

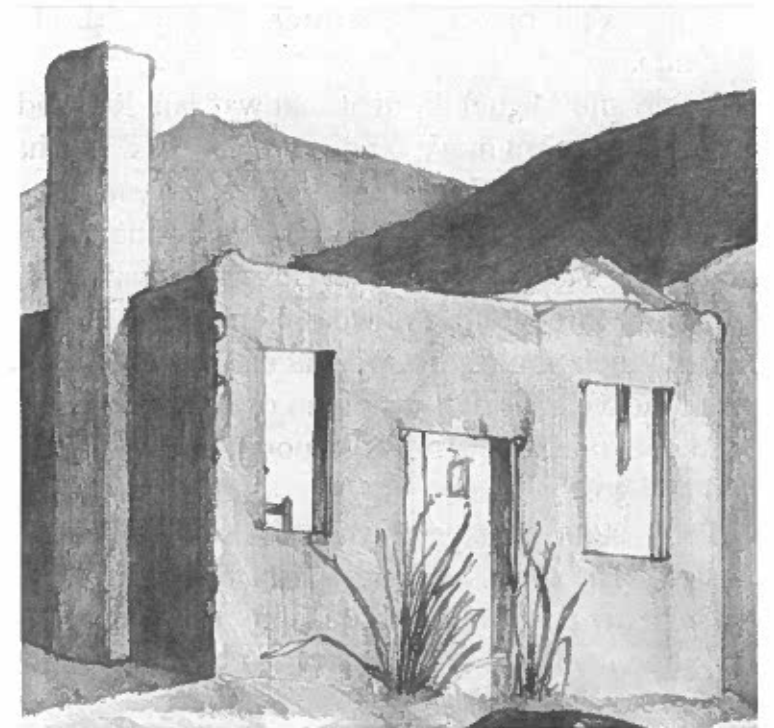
The Three Brothers and the Treasure

by José Maria Eça de Queiroz

Years ago, in Portugal, there lived three brothers. Their names were Rui, Pablo, and Miguel. They were the laziest, most worthless young men in their village.

The brothers lived in an old house made of clay. It was on the side of a mountain. One winter day there was a terrible storm. The storm **destroyed** the roof of the house. It broke all the windows. The brothers had no money to fix the house. So they stayed in their freezing kitchen all winter. They sat and stared at the fireplace. No fire had burned there for a very long time.

When night came, the brothers ate a meal of black bread. Then they made their way through the snow to the stable. They slept there in the straw. During the night they heard wolves howling outside. The brothers were very poor. And their **poverty**



made them fiercer than the wolves.

Finally spring came. One morning the brothers got on their mules. They rode into the woods. They were hoping to catch some rabbits for food. Or maybe they could find some fruit. It would taste good with the black bread.

Suddenly the brothers came upon a cave. The cave was carved into a large rock. It was hard to see the cave because the rock was hidden by thick bushes.

The brothers pulled out their knives. They cut through the bushes. Then they entered the cave. Inside the cave they saw an old iron chest. The chest had three locks. And in each lock was a key.

The brothers quickly opened the locks. They threw open the chest. They saw that the chest was filled with pieces of gold!

The brothers were delighted when they saw this treasure. They laughed. They shouted. They danced wildly about.

Finally, they faced one another. They did not speak. But their looks seemed to say, "What shall we do with this gold?"

Rui was the oldest of the three. He said, "Brothers, we must divide this gold equally."

Pablo and Miguel thought that was fair. Rui said, "But this chest is very heavy. We cannot move it now. We are tired. We have not eaten all day."

Rui turned to Pablo. He was the youngest of the three. Rui said, "Take one piece of gold. Put it in your pocket. Ride into town. Buy three large leather bags to carry the gold. Buy three loaves of bread and three pieces of meat. Buy three bottles of wine. Remember, too, to buy some oats for the mules. When you return, we will eat. Then we will take home the gold. It is wise to leave after dark when no one can see us."

Miguel nodded. "That is a good idea," he said. "Pablo. Take one piece of gold and go."

Pablo stood looking down at the shining gold. He did not move. Finally he said, "The chest has three parts. Each part locks with a different key. I will lock my part. And I will take my key with me."

"Then I will lock my part of the chest too," said Miguel. "And I will keep the key."

"And I will do the same thing," said Rui.

So each brother locked his part of the chest. And each put the key safely in his pocket.

Pablo was satisfied. He said good-bye. He got on his mule. He made his way back through the woods. As he rode away, Miguel and Rui could hear him singing.

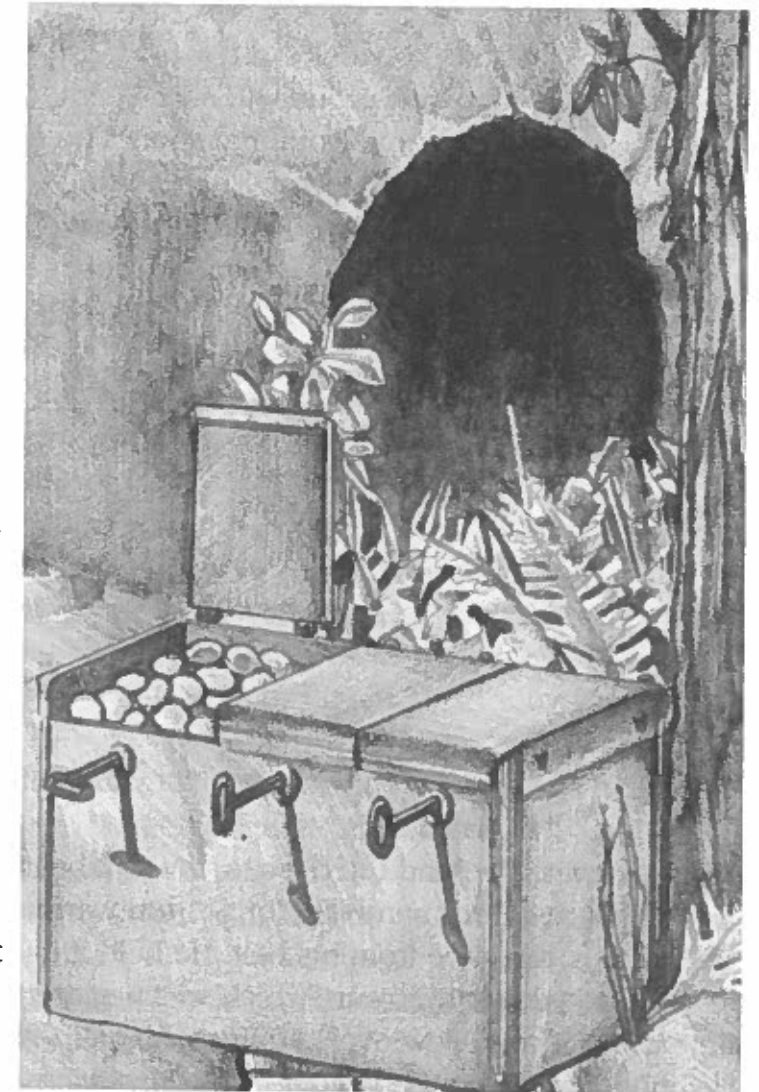
There was a grassy field across from the place where the cave was hidden. Miguel and Rui sat down on the grass. From there they kept watch over the treasure.

After a while Rui said, "Life is strange. Pablo did not want to go out today. Suppose he had stayed at home. You and I would have discovered this gold. There would have been no need to share it with him."

"True," Miguel said sadly. "How true."

Rui said, "Suppose Pablo had come along this way alone. Suppose *he* had found this gold. I am sure that he would not have shared it with us."

"That is so, brother," said Miguel. "Pablo is



greedy. Last year Pablo tricked a merchant out of many silver coins. I asked Pablo to lend me a coin to buy a new knife. He would not lend it to me.”

“You see!” Rui said excitedly. “You see!”

“And how quickly Pablo wasted his silver coins!” Miguel said. “He will quickly waste this gold too.”

Both men were silent for a while. Then Rui said, “You know, Pablo is a very sick man. His cough gets worse and worse. I do not think he will live until next winter.”

“That is true,” said Miguel.

“But by then,” said Rui, “he will have spent his share of the gold. He will have wasted that **precious** gold that should be ours!”

Miguel thought for a moment. Then he said, “But suppose *we* had that money. We could rebuild our house. You would have fine clothes. You would have a handsome horse. And you would have the biggest room. You are the oldest brother. You should have the best.”

“You are right!” exclaimed Rui.

Both men jumped to their feet. They suddenly had the same idea. Miguel asked slowly, “What do you think we should do?”

Rui did not answer at once. He took his brother by the arm. He drew him along the path in the woods. Then he said, “Look over there, Miguel. That is a good place—behind those bushes. You must do it, Miguel! One blow with your knife—and Pablo will be no more!”

“Yes,” Rui went on, “You must do it, Miguel! Besides, Pablo makes fun of you behind your back. He calls you a fool. He calls you a good-for-nothing fool.”

Miguel’s face grew red with anger. “I will do it!” he growled.

“Come, then,” said Rui.

They waited behind the bushes. It was a beautiful spring day. A stream flowed nearby. Birds sang. The bright sun warmed the sweet-smelling air. Miguel took the knife from his belt. He held it in his hand.

Rui looked up at the sun, which was beginning to set. He wondered what time it was. Crows flew over the trees. Miguel watched the birds disappear. He complained about how long Pablo was gone. “Pablo wastes time in

town,” Miguel said. “And we must wait here, hungry and thirsty.”

At last! They heard the sound of a song. It was the same song that Pablo was singing when he left for town.

They saw Pablo riding up the path. There were some packages tied to his mule. Miguel moved quietly through the bushes. As Pablo passed by, Miguel raised his knife. He brought it down quickly. Pablo fell to the ground. The terrible deed was done!

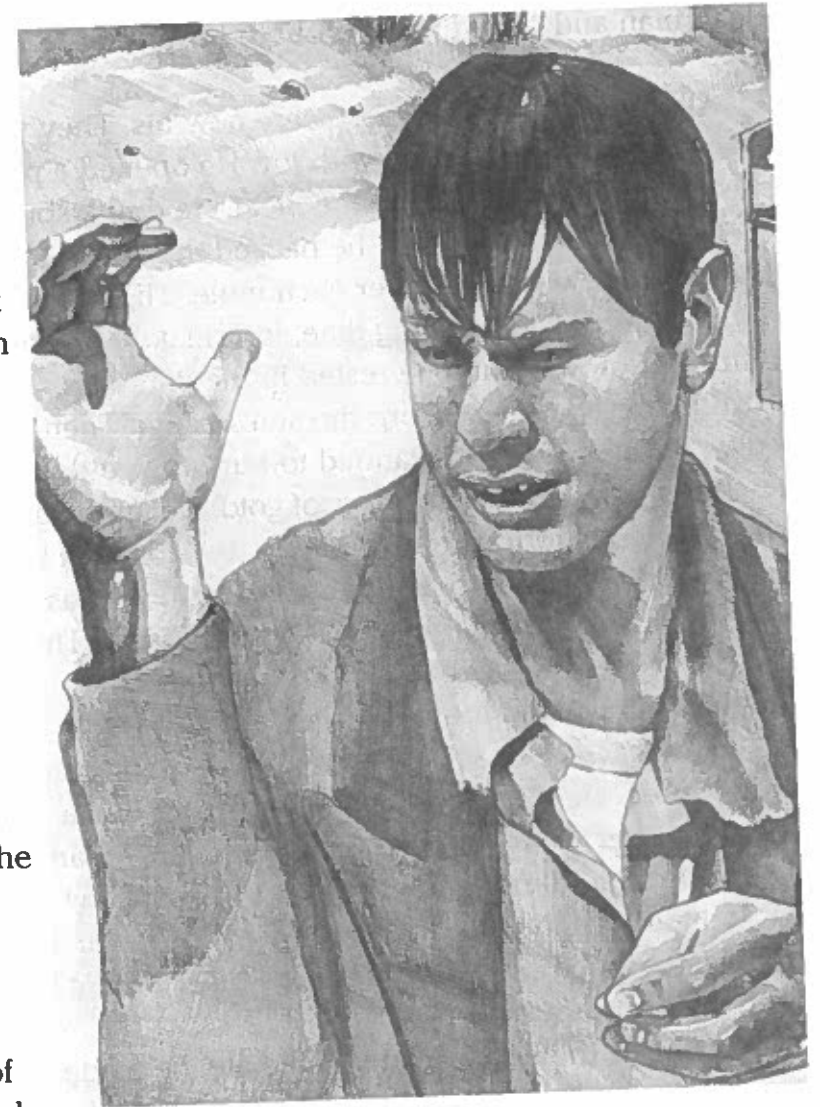
“The key!” cried Rui.

From the pocket of the dead man, Rui took the key. Rui led the mule away. Miguel walked to the stream to wash his knife. A moment later Rui was at Miguel’s side.

“I will open the packages now,” said Rui. “Let us eat something before we do anything more.”

Rui took out his knife. Then as Miguel leaned over the stream to wash his face, Rui struck him with his knife.

Miguel slipped forward into the stream. As Miguel fell, Rui grabbed the



dead man and pulled the key out of his pocket.

All three keys to the chest were now his. They were his alone! Rui took a deep breath. He was filled with joy. He opened a package and sat down on the ground. He ate some of the meat. He drank some wine. He gave each of the mules some oats. Then he packed the gold into the three large leather bags. He threw one bag over each mule. Then he started for home.

The journey took a long time, for the gold was heavy. But Rui was not in a hurry. Now and then he rested in the darkness.

Rui arrived home before the sun was up. Then he went down to the cellar of the house. He planned to bury the gold there.

Rui opened one of the bags of gold. He let the gold coins slip through his fingers. He heard the coins rattle on the stones of the floor. How lovely the gold was! What a pretty sound it made. And it was his—all his!

Now Rui was very hungry. He went outside. The sun was just beginning to rise. In the **dim** light he saw a small package. It was tied to Pablo's mule. Rui had not noticed it before. What could it be?

Rui opened the package. Ah, what delights were there! He saw turkey, fruit, sweet cakes, and chocolate. And there was a small bottle of wine. This must be a very fine wine! Pablo had probably planned to keep this fine food and wine all to himself. The greedy, selfish fellow!

Rui took the food and wine down to the cellar. He thought, "How good it is to eat as much as I want. I am glad that I do not have to share this food with my brothers."

Rui sat on the floor. He ate. As he ate, he made plans. He would rebuild the old house. Everything would be of the very best. He would wear the best clothes. He would meet the best people. He might marry a wealthy lady. She would be someone from a fine, old family.

When he finished eating, Rui picked up the small bottle of wine. He went up to the kitchen and returned with a glass. He poured some of the wine into the glass. The wine smelled very sweet. He had never before tasted good wine. Rui took a long drink. Then he waited for a while, the better to enjoy it.

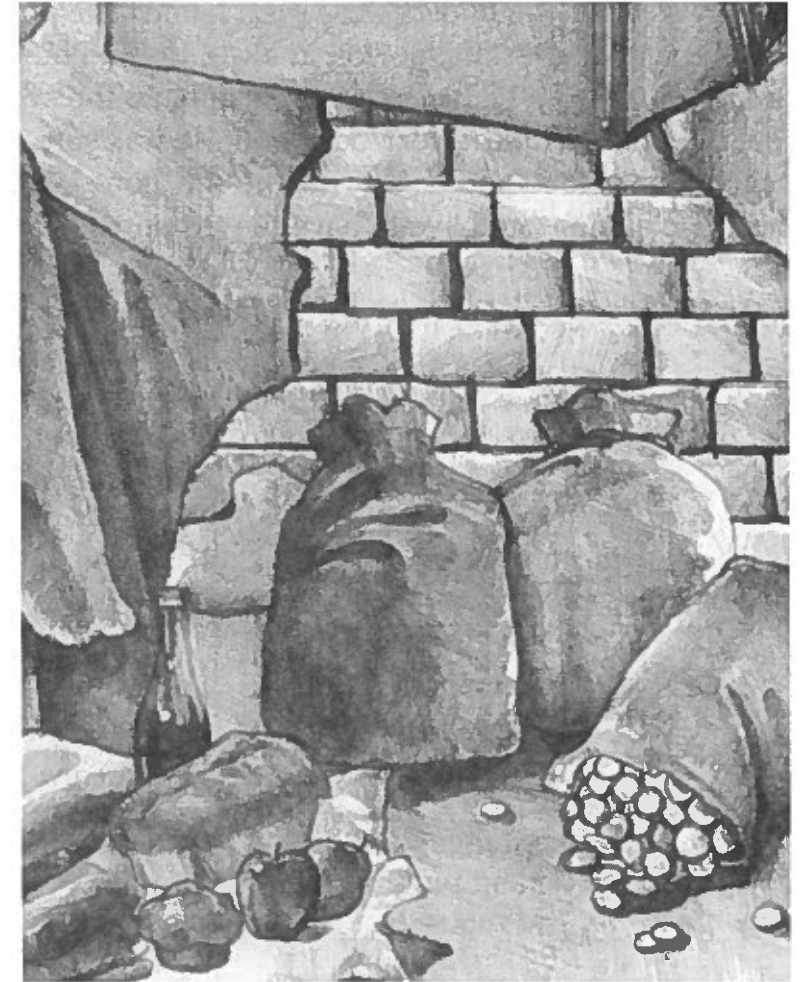
Suddenly, flames of fire seemed to burn inside him! The flames tore him apart! He rose and hurried outside. He rushed to drink from the brook. He tried to cool his burning throat. But that did not help. The more he drank, the more terrible was the fire in his throat!

He began to run. On and on he ran. His throat was on fire! Suddenly he stopped by the edge of a stream. There was the body of his brother, Miguel!

Rui turned away from the body and ran. He ran across a field. He tripped. He landed on his hands and knees. He crawled along the grass, moaning in pain. Just then he saw something on the path in the grass. It was the body of his brother, Pablo!

Suddenly Rui understood it all. It was all clear to him now. He thought about the delicious food. He thought about that small bottle of wine. Then Rui suddenly understood Pablo's terrible plan!

Rui got to his feet. He looked down at his brother on the grass. "*Poisoner! Murderer!*" Rui shouted at Pablo. Then Rui breathed his last breath and fell to the ground.



It was true. The bodies were soon found. The police discovered that Pablo had bought some poison in town. He said he wanted to rid the old house of rats. But he had put the poison into the bottle of wine. Then he put the bottle with the very best food. He was sure that his brothers would take the best food and wine. Then he—he alone—would live to get the three keys. He alone would live to have the treasure.



LOOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY.
How well can you find facts in a story? Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. What did the brothers find in the woods?
 a. fresh fruit
 b. some rabbits
 c. a cave
2. What was true of the chest?
 a. It was new.
 b. It had three locks.
 c. It was made of wood.
3. Rui told Pablo to buy
 a. fine clothes.
 b. a handsome horse.
 c. bread, meat, and wine.
4. Where did Rui plan to bury the gold?
 a. in the cellar
 b. in the woods
 c. in a grassy field

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS.
Here are four vocabulary questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. A storm destroyed the roof. The word *destroyed* means
 a. missed.
 b. broke.
 c. climbed.
2. The brothers had no money. Their poverty made them fierce. The word *poverty* means
 a. being poor.
 b. being rich.
 c. being ill.
3. Pablo thought that the precious gold should be his. Something that is *precious* is
 a. shiny.
 b. old and small.
 c. worth a lot.
4. In the dim light, he noticed a package. The word *dim* means
 a. very warm.
 b. very beautiful.
 c. not bright.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

ADDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH.
Complete the paragraph below.
Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word appears in the story. There are five words and four blanks, so one word in the box will not be used.

For as long as anyone can
_____ , people
1
have searched for buried gold.
These _____
2
hunters use maps and old
stories to decide where to dig.
Very few people have ever
_____ any gold.
3
Still, this does not stop others
from searching for
_____ treasure.
4

treasure remember buried
journey discovered

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

READING BETWEEN THE LINES.
These questions will help you think critically. You will have to think about what happened in the story, and then figure out the answers. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

- How did Rui die?
 - a. He drowned in a stream.
 - b. He was killed with a knife.
 - c. He drank wine that had poison in it.
- We may infer (figure out) that Pablo planned to
 - a. kill his brothers.
 - b. build a new house.
 - c. give his gold to the poor.
- Rui and Miguel thought that Pablo would
 - a. spend his gold wisely.
 - b. spend his gold quickly.
 - c. spend his gold slowly.
- The story had an unhappy ending because the brothers
 - a. lived in a house.
 - b. did not share their treasure.
 - c. never spoke to each other.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

NOTING STORY ELEMENTS.
Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, **setting**, and **mood**. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

- What happened first in the *plot*?
 - a. Pablo returned from town.
 - b. The brothers discovered a chest filled with gold.
 - c. Rui felt a burning in his throat.
- Which words *characterize* the three brothers?
 - a. lazy, selfish, fierce,
 - b. happy, honest, hardworking
 - c. friendly, helpful, liked
- Where is the story *set*?
 - a. in Portugal, years ago
 - b. in a town in France
 - c. in the United States
- What is the *theme* of the story?
 - a. You are lucky to find a treasure.
 - b. Rich people are not always happy.
 - c. Greed leads to the death of three brothers.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

THINKING MORE ABOUT THE STORY.
Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- ◆ Do you think the three brothers "got what they deserved"? Explain.
- ◆ Rui said that Pablo had a very bad cough. Was Pablo so sick that he would have died before the winter? Why?
- ◆ Suppose that Miguel had not killed Pablo. How do you think the story might have ended? What lesson or lessons does the story teach?

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 138 and 139.

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LOOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY
EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS
ADDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH
READING BETWEEN THE LINES
NOTING STORY ELEMENTS
 SCORE TOTAL: Story 4