

# The farmer's tree

## A story from Tanzania

**Key ideas: gifts, values, greed**

A farmer had a tree which grew beautiful mangoes. Everyone in the village knew about the tree, and the mangoes. One day the farmer was inspecting his trees, and saw the loveliest mango he had ever seen. He picked it, and showed it to his family. They were amazed by the beautiful mango. So were all his friends, who heard about the mango, and came to look.

The farmer knew this was a special mango, but it wasn't until his wife said, 'That's a mango fit for a king,' that he knew what to do. He was a poor farmer. He had no money, but he could take this mango and offer it to the king.

He wrapped the mango in a special cloth, and walked all the way to the palace. At first the guards laughed at him, but he unwrapped the mango and showed it to them. They were so amazed they called their commander, and the commander took the farmer to see the king.

The farmer unwrapped the mango once more. The king was amazed by the mango, but pleased by the generosity of the farmer. He asked the farmer what he would like in return but the farmer refused. He wanted no reward, and no gift. 'All I wanted was to see the joy on your face when you saw the perfect mango,' he said. Then he quietly slipped away, and went home.

The king was sad when he discovered that the farmer had gone. He ordered one of the guards to take his finest horse to the farmer to show his gratitude.

Soon everyone knew the king had given his finest horse in return for a mango. A rich merchant in a nearby town heard of this. He saddled his fastest horse and rode quickly to the palace. There he offered the king his horse to replace the one which had been given to the merchant. The king thanked him graciously, and waited for the merchant to leave. But he did not.

'Ah,' said the king, 'You want something in return,' and he went into the palace. The merchant could hardly wait. It might be jewels, fine clothes, perhaps even a big house. The king returned with a small casket. He opened it, and inside lay a mango. 'This is my greatest treasure. It was given to me by a generous man who wanted nothing in return.'

The merchant was angry. Outside the palace he took the mango and threw it away. The king saw this and called his guards. 'Take the merchant, and make sure he never comes back to my palace.' He does not understand that to give freely without expecting anything in return is the most precious thing anyone can do.'