

The Dalai Lama

As you read, look for these **words** in the text. Use the surrounding writing to make an educated guess about the meaning of the words. Write your educated guess on this form, or on another piece of paper. Later on, after you have finished this work, find the word in the dictionary and find the meaning that is closest to the one used in this story. Write it down.

Word	definition - educated guess	dictionary definition
peace		
yak		
peasant		
kind		
fair		
palanquin		
exile		

As you read, look for these words and others that show us how The Dalai Lama lets people know about his respect for their feelings and property. Think of other words you could use to describe his character traits.

gentle, wise, kind, loving, calm, good listener, fair,

The Dalai Lama's Childhood Story

In 1935, a little boy named Lhamo Thondub (*pronounced lamo tondu*) was born to a **peasant** family in a country called Tibet. He had one older sister and three older brothers. The family had a small farm, and his father grew crops like barley and potatoes.

Tibet is high in the Himalaya Mountains where it is hard for trees and other plants to grow. Lhamo and his family lived a very simple life in a village called Takster. There were beautiful meadows and streams, and the family had horses.

Children in Tibet played outside all the time. When it was hot, they would swim or try to catch tadpoles in the small ponds and streams. In the winter, the pond would freeze, and the children would go ice-skating. Only they did not have ice skates. They put small nails in the bottoms of their leather shoes so they could glide across the ice.

While other children played outside, Lhamo was quiet and liked to be inside. He loved playing with his brothers and building his own toys.

He also liked the animals on his parents' farm, and he would go with his mother to the hen house to collect eggs. His mother was very **kind** and generous, and he loved being with her. They did not have books, but his parents would tell him fascinating stories. Many of these stories were about animals.

Lhamo seemed to be a normal little boy. But one day he did something different. He gathered some clothes, put them in a bag, and said, "I'm going to Lhasa, I'm going to Lhasa." He was three years old and had never left his parents' farm. But he was talking about Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet.

His parents wondered how he knew about Lhasa.

Later that year, some important men from Lhasa came to the village of Takster. A man called "The Dalai Lama" had died. He was the leader of Tibet. The men were looking for the next Dalai Lama. One of the important men had a dream that the next Dalai Lama lived in Takster in a house with turquoise tiles – just like Lhamo's house.

So, the men came to Lhamo's farm house to see him. They played with him and realized that he was the next Dalai Lama because he was so wise and kind for such a small boy. They were going to take him to Lhasa so he could study and be the next leader of the country.

The little boy was right. He was going to Lhasa.

The trip to Lhasa took three months. On the way, he saw geese, deer and wild **yaks**. It was a wonderful adventure. His parents and his older brother Lobsang traveled with him.

Since there were few roads in Tibet at that time, Lhamo and Lobsang got to travel in a **palanquin**. The palanquin was a box with doors on both sides and pillows inside to sit on. The box was attached to two long poles that were carried by two donkeys. Sometimes the two boys would wrestle and play and make the palanquin rock from side to side. Their mother would have to come over and tell them to settle down.

When the group arrived in Lhasa after the long journey, the little boy was introduced as the Dalai Lama. He would be the new government and religious leader of Tibet. There was a ceremony and his hair was cut. He would now always have a shaved head. And he wore bright red and brown robes.

Then he began his education. He learned about Tibetan art and culture, and also about logic and medicine. Monks, who are religious men who live quietly, taught him. He lived in a big palace called the Potala Palace. The Potala Palace was built on a mountain and was seven stories tall. Men from the Tibetan government worked there too.

The Dalai Lama's parents and brothers visited him in the palace. On these visits, he taught his younger brother how to draw pictures with bright colored pencils. They had never seen colored pencils before. He also told them about the mice that lived in his room with him. He would be saying his prayers, and mice would crawl up and down his arms. He was not afraid of them. He considered them friends. The mice helped the Dalai Lama not feel scared and lonely in the big palace.

The Dalai Lama prayed, studied and learned how to be the leader of Tibet. He was growing into a young man and had a lot of responsibility. The country of Tibet needed his leadership.

TROUBLE IN TIBET

In 1950, when the Dalai Lama was just sixteen years old, China invaded Tibet. China is the country just east of Tibet. The Chinese government wanted to take over Tibet and make it part of China. So they sent 80,000 soldiers to capture Tibet. The peaceful Tibetan people were no match for the Chinese army.

The Dalai Lama worked for years to find a peaceful solution to the language and culture than Tibetans. Then the Chinese army started destroying Tibetan buildings like temples and monasteries (where monks lived).

Life in Tibet became very dangerous and unsafe. The Dalai Lama had to leave Tibet so he could keep working for his people's freedom. But the Chinese army would not let him go. So one night in 1959 he dressed up like a Tibetan soldier and walked out of his palace. The Chinese army did not notice him because he looked just like the other soldiers that were around the palace. But he was not free yet.

He had to travel for two weeks over the high mountains into India, the country to the south of Tibet. His parents and family went with him, as did many of his teachers and other Tibetan people.

When the Dalai Lama got to India, he set up the Tibetan Government in a small town called Dharamsala, known as "Little Lhasa." This is known as a government in **exile** (exile means being forced to leave your country). More than fifty years have passed, and China is still controlling Tibet. Many Tibetan people do not have jobs and cannot afford food. The Tibetan people still think of the Dalai Lama as their leader but the Chinese will not let Tibetan people talk about him or hang his picture in their homes.

WORKING FOR PEACE

Now the Dalai Lama travels around the world speaking to important people like presidents and other world leaders about helping Tibet. He also spends a lot of time talking to ordinary people about how to be kind, loving, and **fair**. In 1989, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for being gentle and wise.

TODAY

The Dalai Lama is still living in India and is working for a nonviolent solution to the Chinese occupation. He hopes people will help him by being kind and fair and by being good listeners and problem-solvers. He knows it is hard to stay calm when you are angry. But that is what peace is all about – finding ways to listen and solve problems without hitting, fighting or calling names. This is true for people and countries.

Here are some questions for you to answer:

1. Describe how Lhamo made ice skates? Where do you get most of your toys? Do you make any of them?
2. This is a picture of the Potala Palace. The Dalai Lama's room was on the top floor of the palace. Which room do you think was his and why?
3. Summarize how The Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet in your own words.



Geography:

Here is a map of the area of China, India, and Tibet where this story takes place. On the large map, please mark about where Lhamo was born, where he moved when he was four, and to where he went when he escaped from Tibet.

