

"The Grateful Statues"

A Tale from Japan

Shared in the Global Classroom by students from the University of Shimane during Fall 2012

Characters:

Narrator

Old Man

Old Woman

Six Jizo Statues

Narrator

Many years ago, there lived a kind old couple in a village of Japan. They were very poor and spent their evenings weaving hats out of straw. And when they had finished weaving enough they took them to a nearby town to sell.

Old Woman

There! I have finished the last hat and now you can take them to town to sell them.

Old Man

It will be New Year's Day in two days. How I wish we had some rice cakes to eat then! Even one or two little cakes would be enough. Without rice cakes we won't be able to celebrate the new year.

Old Woman

We've made five new hats and after you sell the hats we've made, why you don't buy some rice cakes for New Year's Day.

Old Man

Ahhhh! A wonderful idea!

Narrator

Very early the next morning, the old man took the five new hats they had made and went into town to sell them. But when he got to town, he was unable to sell them. Not even one single hat.

(Actors walk by and shake their heads, “no” as he tries to sell them a hat. Also try to sell the hats to audience members who will be instructed to say, “No.”)

The old man felt very sad and began his journey home. To make matters worse it began to snow very heavily.

(Narrator helps audience members to make the sound effects of a snowstorm.)

He wearily walked down a lonesome mountain trail when suddenly he saw a row of six stone statues. They were the statues of Jizo, the protector of children, but they were covered in snow.

Old Man

My, oh my. Isn't this a pity. These are only stone statues but think how cold they must be standing in the snow.

Narrator

And the old man unfastened the five new hats from his back and began them, one by one, onto the heads of the statues. But when he came to the last statue he realized he did not have enough hats, so he took off his own scarf and tied it on the head of the last statue. The old man then made his way home where his wife was waiting for him by the fire.

Old Woman

You must be frozen half to death. Come and sit by the fire! You must have sold all of the hats!

Old Man

I am sorry to say that I sold none of our hats, but, instead I gave them to six Jizo statues along with my own scarf. I'm sorry I could not bring us any rice cakes for the New Year.

Old Woman

That was a very kind thing you did for the statues. It is better to do a kind thing like that than to have all the rice cakes in the world! We'll get along without any rice cakes for New Year's Day.

Narrator

Since it was already late at night the old man and the old woman went to sleep. But just before dawn, while they were still asleep, a wonderful thing happened. Suddenly there was a sound of voices in the distance.

Statues

A kind old man

Walking in the snow

Gave all his hats to Jizo

So we bring him gifts with a yo-heave-ho!

Narrator

The voices came nearer and nearer and then the sound of footsteps could be heard in the snow. The footsteps came right up to the house where the old man and the old woman were sleeping. And then there was a great noise. The old couple jumped out of bed and ran to the door and what do you think they found?

(Oversized rice cake will be hidden from the audience until the old man and old woman reveal it. Audience will guess what the statues left them.)

The statues left them the biggest, grandest and most beautiful rice cake the old couple had ever seen.

Old Woman

Who do you suppose would have left us this wonderful gift?

Old Man

Look! There are some tracks leading away from our house.

Old Woman

And the snow is tinted with the colors of dawn.

Narrator

There in the distance, walking slowly through the snow were the six Jizo statues still wearing the hats the scarf the old man had given them.

Old Man

It was the stone Jizo who brought these wonderful rice cakes to us!

Old Woman

You did them a kind favor when you gave them your hats, so they've brought this rice cake to show their gratitude.

Narrator

And so the old couple had a wonderful New Year's Day celebration after all, because they had a wonderful rice cake to share.

And that was...The End!