



THE RICH MAN AND THE SHOEMAKER

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Once upon a time there lived a poor but cheerful shoemaker. He was so happy, he sang all day long. The children loved to stand around his window to listen to him.

Next door to the shoemaker lived a rich man. He used to sit up all night to count his gold. In the morning, he went to bed, but he could not sleep because of the sound of the shoemaker's singing. One day, he thought of a way of stopping the singing. He wrote a letter to the shoemaker asking him to call.

The shoemaker came at once, and to his surprise the rich man gave him a bag of gold.

When he got home again, the shoemaker opened the bag. He had never seen so much money before! He sat down at his bench and began, carefully, to count it. The children watched through the window.

There was so much there that the shoemaker was afraid to let it out of his sight. So he took it to bed with him. But he could not sleep for

worrying about it. So he got out of bed and went to hide it in the attic, but he was not sure if that was a good place.

Very early in the morning, he got up and brought his gold down from the attic. He had decided to hide it up the chimney instead.

But after breakfast, he thought it would be safer in the chicken house. So he hid it there.

But he was still uneasy, and in a little while he dug a hole in the garden and buried his bag of gold in it.

It was no use trying to work. He was too worried about the safety of his gold. And as for singing, he was too miserable to utter a note. He could not sleep, or work, or sing—and, worst of all, the children no longer came to see him.

At last the shoemaker felt so unhappy that he seized his bag of gold and ran next door to the rich man.

“Please take back your gold,” he said. “The worry of it is making me ill, and I have lost all of my friends. I would rather be a poor shoemaker, as I was before.”

And so the shoemaker was happy again and sang all day at his work.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why does the shoemaker return the gold instead of spending it?

- Why is the shoemaker surprised that the rich man gave him a bag of gold?
- Why does the shoemaker keep moving the gold from one hiding place to another?
- Why does worrying about the gold make the shoemaker “too miserable” to sing? (2)
- Why does the shoemaker feel it is “worst of all” that the children no longer come to see him? (2)