

Christmas Tales from Foreign Lands: **An Untold Miracle**



Teacher's Guide

Christmas Tales from Foreign Lands:
An Untold Miracle

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**Christmas Tales from Foreign Lands:
An Untold Miracle
Running Time: 14 minutes**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Intended Audience and Uses

This video is intended to be used for holiday and Christmas programs in which children of any age (and adults) participate. It also may be used by older students studying folktales and comparative literature. Comparative literature students, as well as other viewers, may find it instructive to see the other two programs in this series – Busy Befana, from Italy, and The Wondrous Candle, from Romania.

Program Synopsis

A newborn hunchback, Mustafa, is left on the doorsteps of a contemptible old woman who takes him in and teaches him to beg.

Although Mustafa sees himself as a lowly beggar, others can see something miraculous in him – in his eyes. People in his village say his eyes look as if they have beheld the Messiah.

Because of his eyes, Mustafa brings home many coins each night. Seven years pass, and the old woman determines she now has enough money to rid herself of the child. She tells Mustafa he must live on his own.

Cold and miserable, the little hunchback curls up in a cave. He awakens later to find people on their way to Bethlehem. He follows the procession, and eventually finds his way to a manger, where a man and his wife have unpacked their belongings.

When Mustafa awakens the next morning, he discovers a wondrous Child in the woman's arms. The woman tells Mustafa to come forward, and allows him to touch the Child. When he does, a miracle occurs.

VIEWER OBJECTIVES

Young Viewers (Ages 4-8)

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, young viewers should be able to do the following:

1. Summarize the story.
2. Tell their favorite part of the story.
3. Discuss the meaning of the word "miracle."

Intermediate Viewers (Ages 9-13)

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, intermediate viewers should be able to do the following:

1. Summarize the story.
2. Discuss the concepts of good and evil as presented in the story.
3. Discuss the concept of miracles, and their role in stories.

Advanced Viewers (Ages 14-Adult)

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, advanced viewers should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss the concepts of good and evil as presented in the story.
2. Analyze the character of the old woman.
3. Discuss and interpret the symbolism of Mustafa's eyes.

4. Examine and discuss the thematic aspects of the story.
5. Explore the concept of miracles and their place in literature and history.

The producers encourage you to make adaptations and changes to the following lesson plan whenever you feel it will enhance your students' learning experiences. Only by tailoring the material to your unique classroom situation will you be able to maximize the educational experience afforded by these materials.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Primary

Introduce the Program

Conduct a class discussion of being special. What makes a person special? Are all people special in some way? In what ways are people special? Help your children understand that each person has unique talents. Some people can sing, some can play instruments, some can tell stories, some are excellent athletes, some are particularly warm and caring. Then go around the room and have each person tell about a special individual whom he or she knows.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Locate the Middle East on your classroom map or globe. Tell the class that they will see a program that tells a Christmas story that comes from that area of the world. Duplicate and pass out Mustafa Was Special. Have the students color the picture, then draw their choice for a special person. If appropriate, ask each student to talk about the special person he or she has drawn. Discuss the concept of miracles. Tell

your students that as they watch the program, they should pay attention to find out what makes Mustafa so special and to discover what the miracle is.

View the Video

Total viewing time is approximately 14 minutes.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss why Mustafa was special. Was it because a miracle happened to him? Discuss his character. Help your students understand that he was special, in part, because he did not become angry at his situation in life. He simply went about his life as best as he could, despite his physical challenges and his having been taken in by a contemptible old woman. Duplicate and pass out *A Terrible Woman*. If your students are unable to do this exercise by themselves, do it as a class activity. After your class colors the picture, discuss why the woman was evil. Was she completely evil? What about her taking care of Mustafa before he was able to beg for her? Are mean people always completely bad? If your students are capable of understanding basic nuances of character, help them see the shades of gray in a person's psychology. Next, discuss the miracle. Are there such things as miracles? Help your students understand that miracles may be defined differently, depending on individual viewpoints. Finally, duplicate and pass out *Important Animals*. After your students color the picture, discuss what other animal in the program was used to transport goods and people. Are camels and donkeys still used today in the Middle East?

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Intermediate

Introduce the Program

Write the word “miracle” on the chalkboard. Ask the class to define it. Assign someone to write down the various definitions of the word. Help your students understand that not everyone would agree on what constitutes a miracle. Discuss good and evil. What makes a person “good?” What makes a person “evil?” Are people all good or all bad? If you feel it is appropriate, help your students understand that a person may act out in hostile or spiteful ways because he or she was mistreated as a child.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Tell your students they are going to see a Christmas legend about a miracle, and that there is an old woman in the program who is very unlikable. Tell your students that they should try to determine if they think the old woman is evil. Now, tell the class that this story comes from the Middle East. Has your class studied this area of the world? If your students are unfamiliar with the countries that make up the Middle East, you may want to duplicate and hand out Middle Eastern Countries. Have your students complete this exercise, either as individual seat work or as a class activity.

View the Video

Total viewing time is approximately 14 minutes.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask your students about the old woman who took in Mustafa. Was she evil? What about her taking care of Mustafa until he was old enough to beg? Could taking care of Mustafa as a baby be classified as a good deed? What might prompt her to do so? Why was the old woman afraid of Mustafa's eyes? Was she afraid of the goodness and compassion in them? Can a person really tell the character of others by looking in their eyes? Now, turn your attention to the miracle. Have your students heard of other medical miracles? Do they truly occur? If so, are they common? Discuss the pros and cons of believing in miracles. Can one go to a physician or other trained medical practitioner and also believe in miracles?

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Advanced

Introduce the Program

Discuss the concepts of good and evil in terms of human relationships. How do "good" persons relate to their fellow humans? Have your students give examples in their everyday lives. Is it always "good" to be charitable? Or helpful? What if a parent helps his or her child so much that the child has no confidence to do things for himself or herself? Discuss the saying that "It is better to teach a person to farm than to give him food?" Help your students understand that what is "good" in one instance may not be "good" in another. What about evil behavior? Has anyone ever felt that his or her parents were unjust – or unsympathetic – only to later discover that the parents' actions were wise? What constitutes truly evil behavior?

Pre-Viewing Activities

Tell your class that they are now going to see a Christmas legend from the Middle East. Continue by explaining that the story centers what are commonly viewed as “good” and “evil” individuals. The story also contains a miracle. Tell the class that you will want to them to analyze the antagonist and protagonist of the story, as well as the nature of the miracle, after viewing the program.

View the Video

Total viewing time is approximately 14 minutes.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss the old woman. Was she the embodiment of evil? Did she have any redeeming qualities? What was her motivation for taking in Mustafa when he was an infant? Could she have foreseen that his begging would be so profitable when she brought him into her house? Discuss the woman’s attitude toward Mustafa. Explain that actors often “back story,” to create a narrative that might explain a character’s motivations and actions. Have your class create a back story for the old woman to help explain her malevolent behavior. Then turn your discussion to Mustafa’s eyes. Is it possible to tell a person’s character through his or her eyes? Has anyone ever run across a description of a criminal’s eyes as “hard,” “lifeless,” or “cold?” What does that mean? Can a person have “hard” eyes and still be kind and gentle? Is it possible to get a general idea of a person’s intelligence by looking at his or her eyes? Does a person with high intelligence often have “bright” eyes? Has anyone in the class ever encountered an individual with highly unusual,

especially expressive eyes? Finally, turn the class's attention to miracles. What constitutes a miracle? By definition, miracles rarely occur. Discuss unrealistic reliance on miracles and the concept of "false hope." Is there any instance in which reliance on a miracle is warranted? Have your students research religious miracles through the ages.

Description of Blackline Masters

Mustafa Was Special – A primary-level activity that helps introduce the main character of the story.

Important Animals – Helps primary students understand modes of transportation in ancient and present day Middle Eastern societies.

A Terrible Woman – Helps primary students recall details that make up the character development of the story's main antagonist.

Middle Eastern Countries – A map activity that helps intermediate students identify the 15 countries that make up the Middle Eastern region.

ANSWER KEY

Middle Eastern Countries - Starting at the upper left country, moving clockwise with the arrows: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria

WEB RESOURCES

Christmas on the Internet

<http://www.twoc.com/Christmasinter/main.html>

Stories, songs, games, recipes, coloring book, Christmas art. A major resource.

Christmas at Imagitek

<http://www.imagitek.com/xmas/ideas>

Ideas for Christmas projects, tips and a lot more!

Christmas Day Kid Crossword

<http://www.sunniebunniezz.com/puzzles/xmaskcr.htm>

A Christmas crossword puzzle for primary-aged children.

Christmas Crafts for Kids

<http://www.merry-christmas.com/crafts.htm#8>

A collection of excellent craft activities for children.

Christmas.com Music Box

<http://www.Christmas.com/carols/>

Listen to all your favorites!

TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

STORYTELLER: Far, far away, where desert lands are hot and dry for countless miles on end...where nomads travel from place to place on horses and camels...where artisans practice their ancient crafts - it is here, the imagination evokes stories of all manner and kind.

For here is found the essence of legend: true stories of bravery and faith!

Long, long ago people made their homes in cliffs here. And when the sun reached the horizon, at day's end, they sat inside and told legends much like the one you are about to see and hear.

No one knew where the baby Mustafa came from.

All they knew was that he was fretful and unhappy, and that things would not get better soon.

From the day the old woman took him into her home, and for years afterward, he would know no happiness.

But how could he, with such a person taking care of him?

HAG: I don't know why I feed you! You're useless! You'll never be worth anything! Look at you! Look at that horrible hump on your back!

STORYTELLER: It was true that poor little Mustafa was born a hunchback.

HAG: And stop looking at me! Never look at me with those horrible eyes of yours!

STORYTELLER: In fact, Mustafa's eyes were remarkable. And perhaps that is why the evil old woman could not look into them. For something within them, something miraculous, shone out with extraordinary brilliance.

And that the old woman could not abide.

For the most part, Mustafa was ignored in his village. And because of the old lady's warnings, he always cast his eyes downward when he hobbled among the villagers.

When was about seven, the old woman told him he must now pay for his keep.

HAG: Here, take this, worthless, ugly boy! Go beg for alms. And don't come back until the plate is full.

And one more thing, ugly boy: when you beg, you must look into the eyes of those to whom you talk. Not me! Not me! Evil, terrible boy!!!

STORYTELLER: And so that very day, Mustafa, alms plate in hand, walked to a fig tree beside the road leading to town. That would be his place to beg and to watch the clouds lazily drift by – a place where he could forget his dreadful lot in life.

It was not long before poor little Mustafa spied, far in the distance, a man riding a camel.

MUSTAFA: Alms! Alms for the poor. Master, I beg for an old woman.

MERCHANT (TO HIMSELF): Look at his eyes! What unearthly beauty is within them! (ALOUD) What is your name, boy? Where do you come from? Who is your father?

MUSTAFA: Mustafa is my name, master. I come from the nearby village. I know not who my father is.

MERCHANT: Why do you look away, my boy, and cry?

MUSTAFA: Because I am hideous and my eyes are especially so! The old woman has told me.

MERCHANT: (TO HIMSELF) Not so! Look at that! Those eyes look as if they some day will behold the Messiah! (ALOUD) This is for you, Mustafa.

MUSTAFA: Oh, thank you! Thank you, most generous master!

STORYTELLER: The man - who had made his journey for an evil purpose - now turned back toward the village, his heart changed forever by Mustafa's gaze.

That evening, Mustafa brought to the old woman more gold coins than she had ever seen!

And, as the days passed, her pile of coins grew higher, for no one could refuse to give alms to the boy once they saw his eyes.

The more money the old woman collected, the less attention she paid to Mustafa. For days on end, there would be no meals for the poor child.

He became weak and sick, until very early one morning, before sunrise, he could barely move.

HAG: Get up! Get up! Go beg for your alms! What's this? Too lazy, eh? Mmmm! If you can't earn your keep, then you can't stay!

Get out, evil child! I have more than enough money now. I have no need of that ugly, wretched child!

STORYTELLER: Mustafa was able to find a little food here and there, such as dates dropped on the road. And he found a small cave in which to sleep.

But his health worsened.

After several days in the cave, he awoke to the sounds of distant voices. He made his way to the opening and listened.

CHILD: But why must we go to Bethlehem, Father?

FATHER: Because the Emperor, Caesar Augustus, has decreed that all of us must enroll at the place of our birth. And we must all obey the great Caesar's commands, my son.

STORYTELLER: All day, Mustafa watched as crowds of people walked on the nearby road - men and women, sons, grandparents.

MUSTAFA: No one is alone. They all walk together. I am the only one who is alone!

STORYTELLER: And with that, he began to weep as he reflected upon the loneliness he had endured his entire life.

At last, unaware of the passing throngs, he slept when darkness came.

But somewhat later, Mustafa awoke. He no longer heard the passing beasts and people. He looked to the heavens, and beheld more stars than he had ever seen - each bright, each magnificent!

Thus it was that Mustafa felt warm and peaceful. No longer was there pain in his back, nor hunger in his stomach.

As the stars shone in the firmament above, the sheep slept in the fields below. And the boy, as if in a trance, walked by them. As he did, they awakened, one by one.

Still entranced, Mustafa turned to see a woman coming toward him. She rode on a donkey led by a man - surely her husband, thought Mustafa - although he did not know for certain.

And then, and then! His eyes beheld something he could not explain! A heavenly glow appeared around the woman. Her husband seemed unaware of it.

But not the sheep! All bowed as the couple passed.

Mustafa also bowed, although he knew not why.

MUSTAFA: She goes to Bethlehem. I shall go, too! I must!

STORYTELLER: He did not know why, but indeed he did go, hobbling along on his misshapen legs, pulled by some mystical force until he reached an inn, where once again he saw the woman and her husband.

And then, once again, he slept.

At sunrise, Mustafa awoke. Everything seemed awash in a heavenly glow. The woman held a newborn child - a child unlike any other!

Careful not to come too close, Mustafa slowly approached.

MARY: You need not be afraid. Come closer if you would like to see Him.

MUSTAFA: No! No, I cannot. I am sick and feeble, a wretched hunchback

MARY: Come! Let Him rest His hand on you.

STORYTELLER: Mustafa knew not how long he kneeled there. All time was lost.

MUSTAFA: I am made whole! I am made whole!

MARY: Go forth and give praise.

STORYTELLER: And so he did.

Later, that same day, two elderly shepherds were tending their flock, when they noticed someone walking from a thicket. They could see, as He walked closer, that He had just bathed. He was cleansed fresh and radiant.

OLD SHEPHERD: Who is he?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Look how handsome and strong he is! And see how the light shines on him? He must be royalty!

STORYTELLER: And as Mustafa passed them, they bowed. Thus, the untold miracle is now told to all.

The Middle East, from where our story has come, is a study in contrasts.

It is a land of deserts, but also a land of green, rolling hills and lush valleys.

The Middle East has clear, sparkling seas filled with brightly colored fish and rich coral growth. Yet, there are also waters there, such as the Dead Sea, that are so salty that only brine shrimp can live in them.

The Middle East has ultra-modern cities where people live, play, worship and work.

But it also has ancient towns with cobblestone walkways, where artisans practice their ancient crafts.

Middle Eastern contrasts do not end there. The region has many cultures. Most people in the region are of Arabic heritage, and most them speak, write and sing - in that language.

But there are other languages in the region. English is one, Hebrew is another. Also, Persian.

History and geography account for many of those differences.

The Middle East lies at the intersection of Asia, Africa and Europe. Thousands of years ago, trade routes passed through the region, and traders brought their varied customs.

The Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, the Arabians, the Turks – and the others who came here – built large cities where trade, government - and everyday life - flourished.

One example was Petra, in Jordan, built on the trade route that linked Arabia and the Mediterranean Sea.

It was founded by an Arabian people, the Nabataeans, some 2,400 years ago. The Nabataeans carved temples and government buildings from cliff sides and cut deeply into hills to make their homes.

The Middle East is also the birthplace of the world's three main western religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Israel, where Jesus lived, is particularly holy.

Every year, thousands upon thousands of Christian pilgrims come to trace Jesus' steps as they walk along the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. They visit churches that are among the holiest in all of Christendom – the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, the Mt. of the Beatitudes in Galilee, the Church of the Loaves and Fishes in Tagba, and others.

To some, the Middle East – particularly its mystical lands – reflects the wonder, the beauty ... and yes, sometimes the harshness of life we all experience. It is to many a place where special stories have come, stories that tell us of the wondrous events that took place in the holy land long ago.

Name _____

Directions: You will meet Mustafa in a video you will see. Mustafa lived a long time ago. He had special eyes. He was special in other ways. Color the picture of Mustafa. Then, in the box below, draw a picture of someone you know who is special.



Name _____

A TERRIBLE WOMAN

Directions: The old woman in the program was terrible. Color her picture. Then, below, list the things she did that you did not like.

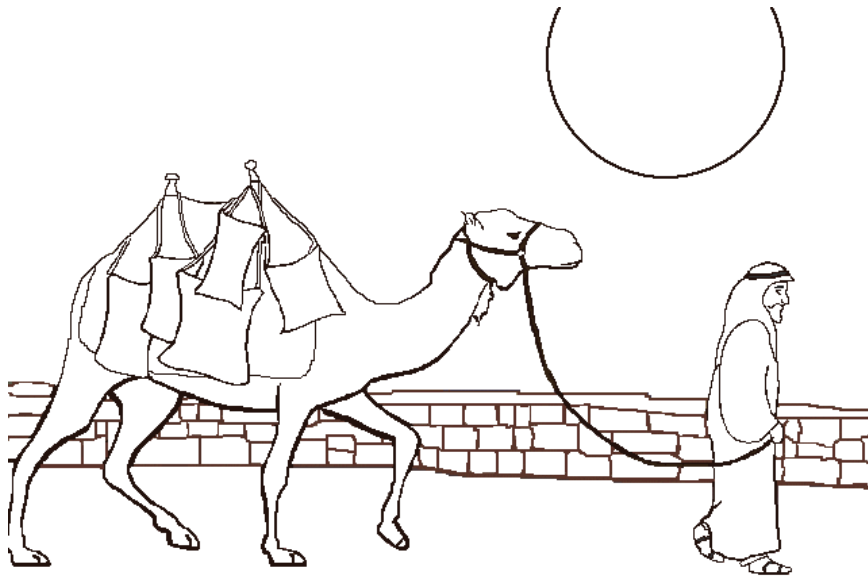


Things I Did Not Like

Name _____

IMPORTANT ANIMALS

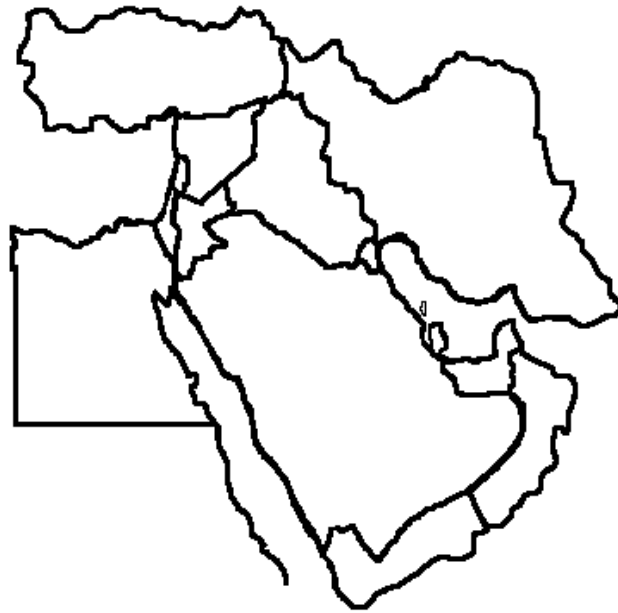
Directions: Some people in the program carried things on camels. Color the picture. Then, in one of the boxes below, draw another animal you saw used to carry people and things. In the other box, draw a way people in the Middle East get around today.



Name _____

MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES

Directions: An Untold Miracle is a story that comes from the Middle East. There are 15 countries in that area of the world. Using a map or an atlas, label the countries of the Middle East. You can use the list below the map.



Countries

Lebanon

Yemen

Oman

Turkey

Israel

Iraq

Kuwait

Lebanon

Jordan

Syria

Bahrain

Saudi Arabia

Iran

Qatar

United Arab Emirates