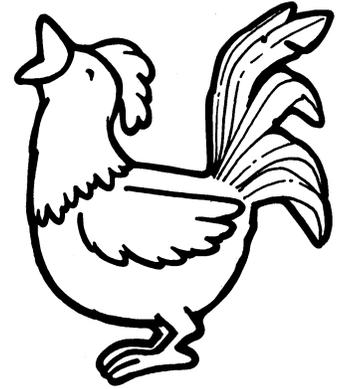


“The Magic Rooster”

A Skit to Read or Dramatize



Characters:

Narrator
John Napier
Thief
Workers (three or four)

Props:

Several tools (garden or kitchen)
A dirty “rooster” such as a chalk eraser filled with dark chalk dust.
A screen or table to represent the shed.
Group may decide if it would be effective for the audience to view actual rooster petting scene.

Narrator: The great mathematician, John Napier, made many discoveries in his lifetime. His problem-solving techniques were so incredible he was sometimes accused of using magic. In this story, Napier used that notion to solve a very practical problem. It’s the story of the magic rooster!

(Enter Napier, talking to himself. Thief may quietly rummage around behind him, collecting a few miscellaneous tools under his coat)

Napier: I just don’t understand. Ever since I hired these new workers, things have mysteriously disappeared from my house! At first, I didn’t really notice, since only a tool or two were missing, but now even the cook has complained about things missing from the kitchen! I have to put a stop to this. What can I do? The thief would never admit to stealing my things. I must think of a plan...

(Exit Thief. Napier sits down to think.)

Narrator: Napier thought and thought, trying to think of a clever way to discover which of the new workers was the thief. Suddenly, he had an idea. He called all the workers for a meeting.

(Enter all workers, including Thief.)

Napier: Someone has been stealing from me. Since no one has confessed, I have found a sure way to catch the thief. In this shed is my black rooster, the magical one that can tell the truth from lies. (Workers look at each other nervously.) Now, I want each one of you to go into the dark shed, one at a time, and pet the rooster on the back. The rooster will then tell me which one of you is guilty.

(One by one, the workers enter shed and pet the rooster. Just before his turn, the Thief steps aside and whispers to the audience.)

Thief: (With his hand shielding his mouth from the other workers.) There's no way I'm going to touch that magical rooster! If I do, I will get in big trouble—and probably lose my job! The master will never know if I don't touch it, so...just to be safe...I'll only *pretend* to pet the black rooster.

(Thief enters shed.)

Narrator: So the thief entered the shed, stayed away from the rooster, and then came out to stand in line with the others.

Napier: Very good. Now, let me see who the rooster has declared as the thief. Let me see your hands.

(Workers hold out hands.)

Narrator: The workers held out their hands to Napier, palms up. He walked slowly past them all and looked at the big, black smudges on their hands. All of the workers' hands were dirty, except for the thief's. Napier stopped in front of the man with the clean hands.

Napier: You are the guilty one. Look at your hands—they're clean. All of the other workers knew they were innocent so they touched the rooster, but you were scared since you were guilty. Because you refused to pet the rooster, I know you are the thief!

(Thief puts his hands behind his back and shouts.)

Thief: Are you going to believe a stupid rooster? How can it know whether or not I've been stealing?—even if it is magical!

Napier: You silly worker. The rooster is not magical. (Napier turns to all workers) Knowing that the guilty man would not touch the rooster, I covered it with greasy black soot, collected after the oil lamps were cleaned. This way I would be able to tell which man was too scared to touch the rooster. The thief would be the only one with clean hands. (Napier turns to Thief) You may think it was only a "stupid rooster," but it definitely outsmarted you!

