

9. “Spotty the Turtle Plays Doctor”

by Thornton W. Burgess
(Adaptation)

Greed’s a dreadful thing to see, as everybody will agree.

Little Joe Otter laughed as he watched Grandfather Frog try to swallow a fish almost as big as himself. Such greed would have been disgusting, if it hadn’t been so very, very funny. Grandfather Frog hitched this way and that way on his big green lily pad, trying his best to swallow. Twice he tumbled off with a splash into the Smiling Pool. Each time he scrambled back again and rolled his eyes in silent appeal to Little Joe Otter to help.

But Little Joe Otter was laughing so that he had to hold his sides, and he didn’t understand that Grandfather Frog really was in trouble. Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat came along, and as soon as they saw Grandfather Frog, they began to laugh, too. They rolled over and over on the bank. It was the funniest thing they had seen for a long, long time.

“Did you ever see such greed?” gasped Billy Mink.

“Why don’t you pull it out and start over again?” shouted Little Joe Otter.

Now this is just what Grandfather Frog was trying to do. But Grandfather Frog’s hands are not made for grasping slippery things, and the tail of a fish is very slippery indeed. He tried first with one hand, then with the other, and at last with both. It was of no use at all. He couldn’t cough it up because it had gone too far down for that. The more he clawed at that waving tail with his hands, the funnier he looked, and the harder everyone laughed. They made such a noise that Spotty the Turtle slipped into the water and started to see what it was all about.

“What’s the joke?” he asked.

Little Joe Otter simply pointed to Grandfather Frog. Little Joe had laughed so much that he couldn’t even speak. Spotty looked over to the big green lily pad and started to laugh too. Then he saw great tears rolling down from Grandfather Frog’s eyes and heard choking sounds. He stopped laughing and started for Grandfather Frog as fast as he could swim. He climbed right up on the big green lily pad, and reaching out, grabbed the end of the fish tail in his beak-like mouth. Then Spotty the Turtle settled back and pulled, and Grandfather Frog settled back and pulled. Splash! Grandfather Frog had fallen backward on one side of the big green lily pad. Splash! Spotty the Turtle had fallen backward on the opposite side of the big green lily pad.

“Thank you! Thank you!” gasped Grandfather Frog, as he feebly crawled back on the lily-pad. “A minute more, and I would have choked to death.”

“Don’t mention it,” replied Spotty the Turtle.

“I never, never will,” promised Grandfather Frog.

Word Count: 468

NAME: _____

QUESTIONS

DATE: _____

Comprehension Questions

“Spotty the Turtle Plays Doctor”

Assess each student’s comprehension of the selection by asking him or her to respond orally to the following questions one on one with you:

1. **Literal** How did the other animals react to the fish being stuck in Grandfather Frog’s mouth?
» They thought it was very funny and laughed and laughed.
2. **Literal** Which animal finally understood that Grandfather Frog was in trouble?
» Spotty the Turtle
3. **Inferential** How did Spotty the Turtle save Grandfather Frog?
» Spotty the Turtle pulled the fish with his mouth while Grandfather Frog pulled in the other direction. The fish finally came out of Grandfather Frog’s mouth, and Grandfather Frog said he would have choked if Spotty the Turtle hadn’t pulled the fish out for him.
4. **Evaluative** What is the moral, or lesson, of the story about Grandfather Frog?
» Answers may vary, but could include: greed may get you what you want at first, but in the end it can hurt you.