
A Little Golden Book  
ISBN 9-781916-164307



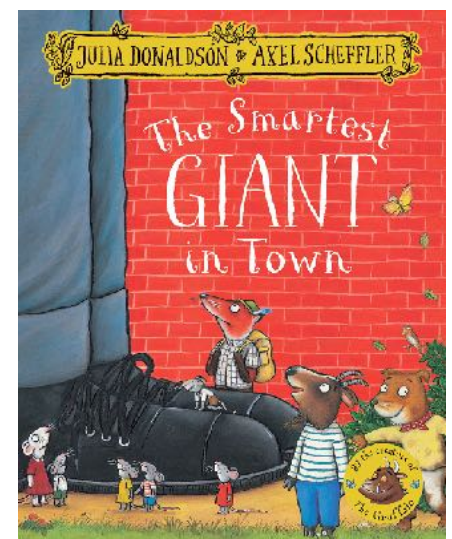
## Positive Panda

Shaun Maitland and Kat  
Stock  
Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 9-781916-164307



## Those Shoes

Maribeth Boelts Illus.  
Noak.Z.Jones  
Candlewick Press  
ISBN 978-060608547-2



## The Smartest Giant in Town

Julia Donaldson and Axel  
Scheffler  
Macmillan Childrens books  
ISBN 978-1-5098-1253-0