

## JEWELS UNDER THE SADDLE

A merchant buys a camel in the market. When he gets home, he asks his servant to help him remove the saddle – camel saddles are very heavy, with a wooden frame and lots of padding! Hidden underneath the saddle they find a small purse containing 20 precious jewels.

"Aiyah!" cries the servant. "You're so lucky, Master. You buy a camel and get a handful of jewels. You are rich!"

"No, I must return them at once," says the merchant. His servant is astonished. "I bought the camel and paid a fair price for it. But I did not buy the jewels."

So the servant helps the merchant saddle up and he goes back to the market. The camel seller is also surprised. "I had forgotten that I hid them there for safe-keeping." (1)

Anxiously he empties the purse and frantically counts the jewels. He is much relieved to see that they are all there. "You could easily have kept them," he tells the merchant.

"No. I bought a camel with its saddle from you. I did not buy the jewels."

"Then please, allow me to give you a reward. Take one. Any one. Even the biggest."

The merchant smiles. "That's alright. Besides, when I decided to return them to you, I kept the two most precious jewels for myself."

(2) Hunh? The camel seller counts the jewels again. "No, they are all here. What jewels did you keep?"

"My honour and my self-respect."



## The story in your classroom

A strong story that is easy to tell with its three characters. I make the servant quite Singaporean (!)

I imagine the pouch to be tied by a thread wrapped around the top and mime untying it, then tipping the contents into the palm of my hand and counting the jewels with the tip of a finger.

(1) I often supply a topical reference here to justify his fears – a reference to Gaddafi and the fighting throughout much of 2011! A topical reference with teenagers jolts them with the immediacy of the story and appeals to their awareness of current events.

(2) This is a nice comic moment as the camel-seller does a double-take and then recounts his money (my finger flicking frantically across my palm)

(3) Very important you get this final line right. Note there's no further moralising around it. Deliver it as a punch line, crisp and clear, and not too fast, and then let it sink in a moment before you move on with the lesson.

## Learning Points

This story highlights one of the most important values in my book: the ability to do the right thing when no one is watching you, when you could get away with doing the wrong thing.

This is why the servant is so surprised. His master could pocket the jewels and no-one would be any the wiser.

(Except of course, the servant. If the master had kept the jewels, what do you think the servant would do the next time he found something that didn't belong him, some money, say, that his master had forgotten to take out of his pockets?)

*Who steals my purse steals trash;  
'tis something, nothing;*

*'Twas mine, 'tis his,  
and has been slave to thousands;  
But he that filches from me  
my good name*

*Robs me of that  
which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.*

Shakespeare, *Othello*



**The first step to becoming a thief is to be a liar**