

NASRUDDIN THE KING!

Nasruddin was deep in thought and walking down a road near the Palace when he bumped into a man.

The man became very angry and started to curse and shout at Nasruddin. "Do you know who I am?!" he screamed. "I am the King's Advisor!"

"Congratulations," said Nasruddin. "As for me, I am a King."

"A king?" asked the man. "You?! Over which country do you rule?" "I rule over myself," said Nasruddin. "I am master of my passions. You would never find me losing my temper as you did just now."

The man apologised and went away feeling very ashamed of himself.



WHOSE NAME ON THE DOOR?

A businessman had an appointment to meet Nasruddin al Hodja (the teacher) for tea, but when he arrived at Nasruddin's house, he found the shutters down and the door locked. In Turkey, this only meant one thing in the old days: he was not at home (when you are home, you open the shutters for light and air!) The businessman knocked on the door anyway. He couldn't believe Nasruddin had forgotten their appointment. He knocked again – more loudly. He was furious!

Nasruddin's neighbour heard the commotion and came to see what was the matter. "I arranged to meet Nasruddin for tea, but he's not in!" snapped the businessman. He was livid!

"No, he went out. Some friends called and invited him out – he's probably in the souk (market) now at a coffee-house."

The businessman was beside himself. How could Nasruddin have forgotten their appointment? He asked the neighbour if he had some chalk. When the neighbour brought it, the man scrawled STUPID FOOL in large letters on Nasruddin's front door and went home.

That evening there came a knock on his own door. It was Nasruddin.

"My friend!" he said apologetically, "please forgive me for forgetting our appointment. As soon as I came home, and saw my front door, I remembered – for you had kindly written your name on the door."

The story in your classroom

Nasruddin is a character in Turkish folklore renowned for both his wisdom and his petty vices, which often get him into trouble! His character spread throughout the Arabic world, and is now a popular figure in world storytelling. As a Muslim character, he is particularly welcome for his positive and respectful approach to life.

One of the advantages of Nasruddin stories is that they tend to be relatively short – as in these two typical examples.

I make the King's Advisor very pompous at the start, before Nasruddin knocks the wind out of his sails.

In the second story, I improvise some 'Turkish' gibberish and by the intonation, it's obvious I'm saying something extremely rude!

I then say that 'stupid fool' is a polite translation!

The Turkish for 'stupid fool' is actually *aptal aptal!*

To read more Nasruddin stories, see pages 54, 60, 77, 106, 142, 157, 170 and the link in the CD-ROM

Talk does not cook rice

Chinese proverb

Learning Points

As someone with a hot temper, before I dash off a furious email or call up customer service, I now try to ask myself, whose name am I writing on the door?

It's rather like the adage about three fingers pointing back at you when you point your index finger at someone.



THE DONKEY'S SHADOW

A merchant hired a man and his donkey to bring his goods to the next oasis town.

At midday, they rested. The sun was fierce, so the merchant sat down beside the donkey, to take advantage of its shade.

"Hey! Get up!" cried the donkey's owner. "I want to sit in the shade. You hired the donkey – you didn't pay me for his shade!"

"That's ridiculous," countered the merchant. "When I hired the donkey, the fee included the shadow!"

The two men began to shout and shove – and while they were doing so, the donkey ran off into the desert.

*When we argue over 'the shadow',
we often lose sight
of the substance!*