

# DETERMINING THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

**3.R.2.A.a** Read, infer, analyze, and draw conclusions to summarize and sequence the events/plot and explain past events impact future events.

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<a href="#">INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR LESSONS 1–3</a>	Detailed walkthroughs of each lesson.
<a href="#">STUDENT HANDOUTS FOR LESSONS 1–3</a>	Reproducible handouts students will use to complete activities during the lessons.
<a href="#">PASSAGE</a>	A text designed to support the skills students practice in the lessons. You may freely use the provided text or select your own. (Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.)
<a href="#">STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE</a>	A feedback tool for students to complete following the lesson set.

# DETERMINING A STORY'S CENTRAL MESSAGE

## TEACHER NOTES

3.R.2.A.a, Lessons 1–3

### UNIT OVERVIEW

In this unit, students learn how to summarize a folktale and determine its central message or lesson. To accomplish these goals, students determine the most important events and actions in the story and then determine what the character learns. This process of recounting important details is a comprehension tool students can use for all stories they encounter in the future. Throughout the unit, discussions, inductive reasoning activities, read-alouds, theme-scheme questions, and comprehension questions guide students in the process of creating a summary and interpreting the folktale's central message.

**Lesson 1:** In this lesson, students create a summary of the folktale by determining its most important details. According to the research, students learn how to summarize by asking and answering questions about the text and deconstructing its organization. You guide students toward understanding the key details by modeling the comprehension strategies and asking guiding questions.

**Lesson 2:** In this lesson, students identify the folktale's lesson or central message by looking at the main character's actions and what the character learns. Using a character map, students find details from the story that show the character's actions and what the character learns. Students use these details to write a sentence about the story's lesson.

**Lesson 3:** In this lesson, students draw a comic strip that represents the key events of the story and the lesson the character learns. This activity gives students the opportunity to visualize and connect story details to further explore the central message. You model asking and answering questions about the key details and encourage students to think of examples of how the lesson is demonstrated in the folktale.

Research Findings	Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities
<p>Reading strategies, such as questioning and thinking aloud, provide a framework for students to summarize while they read. (Taylor, 1986)</p>	<p>Lesson 1 uses reading strategies and questions to break down the thinking process into comprehensible parts, helping students understand key details.</p>
<p>Questions help students focus on significant information. When students develop and internalize questions, they are able to extract and organize important plot components. (Williams et al., 2002)</p>	<p>All lessons use a questioning process to determine the folktale's central message. Students ask questions of the text to help them interpret what they read.</p>

<p>Before a reader can determine a story's theme, the student needs to analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</p> <p>(Cunningham &amp; Cunningham, 2014)</p>	<p>In all lessons, students analyze the key details and explain how they are related to the central message of the folktale.</p>
<p>Competent readers can identify important ideas in a text and use the text structure to develop a summary.</p> <p>(Jitendra &amp; Gajria, 2011)</p>	<p>In all lessons, students summarize which details from the beginning, middle, and end of the story indicate the central message of the folktale.</p>
<p>When readers create images related to a text, they form unique interpretations, clarify their thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance their understanding.</p> <p>(Miller, 2002)</p>	<p>In Lesson 3, students clarify their thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance their understanding of the central message by creating a comic strip related to the folktale.</p>

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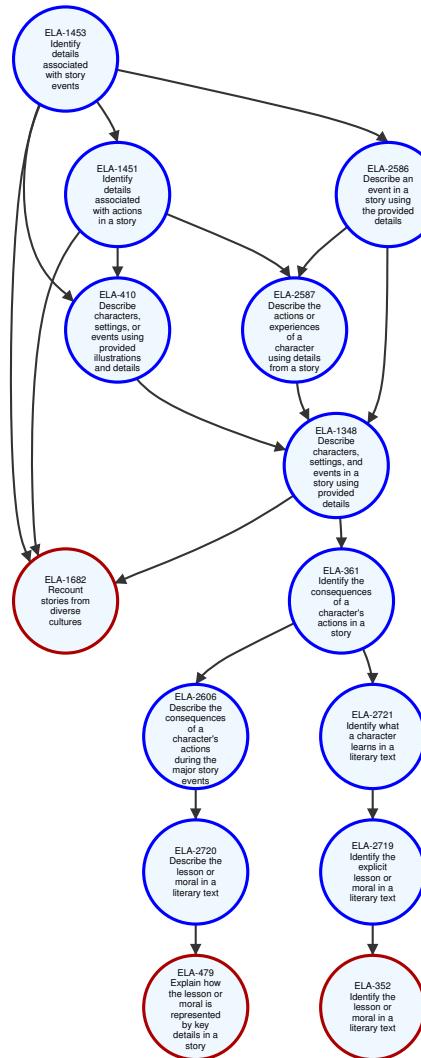
# DETERMINING A STORY'S CENTRAL MESSAGE

## LEARNING MAP TOOL

3.R.2.A.a

### STANDARD

**3.R.2.A.a** Read, infer, analyze, and draw conclusions to summarize and sequence the events/plot and explain past events impact future events.



\*Learning map model for 3.R.2.A.a

Node ID	Node Name	Node Description
ELA-352	IDENTIFY THE LESSON OR MORAL IN A LITERARY TEXT	Identify a lesson, moral, or central message which can be generalized from a literary text using what was learned by a character in it.
ELA-361	IDENTIFY THE CONSEQUENCES OF A CHARACTER'S ACTIONS IN A STORY	Identify the consequences resulting from the specific actions of a character in a story.
ELA-410	DESCRIBE CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, OR EVENTS USING PROVIDED ILLUSTRATIONS AND DETAILS	Describe the characters, settings, or events based on illustrations and details provided in a story.
ELA-479	EXPLAIN HOW THE LESSON OR MORAL IS REPRESENTED BY KEY DETAILS IN A STORY	Explain how specific key details explicitly stated in a story contribute to understanding the lesson or moral.
ELA-1348	DESCRIBE CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, AND EVENTS IN A STORY USING PROVIDED DETAILS	Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story using key details.
ELA-1451	IDENTIFY DETAILS ASSOCIATED WITH ACTIONS IN A STORY	Identify the details that depict specific actions in a story. This skill requires making a conceptual connection between a detail and an action in a story.
ELA-1453	IDENTIFY DETAILS ASSOCIATED WITH STORY EVENTS	Identify the details related to specific events in a story. This skill requires making a conceptual connection between a detail and an event.
ELA-1682	RECOUNT STORIES FROM DIVERSE CULTURES	Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths, from diverse cultures.
ELA-2586	DESCRIBE AN EVENT IN A STORY USING THE PROVIDED DETAILS	Describe an event in a story by using the specific details that depict it.
ELA-2587	DESCRIBE THE ACTIONS OR EXPERIENCES OF A CHARACTER USING DETAILS FROM A STORY	Describe a character's actions or experiences in an event from a story using the specific details that depict it.
ELA-2606	DESCRIBE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A CHARACTER'S ACTIONS DURING THE MAJOR STORY EVENTS	Describe what results from the actions of characters in the major events of a story. The result determines whether the character will be able to achieve the goal.
ELA-2719	IDENTIFY THE EXPLICIT LESSON OR MORAL IN A LITERARY TEXT	Identify an explicit lesson, moral, or central message that can be generalized from a literary text.

ELA-2720	DESCRIBE THE LESSON OR MORAL IN A LITERARY TEXT	Describe the lesson, moral, or central message learned by a character in a narrative.
ELA-2721	IDENTIFY WHAT A CHARACTER LEARNS IN A LITERARY TEXT	Identify what a character learns as a consequence of actions in a literary text.

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# RECOUNTING FOLKTALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

3.R.2.A.a, Lesson 1

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### LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students read a folktale from a world culture and recount the important events in the story.

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### STANDARD

**3.R.2.A.a** Read, infer, analyze, and draw conclusions to summarize and sequence the events/plot and explain past events impact future events.

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### PREPARATION

Before the lesson, find a folktale or myth from a world culture. This unit includes a provided passage, [THE LLAMA AND THE MULE](#), which you are free to copy. For a storybook format, print the story front and back and staple down the side. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.

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### MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ [PASSAGE: THE LLAMA AND THE MULE](#)
  - ▶ white board or chart paper
  - ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: STORY MAP](#)
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### IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can retell the important details in a folktale from a different country.”

**Review** the definition of a *folktale* with the class. **Say**, “A folktale is a story that is passed down verbally from generation to generation. A folktale explains the culture or customs of the country the story comes from.” **Ask** students if they know what a culture or custom is. **Explain** that a culture is a group of people who share

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a set of beliefs and traditions. A custom is a tradition, such as food, religion, manners, or the arts, that is passed from one generation to the next. **Explain** that folktales have a lesson, or moral, that teaches both the character and the reader something. A *moral* is a lesson about how a person should behave or treat another person.

**Direct** students to discuss the following question with a partner or small group: “Do you know any stories or folktales that have a moral or teach a lesson?” **Invite** students to share examples with the class and **collect** responses on the board or chart paper.

**Tell** the class that today you will read a folktale from another country and create a story map of the most important details.

**Divide** students into groups of three and **hand out** [PASSAGE: THE LLAMA AND THE MULE](#) to each student, or display a different selected story. **Direct** students to listen and follow along as you **read** the folktale to the class.

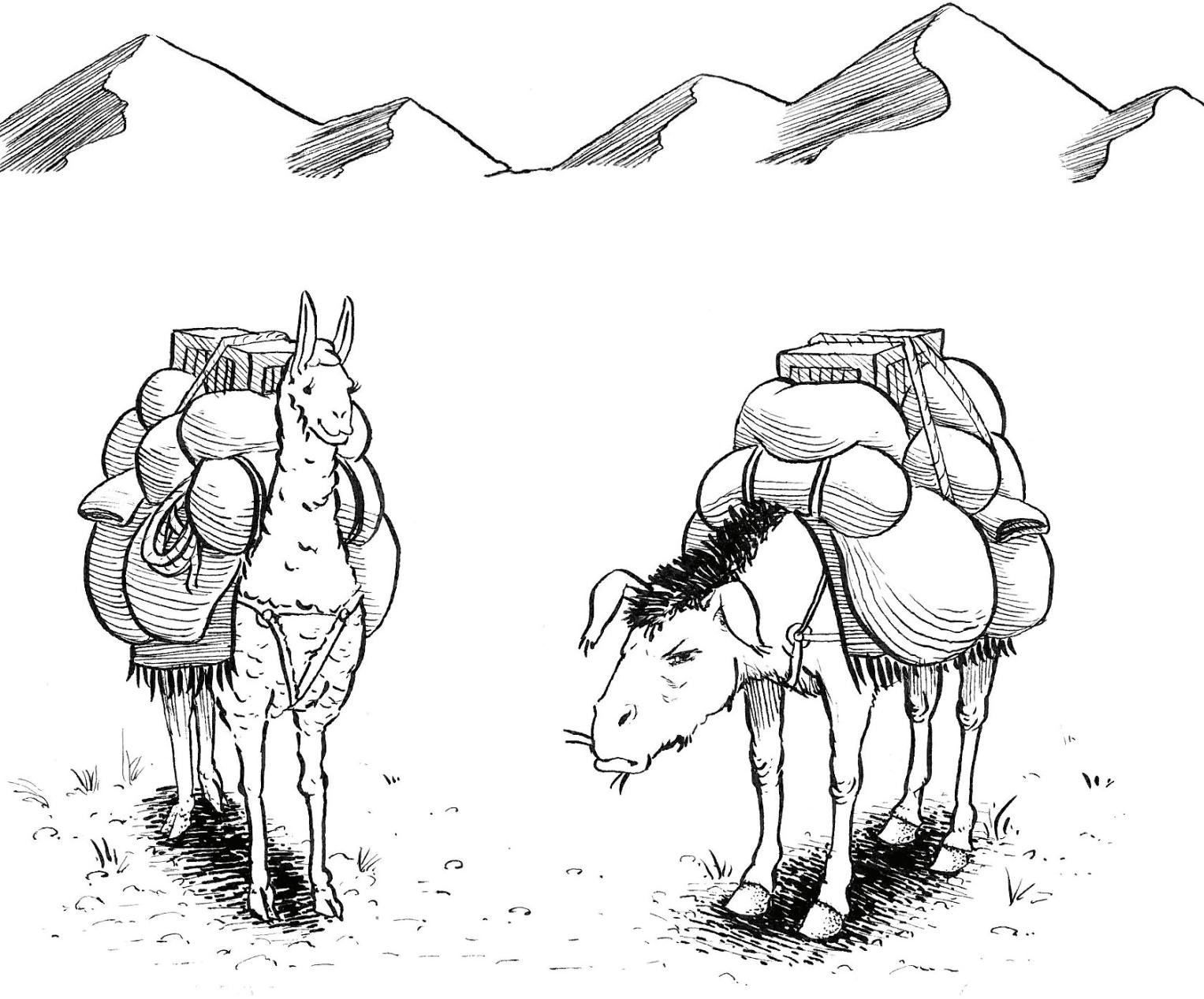
**Pass out** [STUDENT HANDOUT: STORY MAP](#) and **explain** what belongs in each category. Next, **ask** groups to reread the tale together and fill out the handout with the important details.

While students work, **circulate** and ask the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can <b>RECOUNT STORIES FROM DIVERSE CULTURES (ELA-1682):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What happens in the story?</li><li>▶ What are the most important details in the story?</li></ul>	Determine if the student can <b>DESCRIBE THE ACTIONS OR EXPERIENCES OF A CHARACTER USING DETAILS FROM A STORY (ELA-2587):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What happens to the main character in the story?</li><li>▶ How does the character respond to the experience?</li></ul>	Determine if the student can <b>DESCRIBE CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, AND EVENTS IN A STORY USING PROVIDED DETAILS (ELA-1348):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What is the character like at the beginning of the story?</li><li>▶ What is the character like at the end of the story?</li></ul>

To close the lesson, **ask** students to summarize the story and share two important events in their groups. **Call** on random students to share an important event.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.



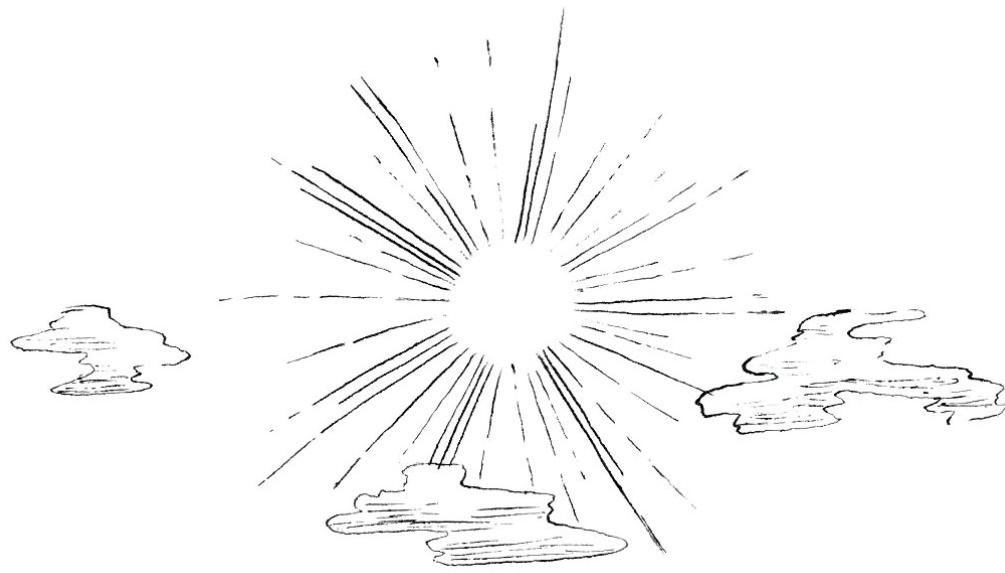
# The Llama and the Mule

**A story based on an Aesop fable**

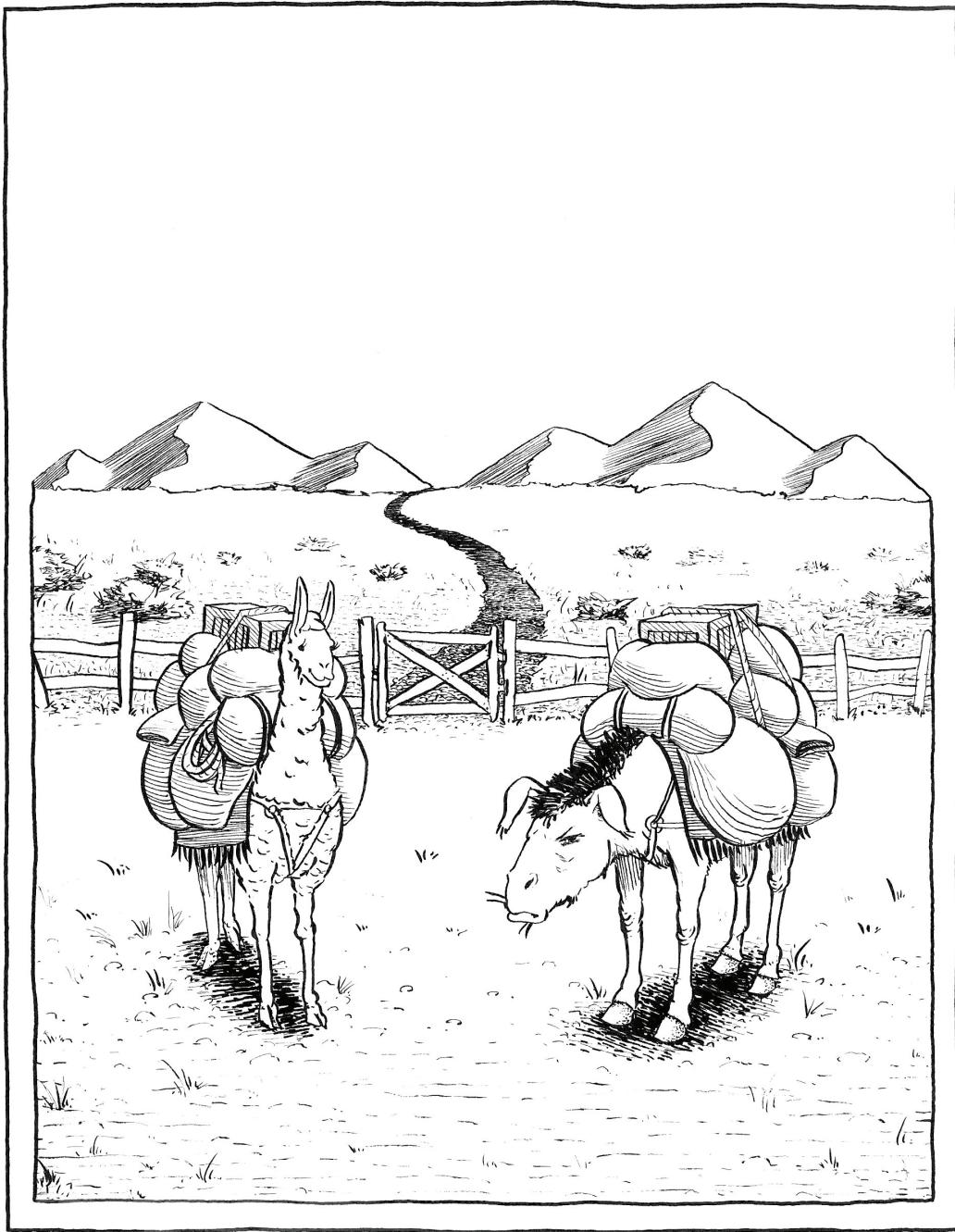
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by Pat Trattles

illustrated by Trevor Eagleman



Early one morning, Mule and Llama set off on a trip to the market. Mule carried half of a merchant's goods on his back, grumbling all the while. Llama cheerfully carried the other half. The journey was a long one. They would need to cross a hot desert, climb a steep mountain, and go through a wide valley before reaching the market.





Mule, who had traveled this way before, kept his head low as he plodded along the dusty path. Llama skipped along, stopping every few steps to look around.

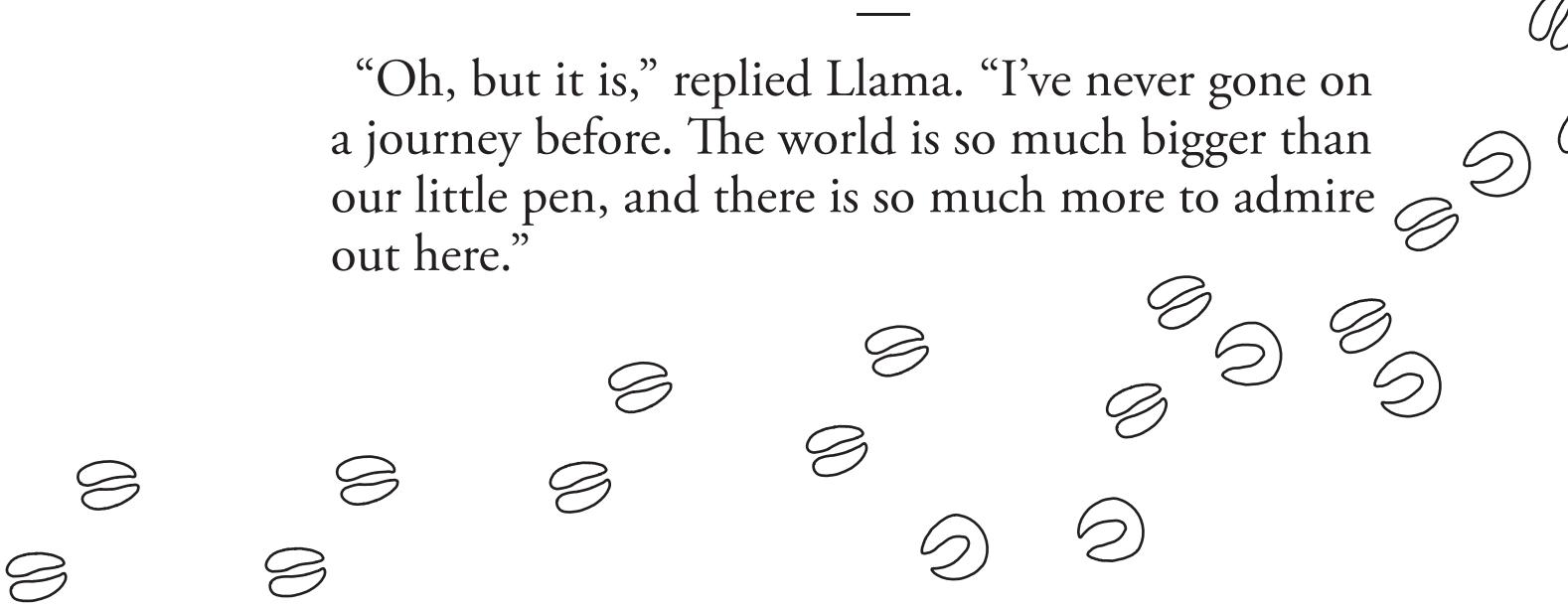
Mule shook his head at Llama.

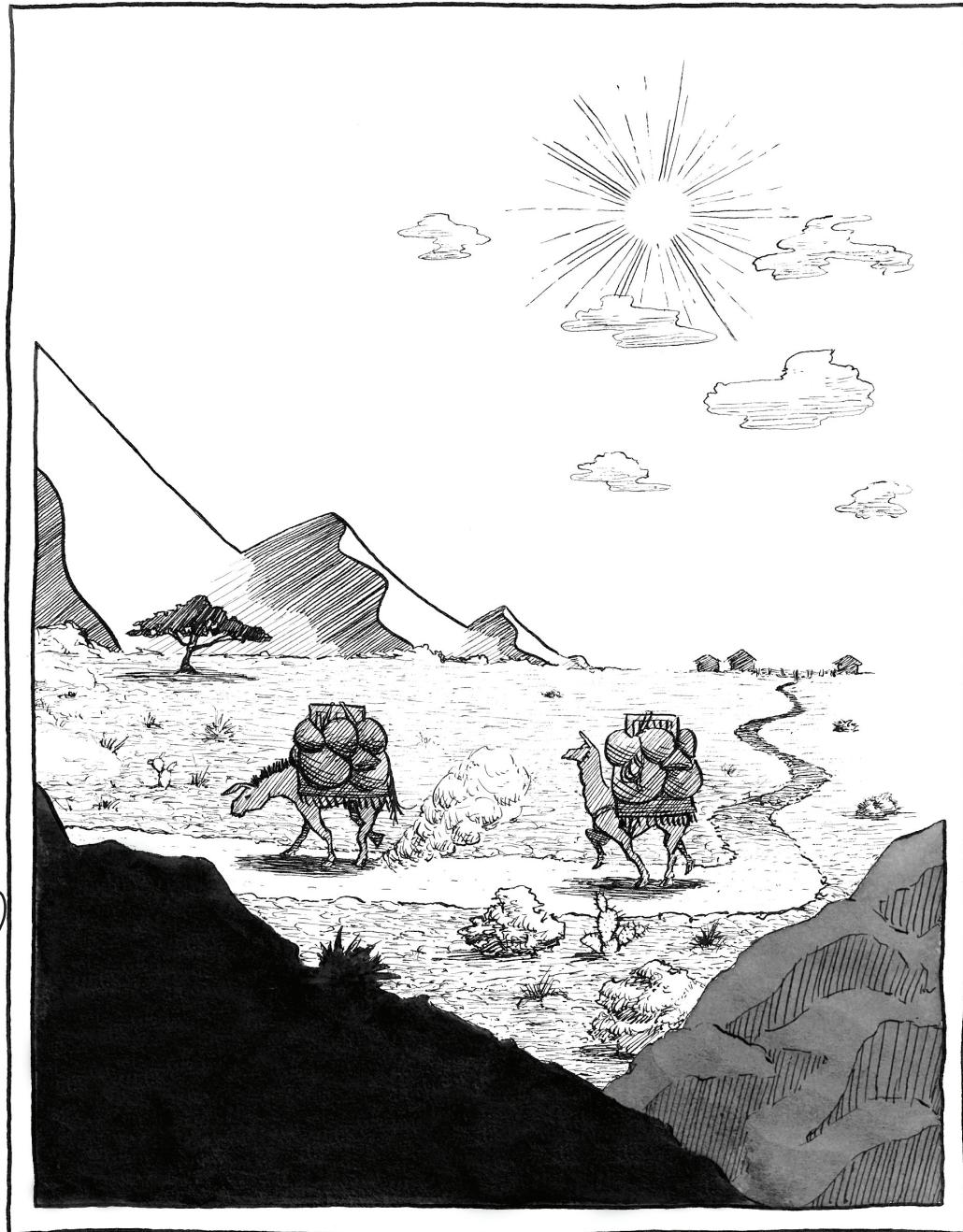
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"We'll take all day," he complained,  
"if you keep acting like this is some  
big adventure."

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"Oh, but it is," replied Llama. "I've never gone on a journey before. The world is so much bigger than our little pen, and there is so much more to admire out here."







"Admire?"

Mule snorted.

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"Admire the dust and the heat and the glaring sun? The journey is just hard work. It will be long enough without stopping to explore."

"There is so much to enjoy," insisted Llama. "We can smell the sweet air, feel the wind on our faces, and notice the interesting sights as we go. It will help the journey feel more pleasant."

Llama's cheerfulness annoyed Mule. "Just pay attention to your work and keep up," Mule said.



Llama did his best to match Mule's pace. Each time Llama slowed down to enjoy the view, Mule grumbled, and Llama trotted to catch up. They traveled through the desert this way until they reached the foot of the mountain.

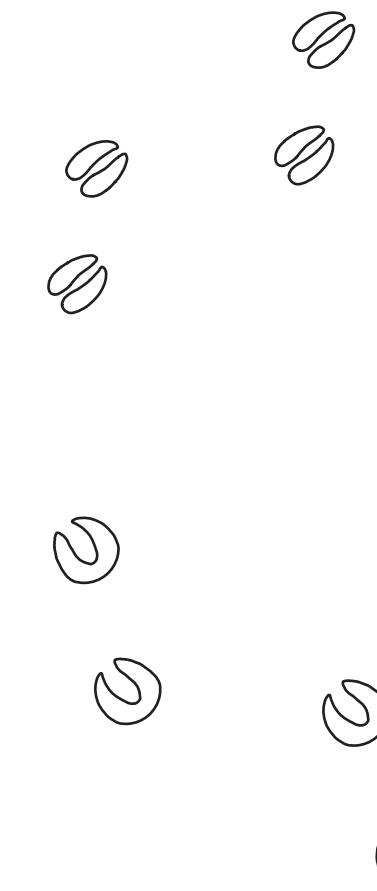
Mule navigated the familiar, rocky path. Yet Llama wasn't used to climbing, and the heavy pack made it even harder. Soon, his pack shifted and he stumbled.

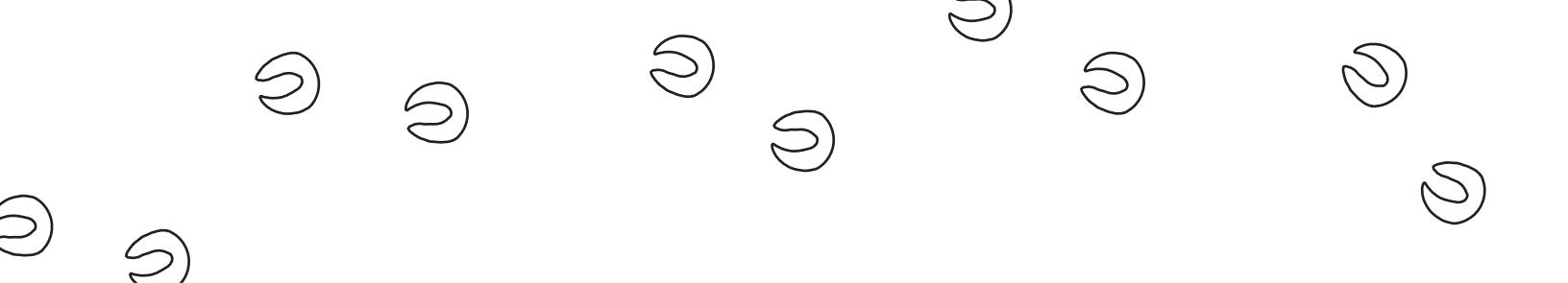
"Please, Mule, the path is steep, and this pack is very heavy. Will you slow down just a little?"

—  
"Going slower will only make the journey longer," argued Mule. "Focus on your work and hurry up."

—  
For a while, they continued up the mountain. Although Llama was careful to watch his footing, he soon stumbled again.

Once he felt steady on his feet, Llama asked Mule, "Will you tell me about the market? I have heard there is a wonderful shady place to rest and delicious olives to eat and sweet cool water to drink. It all sounds so lovely."





“There is a stream,” Mule said, “and some olive trees. We will wait there until the merchant sells his goods. Then we will make the long trip home. Now, stop asking questions. You’re slowing us down.”

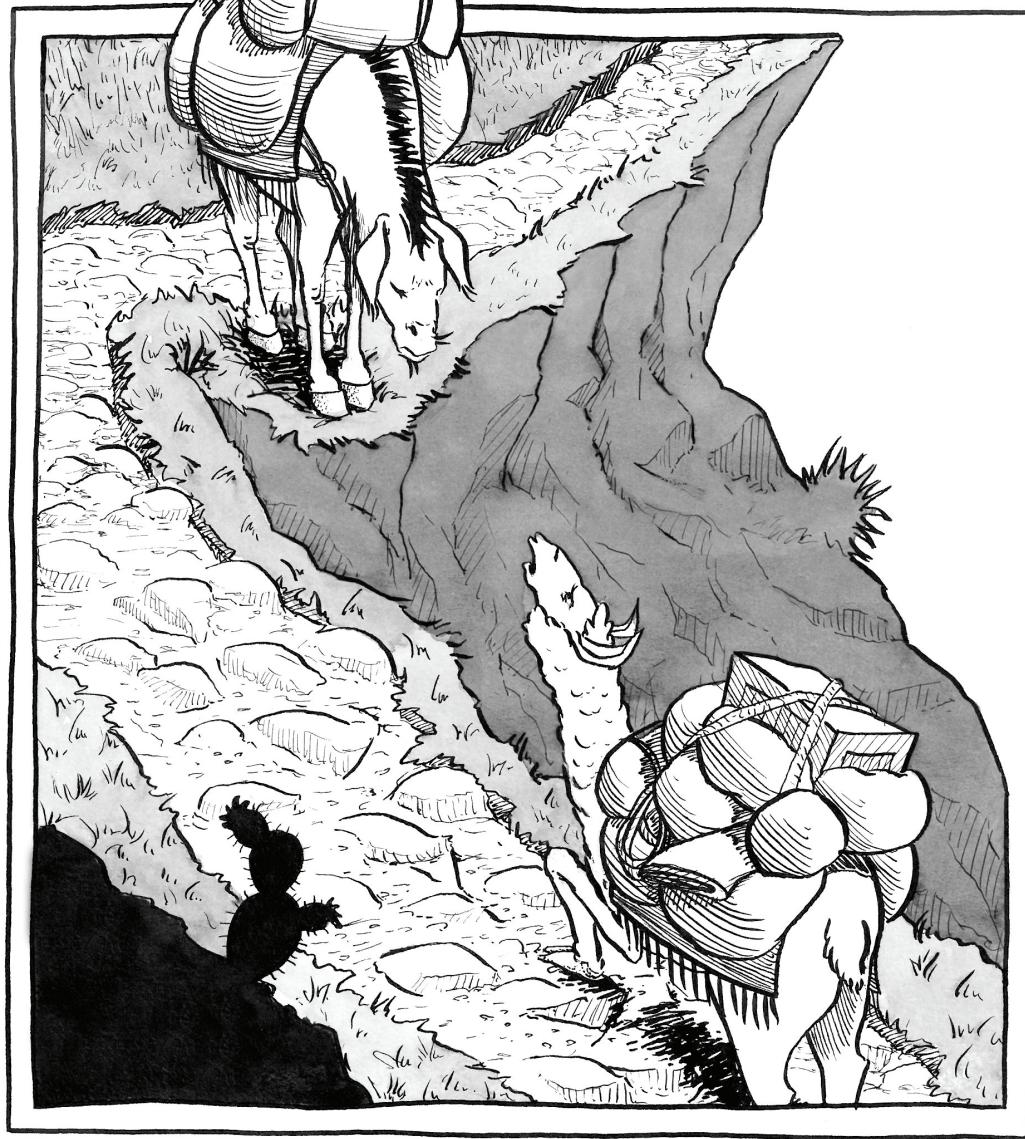
“I thought talking about the market might ease our work,” Llama replied. “We could think about the olives and the grass and the water. Then our packs would not seem so heavy, just like thinking about the wind and the sights and the smells made the desert seem not so hot.”

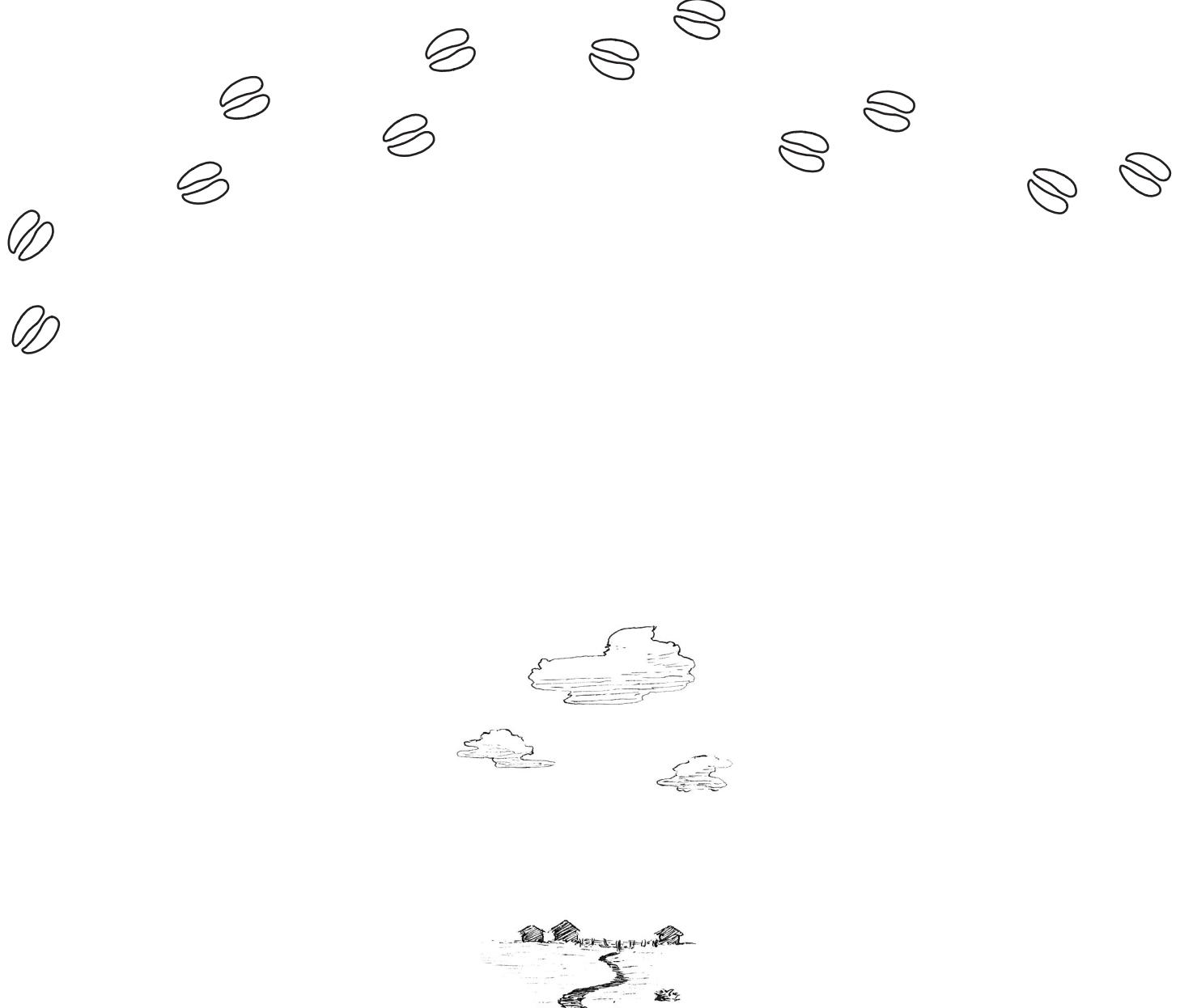
“The packs are still heavy,” Mule complained. “The desert was still hot. The path will still be steep.”

Llama sighed, but he continued up the mountain path until he stumbled again. “Please, Mule,” he asked, “will you slow down so I can climb safely?”

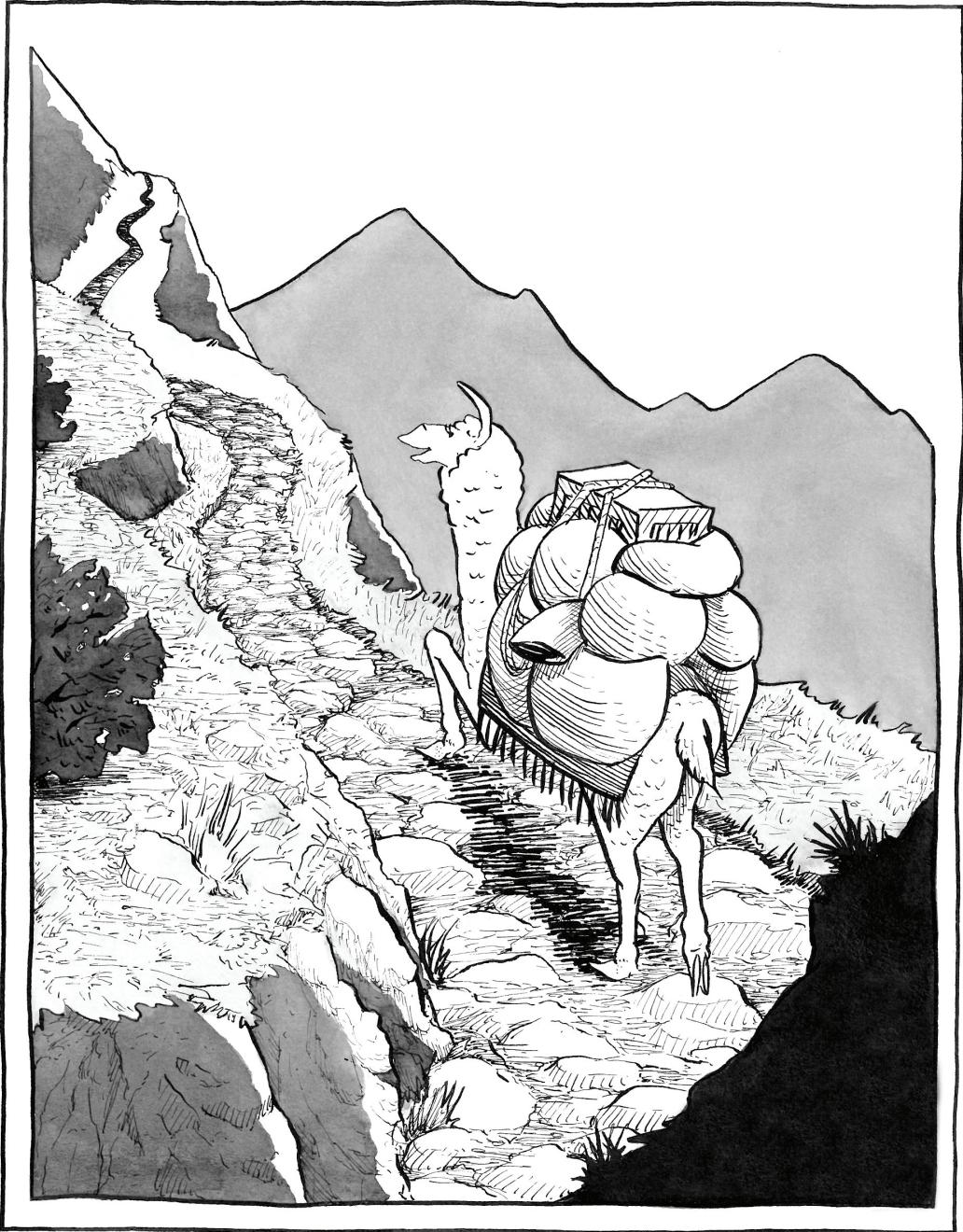
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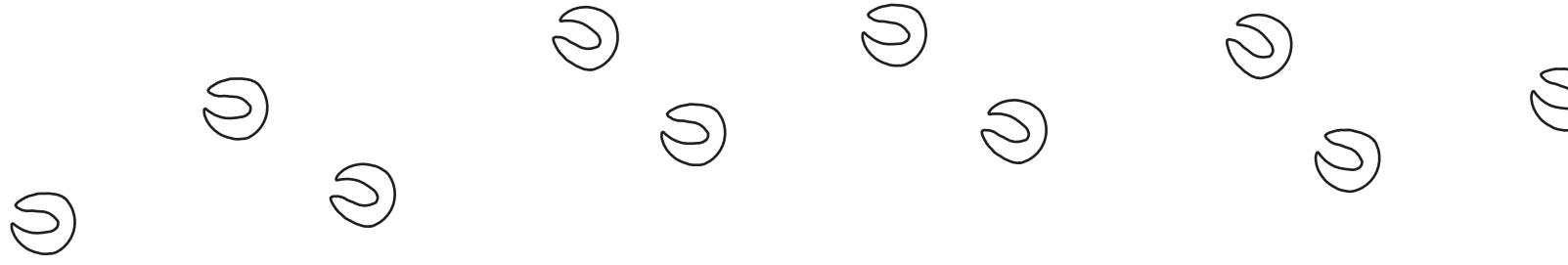
“If I go slower,” Mule grumbled,  
“I’ll have to carry this heavy pack  
even longer.” Mule huffed at Llama  
and climbed even faster.



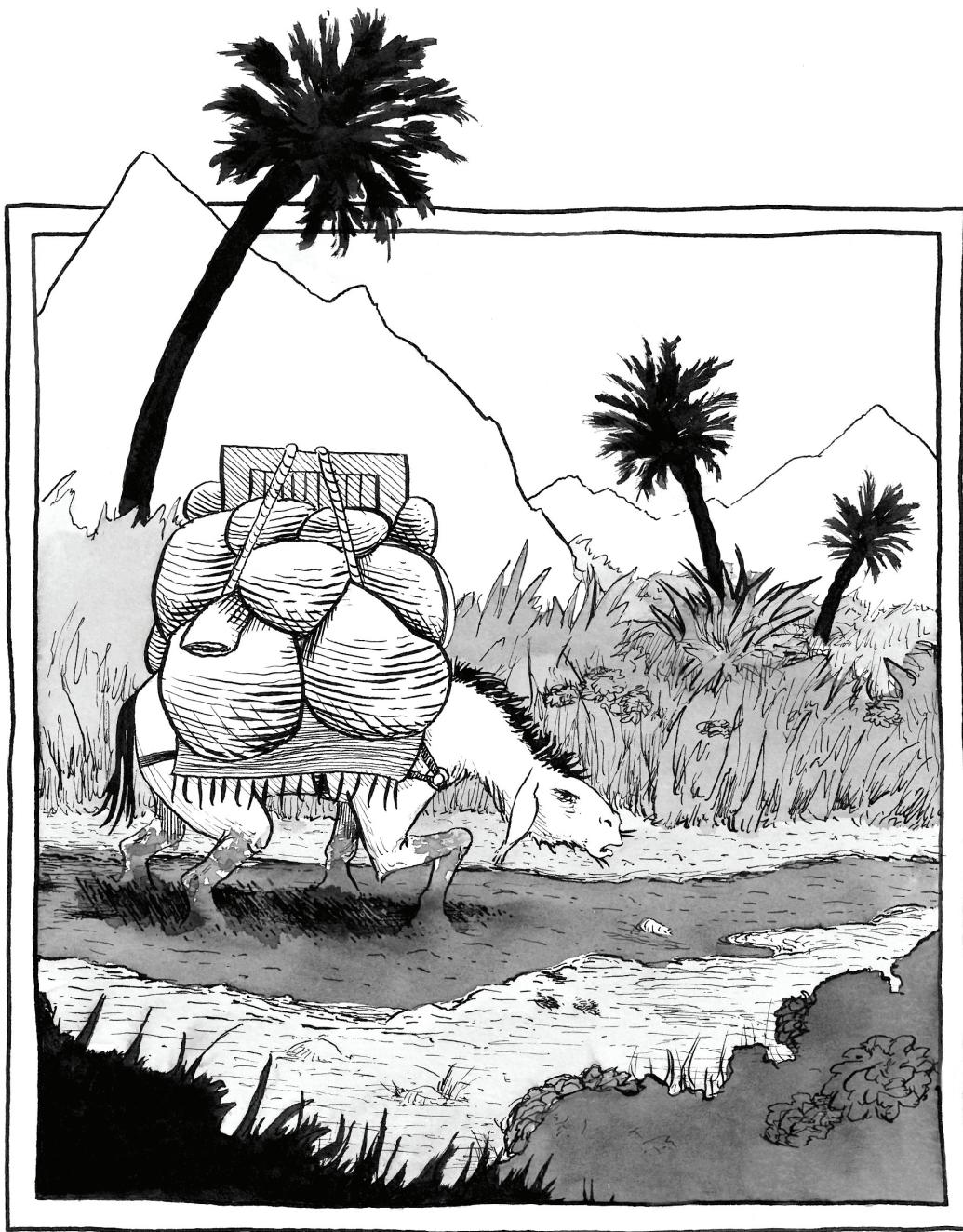


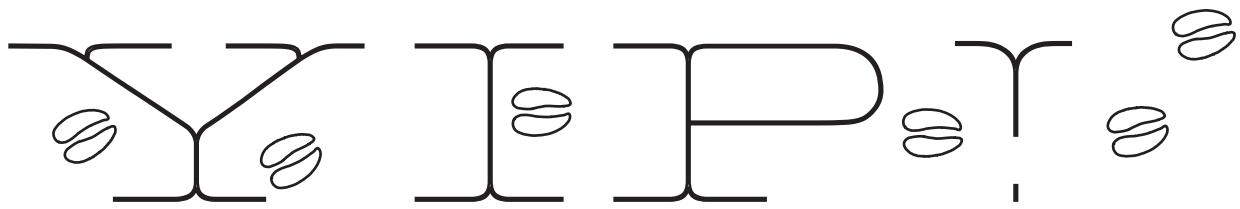
Before long, Llama was alone on the trail.  
He continued slowly but surely up the steep path,  
quietly singing a song about all the lovely things he  
had heard about the market. Singing always helped  
Llama stay cheerful.





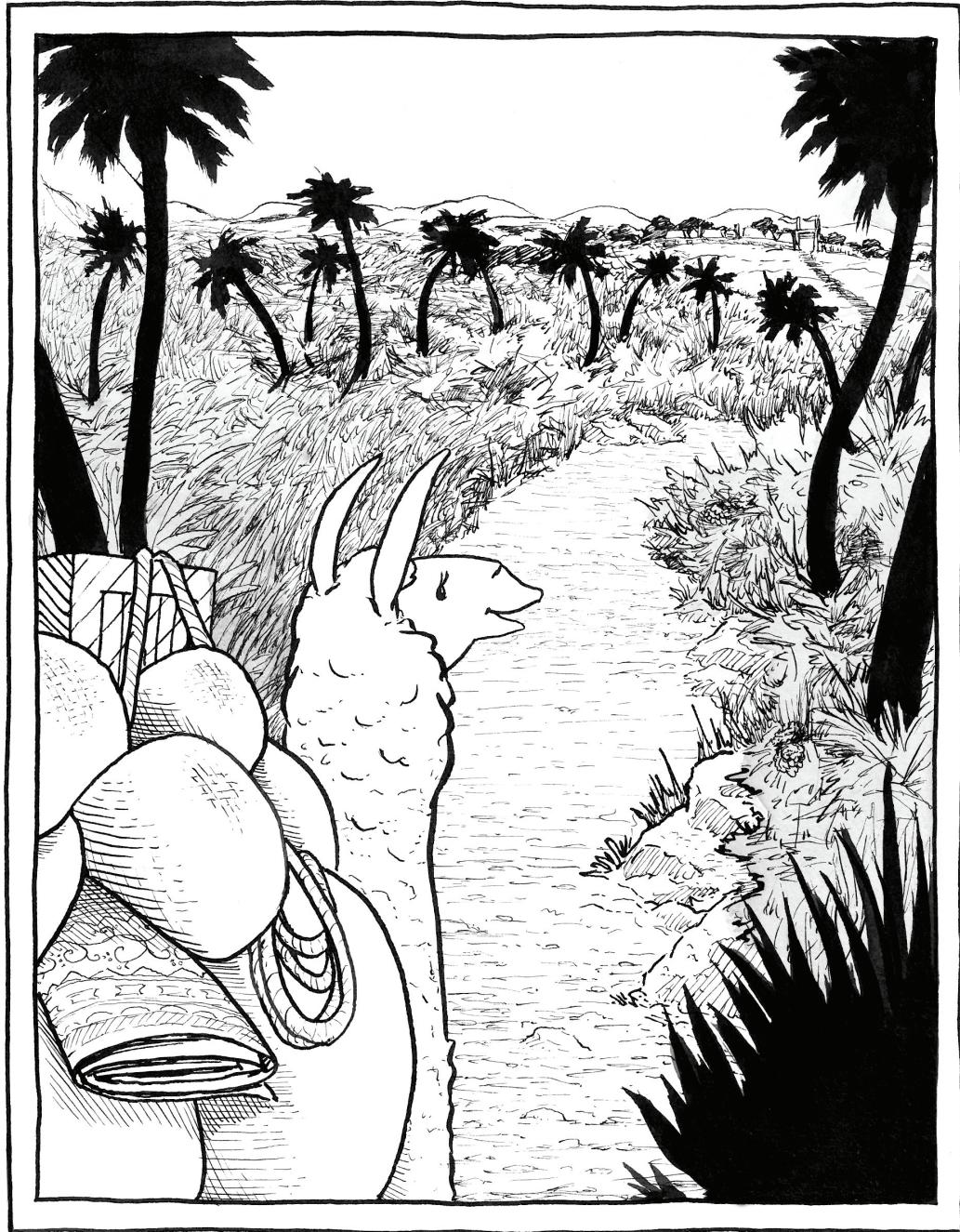
Up ahead, Mule had already reached the valley. Although the desert had been hot, and the mountain path had been steep, the journey across the wide valley felt harder than all that had come before. The heavy pack strained his back and shoulders. Thick mud covered parts of the trail and nearly glued his feet to the ground. And now he didn't even have Llama to keep him company. Mule's steps became **SLOW AND HEAVY.**





When Llama finally reached the wide, green valley, he gave a yip of joy. Surely crossing the open fields would be easier than climbing the mountain, and now they were almost to the market.

Llama skipped into the valley and called out for his friend. "Mule! Where are you? We are nearly there!" Even though Mule had been grumpy, Llama enjoyed his company. And Llama felt sure he could keep up with Mule in the valley.

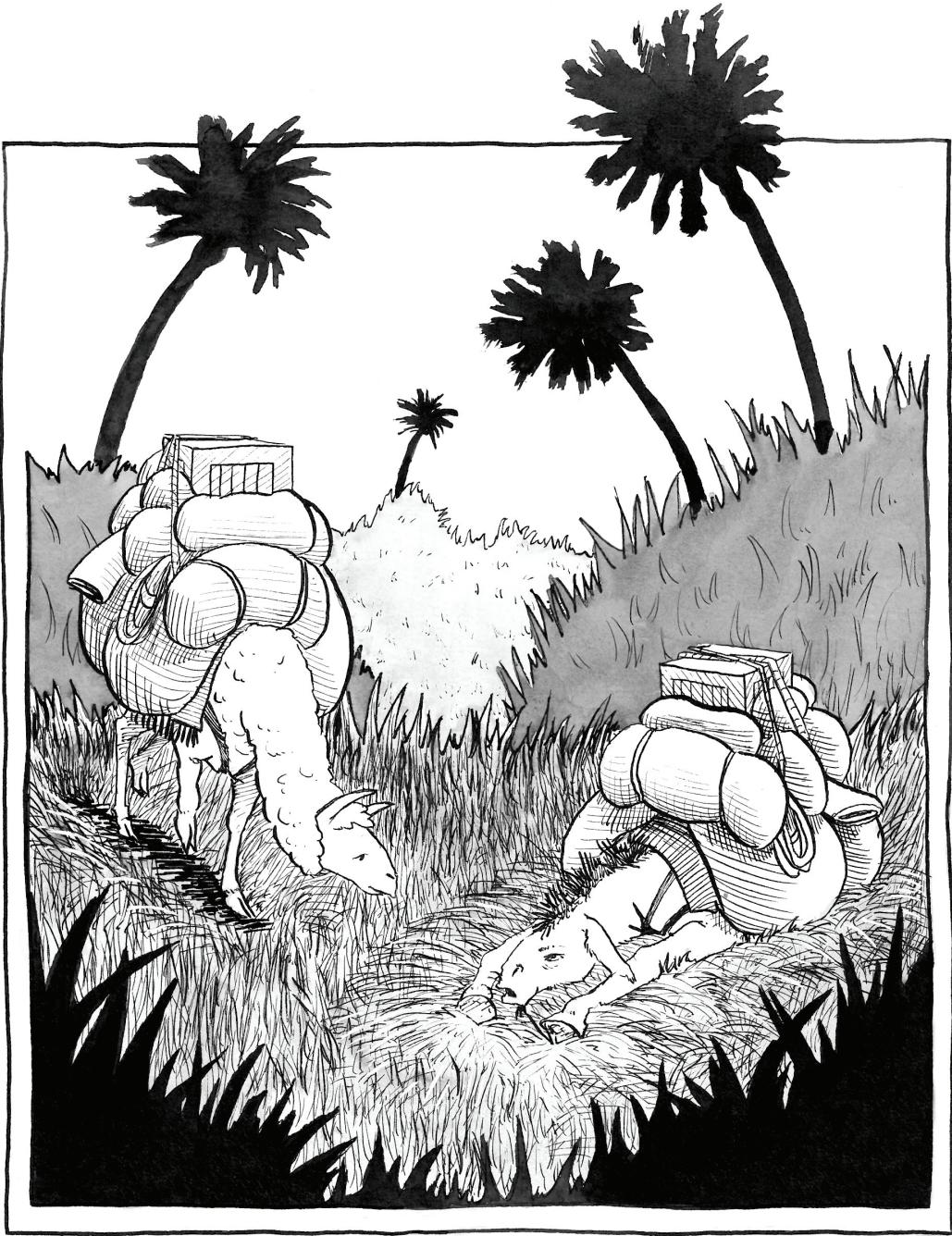


As Llama rounded a curve in the path, he heard a low groan. It sounded like Mule. Llama hurried ahead. He found Mule on his knees in the tall grass next to the trail.

“Mule!” cried Llama, rushing to his side.  
“What happened? Are you hurt?”

Mule growled, “I’m too exhausted to go any further. I’ll never make it to the market again. The journey is too long. I am too old.”

Llama encouraged his friend. “You are a strong and sturdy traveler. You have made this journey many times before, and you can do it this time, too. You just need a rest.” Llama unloaded some bundles from Mule’s pack, and added them to his own.



“The pack is still too heavy,” Mule complained.  
“I can’t go on.”

Llama lay next to Mule and said, “I’ll stay with you and rest a while.”

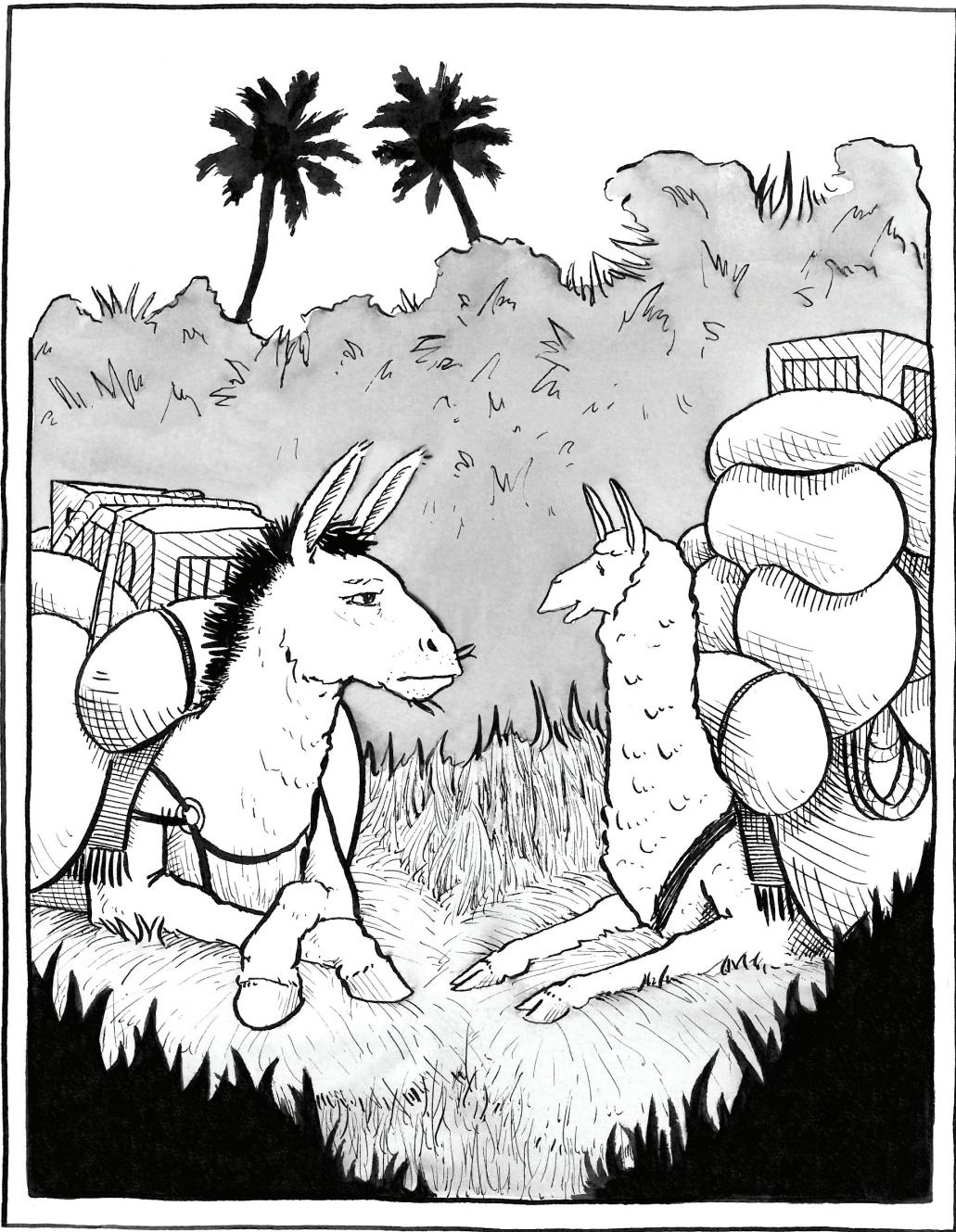
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“When you are ready,  
we will go together.”

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Mule closed his eyes. They lay quietly side-by-side for some time. Then Llama began to sing his market song.

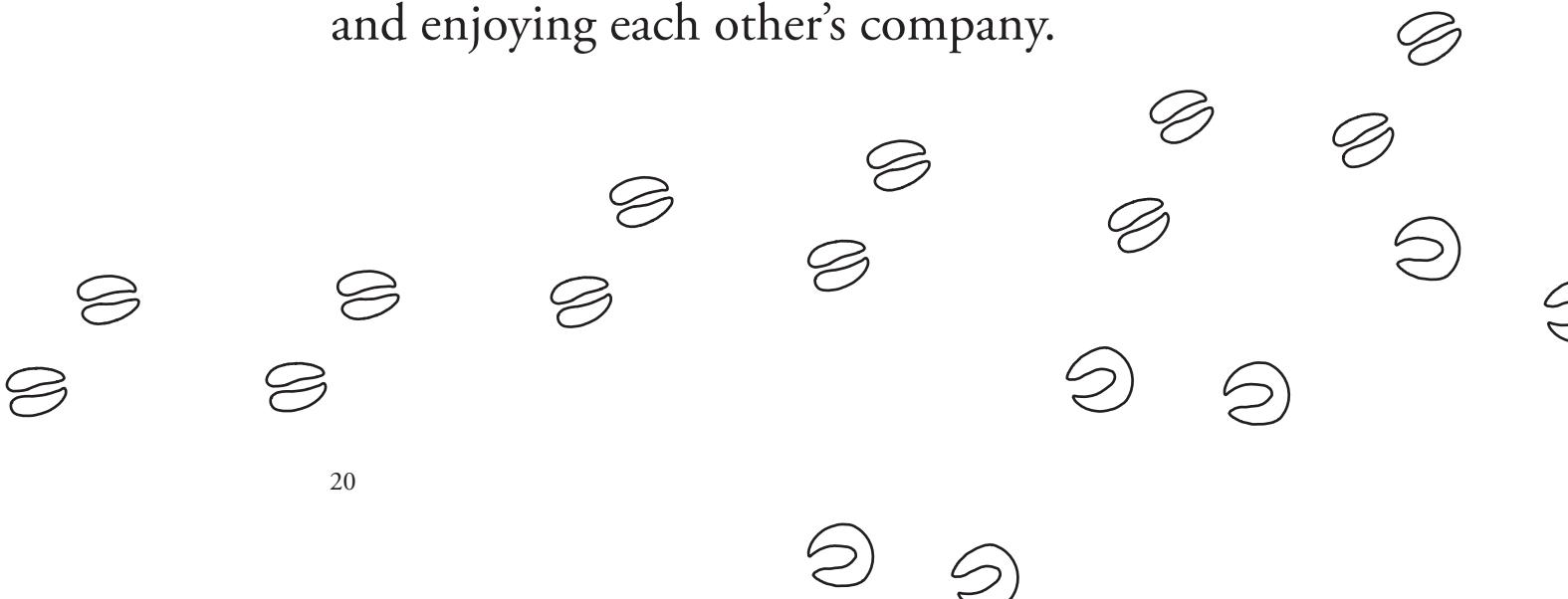
Mule sucked in a chest of air, ready to let out his grumpiest grumble. But then, memories of the market’s shady grove of olive trees, sweet grass, and cool water drifted into his mind. The pack lightened. His legs strengthened.

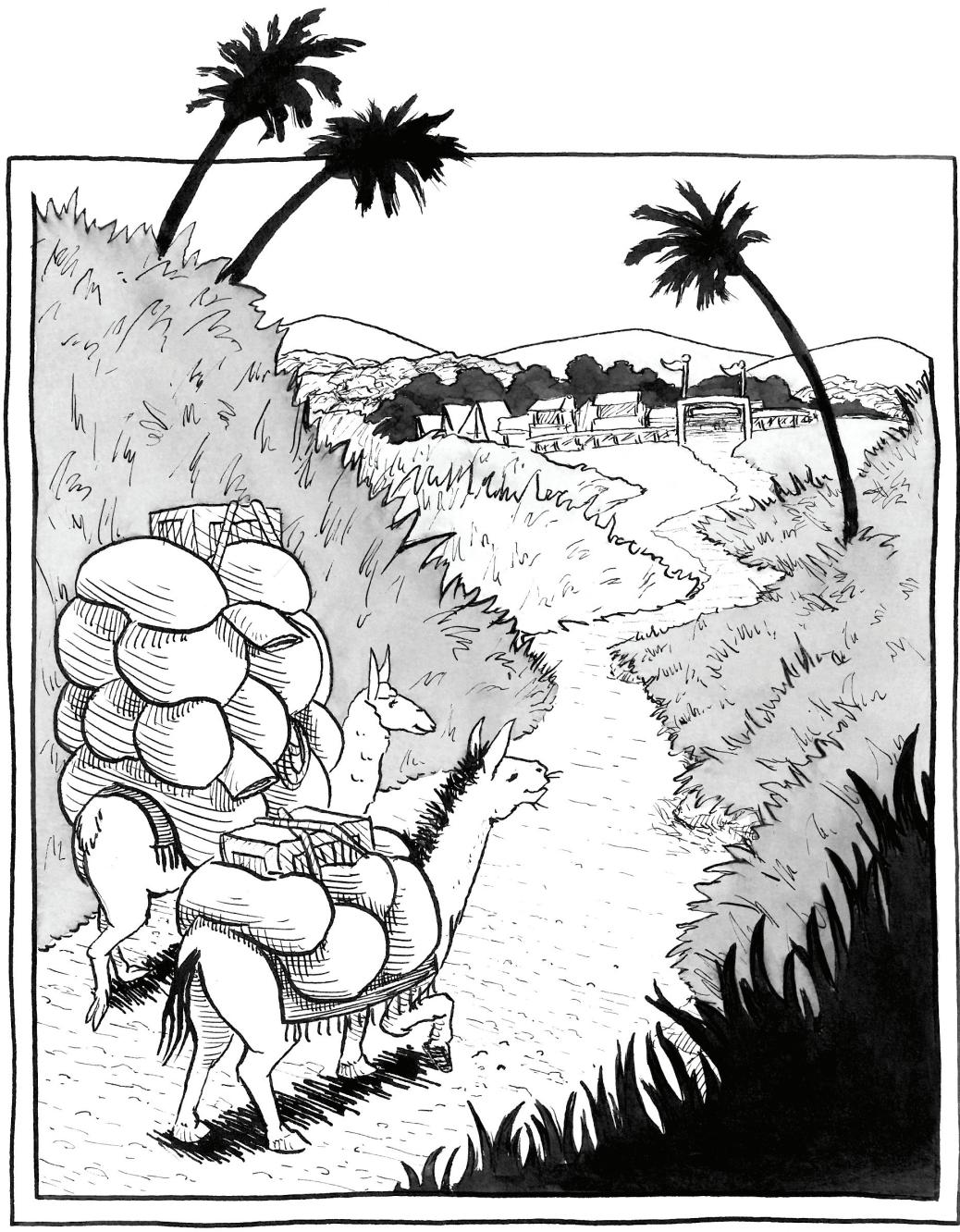


Mule stood up and agreed to continue. As they walked, Llama asked questions about the market, and Mule kindly answered. He described the taste of the olives and the grass. He shared funny memories from past visits. As he talked and laughed, Mule's feet moved a little more quickly. Now they were nearing the end of the journey, and he had more energy than when they started.

Mule thought of how grumpy and negative he had been. He felt sorry for leaving his friend behind instead of enjoying traveling together all along. Mule understood now that his bad attitude made the difficult trip even harder, and rushing made it take even longer.

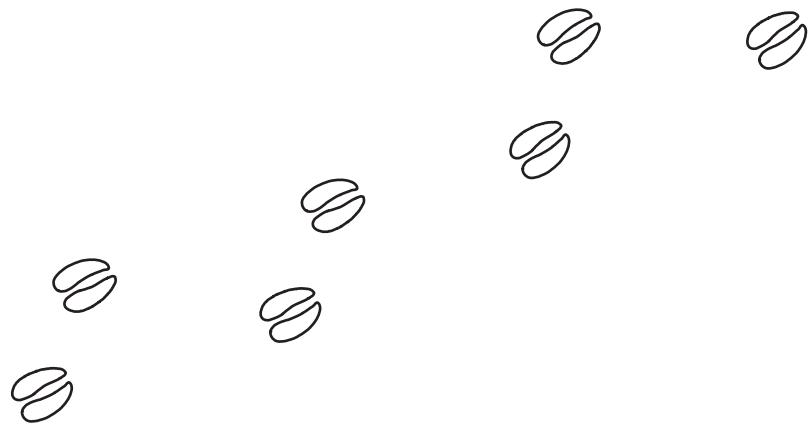
From then on, Mule and Llama made the journey **SIDE - BY - SIDE**, talking and singing and enjoying each other's company.







THE  
END



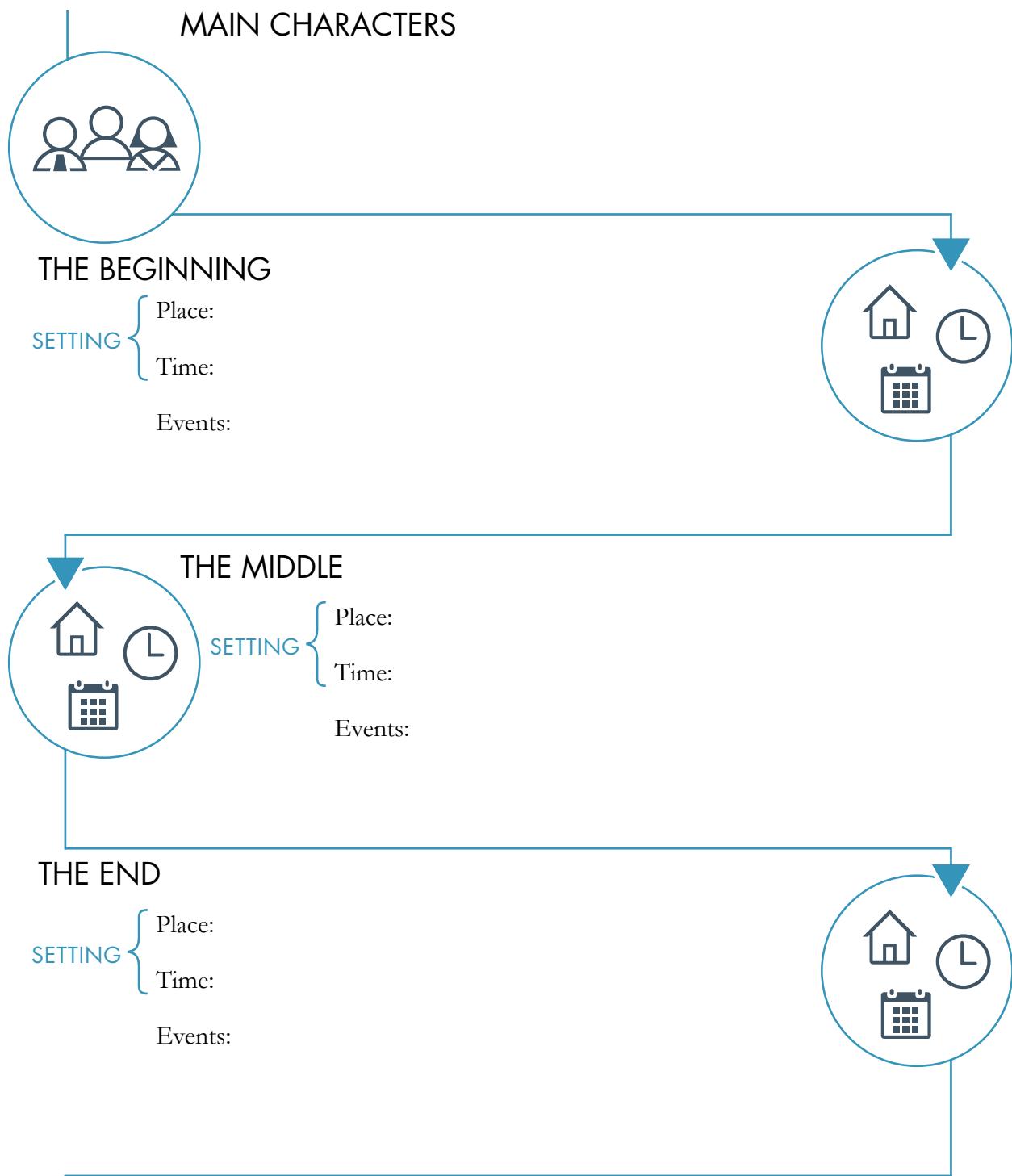
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# STORY MAP

## STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 1



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# DETERMINING WHAT THE CHARACTER LEARNS

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

3.R.2.A.a, Lesson 2

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### LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students use the key details in a folktale to determine the lesson or moral of the text.

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### STANDARD

**3.R.2.A.a** Read, infer, analyze, and draw conclusions to summarize and sequence the events/plot and explain past events impact future events.

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### MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ [PASSAGE: THE LLAMA AND THE MULE](#)
- ▶ completed [STUDENT HANDOUT: STORY MAP](#)
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: CHARACTER MAP](#)

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### IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can use the key details in a folktale to discover the lesson or moral that a character learns in the story.”

**Review** the folktale and story map from the previous lesson. **Ask** students to recall the most important events and actions in the folktale.

**Ask** the following questions as a review:

- ▶ What is the most important event at the beginning of the folktale?
- ▶ What is the most important event in the middle of the story?
- ▶ What event causes the character to learn a lesson?
- ▶ What happens at the end of the story?
- ▶ What idea does the story teach?

**Tell** the class that today they will determine what lesson the main character learns in the story. Students will use their story map from the previous lesson as a guide.

**Divide** students into the same groups as the previous lesson and pass out [STUDENT HANDOUT: CHARACTER MAP](#). **Instruct** students to work together to complete the handout.

Students will determine answers to the following theme-scheme questions:

- ▶ Who is the main character?
- ▶ What is the main character's problem?
- ▶ What does the main character do about the problem?
- ▶ What happens in the story?
- ▶ Is what happens good or bad?
- ▶ The main character learns \_\_\_\_\_.
- ▶ The lesson is \_\_\_\_\_.

While students work, **circulate** and **ask** the theme-scheme questions in the Checking for Understanding box.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can <a href="#">IDENTIFY WHAT A CHARACTER LEARNS IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-2721)</a> :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Who is the main character? How do you know?</li><li>▶ What is the main character's problem?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What happens to the character in the story?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Is what happens to the character good or bad? Why?</li><li>▶ What lesson does the character learn?</li><li>▶ How does the lesson apply to all people?</li></ul>

Next, **invite** groups to share their character maps with the class. **Collect** handouts at the end of the lesson.

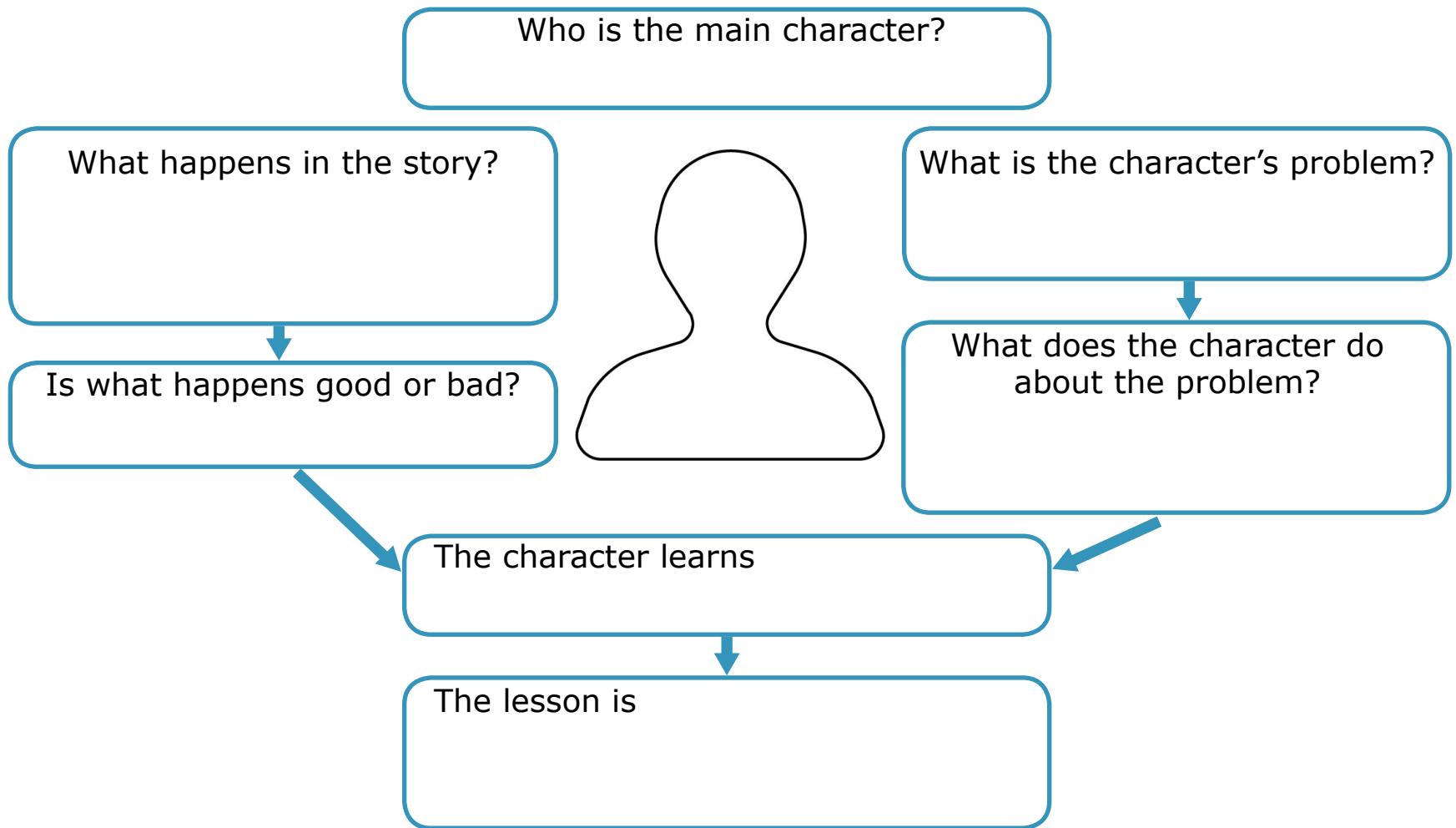
For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

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## CHARACTER MAP

### STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 2



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# DETERMINING THE STORY'S LESSON

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

3.R.2.A.a, Lesson 3

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### LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students create a comic strip of the major events in the folktale and determine the moral or lesson of the story.

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### STANDARD

**3.R.2.A.a** Read, infer, analyze, and draw conclusions to summarize and sequence the events/plot and explain past events impact future events.

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### MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ completed [STUDENT HANDOUT: STORY MAP](#) and [STUDENT HANDOUT: CHARACTER MAP](#)
- ▶ [PASSAGE: THE LLAMA AND THE MULE](#)
- ▶ white board or chart paper
- ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: LIFE LESSON COMIC STRIP](#)

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### IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can use the key details in the story to determine the lesson, and I can create a comic that shows the lesson or moral.”

**Return** the handouts and the story from the previous lessons.

**Review** [STUDENT HANDOUT: CHARACTER MAP](#) from Lesson 2. Have students retell what the character learns in the story. **Ask** students if there are any other lessons they can learn from the character. **Direct** students to discuss what they think the story lesson is with a partner. **Collect** student responses on the board or chart paper.

**Remind** students that a lesson or moral is a complete sentence that describes a life lesson a story teaches. For example, in the folktale, “Hansel and Gretel,” the lesson or moral may be that it is important not to talk to strangers. Another moral may be to listen to directions from your parents because they are for your safety.

**Group** students with their partners from the previous lessons and **pass out** [STUDENT HANDOUT: LIFE LESSON COMIC STRIP](#).

**Tell** students they will use the important details and events in the folktale to create a comic strip. The lesson the character learns in the folktale will go in the last box of the comic strip. The first three boxes will show the most important events or actions that cause the character to learn the lesson. **Remind** students to use their completed story map and character map.

While students work, **walk around** and **collect** evidence about student thinking.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can <a href="#">EXPLAIN HOW A LESSON OR MORAL IS REPRESENTED BY KEY DETAILS IN A STORY (ELA-479)</a> :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What happens to the character in the folktale?</li><li>▶ How does the character change from the beginning of the folktale to the end?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What does the character learn in the story?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ What is the lesson or moral of the story?</li><li>▶ What in the story makes you think that?</li></ul>

Next, **direct** students to tape their comic strips on the board or the wall and have a gallery walk.

You can extend the lesson by discussing which comic strip best represents the lesson or moral of the story and why. Have students complete the [STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE](#) at the end of the lesson.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

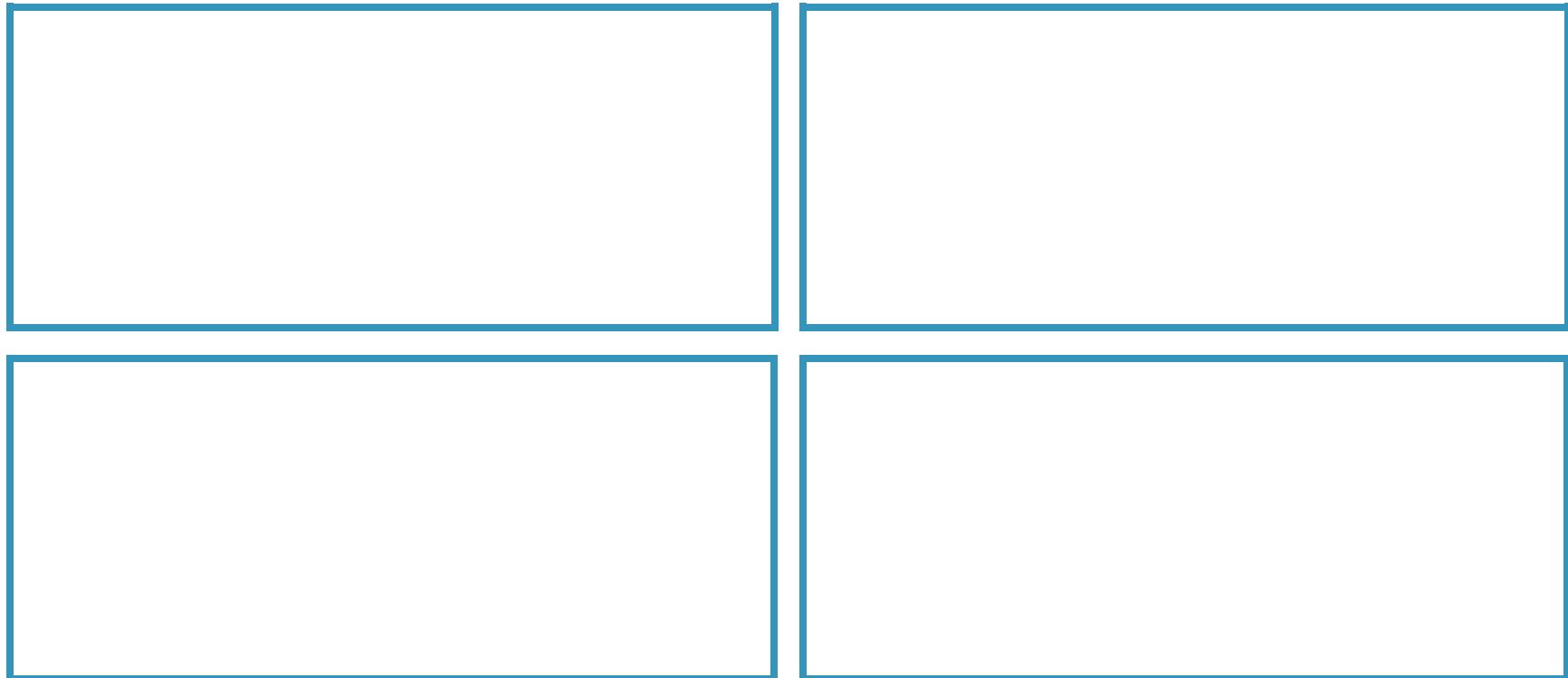
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## LIFE LESSON COMIC STRIP

### STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 3

**Directions:** Draw a comic strip of the story. Draw the character's lesson in the last box.



The folktale's lesson is \_\_\_\_\_

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## DETERMINING A STORY'S CENTRAL MESSAGE

### STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE

3.R.2.A.a, Lesson 3

**Directions:** For each learning goal, circle the sentence that best matches what you can do.

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Create a comic strip of the key details in the folktale.</b>	I can draw a key detail from the folktale.	I can draw two details from the folktale.	I can draw the major details from the folktale.
<b>Find the lesson of the folktale.</b>	I can find a word or idea that shows the lesson in the folktale.	I can find a couple of words or ideas that show the lesson in the folktale.	I can find a sentence that shows the lesson in the folktale.
<b>Explain the lesson in the folktale using details from the story.</b>	I can explain the lesson and how it relates to one story detail.	I can explain the lesson and how it relates to two story details.	I can explain the lesson and how it relates to the key story details.