

Jack and the Beanstalk

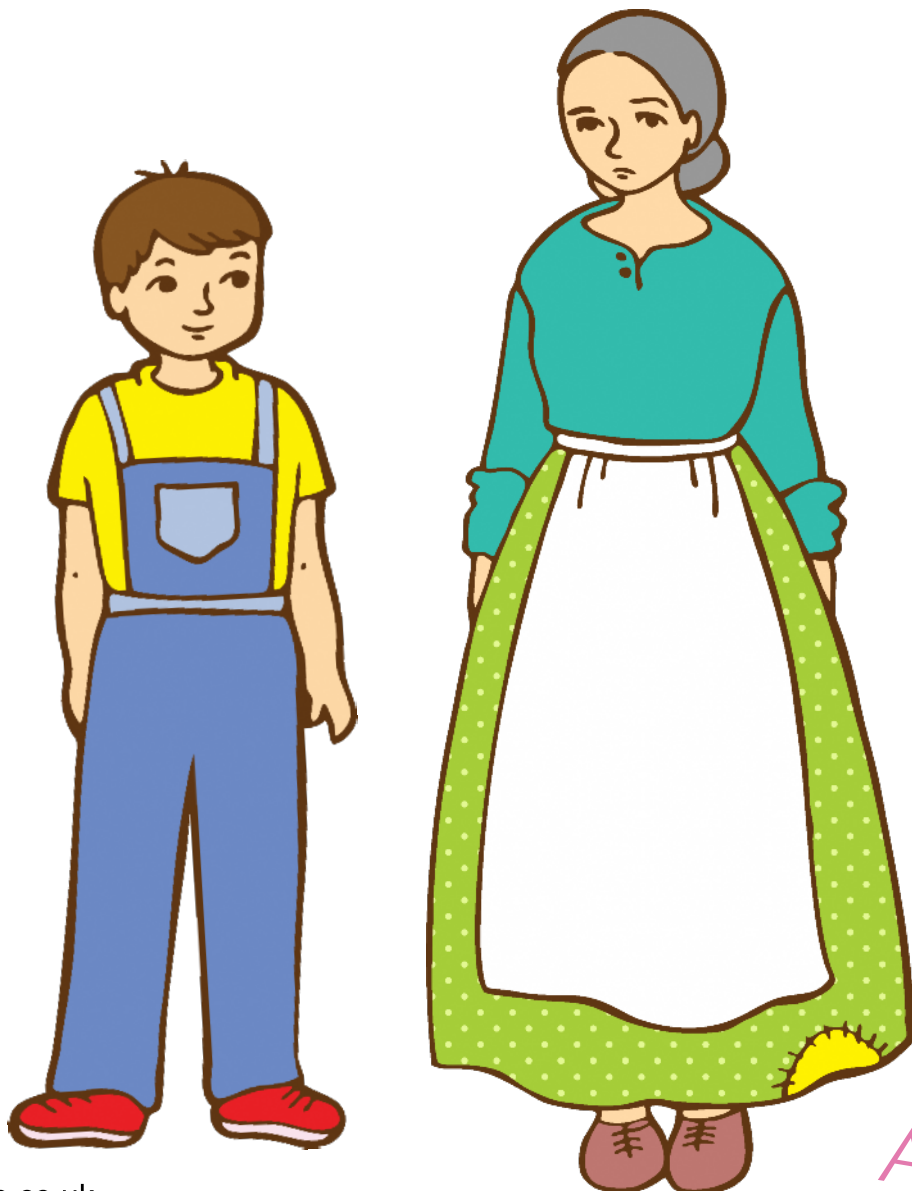
A Traditional Fairy Tale

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www.ActivityVillage.co.uk/jack-and-the-beanstalk

Once upon a time there was a poor widow who lived in a little cottage with her only son Jack.

Jack was a very kind-hearted and affectionate boy, who did as much as he could to help his mother. There had been a hard winter, and the widow had been ill, and Jack was too young to work, so they grew dreadfully poor. One day the widow realised that she would have to sell her cow to save them from starving, so she said to her son,

"I am too weak to go myself, Jack. You must take the cow to market for me, and sell her for a good price."





Jack liked going to market and thought he would do a good job of selling the cow. But on the way he met a man who had some beautiful beans in his hand. Jack stopped to look at them, and the man told the boy that they were very precious, and persuaded the silly lad to sell him the cow in exchange for the beans.

When he brought them home to his mother instead of the money she expected for her nice cow, she was furious. She cried and cried, and when she stopped crying she shouted at Jack, who realised that he had been silly and was sorry. Sadly, Jack went out into the garden.

"At least," he thought, "I can sow the beans. They may not be precious, like the man said, but they are food, and I might as well sow them."

So he took a stick, and made some holes in the ground, and put in the beans.

That day they had very little supper, and went hungry to bed, knowing that there would be no supper tomorrow, or the next day.



But when Jack woke up in the morning and looked out the window he saw to his amazement that the beans had grown in the night, and climbed up so high that the tips of the beanstalk disappeared into the clouds!

"It would be easy to climb it," thought Jack. "I'll climb up and see where it ends."



So up Jack went, high up on the beanstalk until the cottage, the village, and even the tall church tower looked quite little, and still he couldn't see the top of the beanstalk.

Jack felt tired, and thought about going home, but he knew that the best way to succeed is not to give up. So after resting for a moment he climbed higher and higher, until he was frightened to look down in case he felt dizzy. When he

finally reached the top of the beanstalk, he found himself in a beautiful meadow near a wood, and in front of him stood a fine, strong castle.

While Jack was standing looking at the castle, an old woman came out of the wood, and walked towards him. Jack smiled at her, and asked,

"Excuse me, madam, is this your castle?"

"No," said the old lady. But listen, and I'll tell you all about it.

"Once upon a time there was a noble knight, who lived in the castle, which is on the borders of Fairyland. He had a beautiful wife who he loved very much, and a little boy who brought him much joy. He was happy, and wealthy, and kind, and good.

"Soon, however, a monstrous giant heard about his wealth, and decided to take it for himself. He fought with the noble knight, and was so strong that, despite a mighty battle, he killed him. Thank goodness that his lady had taken her baby that day to visit her old Granny who lived in the village nearby. When she heard what had happened, she stayed hidden in her Granny's cottage, weeping for her brave knight.

"Years passed. The old Granny died, and the lady worked hard at spinning cloth to earn money, and growing vegetables in her little garden, and milking her cow to provide food for herself and her little son.

"Now, Jack, that lady is your mother. This castle, and everything in it, once belonged to your father, and you should take something back to make your mother's life easier."

Jack was astounded.

"Oh, my poor father! My poor mother! But, madam, what do we need except for food? Should I take food from the giant?"

"No, Jack, that would only help your mother for a little while. It would be better for you to find a way to steal back some of your father's old possessions: a hen that lays golden eggs, his money bags, and a harp that talks. But your task is a very difficult one, and full of danger. Are you brave enough to try?"

"Of course I am!" said Jack, and, thanking the old woman, he walked up to the castle and knocked boldly at the door. It was soon opened by a horrible, ugly giantess, with one great eye in the middle of her forehead. When Jack saw her he tried to run away, but she caught him and dragged him into the castle.

"Ah ha!" she laughed terribly. "You are just what I need! This castle is huge, and I am tired and overworked and fed up with all the housework I have to do, and the giant is mean and won't let me hire any help. You shall do my housework for me, when the giant is out. When he is at home I will hide you, because otherwise he might eat you up!"

Jack was very frightened, but he struggled to be brave and make the best of things.

"I am a hard worker, madam, and will do all I can to help. Only, please keep me well hidden from the giant, because I don't want to be eaten! My mother would miss me too much."

"Good boy!" said the giantess, nodding her head. "Why don't you hide in my kitchen cupboard. The giant never goes there, and you'll be quite safe."

So Jack hid in the cupboard, and tried to be very quiet and patient. He could see through the keyhole into the room beyond, and soon he heard a heavy tramp on the stairs, like a herd of elephants, and then a voice like thunder cried out:

"Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman!
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

"Wife," cried the Giant, "there is a man in this castle somewhere! I'm hungry! Let me have him for breakfast!"

"You are old and silly!" replied the Giantess. "You are only smelling the sausages that I'm already cooking! Now sit down and eat your breakfast!" And she placed a huge plate of sausages in front of him. When he had eaten and left the castle, the giantess let Jack out and set him to work. After a hard day of housework, she gave him a good meal and put him back in the cupboard for the evening.



Jack peeped through the keyhole again that evening, watching the giant as he ate an enormous supper, keeping very quiet and still. Once the table was cleared, the giant went into a little room next to the kitchen and brought back a hen, which he placed on the table.

"We are lucky, wife," said the giant. "This hen is laying golden eggs just as good and heavy as it ever laid for the knight and his lady. Now off you go and get on with your chores!"

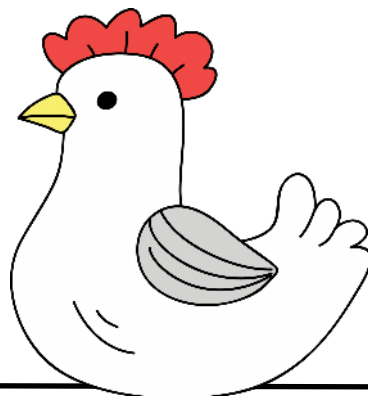
Then he looked sternly at the hen and said,

"Lay!"

And she instantly laid a golden egg!

The giant seemed pleased, and he put his head down on the table and began to snore.

As soon as Jack realised that the giant was fast asleep, he popped open the door of the cupboard and crept out, picked up the hen, and tip-toed out of the kitchen. He tucked the hen under his shirt and flew to the beanstalk as fast as his legs could carry him, and he went down that beanstalk as if his life depended on it, because of course it probably did!



When his mother saw him she cried with joy. Jack told her everything that had happened, and pulled the hen out from his shirt. And of course she was very glad to see the hen, because now she didn't have to worry about how they would be able to buy food.



A few weeks later, when his mother had gone to the market, Jack decided to climb the beanstalk again. He dyed his hair, and changed his clothes, and when he knocked on the castle door the giantess didn't recognise him, and decided to put him to work just like she had done before. She hid him in the cupboard that evening, and Jack wasn't surprised when he heard the giant come in, saying,

"Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman!
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

"Nonsense!" said the giantess, "You must be smelling this lovely big steak I have cooked for your supper. Now sit down and eat up!"

When the meal was over, the giantess got up and said,
"Now, my dear, I am going up to my room to finish the story I am reading. If you want me call for me."

"First," answered the giant, "bring me my money bags, so that I can count my coins before I sleep."

The giantess obeyed, leaving the room and returning with two large bags over her shoulders which she put down by her husband.

"There," she said, "that is all that is left of the knight's money. When you have spent it you will have to go and steal another knight's castle."

The giant, when his wife was gone, took out heaps and heaps of gold coins, and counted them, and put them into piles, and laughed, and counted some more. Then he swept all the coins back into the bags, put his head on the table, and began to snore.

Jack crept softly out of the wardrobe, grabbed the money bags, and ran back down the beanstalk as fast as his legs would carry him.

"There, Mother!" he cried, as he put the bags down on the table, "I have brought you the gold that the giant stole from us."



And of course Jack's mother was very glad to see the money.

A few weeks later, Jack decided to find the talking harp which the old lady had spoken of. So he dyed his hair and changed his clothes, and climbed the beanstalk once more, and knocked on the door, and the giantess opened it. Of course she couldn't resist having some help with her housework, so she let him come in and hid him in the cupboard once more.

Soon the giant came home, and immediately he took a big sniff and cried out,

"Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman!
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

"You silly old giant," said his wife, "It's only the nice stew I'm making for your supper. Now sit down and eat!"

And the giant sat down, and ate. Then he said,

"Now bring me my harp! Off you go and do your chores, and I will enjoy a little music."

The giantess obeyed, and returned with a beautiful harp. The framework was sparkling with diamonds and rubies, and the strings were all of gold.

"This is one of the nicest things I took from the knight," said the giant. "I am very fond of music, and my harp is a faithful servant."

As soon as the giantess had left the room, he pulled the harp towards him, and ordered,

"Play!"

And the harp played a beautiful, gentle tune. The giant put his head down on the table, and began to snore.

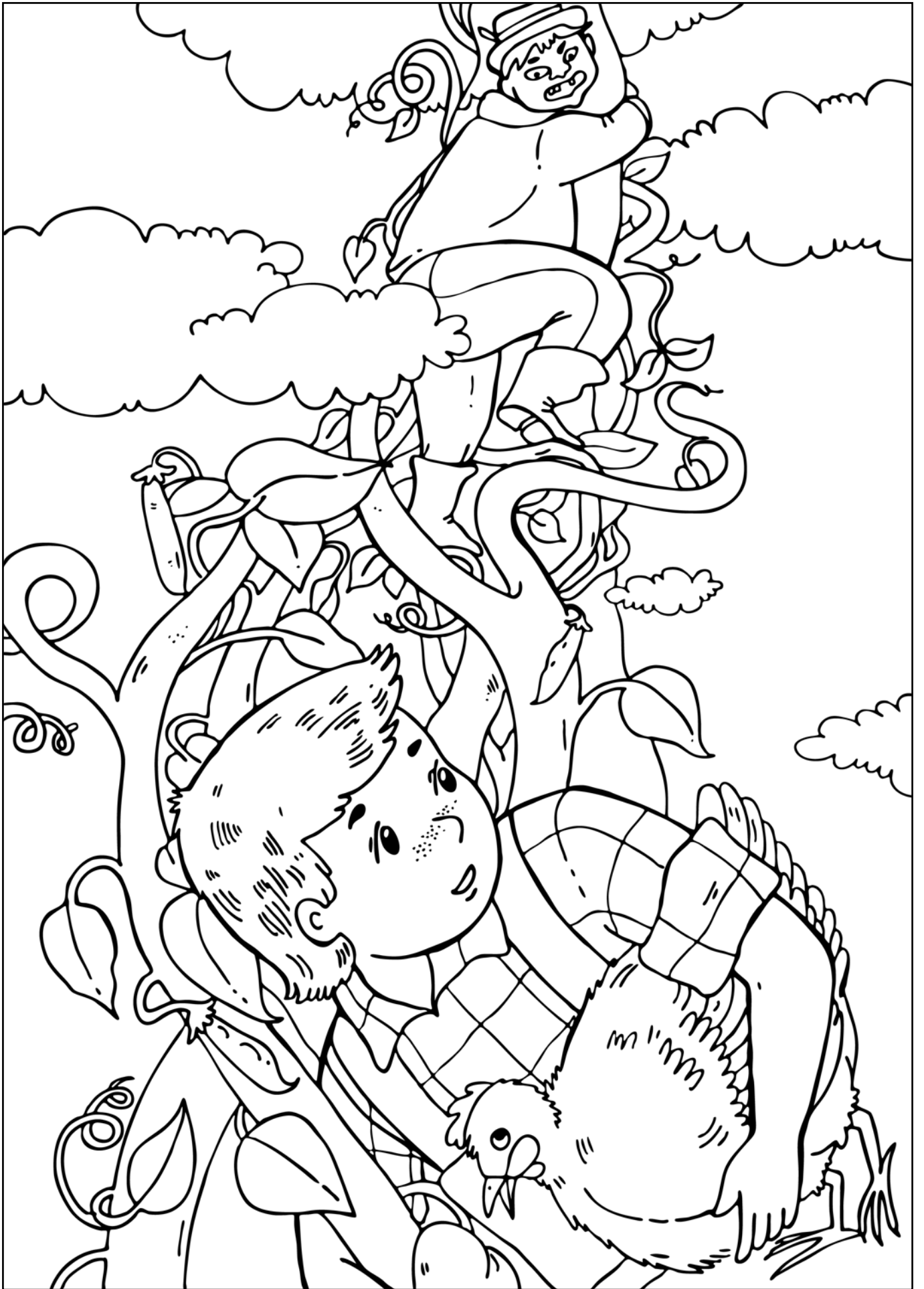
Then Jack crept softly out of the cupboard, picked up the harp and began to run. But as soon as he lifted it off the table, the harp cried out,

"Master! Master!"

And the giant woke up.

With a tremendous roar he sprang from his seat, and chased Jack, who was running as fast as his legs could carry him back to the beanstalk, and down it.





"Mother, Mother!" Jack called, as he neared the bottom,
"Quick! Bring me the axe!"

His mother ran to him with an axe in her hand, and Jack cut through the beanstalk with one tremendous blow.

"Now, Mother, stand out of the way!" he cried. And the beanstalk, and the giant, came crashing down, and of course the giant was no more.

Jack and his mother lived happily ever after in their little cottage, with the golden coins from their money bags, and the golden eggs from their faithful hen, and the beautiful music played to them by the golden harp.



And that's the end of the story.