

**“The Price of a Secret: A Tale from Azerbaijan”**  
*An English Language Lesson Plan by Mary Brooks*



**Unit/Theme:** pride and betrayal

**Proficiency Level:** novice to intermediate low (ACTFL Guidelines)

**Timing:** two to three hours with writing assignment

### **Content Objectives**

For students to:

- understand the pride of Alexander the Great, the confidence he had in his barber, and the depth of a promise
- be able to describe the situation
- be able to retell the story

### **Language Objectives**

For students to:

- use new vocabulary
- use discourse markers for the sequence of the story
- find meaningful metaphors and descriptive adjectives and verbs
- determine the meaning of new words using context clues
- integrate listening, reading, speaking, and writing
- retell the story
- relate the story to a personal experience, first orally, and then in writing

### **Learning Strategies**

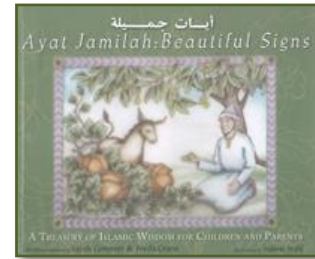
For students to:

- understand the story sequence by building a context
- use discussion skills to consider the lesson of the story as a pre-reading strategy
- use the new words as they discuss the story
- describe what the characters said when the reading is divided into time segments, and then retell the story using discourse markers
- use the reading as a context for writing

**Key Vocabulary:** odd, entrusted, trustworthy, disclose, recommend, clattered, astonished, dare, tongue ripped out, eyeballs plucked, mustering all his courage, haunted, inadvertently, burden, get it off his chest, shepherd, flock, plucked a blade of grass sprouting, absurd, confess, calligrapher, confidant, betray

## Materials

- *Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs: A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents*, collected and adapted by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane. Boston: Skinner House (2010). Available at [www.uuabookstore.org](http://www.uuabookstore.org) or 800-215-9076 and wherever books are sold.
- mp3 player/recorder



## Context Building

Ask the students:

- What is the fear of being laughed at? Have you ever felt this?
- Have you ever made someone promise not to tell a secret? Did that person remain your confidant? What happened in the end?

## Presentation (Teachers)

1. Now that the students have some background for the moral of the story, play the whole story for an overview, without stopping.
2. Play the recorded story again.
3. Play the recorded story a third time and pause at the following parts in order to emphasize their importance:
  - the description of Alexander the Great
  - the decision to replace his barber
  - Vahid's dilemma
  - how the shepherd found the secret
  - the king's decision
4. Read the moral out loud and ask the students to: *Remember always that you are your own best confidant.*

## Practice/Application

1. Retell the story with the students. Start a story chain. Use the new vocabulary in the retelling.

Use sequence markers, for example:

first of all, second, third  
in the first place, for one thing, then, next  
before, now, after, while  
into, until, last, during  
since, always, later, earlier, in the end, finally

2. Help the students use descriptive adjectives and interesting verbs.
3. Make sure the lesson of the story is clear.

## Assessment

Use a dictation to give the students assessment questions. The dictation sequence is: listen, listen and repeat, listen and write, listen and check.

They can write the answers individually and then share with a partner.

1. What was Alexander's secret?
2. Why did Vahid have to get the secret off his chest?
3. Why did he shout down into the well?
4. How did the shepherd find out the secret?
5. Do you think Alexander was a wise man for not punishing Vahid and the shepherd?
6. What did Alexander decide to do?
7. Why do people like to keep secrets?
8. Do you think that secrets can be kept?
9. Do you think secrets are a burden?
10. What is the price of a secret?
11. What does "You are your own best confidant" mean?

## Extension

Reading into Writing

1. Ask the students:
  - Have you ever had a secret that you only told to your best friend? Did this best

friend tell your secret to someone else? What happened? How did you feel about your friend later? Did you resolve to keep your secrets and never disclose them?

2. Tell the students:

- Think about your own story and brainstorm with a partner about a significant event you wanted to keep secret.
- Tell your partner what happened.
- Record this story.

3. Tell the students:

Use this practice storytelling and your recording to write your story. Divide the story in this way:

- Describe the secret.
- Write about your decision to tell someone else.
- Write about the betrayal.
- Write about your feelings after the betrayal.

Use sequence markers, descriptive adjectives, and interesting verbs when you write the story.

4. Follow standard writing process to guide the students into editing and redrafting their stories.