

A BAD BET

A folk tale adapted by
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Mr. and Mrs. Bates had been married for forty years. In those forty years, they had never had a fight, much less an argument. They were a happy couple because they always agreed on everything.

The Bates had many animals, but the ones they loved the most were their two milk cows. They sold the extra milk to their neighbors every day.

One of their friends, Mr. Norton, decided to test them to see if he could get them to disagree on something. He thought about what he might get them to argue about, and then he came up with an idea.

He went to see Mr. Bates. He met him in the garden, and while he was there, he said to Mr. Bates, "I see you have two cows. Do you really need two cows? I think you should sell one of them and then you'd have extra money."

"That's an excellent idea," Mr. Bates responded. "I'll talk to Mrs. Bates about it. I think she will agree with me."

Mr. Bates and Mr. Norton went to the house.

Mrs. Bates met them at the door.

Mr. Bates said to his wife, "I think we should sell one of our cows. I'm going to take it to town. Mr. Norton seems to think it would be a good thing for us to do,"

"Oh, I agree with you! That's a wonderful idea. We'll have a little calf soon, so we

don't need three cows," Mrs. Bates agreed with a smile.

Mr. Bates went to feed the cows, brushed them, and then put a rope on the cow he was going to take to town.

On the way to sell the cow, Mr. Norton joined Mr. Bates.

"I thought I would walk with you to town. I have some business I need to take care of there," he said to Mr. Bates.

Actually, he was trying to think of something he might suggest to Mr. Bates that would upset his wife.

While walking to the town, they came upon a man with a horse.

Thinking he could get Mr. Bates to do something that would cause an argument with his wife, he suggested, "Why don't you trade the cow for the horse? Don't you think you could use a horse?"

"That's a wonderful idea. If I had a horse, it would help me with the things I have to do on the farm," Mr. Bates said with excitement.

The owner of the horse agreed to the trade. He went on his way leading the cow behind him.

Mr. Norton was certain Mrs. Bates was going to get upset because the horse was old and wasn't very pretty.

As they continued to walk along the road to town, they saw a man with a pig.

"Why don't you trade the horse for the pig? I'm sure Mrs. Bates would love to have a pig," Mr. Norton put the idea into Mr. Bates' head.

"Now that's an excellent idea. If we had a pig, my wife could cook pork and bacon for breakfast for more than a month," Mr. Bates agreed with the idea.

He asked the man with the pig to trade the horse for the pig, and he said, "OK."

The man left riding the horse.

Mr. Bates was proud of his new pig and wanted to show it to his wife, but soon they passed a man with a rooster.

Mr. Norton spoke up again, "Why don't you trade the pig for the rooster. Every farm

needs a rooster!”

“What a great idea!” Mr. Bates said excitedly. “It can wake us up every morning. We’ll never sleep late again!”

The owner of the rooster was happy to make the trade.

Mr. Norton was sure that Mrs. Bates would not be happy with her husband for his silly trades.

On the way home, they came to a restaurant.

Mr. Norton commented, “I wish you had sold the cow. Then we would have enough money to buy some food. Maybe the owner of the restaurant will trade your rooster for some food.”

The owner was delighted to have a rooster and made the trade.

Now Mr. Norton was certain that Mrs. Bates would be angry.

After having a filling meal, they started to walk back to the farm. Mr. Norton could not keep quiet.

“I think you and Mrs. Bates are about to have your first fight,” he said confidently to Mr. Bates.

“Why do you think that?” he answered.

“You took the cow to sell it. You traded it for a horse, then the horse for a pig, the pig for a rooster, and finally the rooster for a meal, but now you have nothing. I’m sure she’ll be angry with you,” Mr. Norton said, trying not to smile too big.

“I don’t think so,” was all Mr. Bates could say.

“I’ll bet you two hundred dollars your wife will be angry with you,” Mr. Norton said to him.

“We’ll see,” Mr. Bates replied.

When they walked into the house, Mrs. Bates greeted them.

She asked, “So how did it go today? Did you sell the cow for a good price?”

Mr. Bates replied, “Well, I have an interesting story. On the way to town to sell our cow, I saw a man with a horse. I asked him to trade with me and he let me have the horse.”

“That’s wonderful! The horse will help us do so many chores on our farm,” Mrs. Bates gave a happy response.

“There is more. As we were walking, we passed a man with a pig, so I traded the horse for the pig,” Mr. Bates informed her.

“Really! You traded the horse for a pig? Now we’ll have pork for a month,” Mrs. Bates responded to the news.

“A little later we saw a man with a rooster, so I traded the pig for a rooster,” Mr. Bates says, while he continued to tell the story of his trip to the town.

“A rooster! That’s great. He’ll wake us up every morning and we’ll never sleep late again,” she said excitedly.

“Actually, I don’t have the rooster anymore. On the way home, we were hungry, so we stopped to eat at a restaurant. I didn’t have any money, so I traded the rooster for our lunch,” Mr. Bates ended the story.

“I’m so happy you were able to eat. Now I don’t have to cook your supper. I’m sure you were very hungry after walking all the way to town. I’m glad you have a full stomach,” Mrs. Bates said smiling at her husband.

Mr. Norton realized that he had failed to make the Bates argue.

“I guess I’ve lost our bet,” Mr. Norton said as he gave the two hundred dollars to Mr. Bates.

“What is that for?” Mrs. Bates asked, very surprised to see so much money.

“I had a little bet with your husband that you would be angry with him for not selling the cow,” Mr. Norton informed her.

She responded to him, “Why should I be mad? My husband is very clever. He came home with a full stomach and two hundred dollars. That’s more than he would have ever gotten for the cow in town.”

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. couple (n) _____ | a. cute, beautiful |
| 2. argument _____ | b. switch, deal, give and take |
| 3. agree _____ | c. decide, approve |
| 4. calf _____ | d. evening meal, dinner |
| 5. trade _____ | e. married people, man and wife |
| 6. pretty _____ | f. say hello, meet |
| 7. pork _____ | g. smart, shrewd |
| 8. greet _____ | h. disagreement, fight |
| 9. supper _____ | i. meat from a pig |
| 10. clever _____ | j. baby cow |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. The Bates had two horses. | T / F |
| 2. Mr. Norton suggested that Mr. Bates should sell one of his cows. | T / F |
| 3. Mrs. Bates told her husband not to sell the cow. | T / F |
| 4. Mr. Bates traded his horse for a pig. | T / F |
| 5. The restaurant owner would not trade the rooster for a meal. | T / F |
| 6. The horse was big and beautiful. | T / F |
| 7. One of the cows was going to have a calf. | T / F |
| 8. The Bates sold their extra milk to their neighbors. | T / F |
| 9. Mr. Bates paid Mr. Norton two hundred dollars. | T / F |
| 10. Mrs. Bates thought Mr. Bates was very clever. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. How many cows did the Bates have? _____
 - a) one
 - b) two
 - c) three
 - d) none

2. What did Mr. Bates trade the pig for? _____
 - a) horse
 - b) goat
 - c) supper
 - d) rooster

3. Why did Mr. Norton make the bet? _____
 - a) He wanted the Bates to have an argument.
 - b) He wanted to make extra money.
 - c) He wanted to buy the cow
 - d) He was hungry

4. How long had the Bates been married? _____
 - a) twenty years
 - b) thirty years
 - c) forty years
 - d) fifty years

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What was the neighbor's name?

2. Why did Mr. Norton want Mr. Bates to sell his cow?

3. What was the first thing Mr. Bates traded for?

4. Where was Mr. Bates going to sell his cow?

5. What did he trade the horse for?

6. Why did Mr. Bates think a rooster would be a good thing to have?

7. Why did Mr. Bates and Mr. Norton go into the restaurant?

8. What did Mrs. Bates say about having a horse?

9. What did Mr. Norton give to Mr. Bates after they arrived at his home?

10. What did Mrs. Bates think about her husband?
