



Unit 6 It's absolutely true!

Before you read

The reading is an ancient Chinese story about a stone cutter. Think about this question. Do you know any old stories that have been passed down for many generations? Think about one of the stories. What did you learn from it?

Read the story

The Stone Cutter

People have always loved stories. Long before we had books, people told stories. Some stories entertained and others instructed. Often the stories did both, teaching important lessons through entertaining and memorable stories. This way the listener could learn through the suffering or triumphs of others.

"The Stone Cutter," a tale told by a Taoist scholar from Ancient China, is one such story.

There was once a stone cutter who was unhappy with himself and with his position in life.

One day he passed a wealthy merchant's house. Through the open gateway, he saw many fine possessions and important visitors. "How powerful that merchant must be!" thought the stone cutter. He became very envious and wished that he could be like the merchant.

To his great surprise, he suddenly became the merchant. Soon, he was enjoying more luxuries and power than he had ever imagined, and he was envied and hated by those less wealthy than himself. One day a high official passed by, carried in a sedan chair, accompanied by attendants and escorted by soldiers. Everyone, no matter how wealthy, had to bow low before the procession. "How powerful that official is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a high official!"

Then he became the high official, carried everywhere in his sedan chair, feared and hated by the people all around. It was a hot summer day, so the official felt very uncomfortable in the sticky sedan chair. He looked up at the sun. It shone proudly in the sky, unaware of his existence. "How powerful the sun is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be the sun!"

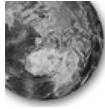
Then he became the sun, shining fiercely down on everyone. But a huge black cloud moved between him and the Earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. "How powerful that storm cloud is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a cloud!"

Then he became the cloud, flooding the fields and villages. But soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. "How powerful it is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be the wind!"

Then he became the wind, blowing tiles off the roofs of houses and uprooting trees. But after a while, he ran up against something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against it—a huge rock. "How powerful that rock is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a rock!"

Then he became the rock, more powerful than anything else on Earth. But soon, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel into his hard surface, and felt pieces of himself falling off. "What could be more powerful than I, the rock?" he thought.

As he started to change yet again, he looked down and saw far below him the figure of a stone cutter.



Check your comprehension

Read the story again. The stone cutter wanted to be several different people/things. Fill in the chart with who or what the stone cutter wanted to be, and why.

WHO/WHAT	WHY
1. <i>a wealthy merchant</i>	<i>Because he had fine possessions and important visitors</i>
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Build your reading skills: Drawing conclusions

What do you think the "moral" of this story is? What lesson is it trying to teach?