

River Babies Story: Charity vs Justice by Daniel Currie (2001)

N1: There once was a man.

J: Ah, that would be me. My name's John.

N2: And a woman.

M: That's me. I'm Marsha.

N1: And John and Marsha were a couple.

J/M: That would be us. {holding hands}

N2: And aren't they a lovely couple!

J/M: Gee, thanks.

N1: And each evening, John and Marsha would take a walk along the river not too far from where they lived.

N2: On one such evening, as they were walking, Marsha stopped suddenly.

J: What is it Marsha? Did you step in something?

M: Yes, but that's not important now. Look! I think there's something floating in the river!

N1: They both moved to the edge of the river

N2: and strained to see what it was that was out there.

M: Oh, my goodness John. Do you see what I see?

J: I'm not sure... I think it's a ...

M: It's a baby John! There's a baby drowning in the river!!

J: Holy cow! I think you're right Marsha.

M: John, we've got to do something. Quick! Jump in and save the poor baby before it drowns.

J: Woooo! Why me? You're a stronger swimmer than me. You can even clean that crap off your shoes at the same time.

M: Okay John. Let's decide it fairly. How about 'Rock, Paper, Scissors?'

J: Yea, right! You know I always lose at that game.

M: Too bad, John. C'mon, we don't have much time.

J: Oh, okay. {They start to play and continue... N. tries to interrupt.}

N1: Ah, excuse me. John. Marsha.

N2: Hellooooooooo! {John and Marsha Ignore N(s).}

J: Hey! Do you mind?! We're busy here.

N1: {in a loud voice.} What are you two doing?!

N2: There's a baby drowning out there and from what I can see, it's a nice shade of blue already!

M: Ha, ha. I win.

J: See, I told you I always lose at this stupid game.

M: Don't be such a sore loser John. Now get in there. The narrator's right. That baby's not looking too good.

J: Okay, okay.

N1: So, John jumps in the river, swims out and manages to bring the baby to safety... just in the nick of time.

N2: Marsha performs mouth to mouth and after a few life-saving breaths, the baby starts to cough.

N1: They wrap the baby in swaddling clothes and lay him in a mang... oh, sorry, wrong story.

N2: They wrap the baby in Marsha's coat and head home.

N1: The next night during their evening walk by the river, John and Marsha stopped to skip stones by the river's edge when all of the sudden Marsha screams. {Marsha ignores the narrator.}

N2: Ah, all of the sudden Marsha screams.

M: Oh ya... AHHHHH!

J: What is it Marsha?

M: I think it's another baby in the river.

J: Don't even think about Rock, Paper, Scissors. It's your turn tonight.

M: Ohhhh, all right!

N1: And so, Marsha leaps in the river and saves the baby... blah, blah, blah...

N2: The next evening it was the same thing, except this time there were two babies floating down the river, so they both jumped in.

N1: Evening after evening, they discovered more and more babies in the river needing to be rescued. Eventually, they got their friends to help and they even convinced the town to set up a tent with a first aid station by the river.

N2: But, night after night, the babies continued to fill the river.

N1: More and more kind people volunteered their time to help save them and to provide care for them... emergency first aid, donations of baby food and clothing, people offering to provide foster care until permanent homes could be found.

N2: And yet, despite all of their efforts each night it just got busier and busier with more and more babies being pulled from the river.

N1: Then one evening, right in the middle of the chaos, while Marsha was looking after yet another baby, a young girl named Sarah, who had been watching everything, came up to Marsha and said...

S: Lady, has anyone ever thought of going up the river to see where all of these babies are coming from?

N2: Exhausted, frustrated and ready to explode, Marsha glares at the girl and shouts back...

M: Can't you see how busy we are? We can hardly keep up. I don't have time to waste wandering up the river. None of us do. These babies need us now.

S: But, I just thought...

THE END

River Babies: Charity vs Justice

To do this

- Leader plus facilitator for each group
- Leader needs to brief facilitators beforehand re issues to be raised etc
- Groups of 4 or 5 – if 4 - facilitator to read Sarah's part
- Each group needs 2 copies of script and 2 copies of questions
- Read through once then act out
- Go through questions (young person leading) with 1 group member recording answers
- Get all back together and 1 group acts out play
- Feedback main points from each group to whole team

River Babies: Charity vs Justice

1. How did Marsha and John decide who would rescue the baby?
2. How did you feel about Marsha and John's reaction to the first drowning baby? Is this a typical response to disasters, man-made or natural?
3. John and Marsha rally their friends to help and set up a tent and a first aid station. Is there anything wrong with that?
4. List the other measure taken by the people in response to the baby problem.
5. The situation is described as 'chaos'. What other phrases are used to describe how people feel when faced by an insurmountable problem? ('exhausted, frustrated and ready to explode')
6. What do you feel about Sarah's question: 'Has everyone ever thought of going up the river to see where the babies come from?'?
7. The narrator refers to 'the baby in the manger...wrong story'. Mother Teresa who worked in India's slums, said of the poor that, 'Each one of them was Jesus in disguise'. What do you think of her statement?
8. Is there a moral to this tale and if so, how does it apply to the plight of children in India?
9. In what ways can charities do the wrong thing with the best possible motives?
10. What is the difference between charity and empowerment?