

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Story of The Lazy Boy: A Kachari Folktale

By Compiled by Rev. Sidney Endle
From The Kacharis • 1911

In the early 1900s, a Christian missionary named Reverend Sidney Endle authored a book about the Kachari, an ethnic group indigenous to the Assam region of India. His book includes written translations of several folktales, including "The Story of the Lazy Boy," which was passed down orally through many generations. As you read, take notes on the developing moral of the story.

- [1] There was once a very lazy boy. And when everybody else had planted out his paddy,¹ he was only setting forth to plough. But the old man of the season, seeing him, said "The season has gone; what are you ploughing for now? The paddy is all planted out, and it is late." But the boy would not listen to him, and ploughed sturdily ahead, beating his cattle soundly as he went. And when the old man again and again questioned him, he cried "What sort of old man is this? Can he not see that I am busy? I know very well what I am about." But the old man said gently, "Nay, my son: but it is for your good that I would speak to you." And the boy said "Speak quickly then, and have done with it." And the old man said, "My son, the season is gone; what avails it to plough now?" And then the boy cried "Where has it gone? And when has it gone? And why has it gone? And how shall I find it?" But the old man of the season said, "You should have ploughed when others did. The season has gone, and no man can bring it back." But the boy said, "I must bring it back; else, how shall I eat, and how shall I live? Do tell me where it is gone." And as he would not let the god go, finally, losing patience, he said "You go over there, and you will find an old man with a snow-white head ploughing in a field. You get hold of him and do as he tells you." So saying, he made his escape. Then the lad hastened home to his mother and bade her cook supper quickly, and tie him up some rice to take with him on the morrow, for he was going to bring back the departed season for ploughing.



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1. Wet land in which rice is grown

"For," said he, "when I was ploughing to-day, an old man told me that the season was gone, and that if I went after him and pursued him I would find him, and that I must do as he would tell me." So she rose very early in the morning, and, giving him to eat and drink, sent him on his way. And as he went, he asked all he met "Can you tell me where the old man of the season has gone?" But they said, "Everyone knows that the season is gone, but where it is gone, or why it is gone, who can say?" At last, when he was nearly in despair, he saw an old man ploughing afar off, and shouted to him "Stay a moment, father, stay; I want to ask you a question." But the old man was busy, and went his way. Then the lad pursued him and never ceased calling after him till at last the old man losing patience, turned upon him, and said, "What pertinacious² noisy lad is this, who won't leave me alone?" But the lad said, "Be not angry, my father; I am fallen into great trouble, and it behooves you to help me." "Speak quickly, then," said the old man. And the boy said, "I take you to be the old man of the season, and I pray you not to slay me. All the others have planted out their paddy, and I have fallen behind, and have planted nothing. Therefore, unless you turn back, I cannot hope to get any harvest." But the old man said, "It is too late for me to return. Go you back, and plant your paddy as best you can." And so the lad hastened back and planted out his seedlings in such heedless haste as became him. And that's all.

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2. **Pertinacious** (*adjective*): stubborn or insistent

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following sayings best describes a theme of the text? [RL.2]
- A. Procrastination is the thief of time
 - B. Waste not, want not
 - C. Wasting time is robbing oneself
 - D. Your hand can seize today, but not tomorrow

2. PART A: Which of the following best describes the central conflict in the story? [RL.3]
- A. Man versus Wisdom -- the boy versus his inexperience
 - B. Man versus Society - the boy versus the old man/men
 - C. Man versus Nature – the boy versus time
 - D. Man versus Nature – the boy versus crops

3. PART B: Support your answer to Part A with evidence from the text. [RL.1]

4. PART A: What is meant by the phrase “the season is gone”? [RL.4]
- A. The planting season is over and any planting done now will likely fail to grow.
 - B. The planting season has literally left, as if a person.
 - C. The planting season is over and the people will soon cultivate their crops.
 - D. This was the last planting season; it is never coming back.

5. PART B: How does the boy understand what is meant by “the season is gone”? [RL.4]
- A. He doesn’t understand it at all.
 - B. He interprets it literally.
 - C. He believes the old man has taken it.
 - D. He interprets it figuratively.

6. Which of the following best describes how the story utilizes personification to further its central idea? [RL.2]
- A. It personifies the planting season (or time, in general) as an old man, who refuses to return the season, thus furthering the idea that time cannot be manipulated or pleaded with.
 - B. It personifies the planting season (or time, in general) as an old man, who refuses to return the season, thus furthering the idea that nature waits for no one.
 - C. It personifies the planting season (or time, in general) as an old man, who refuses to return the season, thus furthering the idea that idle youth is no match for a wizened work ethic.
 - D. All of the above

7. Summarize the conclusion of the story. How do things turn out for the boy? [RL.3]

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Why do we procrastinate and/or neglect our responsibilities? What are the consequences of doing this?
2. Why do you think this particular story was told again and again in Kachari villages?
3. What does it mean to be grown up? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. Who's in control: man or nature? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.