



## MERCURY AND THE WOODMAN

An honest woodman lived with his family in a forest. He worked very hard all day, cutting down trees with his trusted axe. One day he was walking by the side of a deep, fast-flowing river, carrying his axe in his hand. He slipped and the axe fell from his hand into the river.

"Help!" cried the woodman. "The water is too deep and I cannot get my axe back. Without it I cannot work. I shall starve!"

Mercury, one of the ancient gods, heard the woodman's lament. He came down to earth and dived into the deep river, coming up with an axe made of pure gold.

"That is not mine," said the honest woodman, and he would not take the axe from the god.

Again Mercury dived to the bottom of the river. This time he returned with an axe made of pure silver. The honest woodman shook his head.

"That is not my axe, either," he said. "I cannot take what does not belong to me."

For a third time Mercury dived to the bed of the river. When he came out again he was carrying the woodman's battered old axe.

"That's my axe!" cried the woodman, and he took it eagerly.

Mercury was so impressed by the honesty of the woodman that he gave him both the silver and the gold axes as a reward. The man took the three axes back to his family.





Another woodman heard what had happened. He went to the same part of the river and dropped his axe into the water. Then he made a great fuss.

"Oh, Mercury, please help me!" he cried.

The god came down and dived into the river, returning with an axe made of gold.

"That's mine!" lied the woodman and he took the golden axe.

Mercury punished the man by making the golden axe vanish. The woodman's own axe was left lying at the bottom of the river, where all could see it, but no one could reach it.

**Moral**

*Honesty is the best policy.*

Name:  
Group:

Please answer the below questions in complete sentences.  
\*Remember the question asked should be obvious in the answer.



## Mercury and the Woodman

1) How many times did Mercury dive under water to retrieve the honest woodman's axe?

to retrieve/ Mercury/ ... times/ dove under water/ the honest woodman's axe/

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2) What was the axe made out of the first time Mercury dived to the bottom of the river?

dived to the bottom of/ the axe/ .../ the river/ the first time/  
Mercury/ was made out of/

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3) What was the axe made out of the second time Mercury dived to the bottom of the river?

the second time/ of the river/ the axe/ Mercury/ was made out of/ .../  
dived to the bottom/

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4) Why was Mercury so impressed by the first woodman?

by the first woodman/ because/ Mercury/ was so impressed/  
.../

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5) How does Mercury reward the first woodman?

rewards/                      by .../                      Mercury/                      the first woodman/

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6) Who overheard what happened to the first woodman.

to the/                      what happened/                      .../                      overheard/                      first woodman/

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7) What does the second woodman do after he heard and saw what happened to the first woodman?

to the first woodman/                      the second woodman/                      what happened/                      he .../  
heard and saw/                      After/

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8) Why does Mercury punish the second woodman?

the second woodman/                      punishes/                      Mercury/                      because .../

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9) What other moral do you think could be learned from this fable?

be learned/                      .../                      could/                      from this fable/                      I think/

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