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The Fight of the Crickets

by Lin Yutang

Before You Read

Before you read "The Fight of the Crickets," study the words below. Make sure you know what each word means. This will help you understand the story.

net: something used to catch things. Most nets are light and have very small holes.

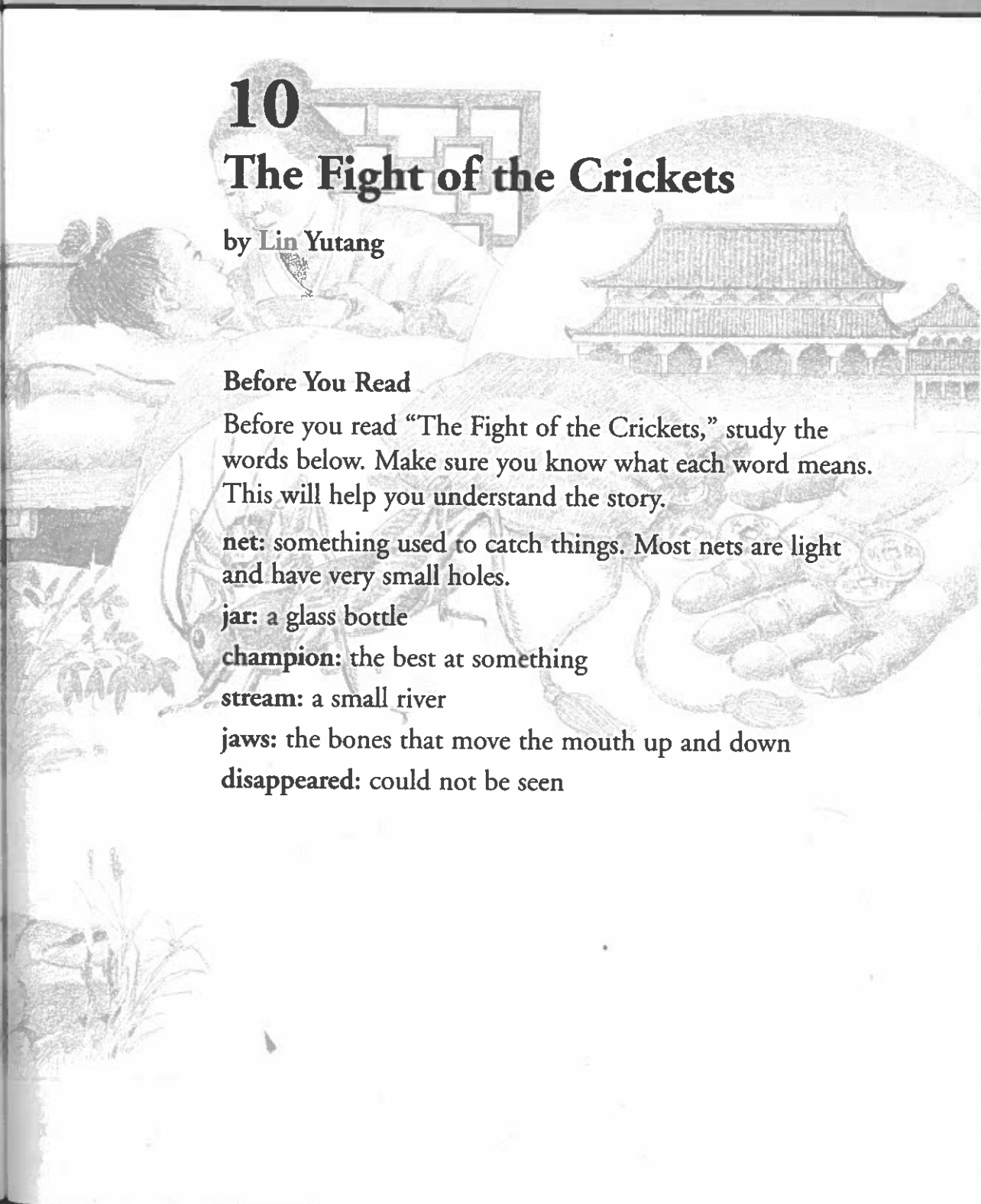
jar: a glass bottle

champion: the best at something

stream: a small river

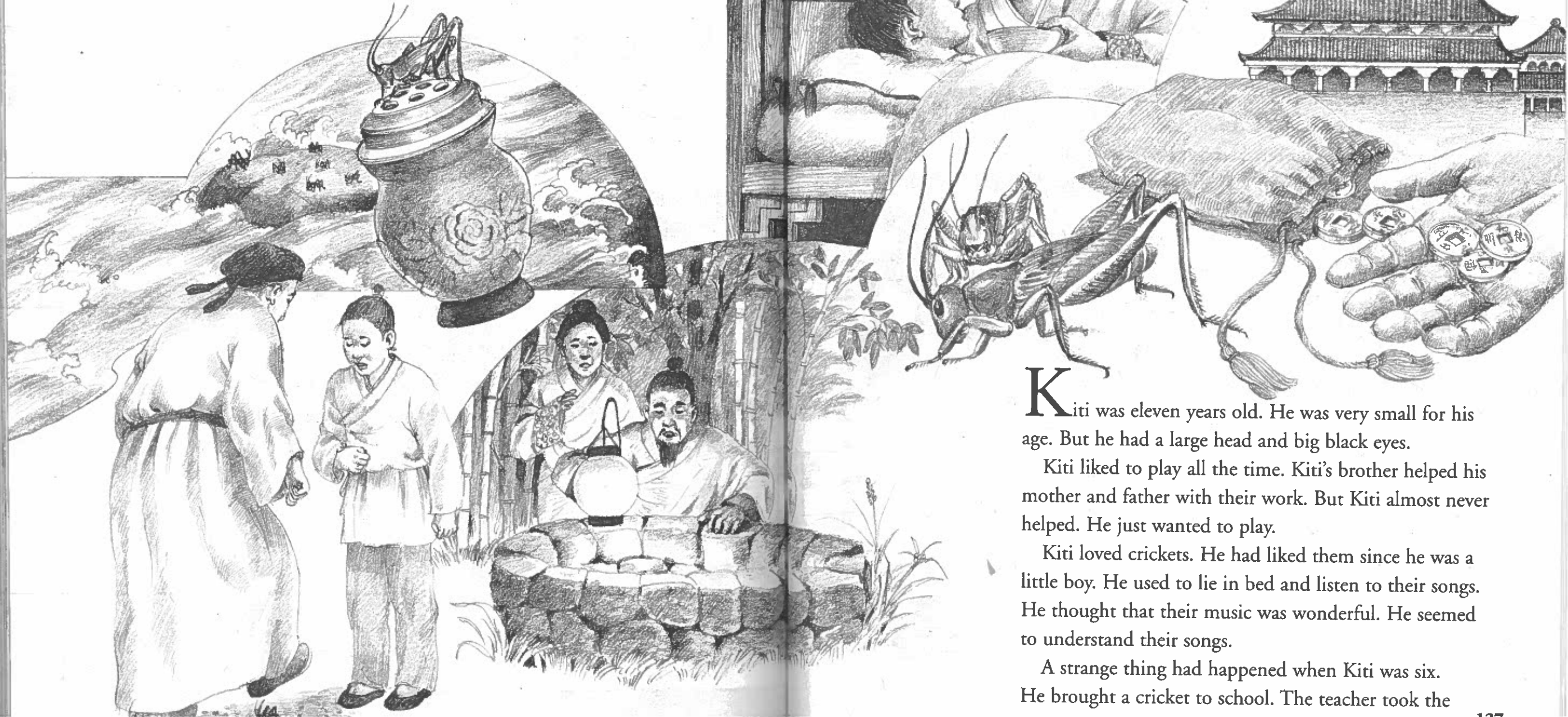
jaws: the bones that move the mouth up and down

disappeared: could not be seen



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Kiti was eleven years old. He was very small for his age. But he had a large head and big black eyes.

Kiti liked to play all the time. Kiti's brother helped his mother and father with their work. But Kiti almost never helped. He just wanted to play.

Kiti loved crickets. He had liked them since he was a little boy. He used to lie in bed and listen to their songs. He thought that their music was wonderful. He seemed to understand their songs.

A strange thing had happened when Kiti was six. He brought a cricket to school. The teacher took the

cricket away. He threw the cricket on the ground. Then he stepped on it.

This made Kiti very angry. He waited until the teacher turned around. Then he rushed at the teacher. He jumped on his back. He started hitting the teacher with his small fists. Nothing like that had ever happened before.

One afternoon a wonderful thing happened to Kiti. His father, Mr. Cheng, said, "Kiti, let us catch some crickets today. We can find some in the hills. I will bring a net to catch them. Bring a box to put them in."

Kiti was very excited. He had caught crickets before. But he had never caught them with a net. He had never caught them with his father. And he had never gone up into the hills. There were many crickets in the hills. But the hills were two miles away. He could not go there alone.

It was July. The day was very hot. There were many stones in the hills. Kiti and his father turned over the stones. Then they listened.

They listened for the sound a cricket makes. It is a loud, clear chirp. That chirp tells you a cricket is near. The louder the chirp, the bigger the cricket.

They heard the crickets' chirps two times. But both times the crickets got away. On the way home, Kiti's father was angry. He wanted to catch crickets very much.



Kiti wondered why his father wanted to catch crickets. But Kiti did not ask.

They got back home in the afternoon. His mother was waiting by the door. She asked, "Did you catch any crickets?"

"No," his father said. His father was very sad.

Kiti waited until his mother was alone. Then Kiti said, "Tell me, Mother. Does Father like crickets?"

"No," she said. "He *has* to catch one. He must catch a very strong one. He has ten days to catch one."

"Catch one? Why? For whom?" asked Kiti.

"For the Emperor."

"I do not understand," said Kiti.

"The Emperor likes cricket fights," said his mother. "In July, every village must send a cricket to the Emperor. The crickets fight each other at the palace. The winner gets a lot of money. It is twenty pieces of silver."

Kiti listened with interest.

His mother went on. She said, "This year our Governor picked your father. Your father must **supply** the cricket."

Kiti rushed to his father. "Father," he said, "Mother told me all about the cricket fights! We can catch a good fighter! He could win! He could be the champion of the country!"

Mr. Cheng said, "Could you catch a champion cricket? It would be worth a lot of money."

"Oh, yes!" said Kiti. "Father, we will catch one! It will make us rich!"

Mr. Cheng was glad that Kiti knew a lot about crickets. He was glad that Kiti could help him.

They went out to catch crickets. They looked for two days. They did not find any crickets. On the third day they were lucky. They climbed to the top of a hill. On the other side was a small stream. "Let us look there," said Kiti.

There were some stones in the stream. The stones were large and flat. On the stones were many crickets. They were singing on the stones. One of the crickets was very big. It was the biggest cricket Kiti had ever seen. It had a very loud chirp.

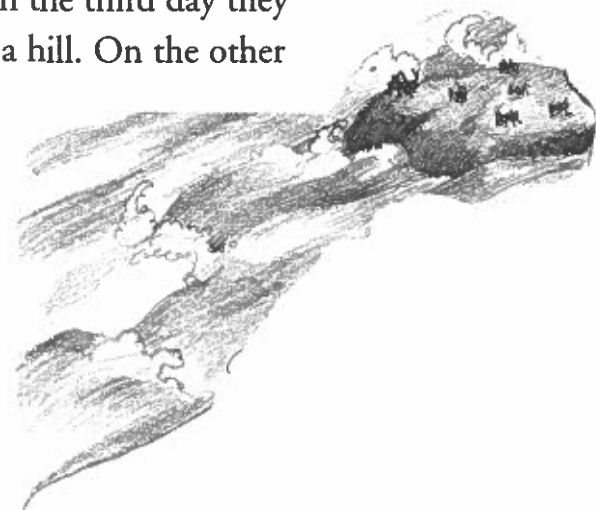
Kiti and his father moved toward the stones. They were very quiet. Suddenly a frog hopped onto the stone. The big cricket jumped up. It went into a hole between two stones.

Kiti took some water. He poured a little into the hole. The cricket jumped up. It went into his father's net. They had caught the cricket!

The cricket was a beauty. It had a long body. It had very strong legs.

"He will be a champion!" said Kiti.

They took the cricket home. They put it in a dark green jar. They made a cover for the jar. It had little holes for air. They put the green jar on a table.



Kiti was very excited. He came into the room often. He liked to hear the cricket chirp.

Then something terrible happened. There was no sound for a long time. Kiti tapped the jar. He did not see the cricket move. But it was hard to see inside.

Was the cricket gone? Kiti was worried. He took the jar over to the window. Slowly he took off the top. He wanted to look into the jar.

Suddenly the cricket hopped out. It began to jump around the room. Kiti ran after the cricket. Kiti reached out. He grabbed the cricket! But he grabbed it much too tightly! He broke the cricket's leg! He had hurt the champion cricket!

Kiti was filled with fear. His mouth was dry. He began to cry. Then he ran away from home.

Supper time came. But Kiti had not come back. Mr. Cheng was very angry. He had found the cricket. He saw that the cricket was hurt. Mr. Cheng said, "Kiti is afraid. He must be hiding. But he will come home soon. He will return when he is hungry."

Ten o'clock came. Still Kiti was away. His parents were no longer angry. They were worried. They went out to look for Kiti. It was dark. They took candles so they could see. Finally, they found Kiti. He had fallen into a well. He was lying at the bottom.

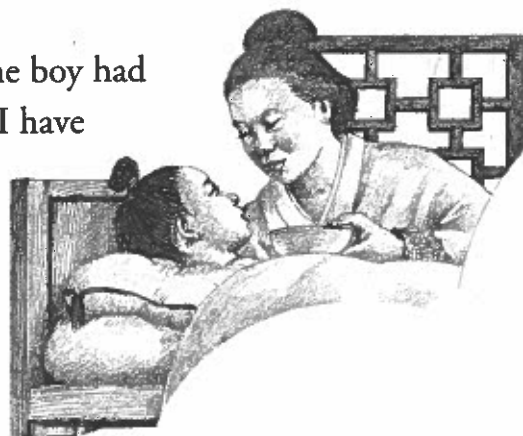


Kiti's parents took him home. They put him to bed. They were afraid that he would die.

All night Kiti kept talking in his sleep. He kept saying, "I have killed the champion cricket! I have killed the champion cricket!"

The next day Kiti ate a bit of soup. But the boy had changed. He was very sad. He kept saying, "I have killed the champion cricket."

The family was glad that Kiti was alive. They hoped he would get better. And Mr. Cheng still had four days to catch a cricket. He planned to go back to the stream. He planned to look on the flat stones.



He got up very early. He was just about to leave. Then a strange thing happened. He heard a chirp. It was very loud. He went into the kitchen. He saw a little cricket. It was sitting on the chair.

Mr. Cheng looked at the cricket. He thought, "This cricket is so small. It cannot be a good fighter. But it has a very loud chirp."

Just then the cricket jumped up. It landed on Mr. Cheng's arm. It seemed to want to be caught!

Mr. Cheng looked closely at the cricket. It had a long neck. It had strong jaws. It might be a good fighter. But it was very small. He could not send it to the Emperor. It was much too small!

Just then a neighbor came in. The neighbor owned a large cricket. It was a very good fighter. It had won many fights with other crickets in the village.

The neighbor knew that Mr. Cheng needed a good cricket. The neighbor said, "I will sell you my cricket. But it will cost a lot of money."

Mr. Cheng did not have much money. He could not buy the cricket. So Mr. Cheng said, "I already have a cricket. Look." He showed the neighbor his little cricket.

The neighbor began to laugh. He said, "Do you call that a cricket?"

Mr. Cheng answered, "Then let the two crickets fight."

The neighbor said, "All right."

The two crickets were put into a cage. They stood looking at each other. Suddenly the little cricket moved. It jumped high into the air. It landed on the other cricket's back. It sank its jaws into the big cricket.

The neighbor was afraid that his cricket would be killed. He put his fingers into the cage. He pulled the two crickets apart.

Mr. Cheng was pleased. He said to himself, "I will send this cricket to the Emperor. I will also send a note. It will say, 'This cricket is small. But it is a very good fighter.'"

Mr. Cheng told his wife about the fight. She said, "That cricket reminds me of Kiti. Remember when he jumped on the teacher's back."

Mr. Cheng thought about that. Then he said, "That is so."

Kiti was still very sick. He was asleep most of the time. His mother had to push food down his mouth.



This went on for weeks. Then one day Kiti woke up. He said to his mother, "I have won! I have won!"

"What did you win?" she asked.

Kiti did not answer. He turned to his father. Kiti said, "I did not mean to hurt that cricket. I did not mean to break its leg."

"Do not worry," said the father. "I found a better cricket. He was small. But he was a very good fighter. I sent him to the Emperor."

Kiti said, "I feel better now. But my legs hurt. I feel as though I had run for hundreds of miles."

The next day Kiti got up. He was able to walk a little. His parents brought him good food.

Kiti said, "This is like the food I had at the palace."

"Where?"

"At the Emperor's palace."

"You must have been dreaming," said his mother.

"It seems very real," said Kiti. "I remember I had a big fight. It was with a big fellow. Everyone came to watch. It was a hard fight. But I won! I won!"

The next day news came from the Emperor's palace. Mr. Cheng's cricket had won every fight. He was the champion of the country! They were sending Mr. Cheng twenty pieces of silver.

But a funny thing had happened. The little cricket was gone. After the fight, it suddenly disappeared from its cage.



TELL ABOUT THE STORY.

Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. Each sentence tells a *fact* about the story.

- Kiti was different because he
 - a. loved crickets and their songs.
 - b. helped his family so much.
 - c. did not like to play.
- Kiti and his father saw some crickets
 - a. in the grass.
 - b. on a tree.
 - c. on large flat stones.
- Kiti fell into
 - a. the river.
 - b. the well.
 - c. a stone.
- The Emperor was sending Mr. Cheng
 - a. some gold.
 - b. twenty dollars.
 - c. twenty pieces of silver.

ADD WORDS TO SENTENCES.

Complete the sentences below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word can be found in the story. There are five words and four blanks. This means that one word in the box will not be used.

In some ways the _____¹
and the grasshopper are very much alike. Both have _____² back legs and can jump very far. Both like to eat the same kind of _____³.
And both can make _____⁴ by rubbing the edges of their wings together.

strong teacher
cricket
sounds food

× 5 =
NUMBER
CORRECT

YOUR
SCORE

× 5 =
NUMBER
CORRECT

YOUR
SCORE

LEARN NEW WORDS.

The vocabulary words are printed in **dark type** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer these questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. Kiti rushed at the teacher and jumped on his back. The word *rushed* means
 a. called to.
 b. fell down.
 c. moved quickly.
2. He had to supply a cricket for the Emperor. The word *supply* means
 a. take away.
 b. like very much.
 c. give what is needed.
3. Kiti tapped the jar. The word *tapped* means
 a. hit lightly.
 b. threw away.
 c. kicked.
4. She said, "That cricket reminds me of Kiti." The word *reminds* means
 a. makes you think of.
 b. is different from.
 c. is smaller than.

× 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.

Here is how to answer these questions. First think about what happened in the story. Then *figure out* (work out) the right answer. This is called *critical thinking*.

1. Which sentence is true?
 a. Kiti did not like crickets.
 b. Mr. Cheng loved crickets.
 c. Kiti and the champion cricket were alike in many ways.
2. What was strange about the cricket that Mr. Cheng found?
 a. It had a long neck.
 b. It seemed to want to be caught.
 c. It was a good fighter.
3. It is interesting that when Kiti finally woke up, he said,
 a. "I feel very tired."
 b. "Where am I?"
 c. "I won! I won!"
4. The cricket probably disappeared at the end of the story because
 a. it had done its job.
 b. the Emperor sold it.
 c. Mr. Cheng took it.

× 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

SPOT STORY ELEMENTS.

Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, and **setting**. (See page 3.) Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. What happened first in the *plot*?
 a. Kiti and his father hunted for crickets.
 b. Kiti ran away from home.
 c. Mr. Cheng's cricket won.
2. What happened last in the *plot*?
 a. The family looked for Kiti.
 b. Kiti brought a cricket to school.
 c. They found out Mr. Cheng's cricket was the champion.
3. Who is the *main character* in the story?
 a. the Emperor
 b. Kiti
 c. Mr. Cheng
4. Which sentence best *characterizes* (tells about) Kiti?
 a. He was tall for his age.
 b. He never got sick.
 c. He was small and had a large head with big eyes.

× 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

THINK SOME MORE ABOUT THE STORY.

Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- In what ways were Kiti and Mr. Cheng's cricket alike?
- What did Kiti dream? Why do you think that his dreams seemed so real to him?
- At the end of the story, Kiti felt as though he had run for hundreds of miles. Why? Did you think Mr. Cheng's cricket would be the champion? Explain.

Write your scores in the boxes below. Then write your scores on pages 138 and 139.

TELL ABOUT THE STORY
+
 ADD WORDS TO SENTENCES
+
 LEARN NEW WORDS
+
 EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED
+
 SPOT STORY ELEMENTS
=
 TOTAL SCORE: Story 10