

Applied Project #2: Story Time

Madeline Huiting

The Courage of the Cow

A long time ago in Southern India, cows were a part of people's daily lives. The people there lived off cow's meat, fashioned tools out of their bones, and used their hides for blankets and clothing. It was simply a way of life. Many families who lived there made their living from raising cows, and one of those families was the Patel family. Samim Patel, the father of the family, owned several acres of pasture to raise cows just like his father before him. He had two sons: Devi and Raj.

Raj was only nine years old but he was always the rambunctious child. While his brother Devi was obsessed with his studies and always did what his parents told him to, Raj was usually daydreaming or out playing soccer with his friends. He wasn't very interested in school or helping out around the house, but he did have a kind heart and always did the right thing.

One day, Raj's father came into his room. "Raj, my son," he said, "you must go out to the pasture and kill a cow for tonight's dinner."

"But father," he said, "I don't know how! And I cannot kill a living creature!"

"Take this knife and do as I say," his father bellowed, leaving Raj to grab the knife and scramble out of the room.

Raj walked out to the pasture, knife in hand, with sweat beading on his forehead. He had never killed anything before. Eating a cow was one thing, but it was another thing entirely to have to kill it with your own hands.

Raj spotted the fattest steer in the pasture and crept up to it with the knife. *You can do this, Raj*, he thought to himself, *It'll be over before you know it*. Raj crouched down low and

slowly raised his knife to the cow, but before he could stab it, the cow turned around and looked at him.

“Don’t,” the cow said. “Please do not kill me.”

Raj was taken aback that the cow could speak. “How can you speak? What kind of magic is this?”

The cow did not answer his question. “Sir, I know you probably want to kill me and eat me, but I beg you to spare me. I will be indebted to you for life.”

Raj thought for a moment. The cow *was* a living thing after all, and she had feelings just like he did. He slowly lowered his knife. “All right. I will spare you. But you must run far away and never come back.” Raj opened the gate to the pasture. “Go,” he said to the cow, “and never return.” The cow nodded her head and ran away into the distance.

Raj’s father was very cross with him when he returned home, but Raj’s brother Devi had killed some chickens for their supper that night. After they ate, Raj and Devi left to go swimming at the nearby lake. They stripped down to their underwear and jumped in the cool river. As they were splashing around and playing, Raj swam out farther and farther into the lake until suddenly, he felt the tide rush over him as the breath was pushed out of his lungs. He couldn’t swim!

Luckily, on the top of the cow overseeing the lake was the cow that Raj had let live. She saw exactly what happened and ran as fast as could to Raj’s house. She knocked frantically on the door and told his flabbergasted parents that their son was drowning. Shocked at the talking cow but determined to save his son, Samim ran as fast as he could to the lake and swam out into the lake and grabbed his drowning son, pulling him back safely onto shore. Raj coughed up some water and began to sit up. “How did you find me?” he asked his father. “How did you know I was in trouble?”

His father pointed to the cow, standing behind him. “She came and told us. You did the right thing sparing her life, my son, for she in turn saved yours.”

The next day, a town meeting was held. Samim shared the story of how the cow alerted him to his drowning son. The town was in shock that the animal had saved a human’s life. The town chief, upon hearing this story, proclaimed that cows would no longer be eaten in the region due to their heroic nature. The townspeople decided to start growing crops as their main export instead, and lived happily ever after alongside their spotted friends.

The End

Applied Project Part 2

This story is meant to appeal to children with slightly more advanced reading skills, around age 8 and up. I chose the fable format because I wanted to have a moral at the end of the story: treat animals with kindness and they will treat you with kindness. I wanted to set the story in India because I wanted to create a backstory for why cows are considered sacred there. I feel like there are not very many children's stories about farm animals, possibly because children are socialized early to consider them food instead of friends. I think more stories about animals like pigs and cows would lead children to feel compassion for them and think twice about eating them.

I chose this story to be a metaphor for how the environment changes when we reduce our consumption of meat. Raj drowning is meant to represent global warming, and the cow coming to the rescue represents the positive effects of reducing our consumption of meat. Raising animals creates a ton of waste, releases methane gas into the atmosphere, and uses thousands of gallons of water. By eating less meat, we are helping the environment by conserving water and keeping the atmosphere clean. Shifting from farming animals to growing crops is also a much more efficient way to produce food, as more food can be yielded in a smaller area of land. My hope is that this story puts things in perspective for children and makes them think twice about eating cows.