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Water and Culture

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Here is a folktale told to me by one of my Form VI chemistry students (equivalent to first year college). It is called "The Hare and the Water."

Once upon a time there was a village known as Singino. Many different animals—such as the elephant, giraffe, antelope, buffalo, hare, lion, tortoise, hyena, and wolf—lived in Singino. The giraffe was their king.

One day there was a shortage of water in the village. There were no natural springs and not enough rain. This was a big problem. King Giraffe called a meeting of all animals in the village to discuss how to solve the problem of water. They all agreed to dig a well that, they believed, would provide enough water for all. But Mr. Hare was against the idea. He didn't want to dig.

All the animals gathered together and dug the well. Mr. Hare did not help; instead he laughed at the animals as they were digging.

Within a short time, the animals had good, clean water. King Giraffe, however, prohibited Mr. Hare from using the well water.

Since Mr. Hare could not get water, he decided to trick the animals. He went to the elephant who was on duty to guard the well and said, "I have some honey, which is very sweet. Would you like to taste it?" The elephant tried some and, liking it very much asked for more. Mr. Hare said, "I will give you more honey, but first I have to tie your hands and legs. You will enjoy it even more this way." Mr. Hare then tied up the elephant and jumped into the well. He drank some water, swam, and ran away laughing and laughing.

King Giraffe was very angry to hear that Mr. Hare tricked the elephant. The next day, King Giraffe made the antelope the well guard, but Mr. Hare tricked him too. The king tried each of the animals in the village, and the hare tricked each and every one of them. The king was furious.

Finally, it was tortoise's duty to guard the well. He sat inside the water waiting for Mr. Hare to come. The Hare eventually came and proudly jumped into the well thinking that there was no guard at all. But the tortoise caught him and took him to the king, who punished Mr. Hare severely.

Ever since then, the animals have lived in peace, enjoying their clean fresh well water.