

The Emperor and the Magic Goose

A drama about loneliness and togetherness

Level 2 Lesson Plan

Adaptable for ages: 6 - 10 years old



BACKGROUND PLANNING AND REQUIREMENTS

Purpose and Learning

This drama takes as its starting point the traditional Red Lantern Festival, held in Auckland since 2000, and cancelled in 2020 because of Coronavirus, both in Auckland and throughout China. The drama uses a traditional Chinese folk tale of the Festival's origins, to explore:

1. Loneliness, what it makes people do and what might help them to avoid being lonely;
2. How to get together and co-operate bravely and imaginatively to deal with a common threat.

The drama demands individual and collaborative ingenuity and problem-solving. Movement and dance, ritual, visual art and music-making also feature.

Pre-text

The story of the origin of the Red Lantern Festival, one of China's (and Auckland's) most popular festivals, held on the 15th day of the 1st lunar month (See Step 1).

Focus question

How in the short term, can people cooperate to deal with an immediate threat, and in the longer term, plan to remove the threat and turn it into an opportunity?

The 5 Ws

What's happening? The Jade Emperor is threatening to destroy our town and its people

Who's it happening to? All the townspeople

Where is it happening? In the town and in the Emperor's Palace

When is it happening? A long, long time ago



Helping teachers work with children when they first return to education following major traumatic or life-changing events

What's at stake? First, our survival and then we must deal with the Emperor.

The Hook

Festivals are exciting events. In addition, the pre-text story has tension and an intriguing and powerful magic figure – the Magic Goose.

The Teacher-in-role

- The Jade Emperor's Maidservant
- Town Prefect (The town's leading official – like Mayor and magistrate combined)

Resources required

- A costume signal for the Emperor's Maidservant (for Teacher-in-Role)
- A costume signal for the Town Prefect (for Teacher-in-Role)
- A hand drum or spooky but rhythmic music for the Magic Goose (if using Step Four)
- A few hand-held percussion instruments (optional)
- Images of the Auckland Red Lantern Festival (optional)
- Art and craft materials for making lanterns (if using Step Seven)



This is a long and complex drama, taking a number of hours and lessons to complete. If your time is more limited, you can easily cut the drama down and just do some of the steps, still making sense and useful learning, though of course it will lose the richness of the whole experience. You could usefully just do **Steps 1, 2** (without the town design), **3, 5 and 6** (simplified, and without the music), **9 and 10** in one or two lessons.

UNIT PLAN

Step One: Introducing the story and the context for the drama - storytelling and planning

* Ask the children if they have attended, or seen pictures of, one of the popular Lantern Festivals, held every in some New Zealand cities like Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Hamilton. Show them some images of the Festival (there are lots on the internet). You may be able to let any who have taken part in one describe what they remember of it. If it does not come up in discussion, tell them that this is part of Chinese New Year celebrations, and the tradition of a Festival of Red Lanterns has a very long history, and a legend behind it.

* Share the following story, which is one of the many variants of the story of the origins of the Festival, with the children:

This story happened a long, long time ago, but it is still brought to life every year with the Red Lantern Festival – red, because that is the colour of fire, which is important in the story.

The Jade Emperor ruled over the heavens and all the people on earth, and he lived in a great palace in the sky. He had everything he wanted... but he had nobody to talk to, because nobody dared to speak to the Emperor unless he gave them special permission, and they were usually too frightened to speak anyway. So, the Emperor was very lonely. To amuse himself, he would look down from his palace window on the people below and watch them going about their business.

One day, he was looking down on the world, and he noticed how happy all the people were. The harvest was good, and they were celebrating and laughing and singing and dancing. He saw them all together with their friends and families, and it reminded him how he didn't have any friends or family. He was lonely, and his loneliness made him envious of the people. He didn't want them to have what he couldn't have. He decided to send down his fearsome Magic Goose which breathed fire, to burn down the world and all the people.

His kindly maid heard about this, and she hurried down to the world to warn the people. She told them that while the goose was caged it could not breathe flames (that's why the Emperor's palace had not burned down). The people built a great cage, and they managed to invent a way to catch the goose and cage it as soon as it landed, and the world was saved.

One of the people then proposed that everybody should make and display red lanterns, so that the Emperor would think the world was burning and the goose had done its job. And that was the first Red Lantern Festival.

And after that, for some reason that we do not know, the Jade Emperor's envy of his happy people faded or disappeared, and he even learned to be kinder.



The fact that the children know the story before the drama starts does not spoil it for them, as the suspense of what happens is not what makes the drama exciting. The students will not just be acting the story out, but they will be experiencing and exploring the story as the people in it, and this knowledge gives them a sense of being in control of the drama, both in-role and out-of-role. They will be exploring particular moments from the story as exciting and challenging problems to be solved.

* **(Optional)** Depending on time, and how engrossed the children were in the story, you may want to use a story-retelling activity to make sure they understand and remember the legend. (You might also - or instead - do this at the beginning of a new lesson – before Steps 3 and 8). One good one is called *Doughnuts*: Pair the children up, **A** and **B**. Get all the **As** into a circle facing outwards, with the **Bs** in another circle outside them, each facing inwards opposite their partner. On a signal get all the **As** to start telling the story, as fully as they can. After about 20-30 seconds, freeze and get the **Bs** to take over the story at the exact point **A** left off. Change again once or twice if you need, to let most finish the story. Then ask each **B** to take a step to the left, so they are facing a new partner. Repeat the activity – this time speeding it up so they must finish twice as quickly! If you repeat it as a memory jog to begin a later lesson, as we suggest, you can use further variations, like getting them to tell the story without words – just gestures and sounds - or like a pair of old gossips... or whatever you or they can think of!

Step Two: Introducing the context – activities to build belief

* Bring the students back together to the ‘talk-chair’ and ask them if the story makes them want to ask any questions, about bits of the story that we have not heard. Accept their ideas and prompt where necessary, for them to realise how many important things we do not know about the story, how many mysteries are left.



If the students are not used to doing this kind of drama, now is also the time to explain that we are going to bring the story to life through drama, in order to find some answers to those mysteries, and all of them, including you the teacher, will be taking part as the people in that story. Mostly, they will be playing the people in the town, but they will have the chance to change roles more than once to become different people in the story.

* Explain that as the legend takes place in the olden days, when cars had not been invented, there were no computer and mobiles, nor even metal machines and tools, we must imagine what life was like for people in those days. Hold a brief discussion about what life would have

been like in a village or town, and the kinds of activities and jobs that people would be doing on a normal day. (Again, some pictures could be useful as prompts).



Let the students lead the discussion, building their common picture of life in the olden days by sharing their knowledge, rather than you telling them, though you may need to ask probing questions to keep them realistic ('Would they have had electricity in those days, do you think?'). You can decide how Chinese or otherwise the town is - whether the students will know enough about China to make it more interesting and exotic, or whether it would just be distracting and slow the action down.

- * Divide the students into groups of between 4 and 6. On drawing paper, get each group to draw a picture of the traditional town as they imagine it; put some people in it doing things, and label who they are.

- * Next, get them to imagine that each group is a typical family in the town, with three generations. They can choose who plays which part: at least one adult, one older adult and one child (but not a baby) in each group. Ask them to decide what the adults' jobs would be, and what each of them might be doing on a typical day.

- * Get the groups on their feet, each with some space, and get them to create a freeze-frame (a three-dimensional photograph) of the family going about their business on a normal day, that can then be brought to life for us to understand what is going on. Give them about three minutes to decide what would make a really interesting picture and arrange themselves as freeze-frames ready to come to life. Next, in turn go around the groups, asking each to make their freeze-frame, and hold it long enough for the other groups to discuss what that family might be doing; then, on a signal, bring the freeze-frame to life for no more than twenty seconds. There may be a little discussion after each frame about what is happening.

- * Next, ask the whole class to use their family freeze-frames as a basis, to make a whole-group picture of the town on that normal day. This time, stress that it will be a very happy scene. The harvest has been plentiful and everybody is cheerful and busy. Some people may stay doing exactly what they were doing, while others would probably be doing things with people from other families. Make it a condition that at least one member of each family must be doing something with a different person or group. If your class is not used to working actively in groups and as a whole class, you may need to direct the traffic a little here, to keep it focused. When they are ready, get them to start with a freeze, on a signal bring the town to life all together, let the activity go on for no more than thirty seconds, then freeze it again. Tell the students to remember exactly what they were doing, because they will be going back there later.

- * Get the students back to the talk-chair for a brief reflection, to let them talk about the scene, and all the many reasons they were demonstrating that the townspeople were happy.

Prompt, if you need to, beyond the given fact that the harvest had been good, to elicit and explore the concepts of sociability and working together, friendships, family and teamwork.



This would be a good place to leave the drama until next lesson, because the next step calls for a change of location and a role-change.

Step Three: Into the story – role-change and pairs role-play

(If you are starting a new lesson particularly if there has been a day or more break, it may be necessary to recapitulate the original story, by using a re-telling activity – *Doughnuts* would be very good here – See Step 1).

* Following Step Two, explain that the drama will be changing *Where* it is happening, to a very different place, to find out what life was like in the Emperor's palace. Get the children into pairs, and ask each pair to take one chair, and 'find their own space' (see *advice* below). Explain that one of them is going to be playing the Jade Emperor, and the other the Emperor's Maidservant. They can choose who plays which role.



* In the traditional story it is the Emperor's Maid, and there is something both traditional and affirming about the humble low-status girl defying and outwitting the old male tyrant. However, if you prefer, the servant could be just a servant, either male or female.

* It is a common instruction in drama for the students to 'Find your own space', but may need explaining the first time, with you helping them or even practising it. *This means that you (or your group) must find a place to work as far as possible from all the other students (or groups) – using the whole open area available. This is because you will be all be working at the same time, by yourself (your group), imagining there is nobody else, and you do not want either to be disturbed, or to distract anybody else.*

* If you have an odd number of students when you are doing a pairs exercise, you have the choice of yourself working with the odd person out, or of making one group of three, with two doubling up in one role. Here that would obviously have to be the Maidservant (there could only be one Emperor), but for this scene the first option is much better dramatically – and would also show the children that you are comfortable stepping into the drama yourself, as you will be doing later. Let the student choose which role they want to take.

Explain that the scene is set with the Emperor looking out of his window at the people in the town far below. His eyesight is not very good, so the Maidservant is describing what is happening in detail. What he is looking at is the exact scene of the happy people going about

their business as they were in Step Two. The Maidservant should try to make the Emperor happy by describing how good everything is down there – everything she remembers, and she can also invent new things that are happening. The lonely Emperor will be hard to please, and he will argue with everything she says, and get sadder and angrier. The maid must stay polite, of course, and keep trying.

All the pairs will start the scene simultaneously, ignoring all the other pairs, with the Emperor seated, looking out of the imaginary window, and calling for his Maidservant to come, and then asking her to help him see the town below. When he calls, she must be deeply respectful and at least bow deeply. When the students are ready: *Three-Two-One-Go!*



If the children are very young and inexperienced, they might find this step difficult. An easier alternative would be for them all together to be servants on a balcony, with each one telling the Emperor (you as Teacher-in-Role) things they can see, and that just make you angrier. This does have the disadvantage for later (Steps Five and Ten) of making less clear the special relationship of the Maidservant to the Emperor.

Let the scene run for two or three minutes, until the Emperor(s) are getting very angry, and then interrupt with a signal and FREEZE! When everyone is silent, narrate:

Whatever the Maidservant tried just made the Emperor angrier, until he cried out in a voice of thunder: [Everyone, repeat after me the Emperor's words]

I HATE THESE PEOPLE! [Chorus] I KNOW WHAT TO DO! [Chorus] I WILL SEND MY MAGIC GOOSE TO BURN THE TOWN [Chorus] AND THEY WILL DIE! [Chorus]

But the Maidservant was so shocked that she decided that she would risk the Emperor's wrath and go down to the town to warn the people, while the Emperor was calling his guards to set loose the Magic Goose.

Cut the drama immediately and bring the pairs together to the talk-chair.

Step Four: Imagining the Magic Goose - Energy change and movement exercise



This step really depends on having a large amount of clear space for the children to move around in. If this is limited, you will have to tailor the step to the space you have, or just get the students sitting or lying in their own space, with their eyes shut, while you narrate the story as vividly as you can, and they imagine it.

* Ask the students to imagine and discuss what the Magic Goose looked like, what it could do, where it was kept.

Get the students on their feet again, in their own space by themselves this time, and tell them that they will be moving around, but whatever happens, they must ignore and avoid everybody else, imagine that they are all alone. Ask them to shut their eyes, and at first crouching on the spot: *to imagine and feel yourselves turning into the Magic Goose* (put on the Goose music, or a slow drumbeat), *unfurling your wings, feeling the feathers growing, feeling your strength and power – stretching your neck and getting ready to breathe out fire.*

Open your eyes and see only the town below you. Begin to beat your wings slowly, to the beat of the music/drum. Now crouch right down, then spring into the air, and let your powerful wings carry you out and slowly, slowly towards the town until you are hovering over it, your wings right over the houses... You glide down and land in the main square, and you take deep breaths, fanning the flames inside you, feeling the flames coming stronger and stronger, then when your flames are ready, they burst out in great billows of fire, blowing them out in every direction with the houses beginning to burn as you blow stronger and stronger... Now the town is alight and your job is done, so you spring back into the air... and fly slowly, slowly back to your home in the Palace... And you land and settle, and fold your wings, and you crouch back down and close your eyes.... You have done the Emperor's command and you can sleep.
[Music/drum off]

* **[Optional]** If the children are used to cooperative movement work (and there is plenty of space!), it is fun to get the whole class together to become a giant Magic Goose, with some children becoming each wing, some the tail, and the neck and the beak – you can play with lengths of material to help the effect, and practise seeing whether the whole composite beast can move and 'fly' when you put the music on.



If you have managed all of **Steps Three and Four**, this might be a good place to end the lesson, as the next steps take some time - but if you have had to curtail **Step Four**, move straight to **Step Five**.

Step Five: The town confronts the threat - class role-play with Teacher-in-Role (T-i-R)

* Bring the students back to the talk-chair, and start by reminding them that according to the story, the goose did not get to burn up the town, and the drama is going to explore what happened instead. Explain that they are now going back to become the people of the town again, and then stay in role (playing townspeople) for quite a while, and that you will be joining in the drama, first as a stranger, and then as the town Prefect. They will know when you are in each role and joining in, because you will be wearing/carrying *this* as the stranger [show them your Maidservant costume item or prop], and *this* as the Prefect [show them your Prefect costume item or prop]. The scene will start by picking up the story where *you* were earlier, depicting the normal happy life of the town. Today is not after all an ordinary

day, because the town is going to get a visit from a stranger. You are going to play the stranger, and as they (as the children in the class) can probably guess who the stranger is, because they know what went on in the Emperor's palace, but the townspeople would not, and they would have no idea of the danger ahead – so when they are playing the townspeople they will not know who the stranger is or why she has come to town.



If some of the children look confused or are very young and inexperienced, you may need to briefly stop to explain about what it means to play pretend characters, and the difference between 'you in real life and you as the people in the story'.

Get them into their positions to start the scene as before, then count them into it: *Three – Two – One – Go!*, then wait for long enough for them to get really engrossed in playing the villagers before you come in dressed as the Maidservant. Enter a little timidly at first, but looking urgent, and talk to one or two townspeople at first, then gather them together because you have a very important warning to give them. Tell them of the Emperor's terrible threat. Give them time to react, and build the tension, but then tell them (before they get mock – or genuinely – hysterical) that you may be able to help them save themselves. You know two things about the Goose:

- First, that the Goose responds to music – it is attracted and becomes quite hypnotised when it hears any rhythm, song or chant.
- Second, it cannot breathe fire when it is caged, so, if they can find a way to trap and cage it before it lands, they might be able to stop it burning up the town.

They do have a little bit of time, because the Goose flies very slowly. Lead a short discussion about what they might be able to do in that time, and then suggest that they should get back into their families to put their ideas together and see what they as a family might be able to do. Give the families time to get started in discussion, then interrupt to say you have to get back to the Emperor's palace before he finds out you have gone, so perhaps the families could take their ideas to the town Prefect, and he might help to organise them. Hurry off, wishing them luck.

* Cut the drama and bring the students back to the talk-chair.



If you have not used Teacher-in-Role before, it is very simple and the children enjoy and appreciate it, but there are a few things to remember:

- You don't need to "act", but just make your bearing, language register and gestures appropriate for the character;

- Make it very clear when you are in role and when you are yourself as the teacher. The Maid's and the Prefect's costume item will help here (don't forget to take it off and change your manner as soon as you step out of role!).
- Don't do all the talking – make it a conversation and avoid a monologue, even if you are giving a lot of information, as the Maid does;
- Avoid falling out of role and becoming just like a teacher: as the Maid, you are just a servant, and so you must sustain being very low status and polite; as the Prefect, you are important, but the townspeople will have the information and the expertise, and so your job is to help them to pool their ideas and organise their labours;
- You can usually deal better with any challenging behaviour from inside the role than by stopping the drama. So, if a few children, unused to seeing teacher in their play, start giggling, the Maid can be really sad and anxious that *'some of the townspeople don't seem to believe what I am saying - that your lives are in danger - and I'm risking my own palace job and possibly my life trying to help... Some townspeople surely believe me?'* That'll work!

Step Six: The townspeople prepare - in-role with T-i-R, music- and cage-making

* Narrate that when the families had said goodbye to the Maidservant, they went off to see the Prefect, to tell him or her what they have just heard, and to help them in some way to save the town and its people. Explain that you will now be taking the role of the Prefect, who of course does not know anything about the Maidservant or the Emperor or the threat of the Goose.

Decide together where the Prefect will be – perhaps seated at a desk or on a big chair - and how the townspeople will greet you respectfully and ceremoniously, even though they have desperate news to tell. With the children, decide exactly what the gesture of respect would be. This might even need a moment's rehearsal in advance of going back into role; if you are making it rather traditional, the townspeople might at least bow low and clasp their hands. When they are ready, get them in their families but as a group, gathering at the Town Hall, discussing as they wait what they are going to tell the Prefect. Count them into role and wait a moment or two; put your costume item on in full view, and immediately transform into the Prefect, sitting down graciously while your townspeople greet you. Question them and let them tell you what their news is.



* You can, if you like, play the role as someone who finds the villagers' story too hard to believe. This will mean that the children will have to work very hard to persuade you that such a wild and terrible tale could be true. The children will love this convention, and they will find no difficulty whatever in telling you exactly what you (in your Maidservant role) have just told them! The more confused or disbelieving you are, the better!

* During this role-play you will move from listening and accepting their ideas, to organising their song-making, which is much more of a typical teaching activity. Try not to drop out of role, but to stay as the Prefect, who is no expert at making chants and rhythm and music, but it is his job to organise the people, using their ideas.

Steer the conversation towards the townspeople telling you some of the ideas they have come up with. Make sure the Maid's information about the power of music comes up, as well as the cage. You will need to lead the discussion (using the students' ideas as much as possible) towards the decision that you will have to make a song or a chant to attract the goose, and then build a cage to catch it. First things first, the townspeople will make up a song and a chant to attract the Goose – which needs words as well as a tune, in case the goose, being magic, can understand human talk. If you are using instruments, you might find that there are a few musicians among the townspeople who are good at keeping a rhythm, and they can accompany the chant.

* When the song and music are ready, the townspeople must get straight into designing and building the cage for the goose. The main activity will be building the cage, which you will do using 'occupational mime' make believe.



* Occupational mime just means that the children pretend to do all the tasks as workers and teams – it does not mean that they can't speak. To keep the task serious and urgent, they do need to know they have to work hard and with precision, and you may have to model doing the tasks yourself, to show how strenuous or careful they have to be. *Let's cut this bamboo – here, you take this big knife...!*

* How much time and ideas they put into the design will partly depend on the age and sophistication of your class; with older children, designing the cage on paper or the whiteboard would be a valuable design activity. However, you might prefer to keep the dramatic tension high, certainly with younger students, by getting straight into the action.

When you know what the cage will look like and how it will work, call on the families to decide who is going to gather the materials – chop trees or bamboo, find or make rope, assemble the pieces, gather seeds or food or other things to attract the goose, and so on. Then (still as the Prefect) supervise the working parties until the cage is built or the trap is ready.

* Straight away when they have built the cage, move into a joint Prefect/Narrator role:
I think I can see something moving over there up in the sky... Maybe it's the Goose...Your eyes are better than mine... Yes it is!... Are we all ready to spring the trap?... It's getting bigger – can you see its great yellow beak? Let's start singing our song so it knows where to come...
And so on, narrating the goose arriving and falling into the trap, keeping the tension high and the townspeople singing and working flat out until it is finally caged. *We've done it!*

Step Seven: Reflection and discussion

* Cut the drama, bring the children back to the talk-chair, and discuss the scene they have just acted out, and the adventure the townspeople had. Lead the discussion in emphasising the great *teamwork*, both in ideas and action, and how well the townspeople had *co-operated*, each family with the other, to avert the disaster.

* This is now the time to broaden this discussion to real-life events. Get them to think about occasions when they work together with each other to solve big problems, then with their families and then when the whole country works together – how everybody had to work together just like this to beat the Covid-19 crisis.

* At the end of the discussion, remind them that only half the job has been done, and so the drama isn't over by any means. The Jade Emperor, still up in his palace, just as lonely and feeling mean, is expecting to see the town in flames! How can they deal with that? You may need to remind them of the original story, that this is where the lanterns come in.



This is another excellent place to finish the lesson, whether or not you have time and are intending to use Step Eight, which will take a lesson to itself, or go straight on to Step Nine, which picks up the second important theme of this drama: loneliness.

Step Eight (optional): Fooling the Emperor – Art and craft + choreography

(* Again, if you did break the drama at the end of the last step, and some days have passed since the last lesson, you might need to play *Doughnuts* or something to recapitulate the story – including their new story of how the villagers dealt with the threat.)

* If you have time and the materials, this would really enrich the drama and the broader learning. You will need lots of red and some yellow or gold paper or crepe paper, and the usual art materials to put them together, and either handles, or sticks or canes to hang them on so that they will not fall off. There are lots of instructions on the Internet as to how to make the lanterns, and most of the lesson will be taken up with making them, and ensuring they are all attached so they are movable. When they are secure enough to be held up and waved, work out with the children (carefully!) what patterns of movement might appear to the Emperor - far, far away – to be waving, flickering, jumping red and yellow flames. Add the music of the song or chant, so that there is a rhythm to what in effect has turned into a dance.

Step Nine: The Maidservant returns – class role-play with T-i-R

* Whether you are starting from the end of **Step Six** or **Step Seven**, begin with an open discussion, asking the children whether they thought that the Emperor would be happy, believing the Goose had done its job and destroyed the town. If you can, expand the discussion to real life, asking them to remember a time when (like everybody does) they had done something mean because they were angry or lonely. Did it make them better and happier, or even sadder and perhaps a bit guilty? Don't get moralistic, but instead leave the question as open as you can. Tell the students that in the drama they are going to find out

how the Emperor felt, and what happened next. Tell them that the town will get another visit from the Maidservant, then narrate the continuing story:

Back in the Jade Palace, The Maidservant was watching the “fire” with the Emperor, and at first she was sad and frightened, but quickly her young eyes could see what his old eyes could not, and she realised the fire was not real, and her warning had worked. The townspeople must have saved themselves from the goose. So, she felt very happy, but she looked at the Emperor, expecting to see him happy too, that his order had been carried out. He was not happy. He was now lonelier and would be more bored than ever, because he had himself destroyed the people he ruled, and had spent a lot of time watching. He seemed to be regretting it. He turned to her and to her surprise he asked her what he should do to make himself happy again. The Maidservant did not know what to answer, so she asked for some time to think. She decided to go down to the town, and ask the townspeople, because they were so clever - enough to have somehow saved themselves and then tricked the Emperor.

* The drama will start back in the town, where all the people were back going about their ordinary business again, and the Maidservant will return. This time she will be recognised. Start the scene just as before her first visit, with the families going about their business. Count the students into the scene again, put on your Maidservant costume, wait until they are playing naturally in role, and enter as before, greeting them and gathering them together. You do not know how they managed to defeat the goose, so find out from them, and again you can again enjoy the T-i-R privilege of the children telling you every detail of what as Prefect you had helped them to organise! Congratulate them on their very clever trick with the red lanterns. Then get serious, and confide that the Emperor was not happy after all, that - as he thought - his plan to destroy the town had succeeded; he was now more sad and lonely than ever, knowing he had been mean. He had even asked you, the lowly Maidservant, how to make him happy again. Remind them too, that sometime soon he would realise that the town had survived, and that he had been tricked, and that might make him angrier than ever. Ask the townspeople what she should tell him. Discuss with them how it was loneliness that made him unhappy and mean, and brainstorm what might make him happier and kinder. Perhaps the townspeople could think of something that they could do, too, to keep him that way. Let them come up with lots of ideas, then say that you must hurry back to the Palace, and, thanking them very much for their suggestions, leave them, saying ‘I’ll do what I can and I hope it works’.

* Cut the scene.

Step Ten: The Emperor relents – Pairs role-play.

* Straight away, get the children into the same pairs as for Step Three, and again one will be the Emperor and the other the Maidservant. If you think it won’t confuse the students, let them reverse the roles from Step Three.



Even if you used the simpler version of Step Three, with the multiple servants, the students should now be ready to do this scene in pairs.

Again, get each pair in their own space, and ready to start with the Emperor seated. He will summon the Maid, who will as before bow deeply, and open with the words: *'Now, tell me why I am not happy, and make me happy.'* (You might like to get all the Emperors to repeat these words). Tell the students that as before, the Emperor will be very hard to please and at first ready to argue with everything, but eventually the Maidservant will get through to him, and persuade him, using some of the arguments that the Townspeople had given her. Count them in to start the scene, all pairs simultaneously again.



You will have to decide judiciously when to cut the scene, because some will finish quickly while others are still deep in argument; earlier rather than later is usually better.

* Cut the scene, and get the children out of role, but to stay in their pairs. Ask them briefly to discuss the conversation that they have just had, in order to decide together which one of the Maidservant's suggestions was the most convincing, or had the biggest effect on the Emperor – which one single argument most convinced him. Then they can decide which of them will remember it best, to tell it to everybody.

* Straight away, get the children, still in their pairs, into a big circle, with yourself in the middle of it, with your Prefect costume ready. They are going to be the Townspeople again, for one [maybe] last time. Explain that the Maidservant had made a quick visit down to the town to tell one of the townspeople that they were safe, because the Emperor had taken their advice. In turn, one from each of the pairs is going to be that townspeople, and report back to the Prefect and everybody what the Maidservant had told them. Give the pairs a moment to remember what their most convincing argument was, and which of them is going to speak. Then explain that the Prefect will ask each of these pairs in turn: *'What did the Maidservant tell you?'* The townspeople will step one pace forward, tell the Prefect their line – loud enough for everybody to hear - then step back into line. This will be like a ceremony, and nobody will interrupt, but all will be listening for the best line, because that will be the best cure for the Emperor's loneliness.

Assume your Prefect's costume, and with real solemnity, conduct the ceremony, listening to each answer then moving straight on to the next, to hold the tension.

* Cut the ceremony, then back to the talk chair. Hold a discussion about all those ideas, and which ones they think would really work in the real world to help people deal with being lonely and bad-tempered.



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That may be the end of the drama, a low-key, thoughtful ending. However, it is also very likely that the children have generated a lot of ideas that, if you have time, could be turned into beautiful final celebrations:

Step Eleven might be up in the Emperor's Palace, or with him coming down into the town, joining in the Red Lantern Festival, and so on. You might even get to find yourself playing the reborn Emperor in *their* final scene!



And if you and the children have really enjoyed the drama and want another equally challenging, there is one all ready and waiting (unless the children have anticipated it in Step Eleven)!

Step Twelve

One very important aspect of the story has not been finalised: The Magic Goose is still stuck in its cage, ready to breathe fire and destroy the town as soon as it gets out, so:

What do we do with the Magic Goose?



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