

BOOKTALK

Angkat

A Cambodian Cinderella

by Jewell Reinhart Coburn / illustrated by Eddie Flotte






Dr. Jewell Reinhart Coburn is the highly respected author of books on storytelling and folklore, as well as several children's books, including *Jouanah: A Hmong Cinderella*. She found an 18th century version of *Angkat* while researching Khmer culture and history and this provided the basis for *The Cambodian Cinderella*. The Khmer culture has had a strong influence on Cambodia where it has existed for almost 6000 years. Eddie Flotte's watercolor illustrations not only support and enhance the storyteller's vision, but also provide authentic representations of ancient Cambodian architecture, clothing, and symbolically, of these peoples' belief in the spirit world.

A lonely, widowed fisherman lives in Cambodia with his dutiful daughter *Angkat*. He meets and marries a widow who has a daughter who is beautiful on the outside but soon causes problems within the family by insisting that she should have the honor of being Number One child rather than *Angkat*. A fishing contest is arranged between the two girls and *Kantok* steals three of her stepsister's fish, thereby leaving *Angkat* to become the Number Two daughter destined to always be the family servant. *Angkat* frees her remaining fish but later befriends *Little Fish* when she discovers that it is magical. *Kantok* discovers the friendship and kills *Little Fish* but the Spirit of Virtue tells *Angkat* to leave the *Little Fish's* bones under her mat where they turn into golden slippers. When a huge black bird brings one of the slippers to the Prince, this provides an opportunity for the couple to eventually meet after the traditional search for the owner of the slipper.

In this story, the tale doesn't end with the marriage ceremony as *Angkat's* jealous family (including her father!) conspire to kill her and allow *Kantok* to take her place in the palace. After *Angkat's* death, the Spirit of Virtue reunites the couple in the sweet breezes of a bamboo grove and brings *Angkat* back to life. The scheming family is banished forever from Cambodia and the royal couple reign joyfully over a peaceful kingdom for many years.

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MOTIFS AND IDEAS

-  Angkat's father marries a cruel woman with a beautiful but cruel daughter
-  like Yeh-Shen, Angkat is befriended by a fish who is killed; the Spirit of Virtue helps Angkat and turns bones into slippers
-  bird takes slipper to the Prince and the search is on
-  Angkat and the Prince marry but she is killed
-  Angkat returns to life

CONNECTIONS

Using atlases, encyclopedias, and/or Internet websites, research the following:

- ★ find Cambodia on a map
- ★ Temple ruins of Angkor
- ★ Khmer architecture
- ★ list countries surrounding Cambodia
- ★ traditional clothing of Cambodia
- ★ fish and animals of Cambodia

VOCABULARY WORDS

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| bamboo | dawdle(d) | iridescent | sampot |
| banished | destiny | multitude | sarong |
| concoct(ed) | hoist(ed) | mystical | summon(ed) |
| dallied | inlet | prosperity | trekked |

Choose the word that matches its meaning:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. long wrapped article of clothing | a. sampot |
| 2. to raise or lift | b. dawdle(d) |
| 3. fate; predetermined course of events | c. iridescent |
| 4. a way into the sea or ocean or lake | d. hoist(ed) |
| 5. to devise or plan; to cook up | e. banish(ed) |
| 6. Cambodian jacket-like clothing | f. destiny |
| 7. a great number | g. mystical |
| 8. spiritual meaning or reality | h. inlet |
| 9. to spend time idly; waste time | i. multitude |
| 10. to drive away from home or a country | j. sarong |
| 11. a rainbow like array of colors | k. concoct(ed) |

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ADVERB: a word used to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb; adverbs often end in ly (for example, kindly)

PREPOSITION: a word used to show the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence (for example, with)

PRONOUN: a word used in place of a noun or more than one noun (for example, she)

Sort each italicized word from *Angkat* into the correct column according to how it is used in the phrase.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>I am entitled</i> | <i>slipped gracefully</i> | <i>his</i> daughter | <i>in</i> the family |
| <i>She</i> picked | <i>to</i> herself | skipped <i>lightly</i> | <i>to</i> the pond |
| will await <i>you</i> | <i>carefully</i> followed | <i>he</i> had said | <i>her</i> feathered friends |
| <i>under</i> her mat | Come here <i>quickly</i> | <i>My</i> search | died <i>instantly</i> |
| <i>They</i> put on | <i>without</i> a wife | rid of <i>it</i> | blessed them <i>abundantly</i> |
| banished <i>forever</i> | <i>by</i> the Spirit | <i>with</i> the biggest fish | |

ADVERB

PREPOSITION

PRONOUN

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PREPOSITIONAL POEM — a poem written in a format in which every line (or almost every line) begins with a preposition.

1. Write a prepositional poem about Angkat after thinking about the important characters and events.
2. The poem below is an example of a prepositional poem and is about the main character in *The Persian Cinderella*.

Settareh
Under the stars
Outside the palace
After help from her pari
With hungry heart,
And flowing scarf
Over her face,
And jewels
Round her ankles ...
She met her Prince
Mehrdad.

3. Some prepositions to help you start:

at, above, across, against, around, before, behind, below, beneath, from, in, inside, into, near, on, out, of, over, past, since, through, to, toward, under, without

