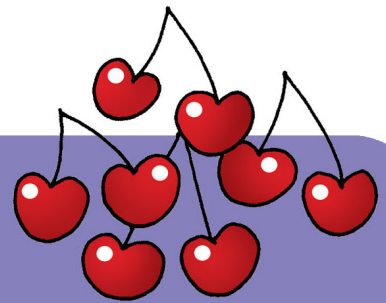


TEO AND...

THE CHERRIES...



Watch out! Your nose is growing..." was a favourite of Teo's mom when a lie seemed to be on the move..., and how many times had the boy heard his parents say: "Whoever sticks to truth is admired and respected, and will always be a winner." Teo had never forgot the story about Gandhi, either, the father of Indian Independence, who had been scolded when he was a child because of a lie. He knew, he really did, that lying was wrong and could get you into trouble...

And yet that day... Teo lied, not once but four times! He didn't think he was going to do so. It just happened! And when he realized what he had done, it was too late. The eggs were broken!

Good morning class! Was everything clear yesterday? Any problems with your homework?" Piped the math teacher to his students walking in the room. He was carrying the class register, and for sure would have invited someone up to repeat the lesson. Teo had been called a few days earlier, so in no way could it be his turn that day.

The kids waved their hands and saluted the teacher, "It's all clear, Mr. Bill", they cried.

Teo's voice rang with the others.

"Fantastic. Then let's get at it and work out some divisions!", he said blinking at Teo. "You can refer to the examples we made yesterday."

Teo felt a knot in his throat. He hadn't even looked at his homework because he was confused about what had been said the day before. He hadn't understood the lesson!

"Ehmm... Mr. Bill, sir ..." said Teo undertone. "I... can't do it, I mean, I feel strange..., maybe because, ... yesterday I ate tons of cherries... you know, grandpa brought them over from his back yard... and ... ohiohiohio... I'm hurting all over... right here..." he whined, pointing to his stomach.

"Is your stomach aching, Teo? Shall we call your mom?!" Teo's face turned as white as a white bedsheet. "You do look pale. Your mom will be happy to take you home and fondle you a little! I'll be back in a second class". Said the teacher, walking out of the room.

Teo sat on the school bench outside in the hall, waiting for his mother. Now he was really feeling bad! He kept wondering why on earth he had lied to Mr. Bill in the first place. He would have liked to been able to eat loads of cherries the day before...

cont.

But this year they still hadn't even seen them on their table! Another lie! And what about pretending to have understood the math lesson, and to be ready to be called up to the blackboard? The boy went over the things he had said. "What am I going to tell mom?", he thought.

"What's the matter, honey?" asked his mother.

"I have a tummy ache mom..." blabbered Teo, looking at the floor.

"Cherries." Chirped the math teacher, poking his nose out of the classroom... "They must have been real good!" he added winking friendly at Teo.

"Cherries?" asked Teo's mom.

"Yesterday he must have overdone it... all those cherries from grandpa's backyard... I know how it goes," said the teacher, "I'm a cherry lover too!"

"Oh, I see, ... said Teo's mother, eyeing her son. "Cherries... of course..."

Teo was quiet while his mother drove home, his head half hidden in his jacket. A few silent tears dribbled down his face. How could he fix the damage done? Gandhi's mom had made a vow to not touch food if not after having heard the cuckoo sing, and her son had lied to her, imitating its song. His intentions were good, because he didn't want to see his mom go without her breakfast...but Teo's intentions were not as noble. He had lied to his teacher, not once but four times, and he had lied to his mom too, just because he hadn't understood the math lesson and because he hadn't done his homework. If little Gandhi's mom had felt so ashamed of her son's behaviour, how would his own mother be feeling? Suddenly something grandpa had once said to him started rolling over in his head: "Truth protects the one who respects it. Truth and right action protect you but you need to be in line with them..." Telling the truth was the only way out of his bunch of lies. Teo had to find the courage to explain what had happened to his mother, and apologize for his misdeeds.

"I'm sorry mom", said Teo undertone, as they entered the driveway. Teo's mother gave her son a tender glance. She knew that he was learning an important lesson: that lying hurts and can damage relationships too.

"I goofed it all up on my own... Mr. Bill asked us some questions about yesterday's lesson and I pretended to know the answers, ... and when he invited me up in front of the class I didn't know how to do the exercise, so I made him believe that I wasn't feeling well..."

“I’m glad that you decided to tell me the truth, Teo”, said his mother. “Because when people start lying they can’t stop anymore. Lying becomes a bad habit. Why didn’t you study?”

“I didn’t understand yesterday’s lesson”, said Teo. “You only had to tell Mr. Bill about it! He would have explained the lesson over again and I’m sure that your class mates would have welcomed a brush-up!”

“You’re wrong mom! Everyone had understood the lesson, except me!”, sobbed Teo. “I didn’t want them to think that I was stupid!”

“Oh Teo...”, said his mother, hugging the child. “There is nothing better than honesty! If you are open and honest the truth will help you out! But if you tell a lie you will have to continue adding on to it, with more and more lies! Isn’t that what happened?!” she asked.

“In a few minutes one lie turned into four!”, sighed Teo. “It’s so much easier to tell the truth.”

“It’s not only easier, Teo... it makes you feel good. If you are what you say you are, and affirm that which you really know, your sincerity will be at the basis of good relationships, especially with yourself. Because when you lie to others you are making fun of yourself in the first place!”

Teo and his mother gave each other a big bear hug. She was happy that he had opened up and shared such a hard time with her, and he was feeling more happy and confident too, now that the truth had come out.

That evening he wrote down in his personal notebook: “Lying makes you lose your way, while truth protects you, and guides you in the right direction. Telling the truth makes things clear and easy. If you don’t understand something... all you need to do is say so!”.

THE END

Don’t miss the
worksheet!

WORKSHEET

TEO AND THE CHERRIES

1. What is a lie?
2. What does it mean to be sincere?
3. How do you know when someone is lying?
4. Have you ever said a lie?
5. Why does one lie lead to another?
6. Why did Teo tell his teacher that he had understood the lesson, when he hadn't?
7. Why did Teo feel ashamed?
8. What did Teo's experience teach you?
9. Do you think that telling the truth is important?
10. What does telling the truth mean to you?



TELL THE STORY IN YOUR OWN WORDS. WHAT IMPRESSED YOU THE MOST?