

An Aesop Fable

Read the **fable**.

A Farmer, His Son, and Their Donkey

One fine day, a farmer and his son were taking their donkey to market. They hoped to sell him for a good price. Before long, they met some women who were collecting water from a well.

“How very silly,” said the women. “Those two are trudging along on foot when the donkey could be carrying one of them on its back.”

Hearing this, the farmer lifted his boy onto the donkey’s back and walked happily along by his son’s side.

Presently an old man saw them and cried, “You should be ashamed of yourself, young man. Have you no respect for age? Your father should be riding, and you should be walking!” Red-faced with embarrassment, the son quickly got down and helped his father get up on the donkey.

They had gone only a little further when they came upon a group of young girls. “Have you no sense at all?” they laughed. “Both of you would easily fit on the donkey’s back. Why should either one of you have to walk along the dusty road?” Feeling sure they were right, the farmer helped his son get behind him on the donkey’s back.

As they neared the market they met a townsman. “How cruel you are!” he shouted. “That little poor animal has too heavy a load. You two are better able to carry him than he is to carry the two of you.” Eager to do the right thing, the two got off the donkey. They tied the donkey’s legs together, slung him onto a pole, and strained to carry him on their shoulders as they crossed the bridge near the entrance to the market.

Seeing this strange sight, the townspeople laughed and laughed. In fact, they laughed so loudly that they scared the donkey. The frightened animal kicked off the ropes that bound its legs, fell off the pole, and ran away.

“That will teach you,” said an old woman who had followed them. “He who tries to please everyone, pleases no one.”

