

Jataka Tales: Layers of Meaning **from the** **Universal to the Personal**

Grade Level or Course Type:

English, Social Studies, adaptable for grades 6 through 10

Overview of the Lesson

Jataka Tales: Birth Stories of the Buddha are among the world's oldest collection of stories. Many, about endearing animals who misbehave – and then learn to behave better – are appealing to children throughout the world. In this lesson students compare an Aesop's fable to a *Jataka Tale* to see what they share in common. Students then learn about the Buddhist context of the tales, through which they deepen their appreciation of what makes a *Jataka Tale* unique. Finally, students approach a *Jataka Tale* through the meaning it held in the life of Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944), whose classic collection *Twenty Jataka Tales* is still in print. She was a Muslim who worked as a covert agent for the British in Occupied France. She died at Dachau in 1944. In all three activities, students gain insight into what makes stories important in our lives.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify stories by genre as fable, parable, folktale and fairy tale.
- Decipher the moral of a story.
- Understand Buddhist concepts (Ten Perfections, cycle of death and rebirth)
- Learn about the life and appreciate the artistry of Noor Inayat Khan.

Materials Needed

- This lesson and the handouts included with it. They include:

Handout 1. Life of Noor Inayat Khan with photos and scrapbook activity
Handout 2. *The Monkey and the Dolphin* credited to Aesop and genre definitions
Handout 3. The Patient Buffalo, a *Jataka Tale*
Handout 4. Background Information about Buddhism and the *Jataka Tales*
Handout 5. Two versions of the same *Jataka Tale*
Handout 6. Graphic Organizer (optional)

- Art supplies for illustrating stories and creating a scrapbook.
- Answer Keys at the end of this lesson.
- Optional but highly recommended, the film *Enemy of the Reich* about the life of Noor Inayat Khan produced by Unity Films, 2012.

<http://www.upf.tv/noorteachers>

Time

- Allow two class periods for each of the three activities. Each of these activities can be implemented independently of the others.

Procedures/Activities

Activity 1: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan

Introduce the life of Noor Inayat Khan through asking students to look at six photographs of herⁱ. These can be uploaded to a PowerPoint or projected from this (for the entire class to view.

Ask the following questions while students study the photographs. After each student's response ask, "What in the photographs makes you think so?"

Questions:

- Based on Noor Inayat Khan's appearance, including her dress and hairdos, when might she have lived?
- Where might she have lived?
- What roles and careers might she have led in her lifetime?
- Was she well-to-do or wanting? Or both at different times?
- In which photograph is she youngest and in which oldest? What might this say about the progression of her life?

Tell students that Noor Inayat Khan was a remarkable person who died during World War II and that they are going to find out about Noor's life.

- Distribute **Handout 1**: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan.

Students can read about Noor's life for homework. They should answer the questions that follow about her life in pairs during class time.

- Next complete Activity 1 by asking students to make a "scrapbook" of Noor's life.

Directions on Handout 1 read: Use the photographs to make a scrapbook of Noor's life. Make a timeline of key events, based on the reading. Study the photographs closely for what they reflect about Noor's character, life and probable age at the time. Then place them in the order in which you think they were taken, and write a caption for each one in "Noor's" handwriting. (If you wish you can add in other photographs about Noor or the times in which she lived and write captions for them as well.)

- Return to the opening activity. What did students accurately or inaccurately surmise about Noor based just on her photographs?
- Now that they have read about Noor, what most surprises students about the real Noor?
- Tell students that they are going to look at one of Noor's lasting achievements,

her collection *Twenty Jataka Tales* with illustrations by H. Willebeek Le Mair, still in print today.



Activity 2: Comparing a Fable by Aesop to a *Jataka Tale*

Introduction to the *Jataka Tales*: Animals in Literature

Ask the class to generate a list of their favorite animal characters in stories, including folktales, fairytales and books. Widen the sources to movies and TV if students cannot generate a long list of print sources. A list might include such animal figures as Babar the Elephant, Br'er Rabbit, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Peter Rabbit, Ferdinand the Bull, the monkey Curious George, the Lion King, Coyote, Donald Duck and many others.

- What are the sources for some of these stories? Were they all intended for children? With the class, discuss some examples such as Br'er Rabbit tales, eventually written down by Joel Chandler Harris, but told among enslaved Africans in America for generations. On the other hand, the story of *Babar the Elephant* was imagined and written by one author, Jean de Brunhoff.
- Why do you think animal stories are universally popular? Generate a list of possible answers from the class. For example, we can identify with certain aspects of particular species that we love, admire or fear. It might be easier to convey both positive and negative human characteristics when exemplified in animal form. Sometimes it is safer to tell a tale about animals than humans. In many traditional animal tales a weaker animal overcomes a powerful one by using his wits. Listening to such a tale would give hope to the downtrodden while masking their anger at powerful human beings (landlord, slave owner) because the tale is “only about animals.”
- Stress that humans have observed and depended upon animal life for sources of food, clothing and labor on six continents. Which animals appear in tales depends upon the human habitat.
- Tell students that they are going to study animal stories from the oldest and largest collection of animal stories in human history, *The Jataka Tales*, which originated in India beginning in the 3rd millennium, B.C.E. Before reading one of these, students will learn some techniques for analyzing an animal tale, which they can later compare to a *Jataka Tale*.

Explain that animal stories can take many forms, and review these definitions.

Explain that sometimes these definitions overlap to some extent.

- **Fairytale:** A story for children in which magical forces appear, such as wizards, fairies and goblins.
- **Folktale:** A story that was told orally among the folk, or common people.
- **Fable:** A story, often about animals, which is intended to teach a moral about right and wrong.
- **Parable:** A short story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson (usually used in reference to the New Testament of the Bible).

- **Animal Story:** A story for children, here meaning one that one author imagined and wrote.

Comparing Aesop's Fable to a Jataka Tale

- Distribute Handout 2: A Fable Credited to Aesop. Note that in the version given to students this Aesop's fable has no moral. Finding the moral of the story is the purpose of the exercise. Students can complete the handout at home, or in small groups in class. Either way, conclude the class with a whole group discussion. Ask the class to share answers, justify them and choose the best moral for the story. In the original, the moral is: *One falsehood leads to another.*
- Next distribute Handout 3: *The Patient Buffalo, a Jataka Tale.* Ask students to read through the tale as a *first reading*. Consider reading the story out loud to the class; have pairs of students read it out loud to one another.
- Then ask students to fill in the Graphic Organizer about the story, insofar as they are able with the information at hand.
- Now tell students, working in pairs, to fill in a Venn Diagram comparing the Aesop's fable to the *Jataka Tale*, based on this first reading.
- Distribute Handout 4: Background Information about Buddhism and the *Jataka Tales*. Tell students that they are going to learn more about *Jataka Tales* and their origins. After learning more they will reread the story and add to their Graphic Organizer in Handout 4. They can also use their textbooks to learn about Buddhism. On the Answer Key to Handout 4. (see below) additional insights students may gain are listed in red.
- In addition, discuss with students which one of the Ten Perfections this tale best exemplifies. What others may also apply and why?

Extensions:

- Read more *Jataka Tales* and fill in additional Graphic Organizers for each one. In each tale, which of the Ten Perfections is exemplified?
- Assign each student to illustrate one *Jataka Tale*.

Debriefing

- Open for debate and discussion:
 - Are the *Jataka Tales* more like or more unlike *Aesop's Fables* and why?
 - To appreciate and learn from a *Jataka Tale*, is it necessary to understand them as Buddhist texts? Why or why not?

- Drawing on what you have learned about Noor Inayat Khan and her religious background, why do you think she included the Buddhist context for her collection of the stories?

Activity 3: Noor Inayat Khan’s Life and *The Monkey-bridge, A Jataka Tale*

Noor Inayat Khan collected twenty *Jataka* stories for her collection, still in print today (*Twenty Jataka Tales*). She acknowledges drawing on two collections for her own, one translated to English from Pali, their original language, and a second translated to English from Sanskrit (another sacred language of India).

This part of the lesson addresses two essential questions:

- Why did she select *The Monkey-Bridge* for her collection; what meaning did it have in her own life?
- What stands out about Noor’s literary style as she re-worked these tales for children?
- Note that if you did not implement Activity 1, assign the reading about Noor’s life in Handout 1.

Distribute Handout 5. *The Monkey-Bridge*

- Students will read all of Ellen C. Babbitt’s version of “How the Monkey Saved His Troop” and excerpts from Noor’s version entitled “The Monkey-bridge” in order to compare them. Noor’s version is more sophisticated and literary. Her sentences are longer and more onomatopoeic. She uses simile and description, whereas Babbitt tell the story as directly as possible.
- Like the monkey Chief, Noor is ready to sacrifice her own life when she joins the British SOE for the benefit of others in the fight to end Nazi occupation of Europe.
- Consider sharing this episode, recounted by Noor’s biographer Shrabani Basu. Before British cryptographer Leo Marks interviewed Noor to see if she was a suitable candidate for the SOE “... he read each of the twenty stories from the *Jataka Tales* twice and knew one of them by heart. It was a story about a monkey chief who led 80,000 monkeys to their freedom by sacrificing himself and offering his body as a bridge.”ⁱⁱ How do you think this tale gave Marks insight into Noor’s commitment to her work as SOE agent?

Answer Keys

Handout 1: Noor’s Life

- What were the values of Noor’s father, Hazrat Inayat Khan? (He was a pacifist, he sought for commonalities among people of different faiths, he valued all human life.)

- To how many countries did Noor's travels take her? List them. (England, Russia, France, India, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Switzerland)
- What subjects did Noor study in school? (Music, child psychology)
- In Noor's stories for children, what topics did she draw on? In what ways did they express her values? (She drew from many cultures, as did her father in his work and faith. These included French, Indian, and Norse.)
- What do you think motivated Noor to become a secret agent for the SOE? In what ways was she supporting her father's values? In what ways contradicting them? (Hatred and persecution of other religions, like the Nazi persecution of the Jews, would have been abhorrent to her father. On the other hand, he was a pacifist, whereas his daughter entered the arena of war.)
- What do you think drew Noor to the Jataka tales? (It is hard to know. They were from a different religious tradition than hers, but well-known throughout her native India. Her father was interested in finding commonalities among religions. Noor included a reference to Buddha in her introduction to the tales. They are also similar to other tales she wrote that featured the natural world.)
- For what is Noor most remembered today? (Both the *Jataka Tales* and her work in the Resistance are remembered. She is being newly honored for her work in the Resistance.)

Answer Key for Handout 2.

Graphic Organizer for Aesop's fable, *The Monkey and the Dolphin*

A. Animal(s) Title Author	B. Physical features	C. Personality traits in tale	D. Story Genre	E. Story Origins	Moral of the Story
The Monkey and the Dolphin Aesop	Monkey: human- like but less than human (smaller brain, less agile limbs) Dolphin: swims; intelligent	Monkey: devious and manipulative. Dolphin: honest, wise	Fable because it is short, to the point, and has one clear moral about good and bad behavior.	Ancient Greece; Athens is referred to. Aesop is believed to be the author of the story.	Do not lie: "One falsehood leads to another."

Answer Key For Handout 3
Graphic Organizer for *The Patient Buffalo*

Additional insights, after reading Handout 3. in red.

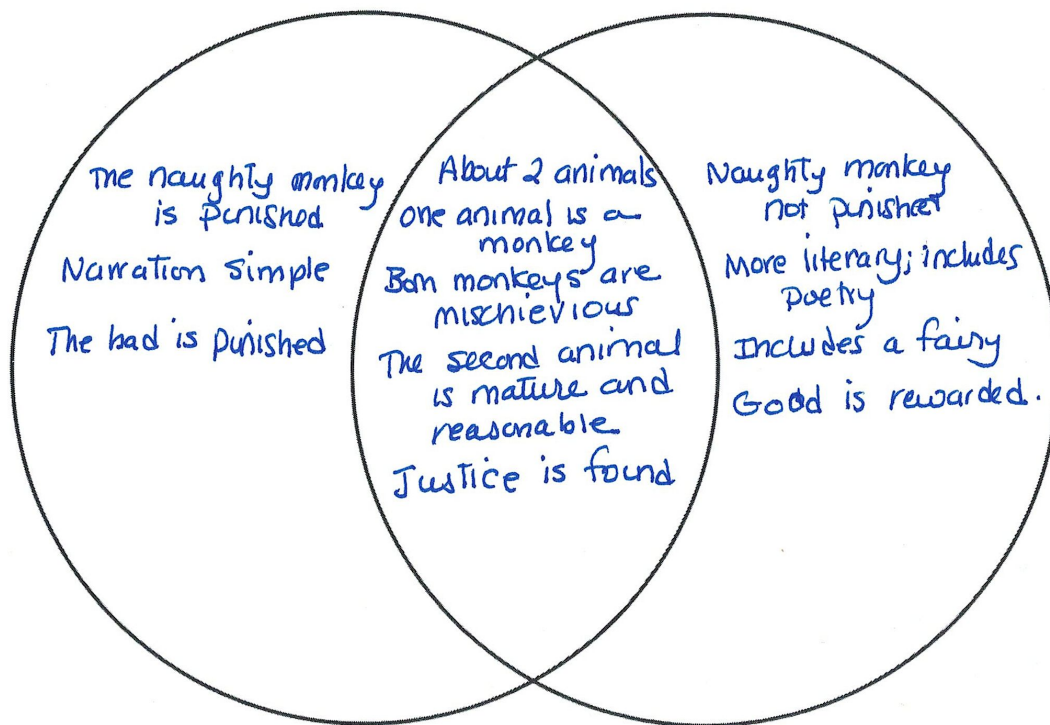
A. Animal(s) Title Author	B. Physical features	C. Personality traits	D. Story Genre	E. Story Origins	Moral/s of the Story
Buffalo and Monkey “The Patient Buffalo” Noor Inayat Khan, <i>Twenty Jataka Tales</i>	Buffalo: giant, horns. Monkey: grasping hands, small.	Buffalo: patient, not vengeful. Refuses to harm monkey. Monkey: Annoying, persistent. Finds many ways to annoy the buffalo. The buffalo is an incarnation of the Buddha in an earlier life. This is the reason he behaves as an example to us.	Fable: short with a moral message. Parable: because of spiritual message Poetry is part of the original <i>Jataka</i> texts.	<i>Jataka Tales</i> come from India. An early Buddhist text written in Pali.	Patience will be rewarded. Do not be the cause of suffering. The Buddha tried to alleviate human suffering, thus as the Buffalo he would not wish to cause suffering. Reverence for all animals since the Buddha may have had a former life in any life form.

Answer Key : Venn Diagram

The Monkey and the Dolphin

Both

The Patient Buffalo



Answer Key Handout 5

Questions to Answer:

- How does the king get to taste mangoes for the first time? (He stood downstream from the mango tree, where he saw fishermen catch them in nets.)
- Why does the king decide to kill the monkeys and eat their flesh? (The monkeys, climbing high in the trees, ate mangoes before they fell to the ground. They were the competition.)
- How does the Chief of the Monkeys save his troop? (He uses his body to form a bridge, tree to tree, so that his troop can escape.)
- Why does the King change his mind about killing the Monkeys? What does he do instead? (The King is moved by the Chief's sacrifice for his troops and spares him.)
- Buddha led a previous life as either the Chief of the Monkeys or the King. Which one do you think he is? (Opinions may vary here. At this point, let students explain their reasoning.)
- Which of the Ten Perfections do you think is best exemplified by this story? (Generosity is a good answer, but answers may vary.)

Comparing two version of the same tale:

1. How do the opening scenes of the tales vary? Which version helps you to imagine the scene in the great river? Which version makes the fruit seem more enticing? (Noor Inayat Khan's version is much more descriptive. Her sentences flow, echoing the cadence of the river's downward movement. The fruit is not named at the start of her tale, making it more mysterious. Comparing the mango to peaches may be accurate, but it does not capture Noor's magic: The "sweet winds of the mountain" gave it "the sweetness of honey." Only poetic language can convey the pleasure of this fruit.)

2. In which version do you feel the Monkey Chief most loves his troops? In which version do his feats seem more daring and amazing? (In Babbitt's version the monkeys were "comforted," while in Noor's version "consoled." These two words are synonyms, but "console" reaches deeper into the depths of suffering. Babbitt identifies what the Chief does, while Noor makes us understand what he feels and uses metaphor to help us imagine what he does.)

3. Do the stories end in the same way? Although the Monkey Chief died in Noor's version, how does he nonetheless still live? Do you hold the same opinion or a different opinion about who the Buddha embodied in the story? (The stories end very differently. Students should be encouraged to search other versions for confirmation of which one is more authentic. The fact that in Noor's version the King makes the monkey Chief a temple makes it clear that the Chief embodies a former life of the Buddha, whom we remember in worship.)

4. Reflect on the special meaning of this story for Noor, now that you know how her own life ended. Several tales in Noor's collection are also about sacrificing the self to relieve the suffering of others. (This is essentially what she did when she joined the SOE and the liberation of France from the Nazis.)

Extensions

- Ask class members to read other animal stories from around the world, to fill in Handout 6 in order to analyze it and to illustrate the tale for children.
- Research storytelling traditions in Southeast Asia, such as puppetry, plays, comics, etc., and retell one of the tales in this lesson in that art form.
- Research the lives of other women who fought in the French Resistance or for the British intelligence services.

Assessment

Ask students to turn in work for any or all of the following assignments that appear in the handouts. Compare their work to the Answer Keys at the end of this lesson.

- Questions on Noor's life
- Scrapbook of Noor's life

- Graphic Organizers for *The Monkey and the Dolphin* and *The Patient Buffalo*, and Venn Diagram for both stories
- Questions for *How the Monkey Saved His Troop*

Assess students on how well they worked as partners or team members on any of this work.

Assign one of the Extension activities for work that can help you assess how well they can apply what they learned in this lesson.

Standards

Common Core State Standards <http://www.corestandards.org>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

National Council for the Social Studies Framework for Teaching, Learning and Assessment <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>

Theme 9 Global Connections

Middle Grades: Global connections may make cultures more alike or increase their sense of distinctiveness. Investigate and explain the ways in which aspects of culture, such as language, beliefs and traditions, may facilitate understanding or lead to misunderstandings between cultures.

National Center for History in the Schools <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards>

- Standard 1: The student thinks chronologically and can interpret data presented in timelines and create timelines.

Resources

Basu, Shrabani, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan*. New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 2007.

Enemy of the Reich, a film about Noor Inayat Khan from Unity Films. Available from PBS at <http://www.pbs.org/program/enemy-reich/>

Helm, Sarah, *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII*. New York: Anchor Books, 2007.

Khan, Noor Inayat, *Twenty Jataka Tales*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1985.

Lawson, Alistair, “Noor Inayat Khan: Statue of British-Indian Agent is Unveiled” November 8, 2012. BBC News <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20241322>

Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust, at <http://www.noormemorial.org/noor.php>

Ortakales, Denise, *History Through Literature: Jataka Tales* at <http://orias.berkeley.edu/2009/jataka.htm>

Shaw, Sarah, *The Jatakas: Birth Stories of the Bodhisatta*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

ⁱ Photographs found on the Website The Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan in Honored Memory of Noorunnissa Inayat-Khan <http://sufimovementusnoorunnissa.blogspot.com>

ⁱⁱ Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* (New Lebanon, New York: Omega Publications), 93.

Handout 1: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944)ⁱⁱ



Noor Inayat Khan was born in 1914 in Russia. Her father Hazrat Inayat Khan was an Indian with illustrious roots; he was a descendant of the Muslim ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan (1750-1799). Hazrat established the Sufi Order of the West in 1914 and traveled widely as both a missionary and classically-trained master of Indian music. In music as in religion, he sought to find commonalities as well as to blend the traditions of “East” and “West.” Hazrat attracted a well-educated, wealthy and literary audience throughout Europe. On one of his trips to the United States he met and later married Ora Ray Baker, Noor’s mother. She became a Muslim and took the name Amina Begum.

Noor spent her earliest years in London with her mother, father and siblings. In 1920, the family moved to France where they settled in a beautiful mansion funded by the Sufis, *Fazil Manzil*, just outside of Paris. Seven years later Hazrat died while on a trip to India. The first time that Noor visited India was to attend his funeral. With the help of friends and the Sufi Order of the West, the family was able to retain their house in Paris. After her father died, Noor remained dedicated to the well-being of her mother, sister and two brothers.

Noor was a sensitive young woman with artistic talents. Music was a constant at *Fazil Manzil* and Noor learned to play harp and piano. In 1931 she studied with the famed musician Nadia Boulanger (1877-1979) at the École Normale de Musique. There she met her Jewish fiancée, remembered only as “Goldberg.” They remained engaged for six years, but Noor finally broke off the relationship. Noor left the conservatory of music to study child psychology at the Sorbonne and gained her diploma in 1938.

As an accomplished young woman, Noor traveled widely, welcomed among the European Sufis who were followers of her father. She traveled to Spain (where she met cellist Pablo Casals), to the Netherlands where she stayed with Baron and Baroness van Tuyll, and traveled throughout Italy, France and Switzerland with her brother Vilayet.

Noor also built a reputation as a children's author. In 1938 she published a children's page in every Sunday edition of the newspaper *Le Figaro*. Noor's biographer Shrabani Basu writes that, "Her stories – often about magical creatures and nature – were greatly appreciated by the paper. Noor had an endearing style that immediately drew in young readers."ⁱⁱⁱ Her stories were also being broadcast on the Children's Hour of Radio Paris, which, in the days before television, drew large audiences. For her broadcasts Noor drew inspiration from historical sources, such as the wise rule of French Emperor Charlemagne, the Mughal Emperor Akbar and from Indian, Nordic and French folklore.

Noor's Dutch friend the Baronness van Tuyll worked as children's book illustrator under the penname Henriette Willebeek Le Mair (1899-1966). The Baroness had visited Arabia with her mother as a child, converted to Islam and become an adherent of Noor's father. She suggested to Noor that Noor select and retell a group of *Jataka Tales* for a children's edition, which the Baroness would illustrate. *Jataka Tales*, which are Buddhist in origin, were well-known throughout India. Noor's *Twenty Jataka Tales* was published in 1939 with illustrations by Henriette Willebeek Le Mair. It is still in print today.

We will never know what Noor's future might have been had Hitler not invaded France in 1940. The Nazi regime was out to destroy everything that Noor's father stood for: non-violence, mutual respect among people of different faiths and the value of all human life. The bombing of civilians in France incensed Noor and all of her family. Noor, her mother and all of her siblings except Hidayat fled to London. There brother Vilayat joined the Royal Navy.

Noor joined the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) as "Nora" Inayat Khan. She was among the first group of women that were trained in radio transmission. As such she was extremely valuable to the SOE, the secret or "Special Operations Executive." The F section of the SOE needed secret agents who would be dropped by plane into occupied France. There they would aid the French Resistance. Radio transmitters were key to the operation, as all communication to and from England was sent in code via radio. They recruited agents who could blend seamlessly into civilian life in France, and fluency in French was a must. Agents needed skill in radio transmission as well as code. Noor met the first two requirements, and she could learn code. Noor joined the SOE despite being warned that radio transmitters had only a one in four chance of survival in Occupied France.

Noor was dropped into France in mid-June of 1943, the first female undercover radio operator in France. She transmitted radio messages under the name "Madeleine." Her identity as a supposed civilian of France was "Jeanne Marie Renier." Every time she found a safe haven from which to set up her radio, she was at risk for being caught. A mere three months later, she was arrested by the Gestapo. Already the Prosper network, for which she worked, had been infiltrated by a double agent who worked for the Nazis. Determined to escape from prison against all odds, she succeeded but was recaptured. Although tortured, she betrayed no one. She was executed at Dachau concentration camp on September 13, 1944. Memorials to her memory have been erected near her homes in

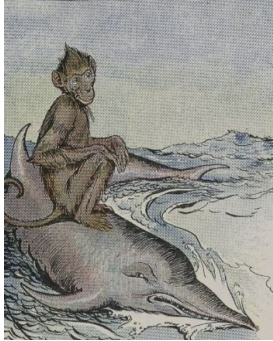
both France and England. She was posthumously awarded the British George Cross and the French Croix de Guerre.

Questions:

- What were the values of Noor's father, Hazrat Inayat Khan?
- To how many countries did Noor's travels take her? List them.
- What subjects did Noor study in school?
- In Noor's stories for children, what topics did she draw on? In what ways did they express her values?
- What do you think motivated Noor to become a secret agent for the SOE? In what ways was she supporting her father's values? In what ways contradicting them?
- What do you think drew Noor to the Jataka tales as stories that children could appreciate?
- For what is Noor most remembered today?

Directions: Use the photographs below to make a scrapbook of Noor's life. Make a timeline of key events, based on the reading. Study the photographs closely for what they reflect about Noor's character, life and probable age at the time. Then place them in the order in which you think they were taken, and write a caption for each one in "Noor's" handwriting. (If you wish, you can add in other photographs about Noor or the times in which she lived and write captions for them as well.)



Handout 1. A Fable Credited to Aesop (d. 564 B.C.E.)**THE MONKEY AND THE DOLPHINⁱⁱ**

It happened once upon a time that a certain Greek ship bound for Athens was wrecked off the coast close to Piraeus, the port of Athens. Had it not been for the Dolphins, who at that time were very friendly toward mankind and especially toward Athenians, all would have perished. But the Dolphins took the shipwrecked people on their backs and swam with them to shore.

Now it was the custom among the Greeks to take their pet monkeys and dogs with them whenever they went on a voyage. So when one of the Dolphins saw a Monkey struggling in the water, he thought it was a man, and made the Monkey climb up on his back. Then off he swam with him toward the shore.

The Monkey sat up, grave and dignified, on the Dolphin's back.

"You are a citizen of illustrious Athens, are you not?" asked the Dolphin politely.

"Yes," answered the Monkey, proudly. "My family is one of the noblest in the city."

"Indeed," said the Dolphin. "Then of course you often visit Piraeus [the harbor of Athens]."

"Yes, yes," replied the Monkey. "Indeed, I do. I am with him constantly. Piraeus is my very best friend."

This answer took the Dolphin by surprise, and, turning his head, he now saw what it was he was carrying. Without more ado, he dived and left the foolish Monkey to take care of himself, while he swam off in search of some human beings to save.

Graphic Organizer for *The Monkey and the Dolphin*

Questions:

Answering these questions will help you to fill in your chart.

1. Where is this story taking place? What and where is “Piraeus”?
2. If the Dolphins, friends of Athens, had not rescued the people on the shipwrecked boat, what would have happened to them?
3. Why were monkeys on this boat?
4. Why did the Dolphin mistake the Monkey for a man?
5. What is the Monkey’s first lie?
6. What is Monkey’s second lie?
7. How does the Dolphin know that the Monkey is lying?
8. What happened to Monkey in the end? Do you think he survived; why or why not?
9. For what bad behavior was Monkey punished?
10. Can you write a once-sentence moral for the end of the story?

A. Animal(s) Title Author	B. Physical features	C. Personality traits	D. Story Genre	E. Story Origins	Moral of the Story

Definitions:

- *Note that some stories may share characteristics of different types of tales.
- **Fairytale:** A story for children in which magical forces appear, such as wizards, fairies and goblins.
- **Folktale:** A story that was told orally among the folk, or common people.
- **Fable:** A story, often about animals, which is intended to teach a moral about right and wrong.
- **Parable:** A short story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson (usually used in reference to the New Testament of the Bible).
- **Animal Story:** A story for children, here meaning one that one author imagined and wrote.

Handout 3: The Patient Buffalo, a *Jataka Tale*

The Patient Buffalo, a *Jataka Tale* ⁱⁱ

told by Noor Inyat Khan



A giant-like buffalo with mighty horns lay under a tree asleep. Two mischievous eyes peeped through the branches, and a little monkey said: “I know a good old buffalo, who’s sleeping ‘neath the tree. But I am not afraid of him, nor’s he afraid of me.”

And he leaped from the branch onto the buffalo’s back. The buffalo opened his eyes, and seeing the monkey dancing on his hip, he closed them again, as if only a butterfly were on his back. The rascal monkey tried another trick. Jumping on the buffalo’s head between his two large horns, he held the ends and swung, as on a tree. But Buffalo did not even wink. “What can I do to make my good friend angry?” he thought. And while buffalo was eating in the field, he trampled on the grass wherever he wished to graze. And the buffalo merely walked away.

Another day the mischievous monkey took a stick and knocked the buffalo’s ears with it; then while he was taking a walk he sat on his back like a hero, holding the stick in his hand. And to all of this the buffalo made never a murmur, though his horns were strong and mighty.

But one day, while the monkey sat on his back, a fairy appeared. “A great being you are, O buffalo,” she said, “but little do you know your strength. Your horns can break down trees, and your feet could crush rocks. Lions and tigers fear to approach you. Your strength and beauty are known to the whole world, and yet you walk about with a foolish monkey on your back. One blow of your horns would pierce him, and a stroke of your foot would crush him. Why do you not throw him to the ground and finish with this play?”

“This monkey is small,” replied the buffalo, “and Nature has not given him much brain. Why then should I punish him? Moreover, why should I make him suffer in order that I may be happy?” At this the fairy smiled, and with her magic wand she drove the monkey

away. And she gave the great buffalo a charm by which no one could cause him to suffer again, and he then lived happy ever after.

Graphic Organizer for *The Patient Buffalo*

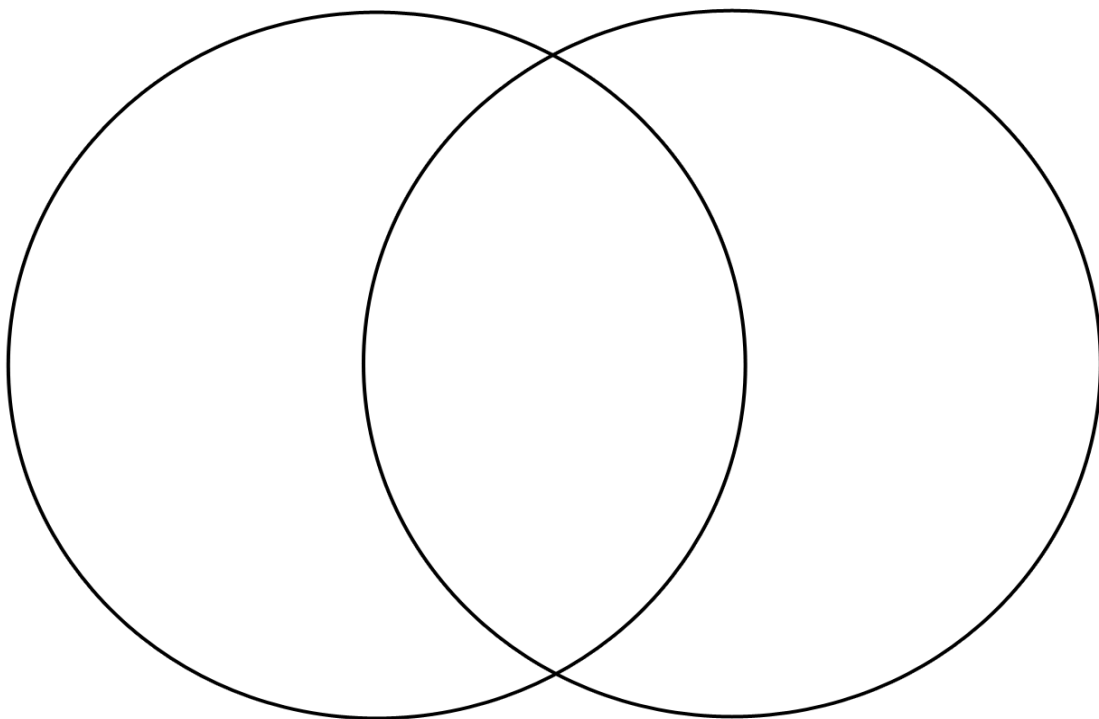
Questions: Directions:

A. Animal(s) Title Author	B. Physical features	C. Personality traits	D. Story Genre	E. Story Origins	Moral of the Story

The Monkey and the Dolphin

Both

The Patient Buffalo



Handout 4: Background Information about Buddhism and the Jataka Tales

The Jataka Tales



Birth Stories of the Buddhaⁱⁱ

The Jataka Tales are comprised of 547 stories written in Pali, the language of the earliest Buddhist texts. They were collected over many centuries, beginning in the early fifth century B.C.E. As such, they are both the oldest and largest collection of stories in the worldⁱⁱ. The stories depict the previous lives of the Buddha when he was on the path to enlightenment as a bodhisattva (bodhisatta in Pali), but not yet the Enlightened One. Jataka Tales are thus known as the Buddha's "birth stories." Each story embodies a lesson the Buddha learned in a previous life, which is conveyed to us through his recounting of it. According to Buddhist tradition, once Buddha attained Nirvana, or enlightenment, he was freed from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

The historical Buddha, or Siddhartha Guatama, was born in about 563 B.C.E. in India. According to the accounts we have, Guatama led a princely and sheltered life until he reached early manhood. Leaving his family's realm he went out into the world only to discover that humankind faced poverty, disease, old age and death. It was his quest to end the human suffering he encountered. First, he renounced his privileged life for that of a monk. After wandering, fasting and meditating, he sat for 49 days under a tree, legs crossed and eyes cast down. According to Buddhist tradition, on the 49th day he reached enlightenment. He understood the causes of human suffering and the means to transcend it. In his first sermon known as the "Turning of the Wheel of the Law," he conveyed the Four Noble Truths: 1) That all life is consumed by suffering, 2) that desire is the cause of suffering, 3) that to end suffering one must renounce desire and 4) that to renounce desire one must lead a disciplined life and follow the Eightfold Path of right belief, right resolve, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right contemplation and right meditation.ⁱⁱ Only then can we be released from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth and reach Nirvana, a state of selfless being.

For many Buddhists the tales retain religious significance. While Buddhism developed in India, it grew deeper roots in the countries to which it spread in Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, as well as in China and Japan. But in India,

where today the majority of believers are Hindu and the minority Muslim, children everywhere are familiar with the Jataka Tales as retold in songs, by storytellers, in books, comics and puppet shows. The universal values expressed through the tales transcend their Buddhist context. Sarah Shaw writes that elements of Jataka Tales entered Persian stories, and, “In Europe, subsequent retellings or variants of the tales can be found in the works of Boccaccio, Poggio, La Fontaine, Chaucer and Shakespeare.”ⁱⁱ One reason for their appeal is that many of the stories are short and about animals including monkeys, lions, goats, elephants and more.

In the original version each tale starts in the present, when the Enlightened One is prompted to tell a story about a previous life. Next comes the story itself, a tale in which the Buddha is usually a character, human or animal. In the concluding part of the story, set once again in the present, the Buddha reveals who he was in the tale just told.

In each tale or life, the bodhisattva (the Buddha-to-be) exemplifies one or more of the Ten Perfections: generosity, moral restraint, renunciation, wisdom, effort, forbearance or patience, truthfulness, resolve, loving kindness, serenity.

In most English translations of Jataka Tales for children, only the central tale of each story is told, divorcing it from its Buddhist context. Noor Inayat Khan’s *Twenty Jataka Tales* differs in this way from other anthologies. She frames all 20 tales by words spoken by the Buddha before each story is recounted:

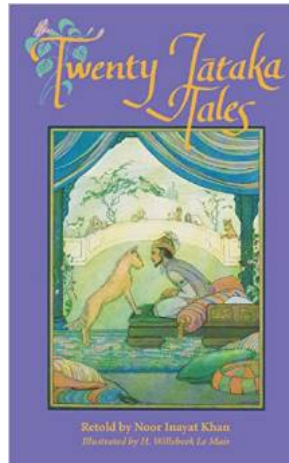
And while the Buddha sat, and all around him listened, these are the stories he told. “My children,” he said, “I have not come now among you as your Buddha for the first time; I have come many times before; sometimes as a child among the little children, sometimes among the animals as one of their kind, loving them as I love you now; sometimes in Nature, among the flowers, I traced a way for you and you knew it not.

“Thus your Buddha came once as a monkey amid the monkeys, as a deer amid the deer, and he was their chief and their guide.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Another element of the original versions that Noor honors is the inclusion of poetry.

Handout 5: Two Versions of the Same Jataka Tale Compared

“How the Monkey Saved His Troop” Re-Told by Ellen C. Babbittⁱ compared to “The Monkey-Bridge”ⁱⁱ



HOW THE MONKEY SAVED HIS TROOP

A mango-tree grew on the bank of a great river. The fruit fell from some of the branches of this tree into the river, and from other branches it fell on the ground.

Every night a troop of Monkeys gathered the fruit that lay on the ground and climbed up into the tree to get the mangoes, which were like large, juicy peaches.

One day the king of the country stood on the bank of this same river, but many miles below where the mango-tree grew. The king was watching the fishermen with their nets.

As they drew in their nets, the fishermen found not only fishes but a strange fruit. They went to the king with the strange fruit.

“What is this?” asked the king.

“We do not know, O King,” they said.

“Call the foresters,” said the king, “They will know what it is.”

So they called the foresters, and they said that it was a mango. “Is it good to eat?” asked the king. The foresters said it was very good. So the king cut the mango, and giving some to the princes, he ate some of it himself. He liked it very much, and they all liked it.

Then the king said to the foresters, “Where does the mango-tree grow?”

The foresters told him that it grew on the riverbank many miles farther up the river. “Let us go and see the tree and get some mangoes,” said the king.

So he had many rafts joined together, and they went up the river until they came to the place where the mango-tree grew. The foresters said, “O King, this is the mango-tree.”

“We will land here,” said the king, and they did so. The king and all the men with him gathered the mangoes that lay on the ground under the tree. They all liked them so well that the king said, “Let us stay here tonight, and gather more fruit in the morning.” So they had their supper under the trees, and then lay down to sleep.

When all was quiet, the Chief of the Monkeys came with his troop. All the mangoes on the ground had been eaten, so the monkeys jumped from branch to branch, picking and eating mangoes, and chattering to one another. They made so much noise that they woke up the king. He called his archers saying: “Stand under the mango-tree and shoot the Monkeys as they come down to the ground to get away. Then in the morning we shall have Monkey's flesh as well as mangoes to eat.”

The Monkeys saw the archers standing around with their arrows ready to shoot. Fearing death, the Monkeys ran to their Chief, saying: “O Chief, the archers stand around the tree ready to shoot us! What shall we do?” They shook with fear. The Chief said: “Do not fear; I will save you. Stay where you are until I call you.” The Monkeys were comforted, for he had always helped them whenever they had needed help. Then the Chief of the Monkeys ran out on the branch of the mango-tree that hung out over the river. The long branches of the tree across the river did not quite meet the branch he stood on. The Chief said to himself: “If the Monkeys try to jump across from this tree to that, some of them will fall into the water and drown. I must save them, but how am I to do it? I know what I shall do. I shall make a bridge of my back.” So the Chief reached across and took hold of the longest branch of the tree across the river. He called, “Come, Monkeys; run out on this branch, step on my back, and then run along the branch of the other tree.”

The Monkeys did as the Chief told them to do. They ran along the branch, stepped on his back, then ran along the branch of the other tree. They swung themselves down to the ground, and away they went back to their home.

The king saw all that was done by the Chief and his troop. “That big Monkey,” said the king to the archers, “saved the whole troop. I will see to it that he is taken care of the rest of his life.” And the king kept his promise.

Questions to Answer:

- How does the king get to taste mangoes for the first time?
- Why does the king decide to kill the monkeys and eat their flesh as well as the mangoes?
- How does the Chief of the Monkeys save his troop?
- Why does the king change his mind about killing the Monkeys? What does he do instead?
- Buddha led a previous life as either the Chief of the Monkeys or the King. Which one do you think he is?
- Which of the Ten Perfections do you think is best exemplified by this story?

Directions: Read the excerpted beginning, middle and end of the story as told by Ellen C. Babbitt and Noor Inayat Khan. Then read the questions. Next circle the words in either text that help you to formulate your answers to the questions. Then answer the questions.

Ellen C. Babbitt	Noor Inayat Khan ⁱⁱ
<p>A mango-tree grew on the bank of a great river. The fruit fell from some of the branches of this tree into the river, and from other branches it fell on the ground. Every night a troop of Monkeys gathered the fruit that lay on the ground and climbed up into the tree to get the mangoes, which were like large, juicy peaches.</p>	<p>A giant-like monkey once ruled over eighty thousand monkeys in the Himalaya mountains. And through the rocks where they lived streamed the river Ganges before reaching the valley where cities were built. And there where the bubbling water fell from rock to rock stood a magnificent tree. In the spring it bore tender white blossoms; and later it was laden with fruit so wonderful that none could be compared to them, and the sweet winds of the mountain gave them the sweetness of honey.</p>
<p>The Chief said: “Do not fear; I will save you. Stay where you are until I call you.” The Monkeys were comforted, for he had always helped them whenever they had needed help. Then the Chief of the Monkeys ran out on the branch of the mango-tree that hung out over the river. The long branches of the tree across the river did not quite meet the branch he stood on. The Chief said to himself: “If the Monkeys try to jump across from this tree to that, some of them will fall into the water and drown. I must save them, but how am I to do it?”</p>	<p>“I will save you, my little ones,” said the chief, “fear not, but do as I say.” Thus consoling them, the mighty chief climbed to the highest branch of the tree. And as swift as wind passing through the rocks, he jumped a hundred bow lengths through space and landed on a tree near the opposite bank. There at the edge of the water, he took a long reed from its very root and he thought.</p>
<p>The king saw all that was done by the Chief and his troop. “That big Monkey,” said the king to the archers, “saved the whole troop. I will see to it that he is taken care of the rest of his life.” And the king kept his promise.</p>	<p>Brahmadatta [the king] had seen all that had happened and tears streamed from his eyes as he gazed upon the stricken monkey chief. He ordered that he be brought down from the tree to which he still clung, that he be bathed in the sweetest perfumes and clothed in a yellow garment, and that sweet water be given him to drink. (...) [The monkey said] “Oh King, I do not suffer in leaving this world for I have gained my subjects’ freedom. And if my death may be a lesson to you, then I am more than happy. It is not your sword which makes you a king; it is love alone. (...)” The Blessed One then closed his eyes and died. But the King and his people mourned for him and the king built for him a temple pure and white that his words might never be forgotten.</p>

1. How do the opening scenes of the tales vary? Which version helps you to imagine the scene in the great river? Which version makes the fruit seem more enticing? Circle some of the words help to convey this in the version you choose.

2. In which version do you feel the Monkey Chief most loves his troops? In which version do his feats seem more daring and amazing?

3. Do the stories end in the same way? Although the Monkey Chief died in Noor’s version, how does he nonetheless still live? Do you hold the same opinion or a different

opinion about who the Buddha embodied in the story?

4. Reflect on the special meaning of this story for Noor, now that you know how her own life ended.