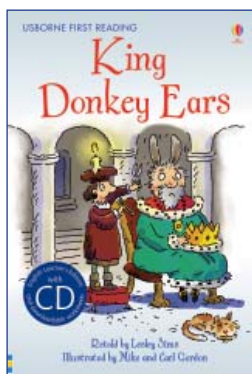


## King Donkey Ears • Teacher's notes



**Author:** based on a story by Aesop

**Reader level:** Elementary

**Word count:** 264

**Lexile level:** 210L

**Text type:** Fable/folk tale

### About the story

The king has a secret that he can't even bear to share with his best friend: underneath his crown, he has donkey's ears. Once a month, he has a servant cut his hair – then throws the servant into prison to make sure they can't tell anyone else. In July, servant girl Meg begs the king not to send her to prison so that she can look after her sick mother. The king relents, but makes her promise to tell no-one about his ears.

Tormented by the secret, Meg has the bright idea of telling a tree. Meg feels better, but the secret lives on: the tree is chopped down and made into a harp. The harp is played at a royal concert – and starts singing, "The king's got donkey's ears." The king is furious with Meg, until his friend admits that everyone knows and no-one is shocked. At last, the king can free all the servants and be happy with his ears.

The story is very old, and one version dates to the Greek Myths; it is related on p31 of the book. In the Greek version, King Midas' barber whispered the secret into a hole in the ground and then covered it up; but when reeds grew over it, they whispered the secret whenever the wind blew. In a Central Asian version, the barber whispered the secret into a well, but forgot to cover it afterwards. The well's water rose and covered the whole kingdom, creating Lake Issyk-Kul, one of the largest lakes in the world.

### About the author

Lesley Sims always wanted to be a writer. She has written a range of stories, including funny history books and books for beginner readers. In her spare time, she likes going to plays and concerts, playing the saxophone and reading.

#### Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

p2	servant	p18	huge
p3	woodcutter		concert
	harp	p19	tune
p4	secret	p21	roared
p6	snip	p24	freed
p7	prison	p31	folk tale
p9	shocked		legend
p10	cried [meaning "shouted"]		judge
	jail		competition
p15	burst		musician
p17	chopped		declared
			winner
			player

#### Key phrases

p4	There was once...
p8	it was [Meg's] turn
p10	As soon as
p13	Promise you'll never tell anyone
p15	it was all [Meg] could think about
p23	you don't mind?



# King Donkey Ears • Teacher's notes

## Before reading

Think of a funny-but-embarrassing “secret” like the king’s – for instance, that you have a cat’s tail. Have your students play Twenty Questions to try and guess your secret (they can ask you up to twenty yes/no questions, and each answer should help them to ask more specific questions until they have guessed).

Show your students the book’s cover. Who can you see in the picture? Do they look happy? Why are they in the dark? Can you guess the king’s secret? How do you think he makes sure the servant won’t tell?

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## Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

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## During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- |       |                                                                                                                                                                                               |         |                                                                                      |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| pp2-3 | There is one other character on these pages. Who is it? [The cat.] Look out for it in the story [it appears on most pages with the king, and is often making faces or doing something funny]. | pp10-11 | Can you think of words to describe: the king, Meg, the guard, the cat?               |
| p16   |                                                                                                                                                                                               | p16     | Do you think Meg’s idea was a good idea?                                             |
| p20   |                                                                                                                                                                                               | p20     | How do the king, the lady playing the harp and the cat look when they hear the song? |
| p7    | Is that fair, to send the servants to prison? Do you think it works?                                                                                                                          | p21     | What do you think will happen to Meg?                                                |
|       |                                                                                                                                                                                               | p25     | How does the king look now?                                                          |
- .....

## Puzzles (pages 26-29)

You might like students to work on these in pairs or small groups. If so, ask the “After reading” questions before doing the puzzles.

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## After reading

Imagine you’re Meg. Can you think of any other ways to tell the secret but keep it secret?

Has anyone ever told you a secret you couldn’t tell anyone else? (You don’t need to say what it was!) How did you feel, was it easy to keep it secret?

What do you think is the message of the story?

