

Thi Lien's Page: A Vietnamese Folk Tale for Reader's Theatre

The Usurer

(Look up the word "usury" in a dictionary. What is a "usurer"?)

Readers: The Usurer

Boy

Narrator (or Narrator and Judge)

Narrator: One day a usurer who was known throughout the district for his greed came to call on a poor farming couple. They were not at home, but their small son was playing outside the hut. A fly buzzed around, then landed on the housepole.

Usurer: Young man, where are your parents? They owe me money, and I have come to collect!

Boy: My father is digging up live trees and planting dead ones, and my mother is selling the wind to buy the moon.

Usurer: (angrily) What!!? What do you mean by that?

Boy: If I tell you, will you forgive my parents' debt?

Usurer: What!!? (After hearing no answer, he continues.)

Oh, well. Yes, if you tell me what you mean, I will forgive the debt.

Boy: Well, my father is clearing a forest and building a fence. Wouldn't you say that is digging up live trees and planting dead ones? And my mother has gone to the market to sell her fans so she can buy oil for our lamps. Wouldn't you say that is selling the wind to buy the moon?

Usurer: G-r-r-r!

Narrator: Later, the usurer regretted his bargain and took the family to court. The judge listened to the usurer's story, then to the parents' plea. At last the boy told about his conversation with the usurer and the man's agreement to forgive the debt.

Usurer: That did not happen, judge! It did not happen at all! Are you going to believe a small boy?

Narrator: "I would like to believe you," the judge told the boy, "but there are no witnesses to corroborate your story."

Boy: But sir, there was a witness. There was a fly who heard the whole story, and he was sitting right on this man's nose! (Boy points to the usurer.)

Usurer: What!!? That fly was not on my nose! It was on the housepole!

Narrator: "Ah," said the judge. "Then you admit you did have this conversation with the boy. Whether the fly was on your nose or on the housepole, you must abide by your agreement!"

If there are four people in your group, divide the part of the Narrator into a Narrator and Judge. Mark the changes on this page so the story will read smoothly.