

Fable Series

Papa Bear and The Bridge

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<http://eltforward.com/index.html>

There by the verdant hill sides lived generations of bears: many in caves, others in hollow logs.

Fruit-bearing trees grew luxuriantly. Between the hills ran a river teeming with fish. As well, ants and insects abounded in the vicinity. Happy were the bears who had plenty to fill their bellies.

Then came a ferocious storm. Two days of relentless rain brought severe flooding, causing landslides and the river to burst its bank, cutting off communities as a result.

Nine-year-old Billy Bear lived with Papa, Mama, Grandpa and Grandma in a cave on the East side of the hill, while most of his relatives and friends were on the West side. They were cut off after the storm. For days and weeks, Billy sat, downcast and dispirited.

Papa Bear and his neighbours came up with a plan. They collected logs which they strung together to form a bridge across the roaring river, hoping to re-connect the stranded communities.

However, the bridge sat there quietly, on its own, for weeks. No one ever crossed it. Papa Bear was puzzled. He decided to do something.

One morning, he gathered together all the bears by the river. Then he stepped on the bridge, 130 feet above the turbulent swirls, and began to walk across it to the other side, as the bears looked on with awe and shock, oohing and aahing.

When he walked back safely after reaching the other side, the bears burst into applause, chanting, Papa, Papa, Papa.

Papa Bear raised his hand and quieted the crowd. Then he said, "I am going back across the bridge, but this time I will need someone to walk with me. He or she has to be blindfolded. Do you believe in me?"

The bears shouted back, "We believe! We believe!"

Papa Bear once again silenced them and posed the question, "Which of you will be that person?"

No one moved. Everyone fell silent. After a long pause, out of the crowd, came one bear. He held out his hands to Papa Bear and allowed himself to be blindfolded. The two walked gingerly across the bridge and back.

Pause and have a think. Then share your thoughts with your teacher or your classmates:

1. Why didn't anyone use the bridge initially?
2. Imagine you were there, watching Papa Bear cross the bridge and return safely. What might your reactions be?
3. Why did the bears fall silent when Papa Bear asked "which of you will be that person"?
4. How would you respond to Papa Bear's question? Explain.
5. What drove the lone bear to respond and agree to walk with Papa Bear?
6. What is one key lesson you may draw from the story?

Moral:

Many in the story had cried, "We believe. We believe". But in the end, only one really believed. Belief with one's lips is one thing. Belief with one's heart and action is another. Belief can only be truthfully expressed in word *and* in deed.