



QUICK START

What can motivate someone to trick or fool someone else? Write down your thoughts in response to this question.

ANALYZE FOLK TALES

Folk tales are stories passed along by word of mouth from generation to generation. "Two Legs or One?" is a folk tale that would have been shared as an oral tradition for a long time before it was written down.

Folk tales vary among cultures, but many teach life lessons about values (such as honesty) or behaviors (such as helping the poor) that are central to the culture of origin (the culture in which the folk tale was first told). As you read, think about what life lessons this folk tale is trying to teach about values and behavior.

In a folk tale, the main character may be a **trickster**—a character who goes against acceptable behavior and fools someone. The trickster's motive may be selfish, or it may come from a desire to help others. The trickster may succeed or fail. The trickery may be discovered, or it may not. In any case, there is a life lesson to be learned. When you meet a trickster in a folk tale, ask yourself, "What can we learn from this trickster?"

ANALYZE HUMOR

Like many folk tales, "Two Legs or One?" features humor. **Humor** is what causes us to laugh or be amused. Humor may come from plot events, characters' words, or the language a writer uses to tell a story.

These are some techniques writers use to add humor to a story:

- They include surprising characters or events.
- They use **exaggeration**, or extreme overstatements.
- They use **irony**, a contrast in which the reality is the opposite of what it seems to be.
- They choose words that create amusing mental images.
- They include clever and insightful dialogue.

Humor can influence the mood and tone of a story. **Mood** is the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates through the use of descriptive words, imagery, and figurative language. The **tone** of a literary work expresses the writer's attitude toward his or her subject.

As you read "Two Legs or One?" look for humor in the folk tale. Analyze the techniques used to create that humor. Then think about how those techniques influence the mood and tone of the story.

GENRE ELEMENTS: FOLK TALES

- are usually set in the past and are based on an oral tradition
- often show the importance of a cultural value or behavior
- often focus on a problem that needs to be solved
- may feature supernatural characters or events
- sometimes feature a "trickster"

TEACH

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

Encourage students to read all the sentences before deciding which word best completes each one. Remind them to look for context clues that match the precise meaning of each word.

Answers:

1. *dash*
2. *parade*
3. *formal or serious*
4. *straight up*



GET READY

hurry along with light footsteps

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

serious way → **scurry** **procession** **dignified** *show honor or respect* → **upright** *straight up*

To preview the Critical Vocabulary words, replace each boldfaced word with a different word or words that have the same meaning.

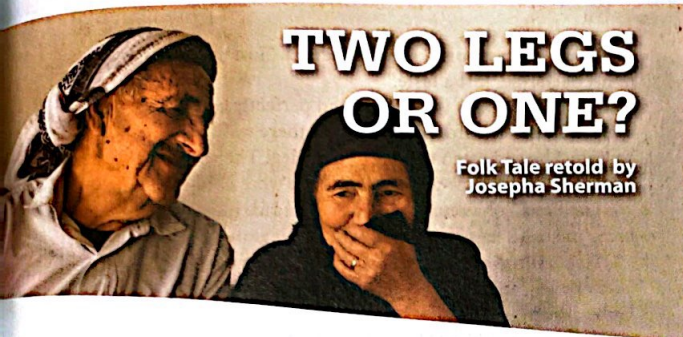
1. When I returned home, I saw a mouse (**scurry**) *dash* away.
2. The people marched proudly in a grand (**procession**) *parade*.
3. The judge was sworn in during a(n) (**dignified**) *formal/serious* ceremony.
4. After the lamp fell, she set it (**upright**) *straight up* on the table.

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Commas Writers can use commas to control the **pace** of a story, or how fast it is read or told. A comma after introductory...

BACKGROUND

Josepha Sherman (1946–2012) wrote fantasy and science fiction tales as well as many biographies. Partly inspired by author J.R.R. Tolkien (who had a great love of folklore), Sherman studied folklore from cultures around the world, and she published several collections of her retellings of folk tales. In this story, Sherman shares one of the many Middle Eastern folk tales that feature a character named Goha.



TWO LEGS OR ONE?

Folk Tale retold by
Josepha Sherman

SETTING A PURPOSE

As you read, think about the characters in this story. Do they act as you might expect? Write down any “surprises” you encounter along the way. Also note what you think someone might learn from hearing or reading this tale.

- 1 One day, a hungry man named Goha was walking in the marketplace, his mind on the dinner to come, when he chanced to pass a butcher’s shop. There, hanging right in front of Goha’s eyes, were two nice, meaty calf legs, every bit as tasty-looking to him as a good leg of lamb might be. He grew more hungry with every moment of looking, and at last bought them and scurried home.
- 2 “Wife, come, cook these as quickly as you can, and I’ll go back to the market and buy some rice to go with them.”
- 3 The calf legs cooked quickly indeed, and when Goha’s wife took the lid off the pot, she saw that they were done wonderfully well—so wonderfully well that the smell of them was sweeter to her than any rose.

NOTICE & NOTE



Notice & Note

Use the side margins to notice and note signposts in the text.

scurry
(skŭr’ē) *v.* To scurry means to hurry along with light footsteps.

ANALYZE HUMOR

Annotate: Mark the example of exaggeration that appears in paragraph 3.

Predict: What do you think will happen next? Explain.

Two Legs or One? 127

TEACH

BACKGROUND

Explain that folklore exists in every culture; many folk tales have a great deal in common across cultures. Trickster characters—like one of the main characters in this story—occur again and again throughout recorded history. Josepha Sherman studied folklore and retold a number of folk tales in print. If students are curious about more tales about Goha, they can look for more online.

SETTING A PURPOSE

Direct students to use the Setting a Purpose prompt to focus their reading.

ANALYZE HUMOR

Remind students that **exaggeration** is an extreme overstatement of a description, plot event, or idea. (Answer: *The exaggeration helps show that the meat is a powerful temptation. That temptation will probably create a problem that the characters in the folk tale will need to solve.*)



For **listening support** for students at varying proficiency levels, see the **Text X-Ray** on page 124C

TEACH

ANALYZE FOLK TALES

Annotate: Remind students that folk tales focus on a problem that needs to be solved. Even though Goha is supposed to be the trickster, it is his wife who is trying to trick him this time. (Answer: Students might suggest running to the butcher and trying to replace the calf leg—or just confessing and apologizing to Goha.)

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Remind students that commas can be used to add dramatic pauses and emphasis. This “dramatic moment” contrasts with what follows. The sheer ridiculousness of Goha pretending to die takes the tale to a new level of humor through exaggeration. (Answer: The pause created by the comma leaves the audience with a moment of suspense. “WHAT HAPPENS in the next moment?” everyone wonders. Creating suspense is part of effective storytelling.)



For speaking and reading support for students at varying proficiency levels, see the **Text X-Ray** on page 124D.

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

procession: This sentence gives the reader an idea of how important the funeral is.

ASK STUDENTS how the sentence would change if



NOTICE & NOTE



ANALYZE FOLK TALES

Annotate: Mark the detail in paragraph 5 that presents a problem to be solved.

Connect: Put yourself in the wife's situation. How would you solve the problem?

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Annotate: In paragraph 17, underline an introductory phrase that signals a sudden, surprising event, and circle the comma that follows it.

Interpret: How does this comma add to the storytelling “feel” of the selection?

procession
(pra-sesh'on) *n.* In a procession, people or things move along in an orderly and serious way.

dignified
(dig 'na-fid') *adj.* Someone or something that is dignified has or shows honor and respect.



4 “I’d better taste one,” she told herself. “Just to be sure they’re done, of course. Just a taste.”

5 Ah, but the meat was tender and perfectly cooked. She took a second taste, a third. And suddenly there was nothing more to taste. She had eaten the entire calf’s leg! The wife worried, “I can’t tell Goha how greedy I was! But what am I to tell him?”

6 Just then Goha returned. “I have the rice here, wife. Come, bring the calf’s legs, and let us eat!”

7 To his surprise, the dish his wife brought from the kitchen held one leg, and one leg alone. “Where is the second leg?” Goha asked.

8 “What second leg?” his wife replied. “Here is the only one!”

9 “There were two legs!”

10 “There is only one!”

11 “There were two!”

12 “One!”

13 “Two!”

14 “One!”

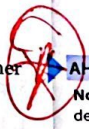
15 So there they were, arguing so loudly it frightened the pigeons off the roof. “I will prove to you that there were two legs!” Goha shrieked. “I’ll win this argument even if it means my very life!”

16 “There was one leg!” his wife shrieked back. “One leg!”

17 “There were two!” Goha shouted. But in the next moment he clutched at his chest, gasping, “My heart, oh, my heart . . .”

18 With that, Goha fell to the floor and pretended to be dead. His wife at first thought this must surely be another of her husband’s tricks. But when he remained so very still, she burst into tears and called the undertaker. Goha was carried from his house with great care. The funeral procession wound its slow, dignified way through the marketplace on its way to the cemetery, and everyone came running to see if the great and tricky Goha was, indeed, finally dead.

NOTICE & NOTE



AHA MOMENT

Notice & Note: Mark the plot detail that could be called an "Aha Moment."

Infer: What does this moment help you understand about Goha's personality?

upright
(ŭp'rit) adv. Someone or something that sits or stands upright is in a strictly vertical position.

19 At last the procession passed the butcher shop. The butcher
came out to see who had died, but by now such a crowd had
gathered that he could see nothing.
20 "Who has died?" he asked loudly.
21 "Goha," came the answer from several mouths.
22 "Goha!" the butcher exclaimed. "But how can he be dead?
He only just bought a pair of calf legs from me!"
23 On hearing this, Goha sat bolt upright. "You see?" he
cried to his wife in triumph. "There were two legs. I win our
argument!"

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

- 1 The author mentions that the calf legs were done wonderfully well in order to —
 - A introduce the problem that will shape the rest of the tale
 - B reveal that Goha appreciates his wife's good cooking
 - C explain why Goha needs to return to the marketplace
 - D show that this story could not happen in real life
- 2 The action that Goha takes after his wife brings one calf leg to the table indicates that he —
 - F cannot take the stress of arguing any longer
 - G does not understand why his wife seems so upset
 - H is tired of arguing and wants to make up with his wife
 - J is willing to take an extreme measure to be proven right
- 3 The butcher's words when the procession passes by his shop are important because they —
 - A show that Goha is loved by the townspeople
 - B summarize the lesson that the folk tale teaches
 - C prove that Goha's wife has been lying to Goha
 - D express the butcher's hope that Goha will come back to life

AHA MOMENT

Remind students that an **Aha Moment** is when a character realizes something. **(Answer: This moment reinforces the idea that Goha is obsessed with being "right." The trickster always wins! It also indicates that he is willing to humiliate himself and his wife to do so.)**

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Have students answer the questions independently.

Answers:

1. A
2. J
3. C

If students answer any questions incorrectly, have them reread the text to confirm their understanding. Then they may proceed to **ANALYZE THE TEXT** on page 130.

ments
very.

APPLY

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Possible answers:

- DOK 2:** In these opening paragraphs, the author introduces the characters (Goha and his wife), as well as the source of the conflict by vividly describing the high quality of the meat.
- DOK 3:** As the argument reaches its conclusion, Goha shrieks that he will be proven right "even if it means my very life!" This statement hints at his method of getting to the truth—by faking his death.
- DOK 3:** The townspeople "came running to see if the great and tricky Goha was, indeed, finally dead." This suggests that Goha is famous throughout the area for being a trickster and that people may have reason to doubt that he is, in fact, dead.
- DOK 4:** Because of the argument and the nature of Goha's trick, the clearest lesson seems to be one about the value of truthfulness. When Goha's wife fails to be truthful, the result is a bitter argument and a trick that exposes her lie to the public. A lesson that is not quite as obvious is that people should treat each other with openness and respect.
- DOK 4:** Goha's wife fears that Goha will see her as greedy for eating the first calf's leg. So she quickly attempts a deception.



RESPOND

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Support your responses with evidence from the text. NOTEBOOK

- Interpret** In paragraphs 1–3, how does the author prepare readers for the conflict that will shape the rest of the folk tale?
- Analyze** Reread the couple's argument in paragraphs 6–17. What technique or techniques does the author use to make this a humorous moment in the story?
- Draw Conclusions** In paragraph 18, what description explains why people came running to see the procession? What can you conclude from that description?
- Evaluate** Identify two life lessons suggested by this folk tale. Explain which lesson is expressed more clearly and which lesson is expressed less clearly or directly.
- Notice & Note** What "Aha Moment" does Goha's wife have in paragraph 5 that causes her to lie to Goha about the calf's legs? Explain.

RESEARCH

Trickster tales appear in the oral traditions of many cultures. Research some trickster tales from around the world. Compare the central characters and humorous twists in the stories, as well as the cultural values that the tales reveal. Record your notes in this chart, and be prepared to share your results.

"TWO LEGS OR ONE?"	OTHER TALE:
Character(s): Goha, his wife	Character(s): Anansi, an unnamed boy
Humorous twist(s):	