

The peach boy

This is a classic Asian folktale, specifically from Japan.

A very long time ago, in a small Japanese village, there lived an elderly couple who had no children. Although they were poor, they were happy and always helped others. The old man spent his days cutting firewood in the forest, while the old woman washed clothes in the river.

One day, while washing clothes, the old woman saw a huge peach floating down the river. Greatly surprised, she thought it would make a wonderful gift for her husband. She picked it up and brought it home.

When the old man returned, they decided to cut the peach open for dinner. But upon opening it, they were in for a great surprise: out stepped a small, rosy-cheeked, and healthy baby boy. With a bright smile, the child told them he was a gift from the heavens, sent in recognition of their kindness. Overjoyed, the elderly couple named him Momotarō, which means “Peach Boy.”

They raised him with great love, and as the years passed, Momotarō grew into a strong, brave, and kind-hearted young man.

One day, Momotarō learned that some terrible demons, living on a distant island, were stealing treasures and wreaking havoc in the villages. Determined to put an end to this, he told his parents that he was leaving to confront the demons. The old woman prepared some sweet dumplings—known as kibidango—to give him strength, and they wished him good luck. On his way to the island, Momotarō encountered a hungry dog that asked him for food. Momotarō gave the dog a kibidango, and the dog promised to help him. Further along, he met a monkey, who also offered to join the adventure in exchange for a kibidango. Finally, a pheasant with bright feathers flew in, and after tasting the kibidango, it too became a loyal ally.

Together, Momotarō, the dog, the monkey, and the pheasant formed a brave team and traveled to the island of the demons. There, they found a large castle protected by a wall. The pheasant flew over the wall to scout, the monkey climbed up to open the gate, and together they entered the castle.

The demons were enormous and fearsome, but Momotarō and his friends did not give up. The dog bit the demons, the monkey trampled them and knocked them down, and the pheasant pecked at them from the air. Using his great strength, Momotarō fought the leader of the demons and defeated him. The leader, feeling remorse, promised to cause no more harm and handed over all the treasures they had stolen.

Laden with gold, jewels, and food, Momotarō and his friends returned to the village, where everyone welcomed them with joy. The elderly couple was immensely proud of their son, and they lived happily, surrounded by the gratitude of the villagers. Momotarō remained a generous and brave hero, always ready to help others.