

The Cricket and the Jaguar

A folktale from Argentina

In the heat of the bright noon sun, tiny Cricket was so happy he couldn't stop himself from chirping. Unfortunately, bossy Jaguar was trying to take a nap nearby.

"Hey, you puny little pest," shouted Jaguar at the tiny insect, "stop chirping right now! It's annoying and I'm trying to sleep."

"I don't mean to annoy you," said Cricket, "but the sun is so warm it makes me want to sing."

"Well, cut it out," growled the cranky cat. "Don't you see how much bigger I am than you?" To make his point, the jaguar opened his mouth as wide as possible, baring his shiny, sharp teeth.

"I'll see what I can do," answered Cricket.

Jaguar trotted away smugly, curled up, and drifted off to sleep. But the hot desert sun kept on shining, and Cricket felt so warm and content that he couldn't resist the temptation to sing out. He chirped a jolly chirp, and Jaguar woke up with a snarl.

"You have one more chance to be quiet. If you're not, I'll put an end to your annoying happy song once and for all!" Jaguar once again showed his fearsome teeth. But this time, he also raised the hair on his back, which made him look even bigger and more ferocious.

Name _____

“I’ll do my best,” said Cricket.

Satisfied with his impressive display, Jaguar curled up once more and drifted off to sleep. But the desert sun kept shining, and Cricket felt too happy to stay quiet, so he chirped a loud, cheerful chirp.

“That’s it!” roared Jaguar. “I declare war on all crickets!” Jaguar called together the pumas, boars, and armadillos and prepared to stamp out all annoying insects.

But Cricket called together the bees, wasps, and stinging ants and told them about Jaguar’s threats. They all agreed to help fight back.

The battle was short and sweet for the insects. Painfully stung, all of Jaguar’s allies ran away. Jaguar stood alone on the battlefield, crying from the sharp stings.

“You see,” whispered Cricket into one of Jaguar’s swollen, bee-stung ears, “there is no such thing as a small enemy.”

Jaguar slunk off to wait for his swelling to go down. Cricket returned to saluting the bright sun with his joyful, triumphant chirping.