



Read the fable carefully. Then answer each question below in a full sentence.

Think about what the character learned and what lesson the fable is teaching.

Kenji and the Mountain Stream

"Oh, this stream!" sighed Kenji, wiping sweat from his brow. "It gives us water for our rice, but then it takes it all away, or sometimes just disappears!" His village, nestled near Mount Fuji, relied on the mountain stream for their precious rice paddies. But the stream was unpredictable. One season, it would swell, overflowing its banks and washing away young shoots. The next, it would dwindle, leaving paddies cracked and dry.



The village elders gathered, worried. Old Master Hiroki, known for his quiet wisdom, spoke softly. "The stream is like a wild horse. You cannot force it, but you can guide it with patience. Observe its path, learn its whims, then build a small, gentle barrier where it naturally wants to slow." Many scoffed, wanting a grand dam or a deep canal. "A small barrier? What good is that against a roaring torrent?" they muttered.

While others began digging massive trenches or hauling heavy stones for large walls, Kenji remembered Master Hiroki's words. He spent days walking along the stream, watching the water flow, listening to its murmurs, feeling the damp earth beneath his straw sandals. He noticed a spot where the current naturally widened and slowed, just before a cluster of bamboo. He tasted the cool, fresh water.



With his bare hands and simple tools, Kenji began to place smooth, rounded river stones in a low, curving line at that spot. He didn't block the water entirely, but gently guided it, creating a shallow pool to collect excess water during



floods and release it slowly during dry spells. It was slow, painstaking work, but he worked with calm focus, humming a traditional folk tune.

Weeks passed. The other villagers, exhausted from their grand projects, watched as their elaborate dams crumbled or their deep canals remained empty. Then came heavy rains, followed by a long, dry spell. Kenji's small, gentle barrier held firm. It softened the floodwaters, diverting them safely, and then slowly fed the thirsty paddies during the drought. His rice harvest was plentiful.

The villagers finally understood Master Hiroki's wisdom. They saw that Kenji's patient observation and subtle guidance had succeeded where brute force failed. From that day, they learned that sometimes, the greatest strength lies not in overpowering a challenge, but in understanding it deeply and working with nature. Wisdom and patience, like Kenji's gentle barrier, yield the richest rewards.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Who is the main character of the story, and where does he live?

(2) What challenge did Kenji and his village face with the mountain stream?

(3) Why did Kenji decide to build a "small, gentle barrier" instead of a large dam like others?



(4) Was Kenji's approach to the stream a good choice? Use a detail from the fable to support your answer.

(5) What lesson does this fable teach about solving problems? How could this lesson help you in real life?

