

Title: Tit for Tat

Author: Husne Alam

Level: Intermediate

Genre: Fiction (folktale)

Adapted & edited with the author's permission by Cherie Brown. Illustrations by Nigur Sultana.

A poor old man lived in a village with his two sons, *Hablu* and *Bablu*. Besides his **hut**, he had just three other things : one **cow**, one *coconut** tree and one *quilt**.

One day he called his two sons and told them, " My dear sons, you know that no one lives *forever**. My time has now come to leave this earth. I want you to live together in this hut and share everything I have. After saying this the old man died.

When the sons **buried** their father, *Bablu*, the older brother, told *Hablu*, "Look, let us share the three things father left for us. You take care of the front part of the cow and I shall look after her back part. Then you look after the **trunk** of our coconut tree and I shall take care of the top. And as for the quilt, you use it in the day time and I shall use it in the night."



Hablu accepted his brother's sharing ideas happily. Next morning, *Hablu* went to feed the cow with **grass** and **hay**. After some time, *Bablu* came and started milking the cow. Then he took the milk **inside** their house to drink. But he did not give any milk to *Hablu*.

Later in the morning, *Hablu* started **cleaning** the ground around the coconut tree. After sometime, *Bablu* **climbed** the tree, cut the **ripe** coconuts, came down with them and took them inside their house to eat and drink them whenever he wanted. He did not offer any coconut to his brother.

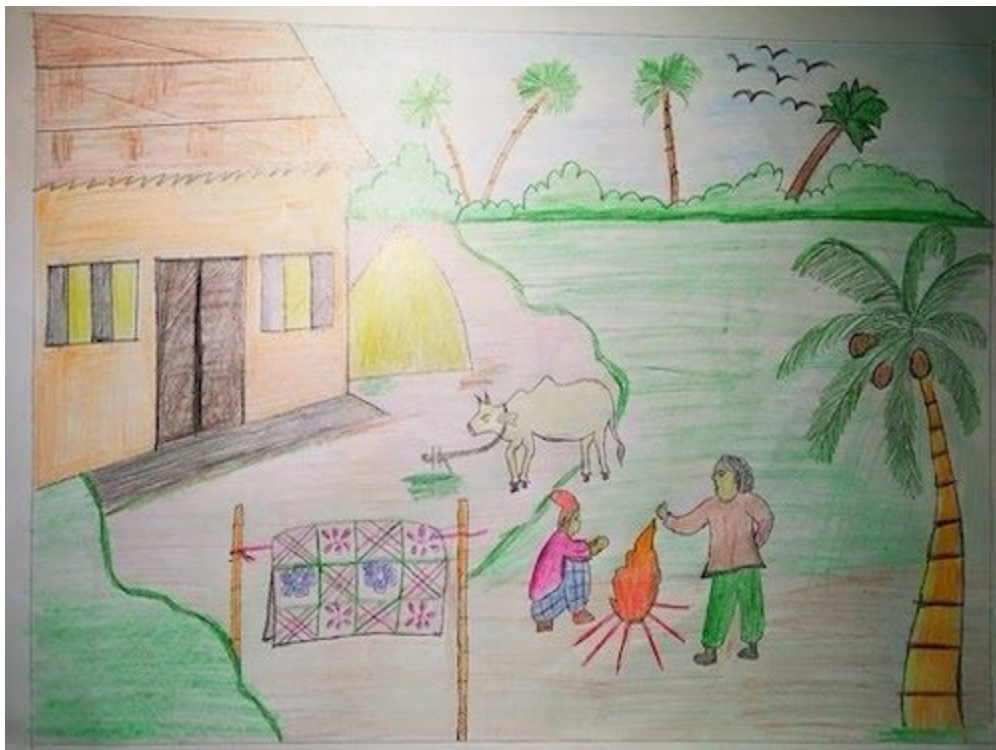
As part of his duty, *Hablu* also brought out their quilt in the morning, cleaned the **dust** from it, then **washed** it and spread it on a **rope** outside to dry. Then in the evening he took it inside and spread it on the bed. When *Bablu* came in to sleep, he covered himself with the quilt and did not leave any part of it for *Hablu* to cover himself from the cold.

This kind of “sharing” continued for a few days. *Hablu* felt very unhappy as he could neither have any milk, nor coconuts to eat and drink, nor could he have the quilt to cover himself in the night. Because he was so unhappy, *Hablu* went to a wise man in the village for **advice**.

The next morning, when *Bablu* sat down to milk the cow, *Hablu* started **hitting** the cow's head. The cow started **kicking** with her **legs** and *Bablu* could not milk the cow any more. When *Bablu* asked *Hablu* to stop hitting the cow, *Hablu* replied, "Why, the front of the cow is my share. I can do what I like." *Bablu* understood *Hablu*'s **trick** and said, " Ok, brother, from tomorrow, we shall share both the cow's work and its milk together." After that *Hablu* stopped hitting the cow.

Later in the day, when *Bablu* climbed up the coconut tree, *Hablu* came and started cutting its trunk with a large **curved knife**. *Bablu* started **shouting**, "What are you doing? Don't do that. Don't you see, it will fall down." *Hablu* did not listen and went on cutting the tree with the knife and said, "Dear brother, the bottom of the tree is mine, so I can do whatever I like to it." Then *Bablu* understood *Hablu*'s trick and said, "Ok, brother, from tomorrow, we shall share both the cleaning and the **fruit** together."

That night, when *Bablu* went to sleep and pulled the quilt to cover himself, he found it was completely **wet** and it felt cold. He shouted, "What have you done to the quilt? Why is it wet? How can I cover myself with it?" *Hablu* replied, "Why, it was mine in the *daytime** and I washed it in water, but it hasn't dried yet, so what can I do?"



Bablu then understood *Hablu's* trick and replied, "Ok, brother, I am **sorry** for being so **selfish** about everything. From **tomorrow**, we shall both clean and dry the quilt in the day time and cover us both with it at night."

In this way, the two brothers learned that it is best to share, and so *Bablu* and *Hablu* lived happily ever after.

Learning Activities

Vocabulary

1. **High frequency vocabulary from the second 1000 General Service Word List.** (These words are very common in English, so it is important for you to know them)

advice	climbed	fruit	hut	legs	shout	trunk
bottom	cow	grass	inside	ripe	sorry	washed
buried	curved	hay	kicking	rope	tomorrow	wet
clean	dust	hitting	knife	selfish	trick	

2. **Off-list words.** (These are not so common in everyday English, so only learn these if you already know the words in list one above well.)

coconut daytime forever quilt

3. Comprehension Questions

Remembering: What did the father in this story tell his sons to do after he died?

Understanding: What do you think the father in the above story really wanted his sons to do with the three things he left them? To begin with, did the sons do what their father wanted them to do ?

Understanding: What does the title mean -"Tit for Tat"? How was this idea shown in the story?


4. Critical Thinking Questions

Analysing: Was *Hablu* happy with *Bablu*'s plan to begin with? Why do you think he changed his mind?

Applying: Have you had to share anything with a brother or sister? What was it, and were you happy about the arrangement? What is the best way to teach children to share fairly? When is it OK NOT to share something you own? (Explain your reasons.) Can you give an example of 'tit for tat' that you have experienced or know about in your own life? Is using 'tit for tat' a good way to solve problems? Why? why not?

Evaluating: What is the purpose of the story? Do you think this story would be useful in helping children to learn to share or not? Give a reason for your answer. What kind of person do you think *Hablu* was? What kind of person do you think *Bablu* was?

Creating: Use the squares below to make a comic strip of the story using no more than 10 pictures. Draw each part of the story to show what happened. Include *speech bubbles** to show what each character said. Try to show what each person in the story said in your own way. Don't worry too much about how good your drawings are. Think more about the words you will use to tell the story. The title has been done for you. Share and compare your comic stories with your classmates

speech bubble = 

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by
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The End

Writer's Profile

Ms. Husne J. Alam is a retired professor who has worked as the Director at WINGS English Language Centre, UAP, IUB, Islamic University in Gazipur, the Government College for Women, Karachi, Rajshahi Govt. College, and Eden Girls' College. She has also been an active member of SPELT and BELTA and a volunteer ESL teacher in the USA. She holds several post graduate degrees in English, American Literature and EFL/ ESL and has published widely in her academic fields of interest as well as several creative writing works.