

Should we blame the donkey?

Today I have some stories to share with you. We'll be doing lots of thinking in question time, and we'll be hearing from other children, too.

Are you comfortable? Let's get started with a story – it's a funny story called *The donkey and the little dog*, and it's a very old story. It's a 'Once upon a time' story.



What do you know about 'Once upon a time' stories?

Do you think 'Once upon a time' stories are true?

This story is about a donkey and a little dog. Have you ever seen a donkey?

Do you know what sound a donkey makes?



Make the sound of donkey here.



Can you make that sound too?

Do you know how big donkeys are?

Do you think the donkey in the story is bigger than a little dog? Or smaller?

In this story, the donkey is much bigger than a little dog. Now let's read it.

Once upon a time there was a farmer, who had a donkey. The donkey didn't have a name, so we'll just call him Donkey.

And the farmer had a little dog too, and the little dog's name was Little Dog. Donkey lived in a stable. Donkey had lots of oats to eat and clean straw to sleep on. But he had to work very hard. Sometimes he carried the big strong farmer and the farmer's big heavy axe – and Little Dog – all the way to the great forest. Then the farmer would take his axe and cut branches from a tree – and

then bundle all the branches together and tie them onto Donkey's back. And then Donkey had to carry those branches all the way home so that the farmer and Little dog could have a warm fire at night.



Can you imagine you are Donkey, carrying that heavy load of firewood on your back?

The farmer was kind to Donkey, but Little Dog was his favourite. Whenever the farmer came to the stable to check on Donkey, Little Dog came too. She would run around the farmer, dancing and playing and leaping up to lick his hand.



Can you see Little Dog in your mind – dancing and playing and jumping up at the farmer? Close your eyes and see if you can. Maybe you can imagine you are a little dog, dancing and playing and jumping up at the farmer?

And every time Little Dog did this, the farmer would put his hand in his pocket and give Little Dog a treat - a piece of chicken or a biscuit. But there was never a treat for Donkey. And at night Little Dog lay by the fire in the farmer's house and sat on the farmer's lap and licked the farmer's face. Donkey was jealous. 'Why doesn't the farmer let me lie by the fire?' he wondered. 'And why doesn't he let me sit on his lap and lick his face?' Donkey asked himself.



If you were the farmer would you let Donkey lie by the fire? And would you let Donkey sit on your lap and lick your face?

Donkey couldn't understand why the farmer didn't want him to sit on his lap and lick his face. And then he had an idea. 'I know what I must do', Donkey said to himself. 'I must do just what Little Dog does. I must dance around and play. And I must jump up onto the farmer's knee and lick his face.'



Can you imagine what Donkey would look like, dancing around and playing? Close your eyes for a moment and see if you can. Can you imagine what it would be like to have a donkey jump on your knee - and lick your face? Again, close your eyes and try to imagine that.

That will certainly make the farmer happy,' thought Donkey, 'for after all, I have a very fine tongue - much bigger and better than Little Dog's.'

And so Donkey ran from his stable – clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack. He ran over to the farmer's house, and pushed the door open with his nose. There was the farmer sitting at the table, eating his dinner.

And with a loud 'BRAAAAY-EEE-AWW' Donkey danced around the table, kicking up his back feet. But as he kicked, his feet hit the table, and it wobbled so much that the plates and glasses all fell onto the floor and smashed to pieces - CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! and then the table wobbled some more and fell down - BANG! But Donkey didn't stop. Instead, he stood up on his back legs and put his front feet on the farmer's knees, just as he'd seen Little Dog do.

And then he rolled out his tongue to lick the farmer's face, just like Little Dog always did. But what do you think happened? Donkey was too heavy, and his weight upset the chair, and Donkey and the farmer rolled over together into the pile of broken dishes from the table.

Now the farmer was afraid of Donkey and he called for his helpers to help him. 'You careless donkey!' the helpers cried. And they dragged Donkey back to the stable, and there they left him. And that night, Donkey went without his dinner.



Did Donkey mean to knock over the farmer's table and break all the plates and glasses, or was it an accident?

In the story, you'll remember that the helpers called Donkey careless. And he got into trouble and had to go without his dinner as a punishment. How do you think Donkey felt?

Do you think Donkey was careless?

Do you think it was fair to punish Donkey – to make Donkey go without his dinner?

Let's listen to what some other children have said.



Freya: It was an accident. Because he was just trying to get more attention and spend more time with the farmer.

Sravgee: I don't think it was fair to punish him, because he didn't mean to do it. He wasn't being naughty – it was just an accident.

Mac: Well, it's true that he didn't mean to break the plates, but he should have known that he is too big to dance around inside. It was a silly thing to do. So I think it is fair if he is punished.

Ellie: No, I disagree. Maybe he should have known better, but he's only a donkey. Probably no-one had explained it to him. So I don't think it was fair to punish him.

Toby: But even if no-one explained it to him, he should have been able to work it out for himself. He should have thought about what might happen. So I think it is fair to punish him.

The children have raised some interesting points, haven't they?



Sravgee said that Donkey didn't mean to do it, so he shouldn't be punished. Do you agree? Can you explain why you think that?

Some people said that Donkey should be punished because he should have known he might cause harm. Do you agree?

Do you think that even if you didn't mean to cause any harm, but you did because you were being careless, or because you didn't think about what might happen, you should be punished? And can you explain why you think that?

Now, we are going to think some more about doing things on purpose and doing things accidentally.

This is a story about Max. Max is 5. He is in his bedroom, playing a game with Watson. Watson is Max's dog. Max throws a ball high into the air and Watson jumps up and catches it. Watson can jump really high, and it's his favourite game. They're not allowed to play that game inside. That's one of Max's mum's rules: No ball games inside.



Why do you think that is?

Do you think that's a good reason?

Today it's raining, and Watson really wants to play. All day long he's been coming up to Max with a ball in his mouth. So Max is trying to play really quietly so that his mum doesn't hear. And Watson is having a great time. Then, suddenly, there is a loud CRASH!



Can you guess what has happened?

Max has thrown the ball really hard and really high - and it has hit the light up on the ceiling and smashed it all to pieces. And then his mum came in.



Can you guess what Max said then?

He said, 'Sorry mum - I didn't mean to break the light. It was an accident.'



Is Max telling the truth?

What makes you say that?

Do you think Max was careless?

Was there anything wrong with what Max did?

Could you explain why you think that?

How do you think Max is feeling after this?

Maybe if you have some extra time you could draw a picture of Max and his dog Watson!

We heard some really interesting ideas today!

Thank you for being part of this. You might like to keep thinking about whether it's fair to be blamed for causing harm when you didn't mean to do it, and whether it makes a difference if you should have been able to see that it might cause harm.

Maybe you could have a talk to your family and friends to see what they think, too.

Thank you to our wonderful actors Freya, Sravgee, Mac, Ellie, Toby and Max who helped us to hear different points of view. While sometimes these points of view might have reflected their own opinions, at other times they were asked to express an opposing view in order to help us think more deeply about the topic.