

King Alfred and the beggar

Sist oppdatert: 15. november 2003

At one time the Danes drove King Alfred from his kingdom, and he had to lie hidden for a long time on a little island in a river.

One day, all who were on the island, except the king and queen and one servant, went out to fish. It was a very lonely place, and no one could get to it except by a boat. About noon a ragged beggar came to the king's door, and asked for food.



The king called the servant, and asked, «How much food have we in the house?»

«My lord,» said the servant, «we have only one loaf and a little wine.»

Then the king gave thanks to God, and said, «Give half of the loaf and half of the wine to this poor man.»

The servant did as he was told. The beggar thanked the king for his kindness, and went on his way.

In the afternoon the men who had gone out to fish came back. They had three boats full of fish, and they said, «We have caught more fish today than in all the other days that we have been on this island.»

The king was glad, and he and his people were more hopeful than they had ever been before.

When night came, the king lay awake for a long time, and thought about the things that had happened that day. At last he fancied that he saw a great light like the sun; and in the midst of the light there stood an old man with black hair, holding an open book in his hand.

It may all have been a dream, and yet to the king it seemed very real indeed. He looked and wondered, but was not afraid.

«Who are you?» he asked of the old man.

«King Alfred and the beggar»

«Alfred, my son, be brave,» said the man; «for I am the one to whom you gave this day the half of all the food that you had. Be strong and joyful of heart, and listen to what I say. Rise up early in the morning and blow your horn three times, so loudly that the Danes may hear it. By nine o'clock, five hundred men will be around you ready to be led into battle. Go forth bravely, and within seven days your enemies shall be beaten, and you shall go back to your kingdom to reign in peace.»

Then the light went out, and the man was seen no more.

In the morning the king arose early, and crossed over to the mainland. Then he blew his horn three times very loudly; and when his friends heard it they were glad, but the Danes were filled with fear.

At nine o'clock, five hundred of his bravest soldiers stood around him ready for battle. He spoke, and told them what he had seen and heard in his dream; and when he had finished, they all cheered loudly, and said that they would follow him and fight for him so long as they had strength.

So they went out bravely to battle; and they beat the Danes, and drove them back into their own place. And King Alfred ruled wisely and well over all his people for the rest of his days.

A. Questions

1. Where did Alfred hide after the Danes had driven him from his kingdom?

2. How much food did Alfred have in the house when the beggar came?

3. How much food did Alfred tell his servant to give to the beggar?

4. How much fish did his men catch that day?

5. What did the person in the dream tell Alfred to do?

B. Gap-filling exercise

Use the following words to fill in the blanks in the text below:

island - went - thanks - boat - half - lonely - beggar - food - loaf - except - Danes

At one time the _____ drove King Alfred from his kingdom, and he had to lie hidden for a long time on a little _____ in a river. One day, all who were on the island, _____ the king and queen and one servant, _____ out to fish. It was a very _____ place, and no one could get to it except by a _____. About noon a ragged _____ came to the king's door, and asked for _____. The king called the servant, and

asked, «How much food have we in the house?» «My lord,» said the servant, «we have only one _____ and a little wine.» Then the king gave _____ to God, and said, «Give half of the loaf and _____ of the wine to this poor man.»

C. Writing

What would you do if you were a king for a day? Write at least five things.

D. Adjectives

Write the comparison form (komparativ) and the greatest comparison form (superlativ) of these adjectives as shown in the examples:

big – bigger – biggest

beautiful – more beautiful – most beautiful

old – _____ – _____

lonely – _____ – _____

strong – _____ – _____

hopeful – _____ – _____

brave – _____ – _____

black – _____ – _____

red – _____ – _____

big – _____ – _____

bright – _____ – _____

hot – _____ – _____

Answers

A. Questions

1. **Where did Alfred hide after the Danes had driven him from his kingdom?**
On a little island in a river.
2. **How much food did Alfred have in the house when the beggar came?**
One loaf and a little wine.
3. **How much food did Alfred tell his servant to give to the beggar?**
Half of the loaf and half of the wine.
4. **How much fish did his men catch that day?**
Three boats full of fish.
5. **What did the person in the dream tell Alfred to do?**
To rise up early in the morning and blow his horn three times, so loudly that the Danes would hear it and then attack the Danes.

B. Gap-filling exercise

At one time the *Danes* drove King Alfred from his kingdom, and he had to lie hidden for a long time on a little *island* in a river. One day, all who were on the island, *except* the king and queen and one servant, *went* out to fish. It was a very *lonely* place, and no one could get to it except by a *boat*. About noon a ragged *beggar* came to the king's door, and asked for *food*. The king called the servant, and asked, «How much food have we in the house?» «My lord,» said the servant, «we have only one *loaf* and a little wine.» Then the king gave *thanks* to God, and said, «Give half of the loaf and *half* of the wine to this poor man.»

C. Writing

[No specific answer to this assignment.]

D. Adjectives

old – *older* – *oldest*

lonely – *lonelier* – *loneliest*

strong – *stronger* – *strongest*

hopeful – *more hopeful* – *most hopeful*

brave – *braver* – *bravest*

black – **black**er – **black**est

red – **red**der – **red**dest

big – **big**ger – **big**gest

bright – **bright**er – **bright**est

hot – **hot**ter – **hot**test

Philosophical questions

1. *The King has very little food himself, but nonetheless he gives the beggar half of it. Did he do this out of kindness or do you think Alfred had his reasons for acting as he did? Perhaps he was superstitious (overtroisk) and thought that kindness towards poor people would be rewarded at a later stage?*

If someone asked for your jacket and your boots when you were already freezing very much, would you give it to him just because he was cold too? If you thought you would later win in the lottery, would you then do it? If this was your motivation, would it still be an act of compassion? Or would it be an egoistic thing to do?

2. *Who was this beggar anyway? In the story he later appears in King Alfred's dream as a mystical man in the midst of the sun. In other words: he is some sort of a divine character, only disguised (forklædd) as a beggar.*

Do you believe that some people that we can see with our eyes and hear and talk to quite normally – that they are something else than they look like? Many people believe that Jesus Christ was a God although he looked exactly like a human being. Do you know or have you seen persons who just might be something else than they look like? If so, what made you think that they were something else? Explain.

3. *In the battle with the Danes King Alfred killed a lot of his enemies. Does that make him a murderer? Later he became a king whom the people loved and adored. Why do we adore some «murderers» and hate others? Is it different to kill someone in a military battle than to kill someone in a fight or quarrel (krangel)? What is the difference?*