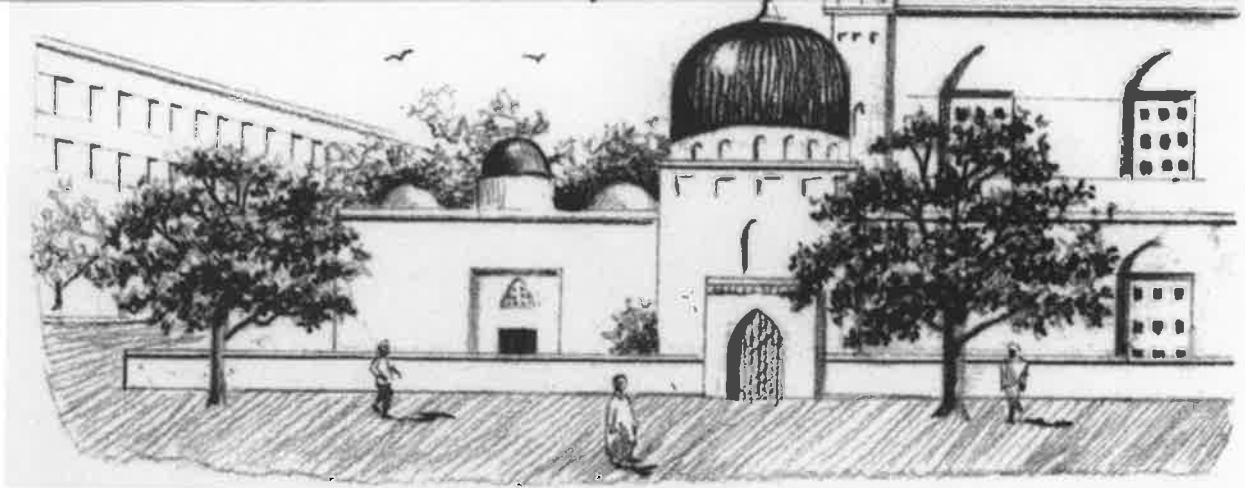




The Great Minu

A West African Folktale
by Beth P. Wilson

- 1 Far away in the African country of Ghana there lived a poor farmer. He decided to make a journey to the big city of Accra some distance away. Looking over his small farm, he took note of the yams and corn growing in the garden. Then he fed his chickens and goats, latched the door of his straw-roofed hut, and started off down the narrow, dusty road.
- 2 The farmer hummed happily to himself as the morning sun rose higher in the sky. How exciting to be going to the big city! Nothing
- 3 much happened in his tiny village. But since Accra was the largest city in Ghana, he would find much excitement there.
- 4 After walking for some time, the farmer at last approached some farms just outside Accra. The first thing he noticed was a great herd of cows. He wondered who could own such a herd. Seeing a man with them, he asked, "To whom do these cows belong?"
- 5 The man did not know the language of the farmer. So he shrugged his shoulders and



- said, "Minu," meaning "I do not understand."
- 5 The farmer thought Minu must be a person. And so he exclaimed, "Mr. Minu must be very rich!"
- 6 Entering the city, the farmer saw some large new buildings in the town square. He wondered who might own the fine buildings. But the old woman he asked could not understand his question. So she answered, "Minu."
- 7 "Good heavens!" cried the farmer. "What a rich fellow Mr. Minu must be to own all those cows and all these buildings too!"
- 8 Soon he came to a great hotel surrounded by beautiful grounds and mahogany trees. A group of well-dressed women came down the front steps of the hotel. The farmer stepped up to them and asked who might be the owner of such a grand hotel.
- 9 The women smiled and said, "Minu."
- 10 "How wealthy Mr. Minu is!" exclaimed the astonished farmer.
- 11 He wandered from one area of the city to another. Seeing a large house with many columns and porches, he stopped in surprise. "These homes in Accra are so grand. They are not a bit like the huts of my village," he said. Just then a servant came out. The farmer stepped up hurriedly and asked, "Please tell me who owns this fine house."
- 12 The young woman shrugged her shoulders. "Minu," she said.
- 13 "How foolish of me to ask!" the farmer said. "The Great Minu, of course." He stood for a moment, admiring the house and garden. Then he went on.
- 14 Finally he came to the ocean. There he saw workers loading bananas, cocoa beans, and wood on a huge ship. The blue sky above, the foamy green ocean below, and the sailors rushing about on board ship made quite a sight. Surprised at the great cargo, the farmer went over to a worker. "To whom does this fine vessel belong?" he asked.
- 15 "Minu," replied the puzzled man, who couldn't understand a word the farmer said.
- 16 "To the Great Minu also?" the farmer asked. "He is the richest man I ever heard of!"
- 17 Just as the farmer was setting out for home, he saw some people carrying a coffin down the main street of Accra. A long procession of men and women, all dressed in black, followed them. Those who were watching shook their heads slowly. Sad faces looked up now and then. When the farmer asked one of the mourners the name of the dead person, he received the usual reply, "Minu."
- 18 "Mr. Minu is dead?" wailed the farmer. "Poor Mr. Minu! So he had to leave all his wealth—his herd of cows, his buildings, his grand hotel, and his fine ship—and die just like a poor person. Well, well, in the future I'll be content to live a simple life, to breathe the fresh air on my little farm, and to help the poor people in my little village."
- 19 The long dusty road back didn't seem as long as it had before. When the farmer arrived home, he unlatched the door of his hut and looked inside. Then he climbed into his own snug bed and dreamed of the good yams and corn he would eat the next day.

How Well Did You Read?

Write the letter of the best answer for each question.

- 1 Many different languages are spoken in Africa. Why is this fact important in understanding the story?
 - a It explains why the farmer travelled to Accra.
 - b It explains why the farmer and the people of Accra couldn't understand each other.
 - c It explains why the farmer decided to go home again.
- 2 Why did the farmer go to Accra?
 - a He wanted to learn a new language.
 - b He wanted to visit an exciting city.
 - c He wanted to sell his crops.
- 3 What did the farmer think about "Mr. Minu"?
 - a That Mr. Minu must be dangerous
 - b That Mr. Minu must be rich and great
 - c That Mr. Minu must be well liked
- 4 How have the farmer's feelings changed by the end of the story?
 - a He feels more content with his own simple life.
 - b He feels less content.
 - c He wants to make the city his permanent home.
- 5 Which of the following ideas was most important to the ending of the story?
 - a The farmer thought that Mr. Minu owned a great hotel.
 - b The farmer thought that Mr. Minu owned a ship.
 - c The farmer thought that Mr. Minu had died.
- 6 What lesson did the farmer draw from the things he had seen and heard?
 - a When death comes, rich and poor are made equal.
 - b People might as well be satisfied with whatever they have.
 - c Both a and b
- 7 What did the people of Accra mean when they said "minu"?
 - a "I don't understand."
 - b "It belongs to Mr. Minu."
 - c Both a and b

Learn about Words

Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 trip (1)
- 2 came near (3)
- 3 speech, spoken or written (4)
- 4 encircled; enclosed on all sides (8)
- 5 amazed; very surprised (10)
- 6 load of goods; freight (14)
- 7 burial box for a dead person (17)

- B** A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning depends on the way it is used. The word *watch* is an example.

A guard stood *watch*.
My *watch* is fast.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a** or **b**. Write *a* or *b*.

- 8 great** (3)
a big; large
b important; famous

- 9 fine** (6)
a very small or thin
b very good; excellent

- 10 columns** (11)
a slender, upright posts; pillars
b vertical sections of a printed page

Word Study

- C** serv \acute{e} + **ant** = servant (one who serves)
break + **age** = breakage (result of breaking)

Many nouns end in *ant* and *age*. Often *ant* means "one who," and *age* means "result of." Read each word in **heavy type** and the incomplete definition of it. Write the word that completes the definition.

- 11 spoilage**: result of ____
12 package: result of ____
13 attendant: one who ____
14 defendant: one who ____
15 leakage: result of ____
16 contestant: one who ____
17 coverage: result of ____
18 assistant: one who ____

- D** The small boat / swayed in the wind.
(Subject) (Predicate)
The baby / cried all night.
(Subject) (Predicate)
Diane and Ann / walked to the park.
(Subject) (Predicate)

Each of the sentences above has a subject and a predicate. Read the sentences below and notice the words in **heavy type**. If those words are the subject of the sentence, write *S*. If they are the predicate, write *P*.

- 19 The basket** is in the car.
20 The camel ran through the desert.
21 The food is on the table.
22 A giraffe has a long neck.
23 The noise awakened me.
24 My teacher left the room.
25 The queen lives in the palace.
26 We climbed the mountain.

- E** If you want information from an encyclopedia, you have to decide where the information you want is most likely to be found. For example, if you want to know how long pandas live, you would probably decide to look in the *P* volume for an entry called "Panda." Complete each statement below by writing the word that names the most likely entry.

- 27** Tom wants to know about boats of all kinds. He should look up (Water, Boating, Sailing).
28 Arnetta wants to know when Julius Caesar lived. She should look up (Roman, General, Caesar).
29 Beverly wants to find out what porpoises eat. She should look up (Porpoise, Aquamarine, Food).
30 Kim wants to find out how many people live in Tokyo. She should look up (Tokyo, Japan, Population).
31 Carol wants to find out where chocolate comes from. She should look up (Sweets, Chocolate, Plants).
32 Chuck wants to find a photo of a zebra. He should look up (Africa, Photography, Zebra).
33 Mae wants to know about the training of guide dogs for the blind. She should look up (Guide Dog, Blind, Vision).