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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Why Rabbits have short tails

Bunny Rabbit was sitting in his yard one day, thinking very hard, when his grandfather came along.

“Why are you so quiet and sober, grandson?” he inquired. “I am wondering, grandfather,” said Bunny, “why we have such long ears and so short a tail. I should think it would be much better if it were just the other way about.” “Of course; of course,” said Grandfather Rabbit, bobbing his ears back and forth.

“We all think we could have made a better rabbit if we had been consulted. But let me tell you why your tail is short and your ears are long, and then you will learn you are better off now than was your great-grandfather’s great-grandfather, who had a long tail and short ears.” It did not take Bunny Rabbit long to find a nice soft seat for his grandfather and to sit close and very still, with his ears sticking up to listen, for he dearly loved the stories his grandfather told.

“Once upon a time,” began Grandfather Rabbit, just as all grandfathers begin a story—“a long, long time ago there lived in some woods a rabbit. He had a long tail and short ears, just as all the rabbits in those days had. “One day he ran over the hill to the garden where Mr. Man lived. He should have been very careful, but he wasn’t, and when he was crawling under the rail fence around the garden didn’t Mr. Dog see him and begin to bark and chase Short Ears, as he was called.

"Short Ears was a good runner, and it was lucky he was or there would be an end to this story right here. Through the garden he ran under cover of the vegetable leaves, and when he got out he was a good bit ahead of Mr. Dog.

"Over the field they ran, and under the stone wall went Short Ears and over it went Mr. Dog. Down the road they ran lickety split, and into his house ran Short Ears just as Mr. Dog came into the yard.

"Short Ears had no time to lose, I can tell you. He slammed the door, and what do you suppose happened?" Bunny Rabbit was so interested in his grandfather's story he only started; he did not answer at all. So his grandfather went on.

"Why, Short Ears slammed that door right on his long tail, and there he was held fast, with his tail hanging outside."



"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Bunny Rabbit, feeling of his stubby little tail, to be sure it was safe behind him.

"What did poor Short Ears do then?" he asked.

"He could not do a thing, for there was Mr. Dog right in the yard and running straight for the door," said Grandfather Rabbit. Bunny Rabbit sat closer to his grandfather and his ears grew longer as he listened.

"Yes," said Grandfather Rabbit, "Short Ears was in a bad fix, as you can see. He could not open the door to get his tail out, because Mr. Dog would come in and catch him. He did not have long to think about it, for the very next thing he knew Mr. Dog grabbed at his tail and off it came right up to the door. And off he ran. For, you see, he thought he had Short Ears on the end of the tail, and he did not stop to look. He just ran.

"When his tail broke off, over went Short Ears on the floor, for that set him free. 'Oh dear! Oh dear! What shall I do?' he cried, when he jumped up and looked in the mirror and saw that his long tail was gone and all that remained was a little stubby tail, just like yours.

"First he ran to the medicine-closet and got some salve and a soft piece of cloth. But he found he could not reach the end of his tail—it was too short.

"His first thought was to run over to his cousin Rabbit's house, not far-off, but when he started toward the door he remembered Mr. Dog.

"Short Ears leaned his head to the crack in the door and listened hard. His ears were short, you remember, but not so short but that he heard Mr. Dog barking.

"Nearer and nearer came the bark. Short Ears locked the door and ran to the windows and fastened them and drew the shades, and then he ran into the closet and closed the door.

"Away back he crept under his Sunday clothes, where he was sure no one would find him, and there he sat and listened and listened and listened.

"Mr. Dog barked and jumped about outside the house, for he was very much upset when he found that he did not have Short Ears on the end of the tail he carried off. "But it was no use. He could not get into Short Ears's house, and at last he gave it up and ran off home, barking all the way. "Short Ears listened, and though Mr. Dog's tones grew fainter and fainter, Short Ears was surprised to find he could hear the barking, though it was a long way off. "After it was dark he came out of the closet and crept into his bed without even thinking of the end of his tail, he was so tired and worn out listening. "And now what do you think had happened to him, and what do you think he saw when he looked in the mirror in the morning to brush his hair?"

Bunny Rabbit shook his head. "I don't know, grandfather," he said. "What had happened to Short Ears?"

"His ears had grown long, he had listened so hard to the barking of Mr. Dog," said Grandfather Rabbit. "And from that day all the Rabbit family have had short tails and long ears, which is just as it should be, for we can hear Mr. Dog a long way off, and we do not have the bother of looking after a long tail when we run to cover. So don't wish to have yours changed again, for you see now that you are better off than poor Short Ears was, don't you?"

Bunny Rabbit said he did, and that he should never wish for a long tail and short ears again. And he didn't.