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If you are interested in using the Chinese Cinderella story, please view the print copy of Cinderella Tales from Around the World, which your teacher keeps in the classroom.

Ye Xian

Long, long time ago, there was a cave chief named Wu in south coast of China. He married two wives. Unfortunately, One of them died after giving birth to a baby girl. After growing into a young lady, the girl was extremely beautiful and had a remarkable gift for embroidery and spinning. Chief Wu liked her very much and named her Ye Xian. Before long, Chief Wu died too leaving Ye Xian to be reared by her stepmother. The mean woman did not like Ye Xian for she was prettier and smarter than her own daughter so she treated her poorly. Apart from giving her the worst jobs like collecting firewood and drawing water, she and her daughter often mock at her, while Ye Xian always silently did her work without any complaint.

One day, while drawing water, Ye Xian found a lovely little fish with big golden eyes and red fins. She loved it so much that she took it home and put it into a big bowl. Though the young lady had little food for herself, she was willing to share with the fish. Under her care, the small fish grew up every day, soon being too big for a bowl. Ye Xian had to move it to a pond nearby. Each time she approached to the pond, the fish would come out of the water onto the bank to greet her. It became her only friend companying her in her hard time.

Her stepmother heard about the fish. Angry that Ye Xian had found happiness, she planned to kill the fish. She followed Ye Xian to the pond and saw the fish from the distance. But as long as she came onto the bank, the fish immediately sank into the deep water. So the next day, the malicious woman made Ye Xian go carry water from a new place far away from their house, and then she put on her step daughter's clothes and imitate her voice to call the fish. Unaware of this deadly trap, the innocent creature floated up to greet its friend as usual. When it clearly saw the dagger in the bad woman's hand, it was too late.

Ye Xian's step mother cruelly killed the fish on the bank, cooked its flesh and deeply buried its bones with rubbish. Ye Xian was distraught when she learned of the fish's death. But she could do nothing but cry on the bank. As she was mourning for her friend, an old man wearing the coarsest of clothes and with hair hanging down over his shoulders flew down from the sky and landed by her side.

"Don't cry", he said, "I know where the fish bones were buried. You go there, dig them out, keep them secretly. When you are in bad need, you could pray to the bones which would give you what you want. But memorize, don't be greedy, otherwise, you will be punished by the God." Then, the old man led Ye Xian to a abandoned cellar, disappearing.

Ye Xian retrieved her friend's remains there and hid them in a safe place. Remembering the warning of the old man, Ye Xian rarely used the magic bones until Cave Festival which was an important local festival when the young people gathered in the village to meet one another and to find husbands and wives. Every young girl was keen on going to the festival in beautiful dress. Ye Xian was not an exception, but she knew that her stepmother would not allow it because she feared that someone would pick Ye Xian rather than her own daughter, which meant she would lose her half

property to pay her step daughter's dowry. Moreover, Ye Xian did not have any decent clothes.

After the stepmother and her daughter left for the festival, desperate Ye Xian asked the bones for clothes to wear to the festival. Suddenly she was wearing a sumptuous gown of kingfisher feathers. On her feet were a pair of shining golden shoes which were magically lighter than a feather and did not make any noise while touching stone floor.

Ye Xian arrived at the festival and soon all were looking her way. Attracted by her charm, young men circled her dancing and singing; shocked by her beauty, young ladies looked at her from the distance with envy complaining the stranger stole their thunder. Ye Xian's step sister was one of them. After a while staring, she screamed to her mother: "Look! mom, she just looks like my sister!" They both started moving towards Ye Xian to have a clearer look. At the same time, Ye Xian too recognized them in the crowd. Seeing that she would be found out, Ye Xian dashed out of the festival leaving behind one of the golden shoes.

On reaching home she quickly change back into her rags and pretended to be sleeping under a tree in the yard. When her step mother and sister came back, they found nothing unusual.

Ye Xian's lost shoe was found by a merchant and a few months later sold to the king of Tuo Han (陀汗), a strong kingdom of tens of islands, covering thousands of miles.

Fascinated by the delicate ladies shoe, the young king could not resist yearning for its owner. He ordered his ministers to travel round the kingdom with the shoe and bring back any lady who could fit in it. But no one was found, because the shoe could magically change its size. No matter how tiny a girl's foot was, the shoe was always a inch shorter than it. The eager king called in the merchant again for inquiring of the spot where the shoe was found, only to know it was somewhere near a mountain in mainland.

The king himself sailed off to the mountain right away. To his disappointment, it was a remote and poor area. He could not believe that the owner of the golden shoe could live there. But he still had his men search every house of the neighbor villages for the other shoe. Finally, they found it and the gown that Ye Xian had worn to the festival in her bed-drawer.

Ye Xian was taken to the king. Pretty as she was, the king yet doubted that the village girl in rags would be the one he had been longing for day and night. So he asked her to try on the shoes and clothes. After a while, from the shabby cottage was walking out a lady beautiful like a fairy. A charming smile was shining on her angelic face, the splendid gown was wrapping her appealing body, and the golden shoes were the perfect fitting for her feet. At the moment, the king realized that she was the one for him.

The step mother and sister begged for forgiveness, and Ye Xian forgave them for their cruelties.

The king took Ye Xian back to his kingdom where they married and lived happily ever after.

The Other ending of Chinese Cinderella

The step mother and sister were left and continued to live in their village until the day they were killed in a shower of flying stones from nowhere. The local who felt sorry for them buried them in a stone pit and called it the tomb of regretful women (懊女冢, ao nu zhong).

Some year after returning his kingdom, the king were greedy for treasure. Praying to the fish bones, he obtained a lot of gems. But next year when he did it again, the bones seemed to lose its magic power. Now He buried them with many pearls in a secret place and made a mark with a block of gold. A couple of years later, some soldiers revolted against him. The king wanted to dig the pearls out to award his loyal army. But one night before he did that, the sea flooded the hidden treasure spot, so the bones and the pearls were gone.

Source: <http://www.chinesestoryonline.com/fairy-tale/56-chinese-cinderella.html>

Modern Version:

Once upon a time, a scholar named Wu, who was a village head, had two wives and each gave birth to baby girls. Ye Xian was the daughter of the prettier wife, and she was beautiful, intelligent and gifted in many skills such as pottery and weaving. In contrast her half-sister, Jun-li, was spoiled, lazy, and self-interested.

When Ye Xian was a little girl, her mother and then her father died from a local plague. she had to live with her wicked **stepmother**, named Jin and her daughter. Soon they forced Ye Xian to become a lowly servant and worked for them. Despite living a life burdened with hard housework and chores, and suffering endless mock and abuse at her stepmother's hands, Ye Xian found solace when she ended up making friends with a beautiful, 10-foot-long fish in the lake near her house. Each day the fish came out of the water onto the bank to be fed by her. But she did know the fish, with golden scales and eyes, was the reincarnation of her mother, who now watched out for her.

Her stepmother heard about the fish. Angry that Ye Xian had found happiness, She disguised herself as Ye Xian and enticed the fish from the water. She stabbed it with a dagger, and cooked the fish for dinner. Ye Xian was devastated until her mother's spirit appeared and told her to bury the bones of the fish in pots at each corner of her bed. She also was told that if she needed anything, just prayed to the bones, and her mother's spirit would appear to help her.

Time passed and the local spring festival was nearing. This was a time when many young women would have the opportunity to meet potential suitors. Not wishing to spoil her own daughter's chances, Jin forced her step daughter to remain home and clean their house. After they has left, Ye Xian who also longed to go to the festival prayed to bones. Her mother's spirit occurred and told her to dig up the pots containing the fish bones. Ye Xian found fine clothes, including a cloak of kingfisher feathers, jewelery and a pair of golden shoes which were woven of golden threads in a pattern of a scaled fish

and whose soles were made of solid gold. When she walked in them she felt lighter than air.

Ye Xian dressed up and went to the festival. Soon She got all attentions. She enjoyed herself until she realized her step sister may have recognized her. She dashed back home, accidentally leaving behind a golden shoe. When she arrived home, she was dressed in her rags and hid the clothes in the pots beneath her bed again. When her step family returned, they discussed Jun-li's marriage prospects and also mentioned a mysterious lady in the festival. But they were unaware that it was Ye Xian that they were speaking of.

The golden shoe was found and traded by various people until it reached the hands of the King of a island kingdom of Tou Han. Fascinated by the shoe's small size, he issued a search to find the maiden whose foot would fit in the shoe and declared he would marry that lady. The shoe eventually reaches the house of Ye Xian, Jun-li and her mother tried to put on the shoe and failed. The shoe ended up fitting Ye Xian's foot perfectly.

However, the step family, in order to prevent the King from marrying her step daughter, declared that it was impossible for Ye Xian to be owner of the golden shoe, because she saw the lady who owned it wearing a pair of the golden shoes and fine clothes at the festival, while Ye Xian had not been there at all. Ye Xian proved her wrong by bringing out and putting on the other golden shoe and the clothes she wore at the festival. In the beautiful clothes that her mother's spirit gave her, Ye Xian looked like a fairy.

Awed by Ye Xian's beauty, the King affirmed that he would marry her. The wicked step mother made a final attempt to dissuade the King from marrying Ye Xian by accusing her of stealing the lady's golden shoe, however, the clever king easily saw through her evil plan. To punish the step family for their dishonesty and cruelty, the king force them continue to live in their village and never allowed them to visit Ye Xian.

The king took Ye Xian back to his palace where he made her the queen of his kingdom, and lived happily with her ever after.

Source: <http://www.chinesestoryonline.com/fairy-tale/57-the-modern-version-of-the-chinese-cinderella.html>