

Name _____ Date _____

The Emperor and the Peasant Boy

Early one morning, a lone traveler walked down a dusty road. Around a	13
bend in the road, he came upon a young peasant boy gathering firewood in a	28
field. The boy’s family needed the wood to cook their meals.	39
“I can see that it is not easy to find wood in this field,” the traveler said.	56
“Why don’t you go up into the forest on the hillsides? There must be plenty	71
of wood up there.”	75
“Oh, no!” the peasant boy exclaimed, as though shocked by the	86
suggestion. “All of the land in the forest belongs to the emperor, and the	100
emperor’s law says that no one else may enter the forest.”	111
“What a shame,” the traveler said. “All that good wood up there is going	125
to waste. Your emperor must be a selfish ruler to be unwilling to share his	140
wood with his people.”	144
“The emperor may not be a generous person,” said the boy, “but that	157
doesn’t give me the right to break the law.”	166
“Well,” the traveler said, “I must be on my way.” The peasant boy said	180
goodbye to the stranger and went back to collecting wood.	190
Several days later, a messenger came. The boy and his family were	202
ordered to return with the messenger to the emperor’s palace. When the	214
peasant boy saw the emperor’s face, his eyes grew wide, and his jaw	227
dropped. “You’re the stranger,” the boy gasped, “the man I met on the road!”	241
The emperor smiled. “You refused to break my laws. For that, I intend to	255
reward you and your family.” He gave them a chest of gold. “Thanks to you,”	270
the emperor continued, “I have learned that one of my laws is unjust. From	284
now on, all who wish to enter my forests may do so!”	296

