



# William Tell

Once upon a time a man named Gessler came to Switzerland and took over as the ruler of the Swiss people. He was cruel and treated them as slaves. Among the beautiful mountains of that country, there lived a brave huntsman called William Tell. In all the world there was no one who could shoot with a bow and arrows as well as he. Tell hated the cruel Gessler and the strangers that had come with him into Switzerland.

One day Gessler hung his hat on a tall pole in the town square. Then he gave orders that every man who passed by should bow to this hat. There was one man and one child who would not do this—William Tell and his son.

When Gessler heard that Tell had passed the pole and not bowed to his hat, he was glad because he had now a good excuse for putting Tell in prison. Gessler had long been afraid of the huntsman, and wanted very much to put him where he could do no harm.

William Tell and his son were kept in prison for a long time. Gessler did not mean that they should ever be free again.

One day Gessler thought of a cruel plan. He ordered Tell to be brought before him. "I hear," he said, "that you can shoot well with a bow and arrows."

Tell answered, "That is so."

"Then that is just what I want you to do," said Gessler, "and that is what you shall do.

Tomorrow, your son shall stand at one side of the public square, with an apple on his head. You shall stand at the other side

and shoot the apple with an arrow."

"You do not mean it," said Tell.

"I do," said Gessler. "If you will not do it, your son shall be killed before your eyes."

"You want me to kill my boy," he said.

"No," said Gessler, "I want you to shoot the apple. If you do not hit it, both you and your boy shall die."

"And what if I do hit it?" asked Tell.

"Then both of you shall go free," said Gessler. And so at last Tell said he would try.

The next day the little boy was made to stand up at one side of the public square with a small apple on his head. "I am not afraid, father," he said. "I know you will hit it."

Tell raised the bow. Twang! The arrow flew through the air. There was a great shout from the people. What did it mean?

Tell had turned his face, for he was afraid he had shot his son. Then he felt a little arm around his neck. "Father, I am safe! The arrow went right through the center of the apple!"

That was why the people shouted. Even Gessler's men were glad. But Gessler was angry and would have sent Tell back to prison, if he had dared. But he saw that Tell had more friends than he.

"You may go free, now," he said, "But do not come in my way again."

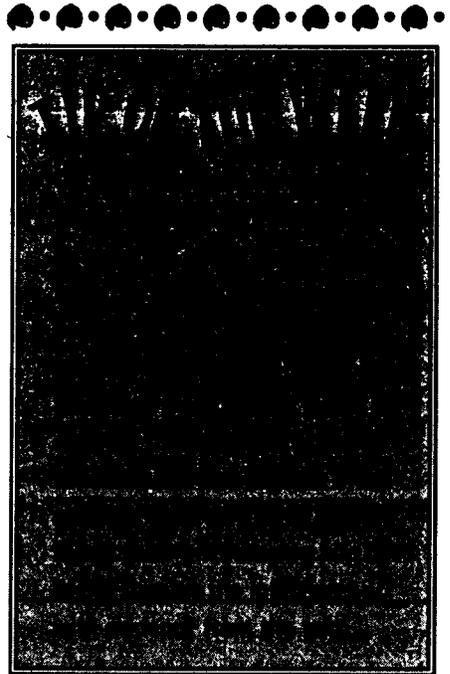
The huntsman and his child went back to their home among the mountains, and the good wishes of all the people went with them.

Taken from *Baldwin's Readers*, Third Year © 1897



**Dear Parents**

This version of William Tell's story was taken from a Baldwin's Reader, published in 1897—proof that some stories are truly timeless. I hope you and your child enjoy this version of the story. Please remind your child that this is a story from European folklore and that it involves a dangerous, unrealistic situation that they should not attempt.



## The Questions



List three words each to best describe Tell and Gessler:

Tell

Gessler

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now complete the following sentences using one word from each answer and some information from the story to justify your choice of words.

I think William Tell was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

I think Gessler was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

We have completed this assignment together.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature