

AESOP'S FABLE: The Boy and the Filberts in Ancient Greece

An Ancient Greek Play Written by Connie Frank



Narrator on the Uses of Filberts: In ancient times, fossil records from several areas in the world dated filberts back thousands of years. In China, filberts were uncovered showing they were one of five sacred foods prehistorically. Records in Scandinavia show hazelnuts shells in areas dating back 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. In 1995, a midden in Scotland was uncovered producing hundreds of burnt hazelnut shells in a pit that dated back 6,000 BC. The ancient Celts believed many different trees to be mystical expressions of wisdom and divine inspiration. An old Gaelic word for filberts is “Cno” and is similar to the Gaelic word for wisdom, “Cnocach”. In one Celtic tale, nine sacred hazelnut trees surround a sacred pool. The tree dropped their nuts into the pool where salmon ate the nuts and acquired the nut’s mystical wisdom. It is said the number of spots on the side of fish showed how many nuts the fish had eaten. The Romans and Greeks have record of filberts also. Pliny apparently recorded that hazelnut came from Damascus and that the Romans frequently gathered the nuts for food. Interestingly the Greeks used the nuts to treat coughs and colds.

Characters:	
	Narrator:
	Adrian:
	Patrik:
	Alexander:
	Belen:
	Ophelia:
Script:	
Narrator:	A young boy of eight years leans against the pillar of the gymnasium, coughing.
Adrian:	Hey Patrik! You made it!
Patrik:	(Coughing): Hi Adrian. Yeah, I don’t feel well, but I’m here.
Alexander:	(Walking up to Patrik): I knew you were not feeling well, but I thought that the gods would make you well by now.
Patrik:	(grinning): I thought so too, but well, here I am. So Adrian, Alexander told me you have a new tutor.
Narrator:	Getting an education in Ancient Greece was considered the highest responsibility for boys. Education came through in physical education, reading, writing on clay tablets, and memorizing poetry. In recent years, girls were also being tutored at home. Women had been left out for years, and in Greece were fine with learning how to run a household, but lately they were looking for opportunities to be educated too. In the Hellenistic period of Ancient Greece, education in a gymnasium school was considered essential for participation in the Greek culture. Education was an essential component of a person’s identity, especially for the wealthy democratic country, and the educational journey started at age seven years old.
Alexander:	(Grinning): Yes, his name is Hephaestus, and he seems pretty smart.
Adrian:	He is a friend of my tutor, Cadmus.
Belen:	(Walking up to the boys): Patrik! Adrian! Get into the physical education room. We are starting in a minute. Alexander, let’s go!

Narrator:	Besides reading, writing, and poetry, the class of physical education was the most important for the boys. Competition and intensity were second nature to every Greek. During this time, physical education proved to be important, because it was a necessity in training both Greek soldiers and athletes. As the boys ran through every activity, each boy showed an excellent eye for archery and swimming.
Adrian:	Wow, that was hard! (Sweat was dripping down his face).
Alexander:	(Panting): Patrik, I hear you coughing again. How are you able to keep up?
Patrik:	(coughing): I can't give up. You know my family has some of the greatest warriors of our time.
Belen:	(Walking up to the boys): Hey guys, I am calling it a day. Patrik, go straight home and get better by tomorrow. We have a javelin competition tomorrow, and I want you to be at your best.
Narrator:	As the boys walked out of the gymnasium and toward their homes, the hustle and bustle of the city of Athens swallowed them. People were everywhere, walking through the vendors. Announcements were being made on the public voting, and Patrik could not wait to be old enough to vote. Only men could vote in Ancient Greece, and he had to be 20 years old to do it. In fact, it was his duty to be part of the voting process as a citizen.
Patrik:	(Coughing): Bye guys! See you tomorrow!
Alexander:	(Waving): Patrik, feel better. Your mom will know what to do.
Adrian:	(Waving): Yeah, your mom is the best in Athens.
Narrator:	Patrik's mother was the most celebrated midwife in Athens. As Patrik entered their courtyard, he noted the brilliant tapestries and handiwork of his mother Ophelia.
Patrik:	Hi Mother! (coughing)
Ophelia:	Welcome home, Patrik. (Patrik's mother looked up from her crafting.) How was class?
Patrik:	It was fine, Mother. (coughing)
Ophelia:	Are you well?
Patrik:	It's nothing. I have a cough.
Ophelia:	Come to the kitchen. I have a surprise for you.
Narrator:	Walking across the courtyard and into the kitchen, Patrik was surprised to see a jug sitting on a low table in the room. Ophelia stood in front of the jug and pointed her finger.
Ophelia:	I bought you some hazelnuts at the market. They are called Filberts. They came from Damascus.
Patrik:	I have never seen them before. What do they taste like?
Ophelia:	They are good! I tried some just before you came home.
Patrik:	Why do you want me to eat them?
Ophelia:	They are good for coughs and colds. Our family physician has recommended them to me. I think you should eat some of them right away. While you get some, I need to go check on your baby brother.

Narrator:	The jug was narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. After Patrick was given permission to put his hand into the pitcher to get some filberts, he grinned. Ophelia left the room while Patrick's lips smacked. He was also hungry after all that activity in physical education, but to get to try Filberts was the best. Patrick reached into the pitcher and grabbed a big handful of Filberts. But he had taken such a great fistful of Filberts that he could not draw his hand out again.
Patrick:	Come on! Come on!
Narrator:	His hand hurt. There Patrick stood, unwilling to give up a single Filbert and yet unable to get them all out at once. Vexed and disappointed he began to cry.
Patrick:	Mom! I can't get my hand out!
Ophelia:	Patrick, let go! What are you doing here?
Patrick:	I can't get my hand out of the pitcher! It hurts!
Ophelia:	My boy, be satisfied with half the nuts you have taken. You do not need to take out so many at the same! If you let some of the go back into the pitcher, you can easily get your hand out. Then perhaps you may have some more filberts some other time.
Narrator:	Being very hungry, Patrick got a little greedy, wanting to take a lot of the Filberts out of the pitcher all at the same time. It is something that we have all gone through, being a little greedy when we are hungry or when we feel that we may not get a chance to get more if we like those Filberts. The Filberts actually did help Patrick. His coughing stopped and he was able to go to his physical education class the next day, as healthy as ever.
The moral of the story:	
<i>"Do not attempt too much at once."</i>	