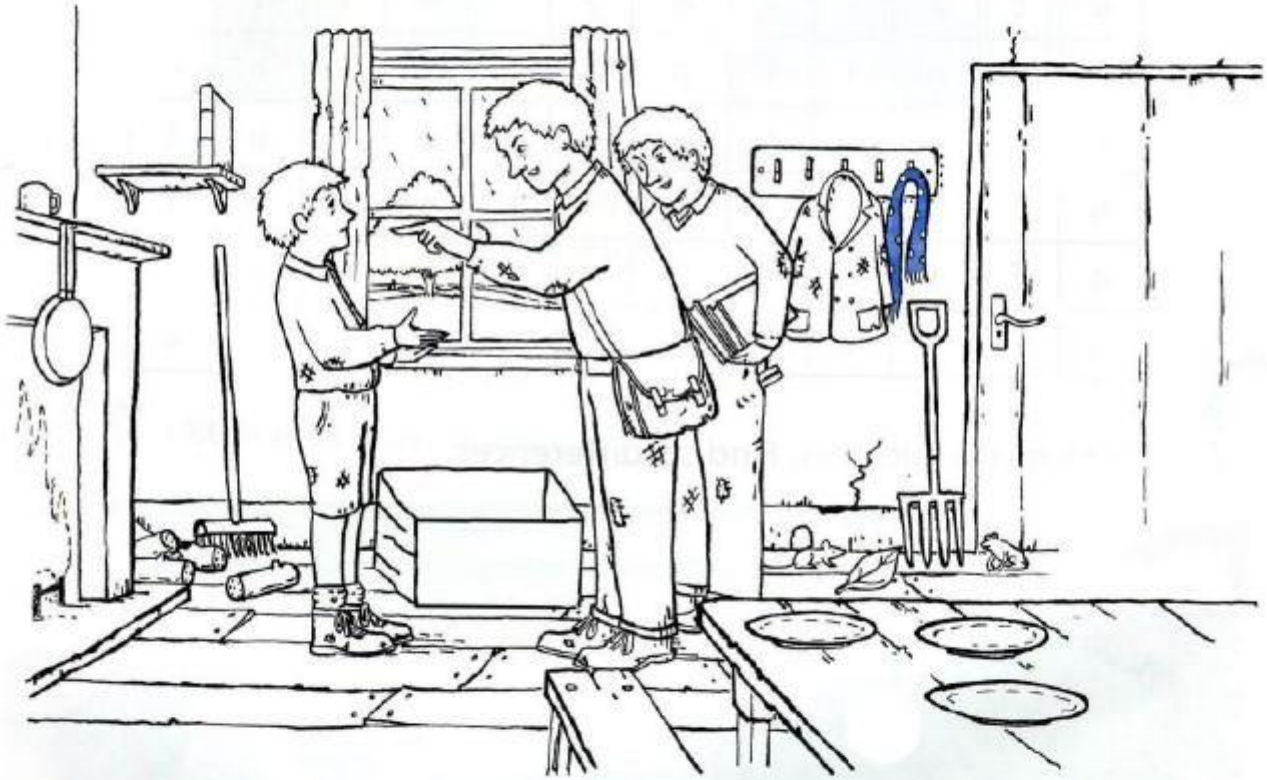
2

Ben's wishes

I have an uncle who writes books for children. I didn't see my uncle very often when I was a child because he lived in Africa, but he came to see us sometimes. When he did visit us, he usually told me one of his stories. I loved them all but 'Ben's wishes' was my favourite. My uncle told it to me one winter when it was very cold outside. I was about ten, I think.



A boy called Ben had two older brothers. The older boys often felt hungry and often got angry because they were so poor.

'Go and work in the fields,' they said to Ben early each morning. 'Then bring home some vegetables and make an enormous bowl of soup for our dinner.'

Ben always answered in the same way. 'But I want to go to school and learn all about the world.'

Ben's unkind brothers just laughed and said, 'Don't be silly! You aren't clever enough to go to school like us.' So Ben didn't go anywhere. He just worked in the fields in the rain, digging and planting and planting and digging.

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One really cold morning, Ben was planting some onions when he saw an old silver cup on the ground. He picked it up, sat down under a tree and cleaned it with his scarf. Then, very carefully, he put it down on the grass next to his rucksack.



Ben was tired and hungry but he only had five little olives to eat. He looked at the cup and said, 'I'm so lucky to have these olives, but I'd like a lovely warm drink, too.'

Suddenly, the silver cup was full of hot chocolate. Ben was very surprised. He drank it all, but he still felt cold. He looked down at his old jacket and at the cup again and said, 'I'm so lucky to have a jacket, but there are hundreds of holes in it. I wish ... I wish ... I could have a new coat.'

A wonderful coat made of wool suddenly appeared from somewhere in the sky. Now Ben was really surprised. He put it on. It felt soft and warm.



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Then he opened a little book that belonged to one of his brothers. Ben looked at the cup one more time and said, 'I'm so lucky to have one book to read, but I'd like one hundred more books so I can learn all about the world, please.'

Suddenly, a hundred books fell from between the leaves in the tree above him. Ben couldn't believe it. He was so pleased.



He laughed and laughed, put the old cup in his pocket, carried the books home, sat down by the fire and read them all.



When Ben's older brothers came in through the door, Ben was still reading. They were angry. 'Where's our dinner? Where's our vegetable soup?' they shouted.

Ben looked up and said, 'I found an old cup in the field today. I think it understands about wishes. It gave me a hot chocolate, a warm coat and 100 really interesting books. I'm learning all about the world. It's amazing! I know all about its lands and its oceans and about all the creatures that live on the Earth as well now. So ask the silver cup for your dinner.'

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The two older brothers looked at Ben's new coat, his new books and then at the silver cup on the table. One of them picked it up. He was angrier now. 'We have a wish, too. Give us our dinner. We want it this minute!' he said.

The empty bowls were suddenly full of delicious vegetable soup. The brothers couldn't believe it.

'Cup,' the oldest brother shouted. 'Give me a room full of money.'

'Give me more money than my brother and a room full of candy,' the other brother said.

Suddenly, there was candy and money everywhere. The brothers began to fight.

'Give me that cup,' one shouted.

'No!' the other one said. 'It's mine. It's not yours. Give it to me!'



The cup fell on the ground and broke, and all the candy, the money, the delicious vegetable soup, Ben's warm coat and the interesting books disappeared. They were nowhere in the house.

I felt really sad when my uncle told me that part of the story.



But then he added, 'But the cup couldn't make all the stories about the world disappear from Ben's head. And when Ben was a man, he visited all the countries in the world and wrote lots of stories about the animals and people who lived there to tell to children.'

I never knew my uncle's first name. I just called him Uncle. Perhaps, just perhaps, it was Ben.

LIVEWORKSHEETS