

L'Ombre de Gerixeti

Forme : Conte d'auteur

Âge : 10-12, 13+

Source : Myths & Maths CM, NN

Notions mathématiques : angles (La taille d'une ombre est déterminée par l'angle avec lequel les rayons du soleil atteignent le sol.)

Démarche mathématique : modéliser (Pour bien comprendre comment les ombres varient, faut modéliser : le soleil par un point, ses rayons par des demi-droites, les objets opaques par des segments de la même hauteur, le sol par un plan horizontal.), visualiser des configurations géométriques (On visualise la configuration géométrique formée par le soleil, ses rayons, les objets opaques, leur ombre sur le sol.)

Compétences transversales : collaboration (La collaboration demande parfois de s'adapter à l'autre. Pour enseigner l'art des ombres aux personnages qui ne possèdent pas d'ombre, le héros invente des outils et procédés spécifiques et adaptés.)

Commentaire pédagogique : *This tale offers a way to explore shadow, a geometrically rich notion involving angles, projection, lines and planes, incidence, and more.*

Résumé : *Le soleil a changé d'axe, un arboriculteur fait de l'ombre à ses voisins et doit s'exiler. Arrivé dans un pays où l'ombre n'existe pas, il réussit à rétablir le soleil au bon endroit en enseignant l'art des ombres à ses hôtes.*

Once upon a time, there was a farmer named Gerixeti. He lived happily in a village nestled in the hollow of a valley, on the sunny side of a little dell so cool that the stones shivered in the morning. The trees in his orchard were so tall, so strong, so generous that their fruit shone each day like pearls wet with dew. Every morning, the sun came on its round, like a baker checking his dough. From east to west, it swelled the buds, opened the blossoms, greened the leaves, ripened the fruit.

But then one fine day, at exactly noon, the sun stopped. Or rather, it chose a new path. From the South, it moved toward the North. And suddenly the orchard trees cast their shadow over the neighbouring gardens. A crowd of villagers came running, their faces twisted in the shade, axes in hand, ready to fell the trees.

Heavy-hearted and empty-pocketed, Gerixeti fled.

Who was playing games with the sun? To find out, Gerixeti set off northward. The farther he went, the smaller his noon shadow became and the more his skin burned. After many days,

he arrived in a strange land bathed in golden light. The powdery ground there rippled like a frozen sea. He walked on. At last he collapsed, hungry and thirsty.

Hours passed. Then he felt a cool liquid running down his throat. Opening his eyelids a little, he saw wide-eyed faces staring at him. He found himself in a country unlike any he had ever seen: camels with two humps, trees whose leaves were shaped like hands, but above all... people who were completely transparent! Their bare, diaphanous bodies did not stop the light, and they cast no shadows...

They stared at him, open-mouthed, not because of the brightness of his skin, but because of his shadow. For he still dragged it behind him! Smaller, more discreet than in his village, but there all the same.

They asked him a thousand questions: "Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you looking for?" No one understood what he was saying, so they turned to the Shadow. But it did not answer. The inhabitants came running to see it, half amazed and half frightened. They greeted it, tickled it, and even brought it a splendid meal! But Gerixeti ate everything, leaving it nothing.

Since the Shadow obeyed only its master, it followed him everywhere and copied his every movement. "Let's find it a wife," said one Transparent. "Let's sew it a blanket!" said another. They made a blanket to its measure, which Gerixeti was supposed to lay at his feet.

But the Shadow did exactly as it pleased! At sunset, they saw it stretch all the way to the horizon, and then it vanished into the night without a word. The Transparents, alarmed, thought it had fled, or worse, that it had been kidnapped. They tried to lock it up. In vain. Then they accused Gerixeti of mistreating his shadow, starving it, keeping it as a slave. He had to set it free! And it was he who would have to leave.

Feeling the crowd closing in on him once again, Gerixeti promised the Transparents that he would teach them the art of shadow in exchange for their help in solving his problem. He showed them how to cut figures out of leaves in order to create shadows in front of the sun. The villagers, amazed, began to play with shadow and light, discovering new shapes and unfamiliar games. They covered their bodies with clothes so as to tame the shadows.

Then Gerixeti told his story. He spoke of his mountain land, of daybreak, of the warm slope called the adret, and the colder one called the ubac. He spoke of the trees, the fruit, the light moving around the orchard. Then he explained how the shadow had changed place, and how, because of it, he had had to flee.

The Transparents listened without understanding everything. But among them, an Elder

raised his eyes. "It is us," he said. "It is we who pulled on the sky. To make the sun less harsh, we moved the axis of the world. Without knowing it, we tilted the light."

A great silence followed. The Council met. And since winter was drawing near, they put the sun back in its place, at exactly noon, just above their village.

The Transparents panicked. Their shadows, only just tamed, were shrinking again, until they disappeared! "Thief! The sorcerer is taking back what he gave!" Without another thought, they threw Gerixeti into prison. The afternoon wore on, and little by little their shadows reappeared. They slid along the walls, crept beneath their feet... But it was too late. The council had made its decision. "Let him leave before it all begins again." And without further trial, they exiled him.

Gerixeti set out before nightfall, riding at full speed on a two-humped mount. Behind him, the delighted Transparents saw their shadows growing again in the setting sun. But when night fell, no more shadows! Another trick from the sorcerer! Their finest riders went after him. That is why, they say, the journey home was quicker than the outward one.

Gerixeti found his mountains again. In what remained of his orchard, where the great felled trees had stood, he planted seeds from hand-trees. They grew peacefully, and those trees bore beautiful sweet fruit. The ground was drier, the adret more arid, but Gerixeti lived in peace.

And every evening, at the fireside, he would sit again with his neighbours. Bearing no grudge, a steaming drink in one hand and a fruit as sweet as honey in the other, he told of his adventures in the Land of Light. Meanwhile, the shadows, faithful and docile, danced on the walls.

And that is how, people say, date palms were born in that valley.