

The Best Thing in the World

Once upon a time, there were four brothers who lived in a land far away. Their father was an old king. One day he said, "I will not live long now. Today you must start out into the world. In a year, bring back the best thing you have found. The one who can pick the best thing shall be the new king."

The first boy said, "I will look in every city or town. I will buy the best thing for you."

The next two boys said, "We will both go on fast ships over the sea. We will find something better."

The last boy said, "I am going to ask the people here in our own land to tell me what the best thing is." The other three boys began to laugh. "Then you will never be king!" they said.

The last brother set off. After about six miles, he met a man. "What do you carry in those bags?" he asked.

"The best thing in the world," said the man. "These are full of the good apples which fall from my five apple trees."

"I don't think that would work," the boy said, "I must try again."

He went on another seven miles. He found a small brown bird. It had been hurt, so he put it in his coat where it could keep warm. As he went on, he saw a girl crying. He ran to her.

"Why are you so sad?" he asked the girl.

"I want to get some water from the well," she said. "We use so much of it. We drink cold water. We wash the clothes clean with hot water. But I do not know how to pull it up. Please show me."

"I can help you," the boy said. "Just hold this bird for me. It does not fly around any more because it got its wing cut."

"Thank you!" she said to him. "What a pretty bird! I wish you would give it to me. If you will let me keep it, I will always be very kind to it. I will take care of it myself. I will make it grow well again."

"Yes, you may have it," the boy said. So he gave her the little bird and went on.

At night, he went to sleep in the green grass under a round yellow haystack. When it was light again he walked on. Every day he would walk eight or ten miles. He asked the people about the best thing in the world.

Some said it was best to sing. Some said it was best to run and jump and play. Some liked the red and blue and white flowers best. One man said the best thing was to ride a black horse.

He always stopped to help people who needed it. Soon he made many friends.

All the people began to like him. They would say, "See, there goes the king's son. He would be just the right kind of king for us."

Every door was open to him. The people would ask him to stop. They would call him to come and eat with them. After he ate, he would sit down and read to the children. After he read, he showed them how to draw and write.

Months went by. He still had no beautiful thing to take to his father. Just before the year was done, he went home again.

The time came when the old king called his sons together.

"What do you have for me?" he asked them all.

The first three boys had many big and beautiful things.

"And what did you bring?" said the king to his last son.

"This is too funny!" the others said. "He has nothing!"

But the king was kind to him.

"So, what did you bring for me?" the king asked again.

"I bring only the friendship of your people," the boy said.

"That is the best thing in the world!" his father cried out.

"You shall be the new king."

The End

This story contains all of the 220 Basic Sight Words.
To practise these 220 most important words in English,
read this story over and over again as often as you can.