

THE FORBIDDEN CITY OF SHENZHEN

Story Summary

Shahryar is informed by Ambassador Kadeer that Prince Lufti heard from King Fawwaz that King Siamak told him that Shahryar has a bad temper. Shahryar can't believe someone would say this and is furious, threatening war. Shahrzad explains to Shahryar that listening to rumors can often lead to misunderstandings. She tells him this story:

A curious boy named Anming ventures where he's not supposed to and falls down a steep wall into the forbidden city of Shenzhen. The people of Anming's village fear the inhabitants of Shenzhen because they have heard about their primitive and barbaric ways. Anming makes friends with the people of Shenzhen and learns they aren't primitive or barbaric at all; they're just like the people from his village. When the villagers come to rescue Anming, both sides are about to go to war. Anming comes between them and stops them, showing them that their perceptions of each other are based on complete misunderstandings. In truth, neither side is primitive or barbaric. In the end, they all become friends and learn to live together peacefully.



Story Lessons

- Encourage children to be curious about and to appreciate differences in other cultures. Help them realize that all people deserve respect and have many positive qualities in common.
- Help children understand that prejudices are often based on irrational beliefs that date back many years and that first-hand experience is often a powerful antidote to combat prejudice and misunderstandings. Don't believe everything you hear until you can prove it yourself.
- Encourage children to speak up when they hear someone say something offensive or untrue about another person or group of people.



CLASS PLAN

Pre-Viewing Activity (Approximately 5 Minutes)

Have a brief discussion of what a misunderstanding is. To help get students thinking about how misunderstandings can lead to problems, share a personal story about a rumor that wasn't true. Maybe someone jumped to the wrong conclusion based on a superficial detail. For example, a student football player once went to the school doctor because his leg hurt. Rumors quickly spread that the student's leg was paralyzed and that he would never play football again. It turned out that the leg injury was merely a bad cramp that went away in a matter of minutes.

Watch or Read Episode (Approximately 10 Minutes)

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions (Approximately 10 Minutes)

What are some of the rumors that Anming hears about the people of Shenzhen? Where did these rumors come from? What is the truth about these rumors?

(Discussion: Anming has heard that the people of Shenzhen boil one another in big pots, hammer nails into their bodies, and eat worms. The truth is that these people take warm baths in big tubs, practice acupuncture, and eat noodles.)

At the end of the story, Shahrzad said it showed that ignorance breeds fear. How does not knowing about someone else lead to being afraid of them?

(Discussion: Not knowing about someone else can cause you to imagine the worst about him or her.)

What should you do if you hear a rumor about one of your friends?

(Discussion: If you have proof that the rumor is not true, you shouldn't repeat it. You may also dispute it to the person who told you about it.)

What should you do if you hear people make assumptions about other groups of people?

(Discussion: You should always question negative assumptions about other people. If someone says "Those people are bad" or "Those people don't like us," you should always ask why and try to figure out if that makes sense or if you have things in common with the other people that can help overcome your differences.)

In-Class Activity – for 50-60 Minute Lessons (Approximately 30 Minutes)

Children often base their relationships on first impressions rather than real information. Write these three questions on the board: What is your favorite food? What is a food you don't like? What is something you like to talk about? Have students write their responses on a piece of paper—but not put their names on it. Collect all the papers, shuffle them, and then hand them out randomly, one to each student. The goal is for the student to get a response from a different student (if he or she gets his or her own, have them switch with another student's paper). Ask each student to look at the three responses written down and ask themselves: *Do I think this person and I might have a fun lunch together? Why or why not?* Then reveal the identities of the writers. How many surprises did you find? Are you friends with the writer? Why or why not? If not, do you have something in common that could help you build a friendship with the writer?