

PANCHATANTRA

The Panchatantra is an ancient collection of Indian animal fables. It is believed that it was first written around 200 B.C. to educate and entertain the children of the royal family. Each tale uses imagery to explain a moral or idea.

In literature, the theme is the main idea or moral of a story. Typically, the theme of a story conveys a message or lesson about life. The theme is generally not stated outright, but rather represented by the story's characters and their actions, as well as symbols and motifs throughout.

On a separate sheet of paper describe the theme of the story and how it relates to today.

The Broken Pot



In a certain place there lived a Brahman by the name of Svabhâvakripâna, which means "luckless by his very nature." By begging he acquired a quantity of rice gruel, and after he had eaten what he wanted, there was still a potful left. He hung this pot on a nail in the wall above his bed. As night progressed, he could not take his eyes from the pot. All the while he was thinking:

This pot is filled to overflowing with rice gruel. If a famine should come to the land, then I could sell it for a hundred pieces of silver. Then I could buy a pair of goats. They have kids every six months, so I would soon have an entire herd of goats. Then I would trade the goats for cattle. As soon as the cows had calved, I would sell the calves. Then I would trade the cattle for buffalo. And the buffalo for horses. And when the horses foaled, I would own many horses. From their sale I would gain a large amount of gold. With this gold I would buy a house with four buildings in a rectangle.

Then a Brahman would enter my house and give me a very beautiful girl with a large dowry for my wife. She will give birth to a son, and I will give him the name Somasarman. When he is old enough to be bounced on my knee, I will take a book, sit in the horse stall, and read. In the meantime, Somasarman will see me and want to be bounced on my knee. He will climb down from his mother's lap and walk toward me, coming close to the horses hooves. Then, filled with anger, I will shout at my wife, "Take the child! Take the child!"

But she, busy with her housework, will not hear me. So I will jump up and give her a kick!

And, buried in his thoughts, he struck out with his foot, breaking the pot, and painting himself white with the rice gruel that had been in it. Therefore I say:

He who dreams about unrealistic projects for the future will have the same fate as Somasarman's father: He will find himself lying there painted white with rice gruel.