

The Princess of Mount Ledang

A. Look at title of the story. Do you know anything about the story of *The Princess of Mount Ledang*? What do you know? Read the story and check your answers.

The beauty of the princess of Mount Ledang was legendary. Everyone who lived in the villages near the mountain told stories about her loveliness, and these stories travelled far and wide until, eventually, they reached the land of Melaka. When the sultan there, whose wife had died, heard about the beautiful princess who lived at the top of the mountain, he knew he wanted to make her his wife.

The sultan sent several of his most devoted nobles to speak to the princess and ask her to marry him. With them, he sent a great number of expensive gifts: beautiful clothes, fine gold jewellery, and bowls and boxes crafted from silver. The journey from Melaka to Mount Ledang was a long one, but eventually the nobles arrived at the bottom of the mountain.

It took them a full day to reach the top. There, they found a garden of bright flowers and tall trees – and, at its heart, a magnificent palace. A young woman waited for them at the entrance; she was slim and graceful, and even more beautiful than the stories told. She welcomed them warmly and invited them into the palace, where they were served food and entertained.

When they had eaten, they relaxed, satisfied. Then, the princess asked them why they had come to her mountain.

'Princess,' one replied, 'we have come from the sultan of Melaka. He sends you these gifts, in the hope that you will consider marrying him.'

For a while, the princess looked deep in thought. Finally, she spoke: 'If the sultan really wishes to marry me, he must give me seven gifts. First, he must build two bridges between Mount Ledang and the sultan's palace – one of silver, one of gold. Then he must bring me seven trays of mosquito hearts, seven trays of germ hearts, seven barrels filled with juice from the betel nut, and seven barrels of tears. Finally, for the seventh gift, he must give me a silver bowl, filled with the blood of his only son.'

A long silence followed her words. 'We shall carry your message to the sultan,' said one of the nobles, eventually. After that, they left the palace as quickly as they could.

The sultan was so eager to marry the princess that, when he heard her requests, he used every resource in his lands to fulfil her requests. He made the people of Melaka work night and day and, soon, he had prepared the first six gifts.

Now he started to think about the seventh gift, but his heart felt heavy. He had been dreaming of marrying the princess for a long time now, but he loved his son dearly. As he thought on it, he realised he could not do it; he would have to give up the dream of marrying the princess of Mount Ledang.

It was in this moment that the sultan finally saw clearly. He looked out over his lands and saw what he had missed before; his people were suffering. They had worked too hard, and he had forgotten his duty to look after them. He realised then the price he had paid for selfishly chasing his own ambition.

B. Read again and answer the questions.

1. What was the princess of Mount Ledang famous for?
2. What did the nobles take with them to Mount Ledang?
3. How did the princess treat the nobles?
4. How does the text suggest the nobles felt about the princess's requests?
5. What finally made the Sultan decide he would not marry the princess?
6. How did the Sultan's wish to marry the princess affect his people?

C. Discuss.

- Do you think the princess of Mount Ledang expected the sultan to fulfil her requests? Why / Why not? What was she trying to do by making these requests?
- What is the moral of the story?

D. Read the sentences below from the extract. Decide whether the adjectives in bold express feelings, character or appearance.

The Sultan sent several of his most **devoted** nobles to speak to the princess.
She was **slim** and **graceful**...
When they had eaten, they relaxed, **satisfied**.

Character descriptions usually provide information about a character's traits, appearance and feelings. They are an important feature of writing because they help readers create a picture in their minds of the character they are reading about. This makes the reading experience more real, and helps the reader connect with the characters they are reading about.

E. Read the extract again and find additional adjectives that refer to the characters in the story. Decide whether they express feelings or appearance.

F. Put the adjectives in the box in the correct category in the table below.

bald arrogant devoted irritated offended
witty well-built overjoyed underweight
reserved discouraged handsome

Feelings

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Character

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____


Appearance

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

G. Use some of the adjectives in the previous activity to complete the sentences.

1. He was a / an _____ husband and father, and did his best to provide for his wife and children.
2. Beatrice is very _____ and feels terribly uncomfortable when she has to speak to people she doesn't know.
3. The boy was terribly weak and _____; it was obvious that he had not eaten in days.
4. I was _____ to hear that my brother who lives in Canada is visiting us in July.
5. I felt _____ when Brian spoke to me so rudely the other day.
6. I had really made an effort, so when my boss criticised my work, I felt really _____.
7. Edgar is really _____; his comments are not only clever but also funny.
8. I don't like working with Derrick; he has a big idea of himself and is terribly _____.

Project

 Do some research on the Internet and find a folk tale from another culture about a princess. Take notes (plot, main characters, interesting features) and present it to the class.