

A Bamboo in the Heart

A painter in ancient China loved painting bamboo. He planted bamboo and watched it daily—in sunshine and rain. He knew bamboo so well that he could see it with his eyes closed. When he painted, he didn't need real bamboo. He painted perfect bamboo from his mind!



Meaning: Plan carefully before acting.



For kids: Think about steps before doing things, like planning a drawing.



Quenching Thirst with Plums

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Meaning: Comfort with imagination.



For kids: Happy thoughts help, but real water quenches thirst.



Dotting the Dragon's Eyes

An artist painted four lifelike dragons on a wall but left their eyes blank. When asked why, he said, "They'll fly away if I add eyes!" People doubted him, so he dotted two dragons' eyes. Lightning flashed—those two dragons flew into the sky! The eyeless ones stayed.



Meaning: A small touch makes things perfect.



For kids: Final steps matter, like checking your work.



Sharpening the Axe Won't Delay Woodcutting

Two woodcutters went to the mountain. One started cutting immediately. The other sharpened his axe first. The first laughed, but the sharp axe cut wood faster. The prepared woodcutter finished first.



Meaning: Prep saves time.



For kids: Prepare well, like sharpening pencils before homework.



Standing in Snow at Cheng's Door

Two students visited teacher Cheng Yi but found him napping. They waited silently outside as snow fell, covering them. When Cheng woke, he saw them shivering in deep snow. Moved, he answered their questions.



Meaning: Respect teachers patiently.



For kids: Be polite and patient when asking for help.



The Bird Scared by Bow Twang

An archer told a king he could down a goose without arrows. He twanged his bowstring—the goose fell! The archer explained: “It was already hurt and scared. The sound made it panic and reopen its wound.”



Meaning: Fear from past harm.



For kids: Learn from mistakes; don't stay scared.



Fox Borrowing Tiger's Might

A tiger caught a fox. The fox lied: "I rule the forest! Follow me—animals fear me!"

Animals fled seeing the tiger behind the fox. Thinking they feared the fox, the tiger let it go.



Meaning: Bully using others' power.



For kids: Don't trick others or be easily scared.



Beating Grass to Startle Snake

Villagers suspected a snake stole food but couldn't find it. A wise man said, "Beat the grass with sticks." They did—the hidden snake slithered out in panic and was caught.



Meaning: Alert enemies carelessly.



For kids: Be careful, like keeping surprises secret.



Carving Insects' Tiny Tricks

A man carved tiny birds on rice grains. Proudly, he showed a scholar his work. The scholar said, "This is skillful but small. Learn big skills to help people, like reading or kindness."



Meaning: Trivial skill.



For kids: Small skills are fun, but learn important things too.

