

Have you heard the story of THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES? I don't know what young whippersnappers like you have read or not read nowadays. It's possible that you have read this story already - but if not, it's a good story to know! It was originally written by HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, who wrote lots of fairy tales in the 19th century. This particular story was published in 1837, when Hans Christian Andersen was only 32 years old. It goes something like this:



Many years ago, there lived an Emperor who loved wearing new clothes. In fact, that was the thing he loved. He would spend all day changing his clothes: he had a different coat for every hour of the day. One day, two men visited the city that was ruled over by the Emperor, and they found out about the Emperor's love of wearing clothes. These two men made their living swindling other people out of their money. They had an idea how they could get lots of money from the Emperor without doing a stitch of work (literally, as we will see). They let everyone know that they were tailors, and were able to make clothes out of the most incredibly beautiful and colourful fabric. But they warned everyone, 'This fabric is so amazing, not everyone can see it - anyone who is really stupid won't be able to see it!'

Soon the Emperor heard about these two new arrivals in his city. He thought to himself, 'I really want them to make some clothes for me - this fabric sounds absolutely wonderful. And also if any of my advisers can't see my clothes, I will know they are really stupid, and I'll sack them on the spot.' So the Emperor summoned the two thieves who were pretending to be tailors and said, 'You will make some clothes for me out of this fabric of yours.' The tailors said, 'That's great - but we don't come cheap! You will have to give us lots of gold from your treasury for the clothes, and we will need lots of gold thread and silk to make our fabric.' The Emperor said, 'You will have whatever you want.' So the tailors set to work, pretending to spend all day and night weaving the Emperor's clothes out of the silk and gold thread they were given. But instead, they stuffed all that into their bags to use some other time, and spent their time waving their arms around and pretending to weave the clothes - when there was in fact nothing there.

The Emperor's chief adviser went to visit the Emperor's tailors to see how they were getting on. The tailors said to him, 'You have come just in time to admire the fabric we have produced for the Emperor's clothes!' And they pretended to show him rolls and rolls of this fabric, saying to him, 'Isn't it beautiful? Aren't the colours amazing?' But the adviser could see nothing at all. But he was scared that if he said he couldn't say anything, the Emperor would think he was stupid, so he swallowed hard and said, 'Hmmm... this is really fantastic work. The Emperor will be very pleased.' After he had left, the two swindlers collapsed laughing - their plan was working.

The day came to dress the Emperor in his wonderful new clothes. The Emperor planned to walk through the city in his fine new clothes, and everyone who lived in the city woke up early, trying to get a good spot to see the Emperor's new clothes as he walked about. The tailors arrived at the Emperor's palace carrying nothing at all, but pretending to be weighed down with loads and loads of coats and shirts and trousers and robes and underwear for the Emperor to wear. The soldiers who let the tailors into the palace couldn't see the clothes that the tailors were supposed to be carrying, but they said nothing because they too did not want to appear to be really stupid. The tailors staggered into the Emperor's dressing room with his

clothes, and told the Emperor to undress - they would hand him his new clothes to put on. So the Emperor got undressed and the tailors said, 'Right - here are some amazing underpants for you to wear.' The Emperor could not see them, but he did not want anyone to think he was stupid, so he took 'the underpants' and put them on, and said, 'Yes, you are right - they are amazing. They are the best underpants I have ever worn' And the same thing happened with the socks, and shirt, and trousers, and coat and robe that the tailors gave the Emperor to wear - he could not see any of them, but he didn't want to admit he couldn't see them. The tailors then said, 'Okay, put your best shoes on' and look at yourself in this long mirror. The Emperor did as he was told, and all he could see was that he was stark naked, except for some shoes on his feet. But again, he didn't want to admit that he couldn't see the clothes. So all he said was, 'What a wonderful costume you have made for me! Right - now it's time for the parade.'

So the Emperor started walking through the city, stark naked except for his shoes. The two tailors slipped away, with their bags full of gold and silk and gold thread. All the cityfolk who had lined up to see the Emperor's new clothes thought, 'I can't see his clothes! I must be stupid! Quick - pretend that you can see them!' So everyone said, 'These clothes are amazing! The quality! The colours! The cut and the line! Surely we are the luckiest people in the world to be able to see clothes like this, and to be ruled over an Emperor who gets to wear clothes like this!'

But then a little boy, who didn't care what people thought of him, piped up and said, 'The Emperor's got no clothes on! He's completely naked!' Some people near the boy tried to hush him, but he kept on pointing the Emperor saying 'The Emperor's got no clothes on! I can see everything!' And gradually people overcame their fear of being thought stupid and said, 'You know what? He's right. The Emperor's got no clothes on!' And the more people who said this, the more other people got the confidence to say, 'I can't see any clothes. We can't all be too stupid to see them! The Emperor's got no clothes on!' And soon everyone was saying it, and the murmurs of the crowd reached the Emperor's ears. And he thought to himself, 'You know what? I think I'm completely naked!' And he turned round and ran as fast as he could back to his palace.

This is a really important story about the importance of THINKING FOR YOURSELF, and not allowing other people to force you to think like they do by saying, 'If you don't think like we do, you're really stupid!' This sort of thing goes on all the time at the moment, and it's really important not to go along with it, but think and judge for yourself. Be like the little boy who was unafraid of being thought stupid, and don't be like the Emperor, and his advisers, and the crowd of cityfolk - none of whom wanted to be thought stupid, and as a result fooled themselves into 'seeing' clothes that were never there.