

CROSSING THE RIVER



Hi! My name is Ms. Newman and this is my son, Peter. We are both waiting for his sister to get home from her first day of school. We just moved to Toronto, Canada this month and are adjusting to our new life here. Peter loves his big sister and looks up to her very much.



Look who's finally home from school! It's Tina!

"Yayyyyyy, Tinaaaa!" shouts Peter.

"How was your first day of school, honey?" I ask.
Tina tells us about the new friends she has made,
and about her new teacher and new classroom.
"But I still miss my old friends in Calgary," she says.
"And my old teacher, and my old classroom."



"I know how different everything is here. But look at you! You are making new friends on your first day of school. Change is hard and you are brave for embracing it, Tina." I tell her.

Tina, Peter, and I miss our old home but we talk about the positive side that change can bring. "It will get easier with time," I often tell them. "Just wait."



The three of us love working in the garden on Saturday mornings. Tina helps water the plants and Peter helps pick strawberries.

"Have I ever told you the story about the bird and the mice?" I ask the kids. They love when I invent funny stories.

"Once upon a time, there was a village of hungry mice. Do you know what mice like to eat?" I ask.

"CHEESE!!" say Peter and Tina at once. "That's right!" I laugh.



Once a week the mice had to cross the river to get to Cheese Mountain, where they harvested their cheese for the coming week. However, they only had one raft, and often the current in the river was very strong and the mice struggled to cross.

"What's a current?" asks Tina.

"Great question!" I explain that a current is the movement in water.

"It's sort of like the way wind blows in the sky."



Often the mice lost their raft when the current was strong. Each time, they had to swim back to shore and build a whole new raft. The mice got very frustrated over time and fought with one another about what to do. But using a raft was their only idea and so they kept having the same problem over and over.



One day, a little yellow bird came by for a chat. She had been watching the mice struggle to cross the river.

"I have a great idea. I can help you," said the bird.

But the mice didn't like birds. In their opinion, birds sang too loudly and the mice were jealous because the birds could fly.

But one little mouse decided to listen. "What's your idea?" that mouse asked.

The bird tweeted, "Well, have you thought about growing cheese on your side of the river? I know just how to plant and harvest seeds. I can help you do the same, with your cheese."



The mice scowled. "Don't trust birds!" one yelled.

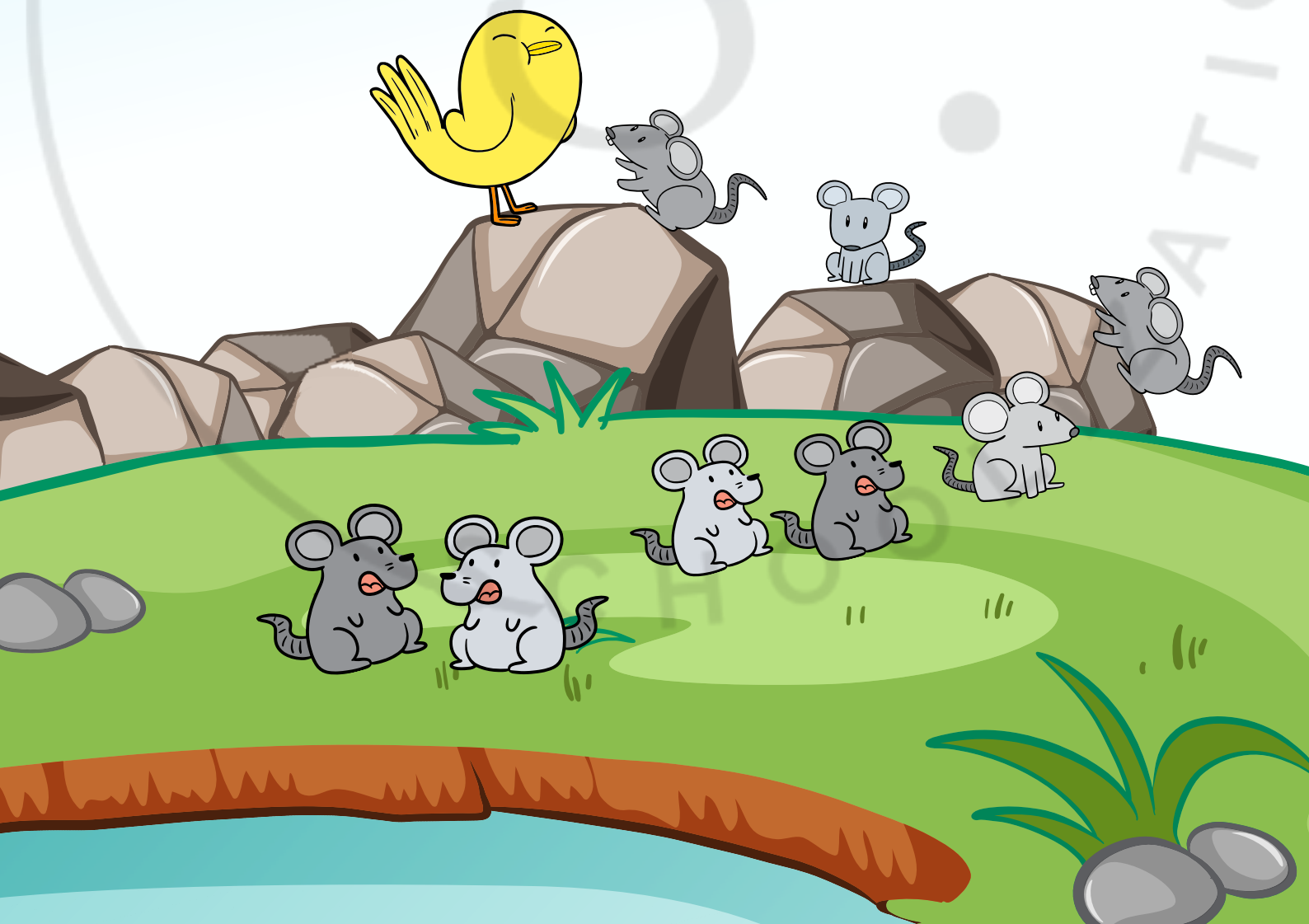
"No new ideas!" another said.

"We don't need to change!" yelled another mouse.

But the brave mouse listened and thought. He climbed on top of the rock and stood next to the bird. He listened to the bird's idea.

"What we've been doing isn't working. Crossing the river with a strong current is too dangerous. Let's give this new idea a try," he said.

One by one, the other mice started to climb onto the rock. "Let's not be afraid of change," cried another brave mouse.



The mice worked together with the birds. It took time to build a farm and to learn how to grow cheese, but by the next spring, the mice had their first harvest.

They became friends with the birds and learned to trust each other and new ideas. The brave mouse who stood up for the bird became the head cheese farmer.

Now the mice only cross the river on calm days.



"Oh, great story, Mom!" says Tina. "I liked the brave little mouse and how the others changed their minds and got along with the birds."

"Can we grow cheese?" asks Peter.

Tina and I both laugh. "Sorry, Peter, Only mice can grow cheese."



Now, each day that Tina comes home, her smile gets bigger and bigger. She can't wait to tell us about her day at school.

All three of us are adapting to our new home. We still have tough days, when the current feels too strong to cross. But we retell the story of the mice over cheese sandwiches and encourage each other to be brave.

