

The King with the Donkey Ears

Many years ago in Somalia, there was a powerful king. His people adored him and showered him with praise, gifts and respect. But there was one problem: the king had long, floppy ears, just like a donkey! Understandably, the king was embarrassed by this – what would people think of him? He always hid them when he was in public, so that nobody would ever discover his horrible secret. The only person who ever saw the king's ears was his hairdresser.

The King often cautioned the hairdresser. “You must promise never to tell anyone that I have ears shaped like a donkey. If you do, you will remain imprisoned for the rest of your life,” the king warned.

The hairdresser found it difficult to keep this secret. He just wanted to tell all of the villagers about the king's hilarious ears! However, he was worried by the king's warnings, and not wanting to risk eternal imprisonment, he kept the secret to himself for many years.

One morning, it all became too much. The hairdresser was fit to burst! He jumped out of bed and walked out of the village into the barren countryside where he was sure that he was completely alone. Then, he dug a hole.

The hairdresser made a very deep hole, and then he leaned over into the hole and shouted at the top of his voice, “The king has ears shaped like a donkey! The king has ears shaped like a donkey!”

Once he had shouted out the king's secret, the hairdresser felt much better. Then he covered over the hole and returned to his home, telling himself that he had not really betrayed the king.

Many years later, there was a school built next to the hole. One day, when all of the children were playing in the playground, a young boy found the hole hidden beneath the grass and earth. All of a sudden a booming voice escaped from the hole for all the children to hear. ‘The king has ears shaped like a donkey!’

The children were very surprised to hear the hairdresser's voice fill the air, and they giggled and laughed about the secret of the King's ears. When they got home that day, the children told the secret to their parents. Then the parents told the secret to the rest of their family.

Well, it did not take very long at all before the king realised that everybody knew his secret. He was very angry. Only one man knew about his donkey shaped ears and so he sent his guards to the hairdresser's house. The guards took a hold of the hairdresser and dragged him to prison.

The hairdresser always regretted sharing the King's secret when he had promised not to do so.



Questions

DIFFICULTY:  

1. Look at the first paragraph.

Why was the king embarrassed by his ears?

2. Look at paragraph 2.

Which word below best describes the king's feelings about his hairdresser knowing his secret? Tick one.

- anxious
- heartbroken
- relieved
- comfortable

3. Look at paragraph 2.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'warned'.

4. Look at paragraph 3.

... not wanting to risk eternal imprisonment ...

This means that the hairdresser...

- Was a risk taker
- Didn't want to be sent to prison forever
- Didn't know what to do
- Didn't want to send the king to prison

Questions

DIFFICULTY:  

5. The hairdresser went into the *barren* countryside.

Which of the following words is closest in meaning to *barren*?

busy

deserted

hot

fertile

6. Look at paragraph 7.

Whose voice can the children hear?

7. 'The hairdresser always regretted sharing the King's secret when he had promised not to do so'.

What do you think 'regretted' means in this sentence?

kept

felt sorry

wondered

wanted

8. What is the moral of this story?

Answers

1. Look at the first paragraph.

Why was the king embarrassed by his ears?

Because they were long and floppy, and looked like donkey's ears.

Also accept: Because he was worried what the people would think of him.

2. Look at paragraph 2.

Which word below best describes the king's feelings about his hairdresser knowing his secret? Tick one.

anxious

heartbroken

relieved

comfortable

3. Look at paragraph 2.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'warned'.

cautioned

4. Look at paragraph 3.

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This means that the hairdresser...

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Answers

DIFFICULTY:  

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- busy
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6. Look at paragraph 7.

Whose voice can the children hear?

The hairdresser's voice

7. 'The hairdresser always regretted sharing the King's secret when he had promised not to do so'.

What do you think 'regretted' means in this sentence?

- kept
- felt sorry
- wondered
- wanted

8. What is the moral of this story?

To keep other people's secrets to yourself.
