



The Storytelling Doll

Once there was a school where the teacher was thought to be very wise. In all his classes the students listened to his wise words and tried to remember them and in the exams would write them down. Some did well and some did not so well, but everyone agreed that everything the teacher said was very wise.

One day the teacher issued a challenge to his class.

“I challenge you all to set me a riddle that I cannot answer. If you succeed then, make a wish and if I can, I will grant it.”

The next day the students tried

- “What has hands and a face but no heart?”
- “What has a bed and runs all day but no feet?”
- “What has a head and foot and four legs but no tummy?”

The teacher guessed them all easily, until the daughter of the village storyteller (a troublesome and rather noisy girl) gave him three wooden dolls.

“Tell me teacher, what’s the difference between the three dolls?”

He looked and looked but they all seemed the same.

“I need time,” he said.

That playtime he asked the smartest child in the school into his office. “Can you tell the difference?”

She smelled and weighed and measured and touched and just shrugged.

“No idea!”

Then he asked the most foolish child in the school.

He just played with them and laughed.

“Look teacher, it’s obvious. These two are in love, and this one is a space rocket!”

After break the teacher admitted defeat.

“I can’t tell the difference!” he said. “What’s the answer?”

The storyteller’s daughter plucked a white hair from his wise beard and stuck it into the ear of the first doll. Then hair went in and did not come out anywhere else.

“This first one is what you call a good student. Everything he hears goes in and stays in and he remembers it. In the exams he writes it down. This is the meaning of this doll.”

Next she stuck the hair into the ear of the second doll. This time the end of the hair came out of the other ear.

“This is what you call the bad student. He remembers nothing. What goes in one ear comes out the other. This one fails the exams.”

Finally, she put the hair into the ear of the third doll. Its end came out of the doll’s mouth, this time with a little curl on the end. She grinned.

“This one is the storytelling student – it all goes in the ear and comes out the mouth. See how the hair is twisted. It’s a little different when it comes out. The storytelling student can listen, remember and then retell the story in his own way.”

“And here is the thing teacher, the clever doll will do well in exams, but the storyteller student will do well in life. Which is the most important to you?”

“Very interesting,” said the teacher. “I admit defeat: what is your wish?”

“Teach us all to be storytellers!” she said.

So from that day – instead of just him telling the stories, he taught all his class to listen and retell stories in their own way.

Soon their exam results went up, the children learned all sorts of amazing things that prepared them for life after school.

So they all lived happily ever after. That’s how the first storytelling school began.