

Name: _____

Date: _____

September's Theme: Honesty

“The Empty Pot”

Long, long ago in China, there was a boy named Ping. More than anything else in the world, Ping loved flowers and had the gift of being able to make anything grow. He could plant any seed and up would grow beautiful blossoms and rich green leaves. Ping's family and friends would marvel at the wonderful things he was able to grow.

Now, the Emperor in those days was also a great lover of flowers and loved to spend time in his garden, which was filled with beautiful shrubs and fine fruit trees. Each day he would tend to all the lovely things growing there.

But unfortunately, the good Emperor was growing old and was becoming more and more worried about finding someone who would rule fairly after he was gone. How should he choose someone, he wondered daily. Finally, he decided that because he loved flowers so much, he would let the flowers do the choosing.

The very next day, the Emperor issued a proclamation throughout the land.

All the children in the realm were to come to the palace. Each child would be given special flower seeds to plant. “Whoever returns with the best in a year's time will inherit my throne!” were the Emperor's words.

Everyone was so excited by the possibilities and the next day all the children of the land gathered in a long line to await their seeds from the Emperor.

Ping, so anxious to have something to grow for the Emperor, traveled the long distance from his home to the palace. He waited patiently in the long line until, at last, he gladly received his seed from the Emperor. Ping was overjoyed. He was certain that he would grow the most exquisite flower with such a seed.

When he arrived home, he chose a sturdy pot and filled it with good soil. Each day he watered it lovingly and made sure it got the sunshine it needed. He could not wait to see it sprout and grow into a beautiful flower!

Days passed, and Ping waited patiently, but nothing happened. He became worried and put the seed in a larger pot with more good soil. He watered it carefully and made certain it received sunlight, and still nothing happened. Finally, he put the seed into an even better pot and made sure it had the richest soil. He continued to care for it, and watched over it for months, yet no sprouts came. Month after month Ping tried and waited until finally the year was up.

The day had arrived for all the children to return to the palace with the flowers they had grown. They flooded toward the palace gates, eager to be chosen as the next emperor. Ping watched as children with azaleas, peonies, and chrysanthemums streamed by. He saw roses and lilies and orchids like he had never seen before. He was so ashamed of his empty pot. He could not believe that for once he had not been able to make a flower grow.

Just then his friend passed by, holding a beautiful white lily. “Ping!” he cried. “What are you doing with that empty pot? Couldn't you grow anything at all? I'm on my way to the palace with this great big flower now. Where's yours?” The boy did not wait for Ping to answer. He sped off to see if he would be chosen by the Emperor.