CUMULATIVE TALES

The Carrot

Eastern Europe

This cumulative tale is popular with children throughout Eastern Europe; its best known version in the U. S., which usually features a turnip, comes from Russia. The version below is a retelling by the editor, based on recollection from hearing it as a child in Hungary.

For the full introduction to this story and other stories, see The Allyn & Bacon Anthology of Traditional Literature edited by Judith V. Lechner. Allyn and Bacon/Longman, 2003.

From: Retold by Judith Lechner from her recollection of the way the story was told in Hungary.

An old man planted a carrot seed. The seed was tiny and at first nothing happened. But then the seed began to sprout, and the carrot began to grow. Each day it got bigger and bigger, till one day its leaves reached higher than the old man. So he decided that it was time to pull it out. He pulled and he pulled but the carrot would not come out. He called his wife and the old woman pulled the old man and the old man pulled the carrot. They pulled and pulled but the carrot would not come out. Along came their granddaughter. The granddaughter pulled the old woman, the old woman pulled the old man, and the old man pulled the carrot. They pulled and pulled but the carrot would not come out. Along came a dog. The dog pulled the granddaughter, the granddaughter pulled the old woman, the old woman pulled the old man, and the man pulled the carrot. They pulled and pulled but the carrot would not come out. Along came a cat. The cat pulled the dog, the dog pulled the granddaughter, the granddaughter pulled the old woman, the old woman pulled the old man, and the old man pulled the carrot. They pulled and pulled but the carrot would not come out. Along came a rat. The rat pulled the cat, the cat pulled the dog, the dog pulled the granddaughter, the granddaughter pulled the old woman, the old woman pulled the old man, and the old man pulled the carrot. They pulled and pulled but the carrot would not come out. Now along came a mouse, and everyone laughed, “But what can a mouse do?” But the mouse pulled the rat, the rat pulled the cat, the cat pulled the dog, the dog pulled the granddaughter, the granddaughter pulled the old woman, the old woman pulled the old man and out came the enormous carrot.