

The Elves and the Shoemaker

by ReadWorks



There was once a shoemaker who, through no fault of his own, had become so poor that at last he had only leather enough left for one pair of shoes. At evening he cut out the shoes which he intended to begin upon the next morning, and since he had a good conscience, he lay down quietly, said his prayers, and fell asleep.

In the morning when he had prayed, as usual, and was preparing to sit down to work, he found the pair of shoes standing finished on his table. He was amazed, and could not understand it in the least.

He took the shoes in his hand to examine them more closely. They were so neatly sewn that not a stitch was out of place, and were as good as the work of a master-hand.

Soon after a purchaser came in, and as he was much pleased with the shoes, he paid more than the ordinary price for them, so that the shoemaker was able to buy leather for two pairs with the money.

He cut them out in the evening, and next day, with fresh courage was about to go to work; but he had no need to, for when he got up, the shoes were finished, and buyers were not lacking. These gave him so much money that he was able to buy leather for four pairs of shoes.

Early next morning he found the four pairs finished, and so it went on; what he cut out at evening was finished in the morning, so that he was soon again in comfortable circumstances, and became a well-to-do man.

Now it happened one evening, not long before Christmas, when he had cut out shoes as usual, that he said to his wife: "How would it be if we were to sit up to-night to see who it is that lends us such a helping hand?"

The wife agreed, lighted a candle, and they hid themselves in the corner of the room behind the clothes which were hanging there.

At midnight came two little men without clothes, who sat down at the shoemaker's table, took up the cut-out work, and began with their tiny fingers to stitch, sew, and hammer so neatly and quickly, that the shoemaker could not believe his eyes. They did not stop till everything was quite finished, and stood complete on the table; then they ran swiftly away.

The next day the wife said: "The little men have made us rich, and we ought to show our gratitude. They run about with nothing on, and must freeze with cold. Now I will make them little shirts, coats, waistcoats, and hose, and will even knit them stout stockings, and you shall make them each a pair of shoes."

The husband agreed, and at evening, when they had everything ready, they laid out the presents on the table, and hid themselves to see how the little men would behave.

At midnight they came skipping in, and were about to set to work; but, instead of the leather ready cut out, they found the charming little clothes.

At first they were surprised, then excessively delighted. With the greatest speed they put on and smoothed down the pretty clothes, singing:

Now we're dressed so fine and neat,

Why cobble more for others' feet?

Then they hopped and danced about, and leaped over chairs and tables and out at the door. Henceforward, they came back no more, but the shoemaker fared well as long as he lived, and had good luck in all his undertakings.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What did the shoemaker find on his table in the morning?

- A. two little men
- B. a finished pair of shoes
- C. the leather he had cut out the night before
- D. two sets of clothes

2. How did the shoemaker change in the story?

- A. The shoemaker went from being very poor to being a rich, well-to-do man.
- B. The shoemaker went from being very rich to being a very poor man.
- C. The shoemaker went from being happy to being an angry and jealous man.
- D. The shoemaker went from being hardworking to being a lazy man.

3. Read this sentence from the text.

"Early next morning he found the four pairs finished, and so it went on; what he cut out at evening was finished in the morning, so that he was soon again in comfortable circumstances, and became a well-to-do man."

The shoemaker soon discovers that two little men have been making the shoes for him. What can be concluded about the impact these two men have had on the shoemaker's life?

- A. They have had a negative impact on the shoemaker's life.
- B. They have had a small impact on the shoemaker's life.
- C. They have had no impact on the shoemaker's life.
- D. They have had a big, positive impact on the shoemaker's life.

4. The shoemaker's wife wants to show the two little men that she and the shoemaker are grateful for making them rich. How does the shoemaker and his wife show their thankfulness?

- A. The shoemaker and his wife make them each clothes and shoes.
- B. The shoemaker and his wife spy on the two little men at night.
- C. The shoemaker and his wife give the two little men jobs as shoemakers.
- D. The shoemaker and his wife give the two little men riches.

5. What is a main theme of this story?

- A. Shoemaking is a difficult job that requires a lot of skill.
- B. People may show their appreciation to those responsible for their good fortune.
- C. Sometimes people do not always get the appreciation they deserve.
- D. Riches do not always make people happy.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"The next day the wife said: 'The little men have made us rich, and we ought to show our gratitude. They run about with nothing on, and must freeze with cold. Now I will make them little shirts, coats, waistcoats, and hose, and will even knit them stout stockings, and you shall make them each a pair of shoes.'"

What does the word "gratitude" mean in this excerpt?

- A. worry or fear
- B. anger or annoyance
- C. thanks or appreciation
- D. grief or sadness

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

At midnight, the little men came skipping in and were about to set to work on the leather; _____, instead of the leather ready to cut out, they found the charming little clothes.

- A. therefore
- B. finally
- C. however
- D. meanwhile

8. When the little men found the clothes, what did they sing?

9. Why might the little men have stopped helping the shoemaker?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. The two little men made shoes for the shoemaker. The shoemaker and his wife gave the two men shoes and clothes in return. Compare these two acts.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.