

The Kingdom of Jewel

(A place Value story)

- by Beth Sutton

This is a two-part story. The first part celebrates chaos; the second brings that chaos to order. It is important to first establish the mood of chaos and clutter, and then have the "order of place value" return things to peace. The story is intended to give the children a feel for the nesting of tens in place value, and the importance of order – and a phrase and song to repeat as they do the counting of their own stones. It is NOT supposed to teach the literal math - that will happen as we do the activities with counting stones or buttons etc. Boggling the story down in the literal math will confuse the children and block them from living into the images. Staying with the mood, rhythm, and magic offers the children a living ground on which to build the conceptual understanding.

*The second graders love "nesting" imagery and repeating patterns (e.g. "leaf on a branch and branch on a limb, and limb on a tree and tree in a bog, and the bog down in the valley-o"), and nesting IS the core principle of place value (units nesting in tens, etc.). Therefore, this story has many nesting images. This helps support the place value **process**.*

After telling the first half, the next day recall and draw Tricky Mischief in utter clutter. Then tell the next half. The day after that, recall the second half and draw something of the armies etc. Do not draw the order yet. The third day, the children count some huge number of manipulatives (buttons, acorn caps, stones and the like), by sorting them. It is best if this number can be in the thousands so they will see how grouping/place value takes them beyond what they could do without it. This is a lengthy process so allow a full lesson. From there you will begin to take it through the digestion and concept stages; suggestions for this are described separately.

At the edge of the sea lies a place where the waters pound the rocky shore hour after hour, day after day, year after year. The cliffs rise so high into the misty skies that they often disappear into the clouds. Here, at the top of the steep cliffs, sits the kingdom of Jewel. In the center of the kingdom, up a steep staircase, down a long, red velvet carpeted corridor, up a small flight of golden steps, is the throne of the king. King Jewel sits on his throne, the tallest man on the tallest seat, in the highest spot on the steepest cliff, far, far above the sea.

From this high seat King Jewel can look out the big glass doors out over the balcony to see all that happens in his kingdom. All day he watches his subjects go on about their business. Farmers tend their fields, shepherds lead their flocks to graze, dairy maids and dairymen milk the cows, churn the butter and whip the cream. Gardeners

prune the trees and tend the flower beds, bakers knead their bread, and all around the children play - dancing, singing, skipping, and chasing, hour after hour while the sun shines bright. And at the end of each day's work and play, each citizen of the kingdom looks over his collection of jewels earned at work, or discovered by playing children hidden in a river bed, or caught between two stones. All the while, King Jewel watches from afar, smiling broadly at the peace and prosperity in his kingdom high above the sea.

Early one evening, just before dusk melted away to night, King Jewel called his chief counselor, Tricky Mischief, to his side. "Look," he said to her as he gestured out across his kingdom. "Look, Tricky Mischief, look." And so she did. Though the sun had nearly set, as Tricky Mischief looked out over the lands, she saw a kingdom filled with light. Light seemed to dart and dance in every house, on every street - sparkles of blue and purple, scarlet and gold, darting and dashing about.

"What is it? What is it?" cried Tricky Mischief, jumping up and down and turning about. And without waiting for an answer, she cried out, "Let's go catch them!" And she turned to run out the door.

"Stop!" commanded the King. "Be still. Look!" he ordered her. "Every sparkle, every flashing spark of light is a jewel. Every night when the workers are home from the fields and the children are in from their play, each family opens its box of jewels and lays them out for all to see. From my throne I can watch the lights dance each evening, until the jewels are returned to their boxes, lids are closed and the families sit down to their dinners. Tonight, Tricky Mischief, tonight I want to know just how many jewels we have here in the kingdom of Jewel. How many do you see? How many could there be?"

Tricky Mischief watched a while. Looking out over the town, she tried to count the flashes of light. She dashed here and there, from one window to the next, to see what she could see. Finally, when it seemed clear that she would never tire, the king called out, "STOP!" And Tricky Mischief did. "Now," said the king in a voice slow and sure. "Tomorrow you will go out to my subjects. You will stand before them and unroll this great scroll. To each you will say, 'The king proclaims this the Day of Jewels. Each citizen must give me all their jewels, and I will count just how many jewels we have in the kingdom of Jewel. All shall be returned to their owners by week's end.' Sleep well, Tricky Mischief, you must gather all the jewels tomorrow."

Tricky Mischief headed right to bed and tried to sleep. But try as she might, her legs just kept jumping up and forcing her to skip from bed to chair to floor to couch, counting all the while. "Practicing," she told herself, "Preparing for tomorrow." But somewhere amid the jumps and skips, she finally fell asleep.