

How Zebras Got Their Stripes

Long, long ago there were no zebras, but there were a lot of donkeys. The donkeys worked hard each and every day.

"We are all very tired," the donkeys complained. They had no time to play or to relax. It was just work, work, and more work. The donkeys carried heavy bundles. They had to carry them for miles, but they never felt appreciated for the work they did.

One day, two donkeys got fed up. "Why do we have to work all the time? Look at the cows over there!" They decided to stop working. Instead, they wanted to graze in the green fields. They wanted to drink from clear streams, and to lie on soft grass.

"Maybe the wise old man from town can help us," said one of the donkeys. They went to the wise old man and told him their problem.

The wise old man thought and thought. He agreed that they worked too hard, so he said to the donkeys, "I have an idea!"

"What is your idea?" asked the donkeys.

"I am going to paint you, so no one will know you are donkeys," said the man.

The wise old man went off to find some paint, and he returned in just a matter of minutes. He had two pots of paint. One pot was filled with white paint, and the other was filled with black paint. He began to paint the donkeys. First he painted them white, and then he painted black stripes over the white paint.

When he was finished, he said, "You no longer look like donkeys. Everyone will be fooled. I will call you something else. I will call you *zebras*."

The *zebras* went to a field to graze. No one bothered them, and they did not have to work. Instead, they lay in the grass and slept. Soon other donkeys saw the *zebras*. They asked the *zebras* where they came from. When the *zebras* told the donkeys their secret, the donkeys all rushed to see the wise old man.

"Make us into *zebras*, too," they pleaded.

So the wise old man painted more donkeys. As he did, more and more donkeys came. The old man could not paint fast enough. Soon the donkeys became impatient. They began to kick and stir about, and they knocked over the paint pots.

There was no more paint. The painted donkeys ran off to become zebras. The unpainted donkeys, because of their impatience, had to return to work. This is why both donkeys and zebras roam the earth. This is also why it is important to be patient.

Adapted from How Zebras Got their Stripes (Reading A to Z)

Proud red rose

One beautiful spring day, a red rose blossomed in a forest. As the rose looked around, a pine tree nearby said, "What a beautiful flower! I wish I was that lovely." Another tree said, "Dear pine, don't be sad. We cannot have everything."

The rose turned and remarked, "It seems that I am the most beautiful flower in this forest." A sunflower raised its yellow head and asked, "Why do you say that? In this forest there are many beautiful flowers. You are just one of them."

The red rose replied, "I see everyone looking at me and admiring me." Then the rose looked at a cactus and said, "Look at that ugly plant full of thorns!"

The pine tree said, "Red rose, what kind of talk is this? Who can say what beauty is? You have thorns, too."

The proud red rose looked angrily at the pine and said, "I thought you had good taste! You do not know what beauty is at all. You cannot compare my thorns to that of the cactus." "What a proud flower," thought the trees.

The rose tried to move its roots away from the cactus, but it could not move. As the days passed, the red rose would look at the cactus and say insulting things, like "this plant is useless. How sorry I am to be his neighbor."

The cactus never got upset and even tried to advise the rose, saying, "God did not create any form of life without a purpose."

Spring passed, and the weather became very warm. Life became difficult in the forest, as there was no rain. The red rose began to wilt.

One day the rose saw sparrows stick their beaks into the cactus and then fly away, refreshed. This was puzzling, and the red rose asked the pine tree what the birds were doing. The pine tree explained that the birds were getting water from the cactus.

"Does it not hurt when they make holes?" asked the rose.

"Yes, but the cactus does not like to see the birds suffered," replied the pine.

The rose opened its eyes in wonder and exclaimed, "The cactus has water?"

"Yes, you can also drink from it. The sparrow can bring water to you if you ask the cactus for help."

The red rose felt too ashamed to ask for water from the cactus, but finally it did ask for help. The cactus kindly agreed. The birds filled their beaks with water and watered the rose's roots.

Thus the rose learned a lesson and never judged anyone by their appearance again.

Adapted from : <https://www.merit-times.com/NewsPage.aspx?unid=483708>

PUPPIES FOR SALE

A farmer had some puppies he needed to sell. He painted a sign advertising the pups and set about nailing it to a post on the edge of his yard. As he was driving the last nail into the post, he felt a tug on his overalls. He looked down into the eyes of a little boy.

“Mister”, he said, “I want to buy one of your puppies.”

“Well,” said the farmer, as he rubbed the sweat off the back of his neck, “These puppies come from fine parents and cost a good deal of money.” The boy dropped his head for a moment. Then reaching deep into his pocket, he pulled out a handful of change and held it up to the farmer. “I’ve got thirty-nine cents. Is that enough to take a look?” “Sure,” said the farmer.

And with that he let out a whistle, “Here, Dolly!” he called.

Out from the doghouse and down the ramp ran Dolly followed by four little balls of fur. The little boy pressed his face against the fence. His eyes danced with delight.

As the dogs made their way to the fence, the little boy noticed something else stirring inside the doghouse. Slowly another little ball appeared; this one is much smaller. Down the ramp it slid. Then in a somewhat awkward manner, the little pup began hobbling toward the others, doing its best to catch up.... “I want that one,” the little boy said.

The farmer knelt down at the boy’s side and said, “Son, you don’t want that puppy. He will never be able to run and play with you like these other dogs would.” With that the little boy stepped back from the fence, reached down, and began rolling up one leg of his trousers. In doing so he revealed a steel brace running down both sides of his leg attaching itself to a specially made shoe. Looking back up at the farmer, he said, “You see sir, I don’t run too well myself, and he will need someone who understands.”

The world is full of people who need someone who understands.

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