

talk  
to  
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

# Beehive

## 5: A Legend of the Northland

by

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#### 1. Summary

This poem is legend about a selfish little lady. She angered Saint Peter because of her greed. He came to her cottage, hungry and weak, and asked her for one cake from her store. She would not give even a wafer of a cake to Saint Peter. Then Saint felt that she did not deserve to be a human being with food, a place to stay, and a fire to her keep warm. So he turned her into a woodpecker who had to keep boring and boring into wood to get a scanty meal.

Is it true that in some countries the sun doesn't rise at all for many many days? Watch this video! Click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ve41ynkGa6Y&feature=share>

Watch this video to see how reindeers pull sleighs. Click on the link below.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaZ-ETTI\\_v8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaZ-ETTI_v8)

Do you know what a tongue twister is? Try this one about woodpeckers!  
How much wood could a woodpecker peck, if a woodpecker could peck wood?

A woodpecker attacks a tree to get to the delicious termites crawling below the surface. Click on the link below to see the video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ArZokSbJvA>

#### 2. Vocabulary

1. **Legend** - a powerful story handed down from generation to generation, many have a moral  
My grandmother used to tell me many **legends** at bedtime.

2. **Northland** - an imaginary cold place close to the North Pole  
In **Northland**, days are very short in the winter, and very long in summer.
3. **Harness** – control or capture; also a set of straps fastened around a horse's body, connecting it to the vehicle that it pulls  
We need to **harness** the horse to the carriage.
4. **Reindeer** – type of deer  
Children believe that Santa Claus rides on a sledge pulled by **reindeer**.
5. **Sledges** – a type of cart used for transport in snow  
**Sledges** are pulled by dogs or reindeer in Alaska.
6. **Cubs** - baby animals  
Most **cubs** are very cute.
7. **Furry** - covered with hair or fur, usually used to describe animal skins  
My coat has a **furry** collar.
8. **Curious** - strange; wanting to find out about something  
Everybody in my village was very **curious** about the reason for the sudden death of the Pradhan.
9. **Saint** - very holy person  
I went to the **saint** to ask for his blessings before my exams.
10. **Preaching** - lecturing about moral values  
I love my grandmother but sometimes I get tired listening to her because she is **preaching** all the time.
11. **Cottage** - small house  
I live in a **cottage** in my village.
12. **Hearth** - area around fireplace  
When it gets very cold, the entire family gathers around the **hearth**.
13. **Faint** - weak, or to lose consciousness  
The child had such a high temperature that she **fainted**.

14. **Kneaded** - to squeeze with hands, massage, example while making 'atta' for rotis  
When my grandmother was stronger, she **kneaded** the dough each night to make our rotis.
15. **Dough** - a mixture of flour and liquid used for making rotis or breads  
The hardest part of making bread is kneading the **dough**.
16. **Wafer** - very thin piece  
I love eating **wafer** chips.
17. **Provoke** - purposely annoy someone  
The mischievous boy **provoked** his sister by pinching her.
18. **Dwell** - live  
Fish **dwell** in the sea.
19. **Scanty** - very little  
The beggar was wearing **scanty** clothing.
20. **Boring** - make a hole; also very dull  
I saw a rat **boring** a hole under the tree.  
It was a very **boring** film and so I fell asleep in front of the television.
21. **Chimney** - pipe to take out smoke from a fire place  
Kitchens should have **chimneys** or open windows; otherwise they will be full of unhealthy smoke.
22. **Woodpecker** - type of bird with strong beak  
**Woodpeckers** peck wood to find their food.
23. **Scarlet** - bright red colour  
The actress attracted a lot of attention by wearing a **scarlet** dress.
24. **Coal** – fuel that is dug from the earth and burned to produce heat  
In the olden days all the cooking was done on a **coal** fire.

### 3. Stanza By Stanza Translation

Away, away in the Northland,  
Where the hours of the day are few,  
And the nights are so long in winter  
That they cannot sleep them through;

Far away, it is winter in an imaginary country called Northland. In winter, the sun shines for a very few hours, and the nights are so long, that people can't sleep through the entire night.

Where they harness the swift reindeer  
To the sledges, when it snows;  
And the children look like bear's cubs  
In their funny, furry clothes:

They harness their reindeer to sledges when it snows. (The reindeer pull the sledges over the snow.) And their children are wrapped up in funny furry clothes, so they look like bear cubs.

They tell them a curious story—  
I don't believe 'tis true;  
And yet you may learn a lesson  
If I tell the tale to you.

The people tell them a strange story that is probably not true. And yet, it carries an important moral.

Once, when the good Saint Peter  
Lived in the world below,  
And walked about it, preaching,  
Just as he did, you know,

Once upon a time, Saint Peter, came to visit our world. He walked around teaching people how to live better lives.

He came to the door of a cottage,  
In travelling round the earth,  
Where a little woman was making cakes,  
And baking them on the hearth

As he was travelling around the earth, he came to the door of a cottage where a woman was baking cakes on the hearth.

And being faint with fasting,  
For the day was almost done,  
He asked her, from her store of cakes,  
To give him a single one.

He had not eaten for a long time, so he was feeling very weak. He requested her to give him one cake from her store.

So she made a very little cake,  
But as it baking lay,  
She looked at it, and thought it seemed  
Too large to give away.

She made a very little cake, but while it was baking, she thought it was too large to give away.

Therefore she kneaded another,  
And still a smaller one;  
But it looked, when she turned it over,  
As large as the first had done.

So she kneaded dough for an even smaller cake. But when she looked at it, she felt it was as large as the first one.

Then she took a tiny scrap of dough,  
And rolled and rolled it flat;  
And baked it thin as a wafer –  
But she couldn't part with that.

Then she took a tiny piece of dough and rolled it very flat. She baked it so that it was as thin as a wafer. But she could not part with that either.

For she said, "My cakes that seem too small  
When I eat of them myself  
Are yet too large to give away."  
So she put them on the shelf.

She said that the cakes that seemed too small for her to eat herself, were still too large to give away. So she put them on the kitchen shelf.

Then good Saint Peter grew angry,  
For he was hungry and faint;  
And surely such a woman  
Was enough to provoke a saint.

Then, the good Saint Peter got angry because he was hungry and weak. The woman was so selfish that she could even make a saint angry. Saints are normally very peaceful people.

And he said, "You are far too selfish  
To dwell in a human form,  
To have both food and shelter,  
And fire to keep you warm.

He told her that she was far too selfish to remain a human being, who had food, a home and a fire to keep her warm.

Now, you shall build as the birds do,  
And shall get your scanty food  
By boring, and boring, and boring,  
All day in the hard, dry wood."

He told her that she would now have to live like a bird, build her own home, and get some scanty food by digging into the hard wood all day.

Then up she went through the chimney,  
Never speaking a word,  
And out of the top flew a woodpecker,  
For she was changed to a bird.

She went flying out through the chimney, without speaking a word. A woodpecker came out of the chimney, because she had been turned into a bird!

She had a scarlet cap on her head,  
And that was left the same;  
But all the rest of her clothes were burned  
Black as a coal in the flame.

She had been wearing a bright red cap on her head, and the bird had the same cap now. But the rest of her clothes were burned black as the coal in the fireplace.

And every country school boy  
Has seen her in the wood,  
Where she lives in the tree still this very day,  
Boring and boring for food.

Every schoolboy who lives out in the country has seen her in the forest. She lives in the trees till today, boring into the wood for food.

#### 4. Questions

I.

1. Which country or countries do you think “the Northland” refers to?
2. What did Saint Peter ask the old lady for? What was the lady’s reaction?
3. How did he punish her?
4. How does the woodpecker get her food?
5. Do you think that the old lady would have been so ungenerous if she had known who Saint Peter really was? What would she have done then?

6. **Is this a true story? Which part of this poem do you feel is the most important?**
7. **What is a legend? Why is this poem called a legend?**
8. **Write the story of 'A Legend of the Northland' in about ten sentences.**

**II.**

1. **Let's look at the words at the end of the second and fourth lines, viz., 'snows' and 'clothes', 'true' and 'you', 'below' and 'know.' We find that 'snows' rhymes with 'clothes', 'true' rhymes with 'you' and 'below' rhymes with 'know'. Find more such rhyming words.**
2. **Go to the local library or talk to older persons in your locality and find legends in your own language. Tell the class these legends.**

**5. Literary Devices**

1. **Rhyme scheme of the poem: abcb**

Away, away in the Northland,	<b>a</b>
Where the hours of the day are <b>few</b> ,	<b>b</b>
And the nights are so long in winter	<b>c</b>
That they cannot sleep them <b>through</b> ;	<b>b</b>

2. **Alliteration:** The repetition of a consonant sound in two or more close words.

**Stanza 1**

that, they, them through - 'th' sound is repeated

**Stanza 2**

they, the - 'th' sound is repeated

look, like - 'l' sound is repeated

funny, furry - 'f' sound is repeated

3. **Repetition:** Any word or sentence is repeated to lay emphasis on it.

**Stanza 1**

'away' word is repeated

**Stanza 9**

'rolled' word is repeated

**Stanza 13, 16**

'boring' word is repeated

4. **Simile:** Comparison using 'as' or 'like'

**Stanza 2**

'the children look like bear's cubs'. Children compared to bear's cubs

**Stanza 9**

'baked it thin as a wafer'. Cake is compared to a wafer.