

The Boy who Cried Wolf

What would you said if I asked you what being honest means?

Yes, it does mean being honest with things and not stealing them. But it also means being honest with people when you are wrong, such as owning up if you have done something wrong and saying that you are sorry. It also means being honest with words—telling the truth and not telling lies.

A famous story about honest is about a boy who cried 'Wolf' as a joke—but the joke did not have a very happy ending.

Once upon a time, there lived a boy, who had a job as a shepherd. Every day he had to take the village sheep along the lane, past the houses, up the hill, and into the green meadows high above where all the people lived. Sometimes the boy liked his job. He could lie on the grass in the sunshine, and daydream or sleep, as long as he kept a watchful eye on the sheep to make sure they were safe. But on other days, the boy would be bored. He had nothing to do, and no-one to talk to up there in the high pastures, and on those days, the time seemed endless until the evening when he could bring the sheep back down the hillside to the safety of the village for the night. On one particular day, he was really fed-up. He felt lonely and bored.

'I wish I could think of something to liven up things a bit', he thought, as he lay on the grass staring down at the village.

'I know,' he suddenly shouted as he jumped to his feet, 'I'll play a trick on them all. That'll be fun.'

The boy jumped onto a nearby rock, and shouted at the top of his voice, 'Help! Help! There's a wolf attacking the sheep. Help! Come quickly!'

The people in the houses below, heard the cry and rushed out of their houses and gardens. They grabbed sticks and farm tools on their way, and ran as fast as they could along the lane, up the hill and into the green meadows. They arrived, puffing and panting, ready to save the boy and the sheep from whatever wild animals were there.

Of course, when they arrived, there was no danger at all, and the boy was standing on his rock, laughing at them.

'That was a good trick', he spluttered. 'That made you all run, didn't it?'

The people didn't answer, but angrily turned on their heels and stamped back to their houses and gardens. They were not pleased to be made such fools of.

All was quiet for the next few days, and then, about a week later, the boy felt bored again. He remembered the trick he had played on the villagers, and remembered how they had all come running up the hill waving hoes and pitchforks and sticks. 'I'll do it again', chuckled the boy to himself. He jumped onto the rock again and began to shout as loudly as he could.

'Help! Come quickly! There's a fierce wolf attacking the sheep. Help me!'

Once again, the people from the village rushed out of their houses, and ran along the lane, up the hill and into the green meadows to help the boy. Once again they found no wild animals and no danger: just the boy standing on the rock, laughing at them. Once again they crossly went back home.

Two days later, the boy was sitting propped against the rock, when he heard a sound—a dull, low growl, then a snarl. He felt the hair on the back of his neck prickle, and he suddenly felt very cold and afraid. Slowly, he turned round, and looked straight into the angry, red eyes of a huge, grey wolf. The boy slowly crept backwards until the rock was between him and the wolf. Then he jumped up onto the rock and yelled at the top of his voice to the people in the village below. At the sound the wolf leapt amongst the sheep, killing them with his huge yellow fangs. The boy shouted and shouted until his throat hurt. He waved his arms and frantically begged for help.

The people in the village heard the boy.

'He needn't think he's going to trick us again', they said. 'He can shout until he loses his voice, but we're not going to be made fools of again', and they stayed in their homes and gardens.

One hour later, a very sorry-looking boy, with a tear-stained face, and torn clothes, covered in blood, trudged out of the green meadows down the hill, and along the lane, followed by only a few sheep. The rest were lying dead in the green meadows.

'I'll never tell lies again', he said to the village people, 'I'm sorry.'

I think the boy kept his promise. He had learned that if you are always telling lies, people might not believe you when you tell the truth.