

The mean old man and the cherry blossom tree



A sensory story by
David Babatunde Wilson

Transition Music

Music is integral to so many sensory stories. Consistent transition music at the start and end of a story helps to enable children and young people to anticipate what is coming next and to participate more fully in the story-sharing process. They also help to set the mood for the story.

Please feel free to choose your own transition music. The following are only suggestions, but you will need two contrasting pieces (possibly using different instruments:

Introductory music:

- Inuyasha 犬夜叉 - To Love's End - Erhu Cover by Elliott Tordo

Story ending:

- Sakura - Cherry blossom music
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wp2oSuh1Hy0>



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This Japanese folk-tale, or *minkan denshō*, was recorded by Allen Say in "Under the Cherry Blossom Tree"

Resources

You will need some sensory resources available for this story. Please select the ones that are easiest for you to access.

- Small world houses
- Old man puppet
- Sound switch - Koto music
- Sound switch - Money, Money, Money
- Sound switch - All by Myself
- Sound switch - Laughter
- Toy coins
- Pink silk/fabric flowers
- Small wooden branch or stick
- (Possibly) pitted cherries
- Basket of fruit (real or play)
- Enclosed marble maze
- Bean bags
- Pringles tube
- Soft quoits
- Bowl of water
- Hula hoops
- Gel/foam fish
- Play fishing rod

Sensory resources should include tactile resources including 'massage' by adults.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Sound switch with sample of Koto music
- * Small world houses (e.g. Monopoly, Brio, Playmobil) for young people to gather up (fine motor skills)
 - * Old man puppet

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**The mean old man lived in a
village in Japan.
He owned all the houses in the
village.**

Sensory resources & activities

- * Toy coins
- * Sound switch - 'Money, Money, Money' by ABBA

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The mean old man made everyone in the village give him lots of money to live in the houses.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Fabric/silk pink flowers
- * Small wooden branch or stick
- * Young people stand and sway from side to side (balance - gross motor skills)





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Every year the cherry trees were covered in beautiful pink flowers for just a few weeks.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Wicker picnic basket
- * Paper plates, cups etc
- * Encourage young people to breath in deeply

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The people in the village had a big picnic to enjoy the fresh air and the pretty cherry blossom.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Possibly - Cherries (halved and pitted)
- * Basket of fruit (real or play)
- * Basket of red pom-poms to pick up and gather together (fine motor skills)

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The old man had a big basket of food and ate a big bag of fresh, sweet cherries.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Sound switch - All by Myself
- * Objects such as footballs for children to gather up and collect (gross motor)



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The people in the village didn't have much food but the old man sat on his own and wouldn't share any of his.

Sensory resources & activities

* Enclosed marble maze

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As he ate, he swallowed one magical cherry pip. It travelled round his body to the top of his head.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Fabric/silk pink flowers
- * Small wooden branch or stick
- * Patting head (possibly pat head and rub belly at the same time - bilateral Gross Motor Skills)

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The next morning, the old man was shocked to find a cherry tree growing out of his head.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Motor skills activity - squatting down then stretching up high





As the tree grew and grew, the old man became more grumpy and mean.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Sound switch or screen - laughter
- * Bean bag to balance on young people's heads (Gross motor - Balance)

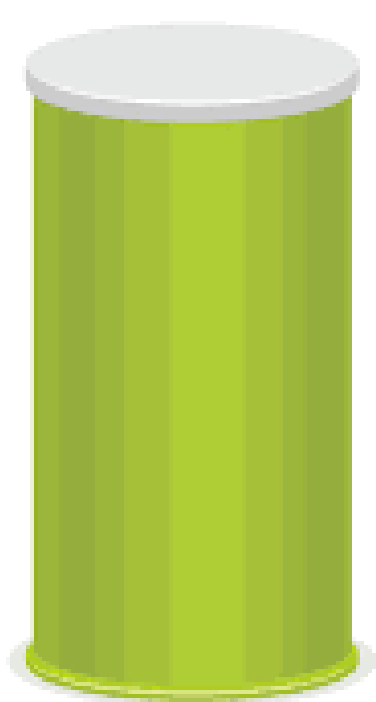




The people of the village laughed to see the old man with a tree growing out of his head. This made the old man even more grumpy and angry.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Stick or branch held by story-teller for young people to pull (Gross motor - Pulling)
- * "Pop" sound made with a pringles tube



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He pulled and pulled at the cherry tree until it *popped* out of his head.

Sensory resources & activities

- * Soft quoits to place on heads
- * Bowl of water



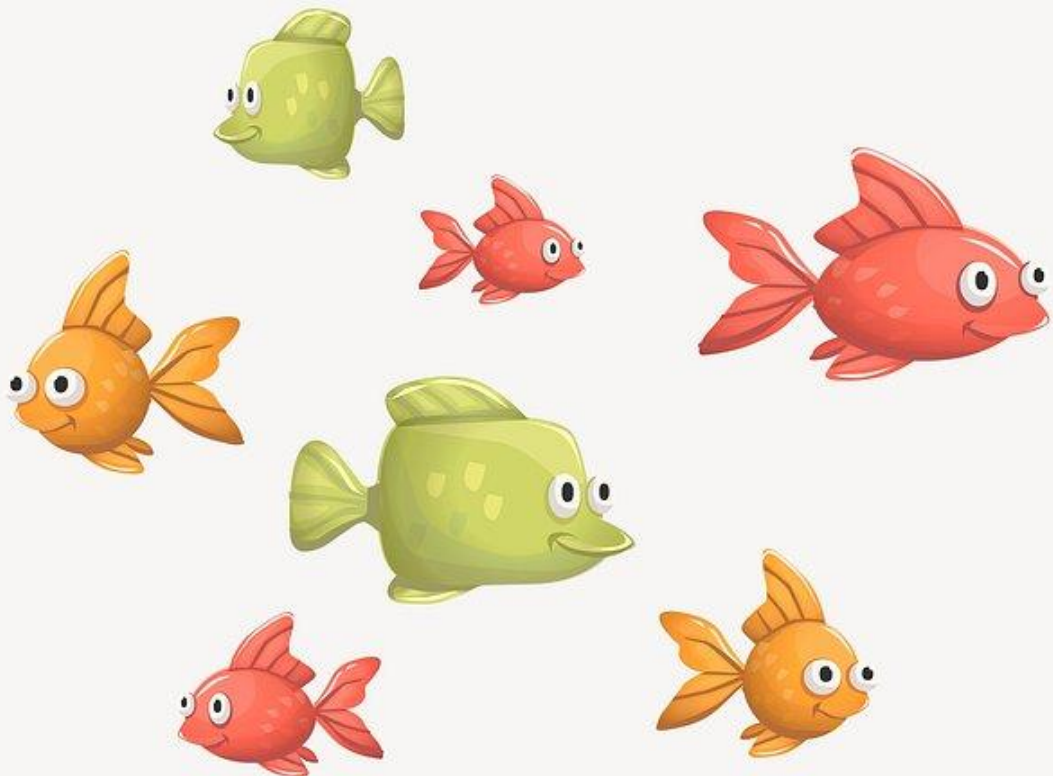
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The tree left a hole in the old man's head that filled with water when it rained.

Sensory resources & activities

* Gel/soft fish





Eventually, big fish started to live in the water in the old man's head. This made the old man even more cross!

Sensory resources & activities

* Hula hoops for young people to step through (Gross motor - Stepping over obstacle)

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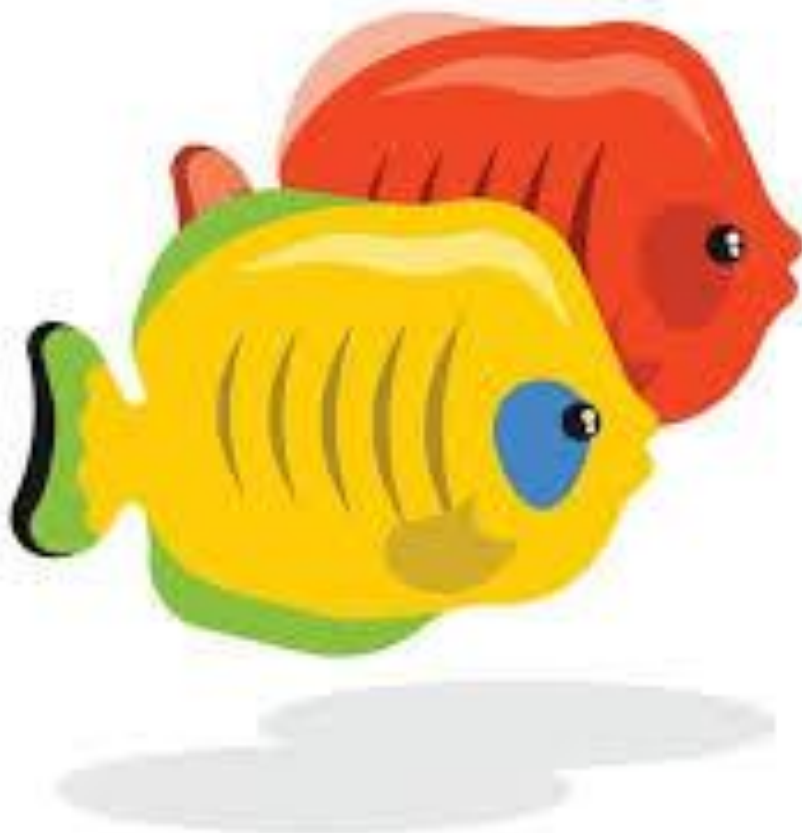




He was so angry, he ran around until he tripped up and fell into the pond on the top of his head.

Sensory resources & activities

* Foam/gel fish



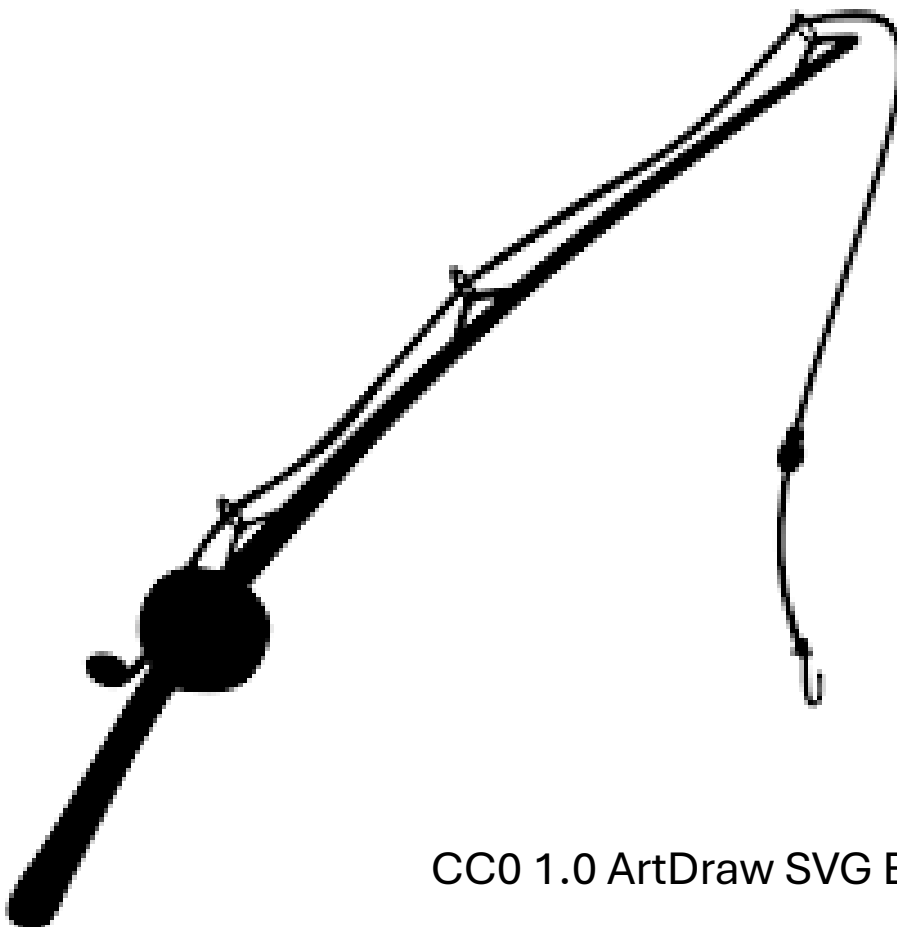
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Where the old man had fallen,
there was a big pond full of fish,
right in the middle of a circle of
cherry trees.

Sensory resources & activities

* Fishing rod / fishing game





From then on, the people of the village remembered the mean old man whenever they went fishing in the pond or enjoyed looking at the beautiful cherry blossom.



Though he was born in Nigeria and brought up in Botswana, David Babatunde Wilson is settled in North Yorkshire. He divides his time between his jobs as a Dad, household cook, Guide helper, writing poetry and working as a Special Needs teacher.

David has had poems published in a variety of online and paper publications including Disabled Tales, View from Atlantis, Beyond the Pane, the Ledbury Poetry Festival and an anthology celebrating Rare Disease Day 2025.