

## Introduction

**T**he basic idea of this collection of tales is quite simple. People like to read, tell, listen to, and talk about stories. In this collection there are **25 famous folktales** from China, reflecting the long history and ancient culture of this important country. Each tale is presented as a reading passage on one page, and on the backside of the page, there is a list of **prompts** for telling the story. The stories progress from short (about 100 words) and easy, to longer (200 words) and more difficult.

In addition to the tales, the book contains a section of **dictations** (Part 2) for each of the stories. Following the dictations section there are three pages of **discussion prompts** (Part 3). Finally, there are short passages that provide **background** (Part 4) to the time and place of the story, with notes about the culture.

A **Story CD** is available for use as an optional listening comprehension activity and pronunciation model. The dictations are also available as a separate set of **Dictation CDs**. Also available is a **Teacher's Handbook** with photocopyable vocabulary exercises and verb cards. The Handbook is available as a separate booklet, or for free downloading from the Pro Lingua website. A **Chinese Version of the Stories** in ideographic characters and Pinyin is also available as a booklet or for downloading.

The book is designed for **English language learners**. However, **Chinese language learners**, as well as **Chinese heritage speakers** will benefit from these stories, especially since they provide background about Chinese culture. The book can also serve as a resource book for the teacher of mainstream students who are studying China. Elementary and kindergarten school teachers will find the book a useful source for telling Chinese folktales.



8. **Discuss the stories** in small groups or as a class using the prompts in Part 3. Some of the stories are “entertainment” stories, and some are “instructional” stories that impart a lesson. There are two questions for each story. In general, the first question involves comprehension of the story line, and the second one is about the lesson (moral). The lesson is not overtly stated in the story in order to stimulate discussion among the learners about the lesson of the story. Not all stories have obvious lessons.
9. Finally, and optionally, have the learners **read the story backgrounds** in Part 4. Less proficient learners may have difficulty with these readings. In that case, you can summarize the key points to them. Many of these background readings can be used as a springboard to further research on China. For example, in Story 1, “The Snake with Feet,” the Chinese zodiac is mentioned. A quick exploration of the Internet could be conducted to learn more about the zodiac and the Chinese calendar.

As mentioned earlier, the book may be used in a variety of ways. Some possibilities:

1. **Trading Stories.** Give each student a different story—easier stories for the less proficient. Circulate and help the learners understand their stories. When learners feel they can tell the story using only the prompts, or from memory, they stand up and look for another person who is standing. They tell each other their stories. Then they take another look at the story, split up and find another person to tell. They may do this three or four times, each time becoming more proficient.
2. **Story-A-Day.** Each day one student tells a story to the class.
3. **Write with Prompts.** Have the learners look at the prompts page of a story they are familiar with and write the story.
4. **Listen and Write.** Read a story to the learners, preferably one that has already been studied. They write it out from memory. They can compare with a friend, listen again, or hand it in.
5. **Act It Out.** Give a story to a group of students (The number depends on the story) and have them perform it for their classmates. It may be necessary to have a narrator as well as actors.
6. **Direct/Indirect Speech Practice.** Have the students rewrite the direct quotes as indirect, and vice versa.
7. **Develop a content-based unit** on China using other sources. Use the collection as a complement to the unit. Engaging the learners actively in reading, telling, writing, even acting out a story, can help make a social studies unit come alive.