

The Skinflint

One time over in Cherokee County there was an old skinflint who was tighter than a pair of cheap boots. He didn't trust banks, so he took his greenbacks and bought a big lump of gold. He buried the gold next to a gum tree on his north forty. Every morning he rode out and dug it up. He'd moon over it a spell and think about how rich he was. Then, he'd cover it up until the next day.

His hired hand noticed the old miser's strange routine and trailed him to the spot. That boy's eyes bugged out when he saw that gold. Now, this hired hand was as crooked as a dog's hind leg. He hotfooted it out to the spot with a shovel and in two shakes of a lamb's tail he had the gold and was hightailing it to Nuevo Laredo.

When the skinflint saw the empty hole, he was fit to be tied and pitched a hissy fit. A cowpoke happened by. He said, "Partner, what's got you so riled up?"

"Some sorry varmint stole the chunk of gold I kept buried in this hole. What'll I do now?"

The cowpoke said, "That's easy. Bury a big rock in the hole and pretend the gold is still there. The rock will do you just about as much good. You didn't have the gold anyway because you weren't doing anything with it."

Moral: A feller who won't use his gifts is no better off than a feller who hasn't got any.



The Coyote and the Crane

A coyote got a bone caught in his throat. He figured a crane could get it out with his long bill and spotted one fishing along the edge of Salado Creek. "I'll pay you a heap of money if you'll snatch this bone out of my throat," said the coyote.

The crane quickly agreed. He stuck his head in the coyote's mouth and jerked the bone out. "Alright, coyote," said the crane. "I did my part—now pay me."

The coyote grinned and clicked his teeth. "Listen, *amigo*," he said. "You've done been paid. You're the luckiest crane in Texas. How many critters do you know who poked their head into a coyote's mouth and lived to tell about it?"

Moral: If you work for somebody as crooked as a bucket of snakes, don't expect anything good to come of it—and feel lucky if you get away without getting hurt.



The Chief and His Sons

A wise Cherokee chief had three sons who were always fighting with each other. They kept the whole village in an uproar. One day the chief called the boys to him. He gave each an arrow. "Break the arrow in half," he said. Each boy broke his arrow easily. The chief nodded. Then, he took three more arrows and tied them in a bundle. "Now, break these arrows," he said to

each in turn. Try as they might, the three boys couldn't break the bundle. The chief said, "Listen well, my sons. If you are divided amongst yourselves, your enemies will be able to snap you like an arrow." Then he held up the bundle of arrows. "But, if you stand together, no enemy will be able to harm you."

Moral: A tribe divided against itself cannot stand.



The Braggart

One morning at the New Summerfield general store, a stranger joined the farmers warming themselves around the potbellied stove. They swapped tales about one thing and another. Now this stranger was a real windjammer. No matter what the other fellers had done, he'd done better. If they raised fat hogs, his had been fatter. If they got forty bushels of corn an acre, he'd gotten eighty. If somebody had traded for a

fine horse, he'd traded for a better one. After a while the stranger asked the clerk, "How about a cup of coffee on credit?" The clerk looked him up and down and said, "Buddy, that big ego—and a dollar—will get you one."

Moral: If you're good at something, folks will know it without you telling them. If you're not, bragging won't make it so.

