The People Could Fly

African American Folk Tale

Virginia Hamilton

They say the people could fly. Say that long ago in Africa, some of the people knew magic. And they would walk up on the air like climbin' up on a gate. And they flew like black birds over the fields. Black, shiny wings flappin' against the blue up there.

Then, many of the people were captured for Slavery. The ones that could fly shed their wings. They couldn't take their wings across the water on the slave ships. Too crowded, don't you know.

The folks were full of misery, then. Got sick with the up and down of the sea. So they forgot about flyin' when they could no longer breathe the sweet scent of Africa.

Say the people who could fly kept their power, although they shed their wings. They kept their secret magic in the land of slavery. They looked the same as the other people from Africa who had been coming over, who had dark skin. Say you couldn't tell anymore one who could fly from one who couldn't.

One such who could was an old man, call him Toby. And standin' tall, yet afraid, was a young woman who once had wings. Call her Sarah. Now Sarah carried a babe tied to her back. She trembled to be so hard worked and scorched.

The slaves labored in the fields from sunup to sundown. The owner of the slaves callin' himself their Master. Say he was a hard lump of clay. A hard, glistening coal. A hard rock pile wouldn't be moved. His Overseer\(^2\) on horseback pointed out the slaves who were slowin' down. So the one called Driver\(^3\) cracked his whip over the slow ones to make them move faster. That whip was a slice-open cut of pain. So they did move faster. Had to.

Sarah hoed and chopped the row as the babe on her back slept.

Say the child grew hungry. That babe started up bawling too loud. Sarah couldn't stop to feed it. Couldn't stop to soothe and quiet it down. She let it cry. She didn't want to. She had no heart to croon to it.

"Keep that thing quiet," called the Overseer. He pointed his finger at the babe. The woman scrunched low. The Driver cracked his whip across the babe anyhow. The babe balled like any hurt child, and the woman fell to the earth. The old man that was there, Toby, came and helped her to her feet.

"I must go soon," she told him.

"Soon," he said.

Sarah couldn't stand up straight any longer. She was too weak. The sun burned her face. The babe cried and cried. "Pity me, oh, pity me," say it sounded like. Sarah was so sad and starvin', she sat down in the row.

"Get up, you black cow," called the Overseer. He pointed his hand, and the Driver's whip arched around Sarah's legs. Her sack dress tore into rags. Her legs bled onto the earth. She couldn't get up.

Toby was there where there was no one to help her and the babe.

"Now, before it's too late," panted Sarah.

"Now, Father!"

"Yes, Daughter, the time is come," Toby answered. "Go, as you know how to go!"

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1. glistening (gln'-stîn') adj. Shiny; reflecting light.
2. Overseer ("ö-va-sir") n. Someone who watches over and directs the work of others.
3. Driver n.: Someone who forced (drove) the slaves to work harder.
He raised his arms, holding them out to her. "Kum... yali, kum buba també," and more magic words, said so quickly, they sounded like whispers and sighs.

The young woman lifted one foot on the air. Then the other. She flew clumsily at first, with the child now held tightly in her arms. Then she felt the magic, the African mystery. Say she rose just as free as a bird. As light as a feather.

The Overseer rode after her, hollerin. Sarah flew over the fences. She flew over the woods. Tall trees could not snag her. Nor could the Overseer. She flew like an eagle now, until she was gone from sight. No one dared speak about it. Couldn't believe it. But it was, because they that was there saw that it was.

Say the next day was dead hot in the fields. A young man slave fell from the heat. The Driver come and whipped him. Toby come over and spoke words to the fallen one. The words of ancient Africa once heard are never remembered completely. The young man forgot them as soon as he heard them. They went way inside him. He got up and rolled over on the air. He rode it awhile. And he flew away.

Another and another fell from the heat. Toby was there. He cried out to the fallen and reached his arms out to them. "Kum kunka yali, kum... també!" Whispers and sighs. And they too rose on the air. They rode the hot breezes. The ones flyin were black and shinin sticks, wheelin above the head of the Overseer. They crossed the rows, the fields, the fences, the streams, and were away.

"Seize the old man!" cried the Overseer. "I heard him say the magic words. Seize him!"

The one callin himself Master come runnin. The Driver got his whip ready to curl around old Toby and tie him up. The slaveowner took his hip gun from its place. He meant to kill old, black Toby.

But Toby just laughed. Say he threw back his head and said, "Hee, hee! Don't you know who I am? Don't you know some of us in this field?" He said it to their faces. "We are ones who fly!"

And he sighed the ancient words that were a dark promise. He said them all around to

◆ Build Vocabulary

**Croon** (krōn) v.: Sing or hum quietly, soothingly
the others in the field under the whip.
“...buba yali...buba tambe...”

There was a great outcryin. The bent backs straightened up. Old and young who were called slaves and could fly joined hands. Say like they would ring-sing. But they didn’t shuffle in a circle. They didn’t sing. They rose on the air. They flew in a flock that was black against the heavenly blue. Black crows or black shadows. It didn’t matter, they went so high. Way above the plantation, way over the slavery land. Say they flew away to Free-dom.

And the old man, old Toby, flew behind them, takin care of them. He wasn’t cryin. He wasn’t laughin. He was the seer. His gaze fell on the plantation where the slaves who could not fly waited.

“Take us with you!” Their looks spoke it but they were afraid to shout it. Toby couldn’t take them with him. Hadn’t the time to teach them to fly. They must wait for a chance to run.

“Goodbye!” The old man called Toby spoke to them, poor souls! And he was flyin gone.

So they say, The Overseer told it. The one called Master said it was a lie; a trick of the light. The Driver kept his mouth shut.

The slaves who could not fly told about the people who could fly to their children. When they were free. When they sat close before the fire in the free land, they told it. They did so love firelight and Free-dom, and tellin.

They say that the children of the ones who could not fly told their children. And now, me, I have told it to you.

◆ Build Vocabulary

shuffle (shuf’ al) v.: Walk with dragging feet

Guide for Responding

◆ Literature and Your Life

Reader’s Response Who do you think is the most important character in the story? Why?

Thematic Focus Do you think that the Master learned anything in this story? Why or why not?

Group Activity Read the story aloud, switching readers at each paragraph. Is the story more effective when read aloud?

✓ Check Your Comprehension

1. How did the people lose their wings?
2. Why does Sarah tell Toby that she must leave soon?
3. How does Toby help Sarah?
4. Who kept alive the story of the people who could fly?

◆ Critical Thinking

INTERPRET

1. Describe three details that help you understand the harsh living conditions of the enslaved Africans. [Support]
2. Why do you think the author includes African words in the story? [Interpret]
3. What do you think “flying” really refers to? [Draw Conclusion]

APPLY

4. How do you think it would feel to hear this tale if you were an enslaved African? [Relate]

EXTEND

5. Do you think that African American freedom tales were still told after the abolition of slavery in 1865? Why? [History Link]
There was once a large village of the MicMac Indians of the Eastern Algonquins, built beside a lake. At the far end of the settlement stood a lodge, and in it lived a being who was always invisible. He had a sister who looked after him, and everyone knew that any girl who could see him might marry him. For that reason there were very few girls who did not try, but it was very long before anyone succeeded.

This is the way in which the test of sight was carried out: at evening-time, when the Invisible One was due to be returning home, his sister would walk with any girl who might come down to the lakeshore. She, of course, could see her brother, since he was always visible to her. As soon as she saw him, she would say to the girls:

"Do you see my brother?"

"Yes," they would generally reply—though some of them did say "No."

To those who said that they could indeed see him, the sister would say:

"Of what is his shoulder strap made?" Some people say that she would enquire:

"What is his moose-runner's haul?" or "With what does he draw his sled?"

And they would answer:

"A strip of rawhide" or "a green flexible branch," or something of that kind.

Then she, knowing that they had not told the truth, would say:

"Very well, let us return to the wigwam!"

When they had gone in, she would tell them not to sit in a certain place, because it belonged to the Invisible One. Then, after they had helped to cook the supper, they would wait with great curiosity, to see him eat. They could be sure that he was a real person, for when he took off his moccasins they became visible, and his sister hung them up. But beyond this they saw nothing of him, not even when they stayed in the place all night, as many of them did.

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1. Algonquins (al' gahr kwihNG) n.: Native Americans living near the Ottawa River in Canada.

2. wigwam (wig' wihm) n.: Indian dwelling made by a dome-shaped framework of poles covered by rush mats or sheets of bark.
Now there lived in the village an old man who was a widower, and his three daughters. The youngest girl was very small, weak and often ill; and yet her sisters, especially the elder, treated her cruelly. The second daughter was kinder, and sometimes took her side: but the wicked sister would burn her hands and feet with hot cinders, and she was covered with scars from this treatment. She was so marked that people called her Oochigeaskw, the Rough-Faced-Girl.

When her father came home and asked why she had such burns, the bad sister would at once say that it was her own fault, for she had disobeyed orders and gone near the fire and fallen into it.

These two elder sisters decided one day to try their luck at seeing the Invisible One. So they dressed themselves in their finest clothes,

3. Oochigeaskw (ō she' gå shka)

▲ Critical Viewing This woven fabric demonstrates Algonquin attention to beauty—even in functional items. What details in the folk tale confirm this concern? [Connect]

...and tried to look their prettiest. They found the Invisible One's sister and took the usual walk by the water:

When he came, and when they were asked if they could see him, they answered, "Of course." And when asked about the shoulder strap or sled cord, they answered, "A piece of rawhide."

But of course they were lying like the others, and they got nothing for their pains.

The next afternoon, when the father returned home, he brought with him many of the pretty little shells from which wampum4 was made, and they set to work to string them.

4. wampum (wēm' pəm) n.: Small beads made of shells used as money by Native Americans.
That day, poor little Oochigeaskw, who had always gone barefoot, got a pair of her father's moccasins, old ones, and put them into water to soften them so that she could wear them. Then she begged her sisters for a few wampum shells. The elder called her a 'little pest,' but the younger one gave her some. Now, with no other clothes than her usual rags, the poor little thing went into the woods and got herself some sheets of birch bark, from which she made a dress, and put marks on it for decoration, in the style of long ago. She made a petticoat and a loose gown, a cap, leggings and a handkerchief. She put on her father's large old moccasins, which were far too big for her, and went forth to try her luck. She would try, she thought, to discover whether she could see the Invisible One.

She did not begin very well. As she set off, her sisters shouted and hooted, hissed and yelled, and tried to make her stay. And the loafers around the village, seeing the strange little creature, called out "Shame!"

The poor little girl in her strange clothes, with her face all scarred, was an awful sight, but she was kindly received by the sister of the Invisible One. And this was, of course, because this noble lady understood far more about things than simply the mere outside which all the rest of the world knows. As the brown of the evening sky turned to black, the lady took her down to the lake.

"Do you see him?" the Invisible One's sister asked.

"I do, indeed—and he is wonderful!" said Oochigeaskw.

The sister asked:
"And what is his sled-string?"
The little girl said:
"It is the Rainbow."
"And, my sister, what is his bow-string?"
"It is The Spirit's Road—the Milky Way."
"So you have seen him," said his sister. She took the girl home with her and bathed her. As she did so, all the scars disappeared from her

**Critical Viewing** In what ways do the rainbow and the Milky Way help readers imagine the size and power of the Invisible One? [Relate]...
body. Her hair grew again, as it was combed, long, like a blackbird’s wing. Her eyes were now like stars: in all the world there was no other such beauty. Then, from her treasures, the lady gave her a wedding garment, and adorned her.

Then she told Oochigeaskw to take the wife’s seat in the wigwam: the one next to where the Invisible One sat, beside the entrance. And when he came in, terrible and beautiful, he smiled and said:

“So we are found out!”

“Yes,” said his sister. And so Oochigeaskw became his wife.

**Beyond Literature**

**Culture Connection**

**Cinderella Around the World** The story of a poor hard-working girl suffering under an evil stepmother is known and loved around the world. There are more than nine hundred versions of this classic tale—the oldest has been traced back more than a thousand years to China. The story most Americans are familiar with was written in the 1600’s by Charles Perrault, a French writer, and it is the only one with a fairy godmother and a warning to be home by midnight. Yet for all the differences between the stories, the poor girl always manages to escape her stepmother, marry the prince, and live happily ever after.

**Cross-Curricular Activity**

**Comparing Stories** Read the Cinderella stories in this book. Then, using library resources, locate one or two others. In a report to classmates, share the stories, describe the similarities and differences among them, and explain why you think the Cinderella model is so popular.

**Guide for Responding**

**Literature and Your Life**

**Reader’s Response** What image from the story had the greatest impact on you? Why?

**Thematic Focus** What lesson does this tale teach its audience?

**Group Activity** Work with a group to plan and create a comic-book version of “The Algonquin Cinderella.”

**Check Your Comprehension**

1. What task must a girl accomplish in order to marry the mysterious brother?
2. How did Oochigeaskw get her name?
3. What happens when Oochigeaskw’s sisters visit the Invisible One?
4. What happens when Oochigeaskw visits the mysterious brother and sister?

**Critical Thinking**

**Interpret**

1. How does the Invisible One’s sister protect him? [Interpret]
2. Why do people in the story pretend to be able to see the Invisible One? [Infer]
3. Why do you think Oochigeaskw succeeds where others failed? [Speculate]

**Evaluate**

4. Do you think that the stepsisters should be punished for their behavior? Explain your answer. [Make a Judgment]

**Extend**

5. What do you think is the most important difference between Oochigeaskw’s story and the European tale known as “Cinderella”? [Literature Link]
In the dim past, even before the Ch'in and the Han dynasties, there lived a cave chief of southern China by the name of Wu. As was the custom in those days, Chief Wu had taken two wives. Each wife in her turn had presented Wu with a baby daughter. But one of the wives sickened and died, and not too many days after that Chief Wu took to his bed and died too.

Yeh-Shen, the little orphan, grew to girlhood in her stepmother's home. She was a bright child and lovely too, with skin as smooth as ivory and dark pools for eyes. Her stepmother was jealous of all this beauty and goodness, for her own daughter was not pretty at all. So in her displeasure, she gave poor Yeh-Shen the heaviest and most unpleasant chores.

The only friend that Yeh-Shen had to her name was a fish she had caught and raised. It was a beautiful fish with golden eyes, and every day it would come out of the water and rest its head on the bank of the pond, waiting for Yeh-Shen to feed it. Stepmother gave Yeh-Shen little enough food for herself, but the orphan child always found something to share with her fish, which grew to enormous size.

 Somehow the stepmother heard of this. She was terribly angry to discover that Yeh-Shen had kept a secret from her. She hurried down to the pond, but she was unable to see the fish, for Yeh-Shen's pet wisely hid itself. The stepmother, however, was a crafty woman, and she soon thought of a plan. She walked home and called out, "Yeh-Shen, go and collect some firewood. But wait! The neighbors might see you. Leave your filthy coat here!" The minute the girl was out of sight, her stepmother slipped on the
coat herself and went down again to the pond. This time the big fish saw Yeh-Shen's familiar jacket and heaved itself onto the bank, expecting to be fed. But the stepmother, having hidden a dagger in her sleeve, stabbed the fish, wrapped it in her garments, and took it home to cook for dinner.

When Yeh-Shen came to the pond that evening, she found her pet had disappeared. Overcome with grief, the girl collapsed on the ground and dropped her tears into the still waters of the pond.

"Ah, poor child!" a voice said.

Yeh-Shen sat up to find a very old man looking down at her. He wore the coarsest of clothes, and his hair flowed down over his shoulders.

"Kind uncle, who may you be?" Yeh-Shen asked.

"That is not important, my child. All you must know is that I have been sent to tell you of the wondrous powers of your fish."

"My fish, but sir..." The girl's eyes filled with tears, and she could not go on.

The old man sighed and said, "Yes, my child, your fish is no longer alive, and I must tell you that your stepmother is once more the cause of your sorrow." Yeh-Shen gasped in horror, but the old man went on. "Let us not dwell on things that are past," he said, "for I have come bringing you a gift. Now you must listen carefully to this: The bones of your fish are filled with a powerful spirit. Whenever you are in serious need, you must kneel before them and let them know your heart's desire. But do not waste their gifts."

Yeh-Shen wanted to ask the old sage many more questions, but he rose to the sky before she could utter another word. With heavy heart, Yeh-Shen made her way to the dung heap to gather the remains of her friend.

Time went by, and Yeh-Shen, who was often left alone, took comfort in speaking to the bones of her fish. When she was hungry, which happened quite often, Yeh-Shen asked the bones for food. In this way, Yeh-Shen managed to live from day to day, but she lived in dread that her stepmother would discover her secret and take even that away from her.

So the time passed and spring came. Festival time was approaching: It was the busiest time of the year. Such cooking and cleaning and sewing there was to be done! Yeh-Shen had hardly a moment's rest. At the spring festival young men and young women from the village hoped to meet and to choose whom they would marry. How Yeh-Shen longed to go! But her stepmother had other plans. She hoped to find a husband for her own daughter and did not want any man to see the beauteous Yeh-Shen first. When finally the holiday arrived, the stepmother and her daughter dressed themselves in their finery and filled their baskets with sweetmeats. "You must remain at home now, and watch to see that no one steals fruit from our trees," her stepmother told Yeh-Shen, and then she departed for the banquet with her own daughter.

As soon as she was alone, Yeh-Shen went to speak to the bones of her fish. "Oh, dear friend," she said, kneeling before the precious bones, "I long to go to the festival, but I cannot show myself in these rags. Is there somewhere I could borrow clothes fit to wear to the feast?"

At once she found herself dressed in a gown of

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1. uncle: In this case, uncle is a term of respect given to an older man and not a blood relation.

**Build Vocabulary**

**sage** (sāj) n.: Very wise man

**undaunted** (un dɑnt' ɪd) adj.: Not stopping because of fear or failure
azure blue, with a cloak of kingfisher feathers draped around her shoulders. Best of all, on her tiny feet were the most beautiful slippers she had ever seen. They were woven of golden threads, in a pattern like the scales of a fish, and the glistening soles were made of solid gold. There was magic in the shoes, for they should have been quite heavy, yet when Yeh-Shen walked, her feet felt as light as air.

"Be sure you do not lose your golden shoes," said the spirit of the bones. Yeh-Shen promised to be careful. Delighted with her transformation, she bid a fond farewell to the bones of her fish as she slipped off to join in the merrymaking.

That day Yeh-Shen turned many a head as she appeared at the feast. All around her people whispered, "Look at that beautiful girl. Who can she be?"

But above this, Stepsister was heard to say, "Mother, does she not resemble our Yeh-Shen?"

Upon hearing this, Yeh-Shen jumped up and ran off before her stepsister could look closely at her. She raced down the mountainside, and in doing so, she lost one of her golden slippers. No sooner had the shoe fallen from her foot than all her fine clothes turned back to rags.

Only one thing remained—a tiny golden shoe. Yeh-Shen hurried to the bones of her fish and returned the slipper, promising to find its mate. But now the bones were silent. Sadly Yeh-Shen realized that she had lost her only friend. She hid the little shoe in her bedstraw, and went outside to cry. Leaning against a fruit tree, she sobbed and sobbed until she fell asleep.

The stepmother left the gathering to check on Yeh-Shen, but when she returned home she found the girl sound asleep, with her arms wrapped around a fruit tree. So thinking no more of her, the stepmother rejoined the party. Meantime, a villager had found the shoe. Recognizing its worth, he sold it to a merchant, who presented it in turn to the king of the island kingdom of T'o Han.

The king was more than happy to accept the slipper as a gift. He was entranced by the tiny thing, which was shaped of the most precious of metals, yet which made no sound when touched to stone. The more he marveled at its beauty, the more determined he became to find the woman to whom the shoe belonged. A search was begun among the ladies of his own kingdom, but all who tried on the sandal found it impossibly small.

Undaunted, the king ordered the search widened to include the cave women from the countryside where the slipper had been found. Since he realized it would take many years for every woman to come to his island and test her foot in the slipper, the king thought of a way to get the right woman to come forward. He ordered the sandal placed in a pavilion by the side of the road near where it had been found, and his herald announced that the shoe was to be returned to its original owner. Then from a nearby hiding place, the king and his men settled down to watch and wait for a woman with tiny feet to come and claim her slipper.

All that day the pavilion was crowded with cave women who had come to test a foot in the shoe. Yeh-Shen's stepmother and stepsister were among them, but not Yeh-Shen—they had told her to stay home. By day's end, although many women had eagerly tried to put on the slipper, it still had not been worn. Wearily, the king continued his vigil into the night.

It wasn't until the blackest part of night, while the moon hid behind a cloud, that Yeh-Shen dared to show her face at the pavilion, and even then she tiptoed timidly across the wide floor. Sinking down to her knees, the girl...
in rags examined the tiny shoe. Only when she was sure that this was the missing mate to her own golden slipper did she dare pick it up. At last she could return both little shoes to the fish bones. Surely then her beloved spirit would speak to her again.

Now the king’s first thought, on seeing Yeh-Shen take the precious slipper, was to throw the girl into prison as a thief. But when she turned to leave, he caught a glimpse of her face. At once the king was struck by the sweet harmony of her features, which seemed so out of keeping with the rags she wore. It was then that he took a closer look and noticed that she walked upon the tiniest feet he had ever seen.

With a wave of his hand, the king signaled that this tattered creature was to be allowed to depart with the golden slipper. Quietly, the king’s men slipped off and followed her home.

All this time, Yeh-Shen was unaware of the excitement she had caused. She had made her way home and was about to hide both sandals in her bedding when there was a pounding at the door. Yeh-Shen went to see who it was—and found a king at her doorstep. She was very frightened at first, but the king spoke to her in a kind voice and asked her to try the golden slippers on her feet. The maiden did as she was told, and as she stood in her golden shoes, her rags were transformed once more into the feathered cloak and beautiful azure gown.

Her loveliness made her seem a heavenly being, and the king suddenly knew in his heart that he had found his true love.

Not long after this, Yeh-Shen was married to the king. But fate was not so gentle with her stepmother and stepsister. Since they had been unkind to his beloved, the king would not permit Yeh-Shen to bring them to his palace. They remained in their cave home, where one day, it is said, they were crushed to death in a shower of flying stones.
A man went out into the forest one day looking for a runaway horse. At one point he had to climb across a cleft in the mountain, and that was when he found that a large snake had got its rear end caught in the crevice.

The snake said to the man, “If you help free me, I’ll see that you get your just reward!”

The man took his staff and pried the rocks apart so that the snake could get out.

“Thanks,” said the snake. “Now come over here and I’ll give you your just reward.”

The man asked what his just reward might be.

“Death,” said the snake.

The man said that he wasn’t sure that he wanted that, and he suggested that they ask the first creature who came along what one’s just reward ought to be.

A bear came along, and the man asked the bear what one’s just reward ought to be.

“Death,” said the bear.

“You see?” said the snake. “Death is one’s just reward! So now I’m going to take you.”

“But then the man replied, “Let’s just walk a little farther and ask someone else.”

After a while they met a wolf. And the man asked him what one’s just reward ought to be.

“Death,” answered the wolf. “That’s everybody’s just reward.”

“There it is,” said the snake. “Now you’re mine!”

“Just a minute,” said the man. “Let us say that the third creature we meet is the final judge, whoever it turns out to be.”

In a little while they met a fox. The man asked the fox what one’s just reward ought to be, and the fox answered just like the others.

“Death,” he said.

“So now I’ll bite you to death,” said the snake.

When the fox heard that, he said, “Now wait just a moment. We must consider this case more carefully. First of all, what really happened?”

“Well,” said the man, “the snake got its tail caught in a crevice.”

Then the fox said, “Why don’t we go back there to see exactly how it was.”

Well, they went back, and the fox asked the man to pry open the rocks again with his staff, and then the snake should put his rear end right in between, just the way it’d been before. Then the man should let the rocks slip back a little.

“Was it tighter than this before?” asked the fox.

“Yes,” said the snake.

“Let go a little more,” said the fox to the man. “Was it tighter than this?”

“Yes.”

“Then let go completely. Now, are you in good and tight?”

“It’s worse than it was before!” said the snake.

“Well then, you might as well stay there. That way the two of you are even.”

So the snake had to stay, and the man avoided getting his just reward.
One day Djuha wanted to entertain his friends with a dinner of lamb stewed whole with rice stuffing, but he did not have a cooking pot large enough. So he went to his neighbor and borrowed a huge, heavy caldron of fine copper.

Promptly next morning, Djuha returned the borrowed pot. "What is this?" cried the neighbor, pulling a small brass pot from inside the caldron. "Oh yes," said Djuha, "congratulations and blessings upon your house! While your caldron was with me it gave birth to that tiny pot." The neighbor laughed delightedly. "May Allah send blessings your way too," he told Djuha, and carried the two cooking pots into his house.

A few weeks later Djuha knocked on his

1. Djuha (d5--8).
neighbor's door again to ask for the loan of the caldron. And the neighbor hurried to fetch it for him. The next day came and went, but Djuha did not return the pot. Several days passed and the neighbor did not hear from Djuha. At last he went to Djuha's house to ask for his property. "Have you not heard, brother?" said Djuha looking very grave. "The very evening I borrowed it from you, your unfortunate caldron—God grant you a long life—died!" "What do you mean, 'died'?" shouted the neighbor. "Can a copper cooking pot die?" "If it can give birth," said Djuha, "it can surely die."

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**Critical Viewing** This Arabic illustration originally accompanied an ancient pharmacology text. In what ways does the artist's style differ from "Western" illustrations you have seen? [Compare and Contrast]

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**Guide for Responding**

**LITERATURE AND YOUR LIFE**

**Reader's Response** How do you feel about letting people borrow your possessions?

**Thematic Focus** What lesson does the man learn in "His Just Reward"?

✔ **Check Your Comprehension**

1. In "His Just Reward," how does the man help the snake?
2. How does the snake plan to reward the man for his help?
3. In "Djuha Borrows a Pot," what happens when Djuha returns the pot for the first time?
4. What happens the second time he borrows the same pot?

**Critical Thinking**

**INTERPRET**

1. Which character gets "his just reward" in the story with that title? [Interpret]
2. In "Djuha Borrows a Pot," why is the neighbor willing to lend Djuha the pot a second time? [Infer]
3. What human frailty does Djuha count on to play his trick? [Analyze]

**COMPARE LITERARY WORKS**

4. Does the neighbor who loans Djuha a pot get his "just reward"? Explain. [Make a Judgment]

**APPLY**

5. Why do you think that many cultures tell tales about tricksters like Djuha who use their cunning and wits to get ahead? [Hypothesize]