

Grade 3: Unit 1, Week 1 New Beginnings

Read Aloud: The Bremen Town Musicians

A German Folk Tale retold by Margaret H. Lippert

Wonderful Words: *strength, gasp, perch, examine, judge*

The Bremen Town Musicians

A man once had a donkey that had carried his wheat to the mill for many a year, but the donkey's strength was going for he was growing old. Then his master began to think about what to do with the old donkey, but the donkey ran away and set out on the road to Bremen.

“There,” he thought, “I can surely be town musician.”

When the donkey had gone some distance, he came to an old dog, lying in the road, gasping.

“Why are you gasping so, you big fellow?” asked the donkey.

“Ah,” said the dog, “because I am old and weak and can no longer hunt, my master wants to kill me. So I ran away as fast as I could, but now, how will I earn my keep?”

“I am going to Bremen,” said the donkey. “There I shall be town musician. Come with me. I will play the lute, and you shall beat the kettledrum.”

The dog agreed, and on they went.

Before long they came to a cat, sitting in the path, with a face like three rainy days.

“Now, old puss, what has gone askew with you?” asked the donkey.

“Poor me,” said the cat. “Because I am now old and my teeth are worn to stumps, I prefer to sit by the fire rather than hunt rats and mice. But my mistress wants to drown me, so I ran away. But where am I to go?”

“Come with us to Bremen,” said the donkey. “You understand night music, so you can be a town musician.”

The cat thought well of it, and went with them. Then the three passed a farm where a cock was crowing with all his might.

“Your crow goes through my heart,” said the donkey. “What is the matter?”

“Oh, I have crowed up the sun for many mornings of many years, but now guests are coming on Sunday, and the cook intends to put me in the soup tomorrow. So I crow while still I can.”

“Ah, but Old Red-Comb,” said the donkey, “you had better come away with us. We are going to Bremen to be town musicians, and you with your good voice can make fine music with us.”

The cock agreed and all four went on together. They could not reach Bremen in one day, however, and in the evening they came to a forest. Far off through the trees they saw a little light shining, and they thought there must be a house in the forest.

The dog said, “A few bones with some meat on them would do me good.”

So they made their way through the forest until they came to a snug little house, which was well lighted. The donkey, being biggest, looked in the window. What did he see but a table covered with good things to eat and drink and four robbers sitting there enjoying themselves. For the musicians had come upon a robber’s house.

“If only we were in there!” said the donkey.

So the animals thought of a plan to drive away the robbers. The donkey placed himself with his forefeet upon the windowsill, the dog jumped on the donkey's back, the cat climbed upon the dog, and the cock flew up and perched on the head of the cat.

And then they began to perform their music together. The donkey brayed. The dog barked. The cat meowed, and the cock crowed so loud it broke the window glass. And the robbers jumped up in fright and ran away.

The four musicians sat down at the table and ate and drank all the good things that were left.

As soon as they finished, the four musicians put out the light and found places to sleep. The donkey lay down on some straw in the yard. The dog lay down at the back door. The cat sat by the dying fire, and the cock perched high on a beam of the roof.

When the robbers saw that the light was out in their house and all was quiet, one said, "We shouldn't have been so frightened," and he went back to examine the house.

The robber entered the house and went to light a candle. He mistook the glistening, fiery eyes of the cat for live coals, and held a match to them to light it. But the cat flew in his face, spitting and scratching. The robber was dreadfully frightened and ran to the back door, but the dog jumped up and bit his leg. As soon as he ran across the yard, the donkey gave him a good kick. And the cock began to crow, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The robber ran back into the forest as fast as he could and said to the others, "Oh, there is a horrible witch sitting in our house who spat on me and scratched my face with her long claws. By the back door stands a man with a knife who stabbed me in the leg. In the yard there lies a huge monster who beat me with a club, and above the roof there sits the judge who called out, 'Cook him in the stew!' So I got away as well as I could."

After this the robbers never again dared enter the house. But it suited the Bremen town musicians so well that they did not want to leave it. So there they stayed, in comfort and friendship, in the snug little cottage for the rest of their days.

strength

Define: **Strength** is to be powerful.

Example: The woman works out with weights to give her arms **strength**.

Ask: If you wanted to gain **strength**, what would you do?

gasp

Define: **Gasp** is to draw in air suddenly.

Example: The runner was **gasp**ing for breath after he ran in the marathon.

Ask: When have you ever **gasp**ed because something exciting happened?

perch

Define: To **perch** is to sit or rest on something or someone.

Example: My cat **perched** on the side of the kitchen counter.

Ask: Where is your favorite place to **perch**?

examine

Define: **Examine** means to look closely and carefully.

Example: When Jon wants to find something in his room, he **examines** every corner.

Ask: How do you **examine** your tooth to find out if it is cracked?

judge

Define: A **judge** is someone who decides on questions and disagreements.

Example: The **judge** decided whether or not the man was guilty.

Ask: Why might it be difficult to be a **judge** in a contest?