

When the traders brought the precious silk cloth to Europe, all the kings and queens wanted to buy it. All the noble people wanted such wonderful cloth. The traders found that they could sell the silk at a very high price.

As soon as possible they returned to China. They began buying as much silk cloth as they could. The people of China soon became richer.

The Emperor and Empress were very happy. This new cloth would help the people of China to have enough money to buy food and other things. If only they could keep the secret of the silk.

The emperor passed laws. Anyone who told the secret of where the thread came from would be put to death. Only people the Emperor could trust were allowed to work with the silkworms.

For many years the people of China kept their secret. They sold their shiny cloth all over the world and the Chinese people became richer.

The people ever afterward called Si-ling “The Goddess of the Silkworm.” Whenever the emperor walked with her in the garden, they liked to watch the silkworms spinning threads for the good of their people.

THE GODDESS OF THE SILKWORM



A Tale from China



A LearningIsland.org
Tale of Old

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The Goddess of the Silkworm/A Tale from China

Summary: The story of the empress who discovered how to make silk cloth.

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“I’ll find a way,” Si-ling said.

First Si-ling tried to unwind the threads, but they stuck together. No matter how hard she tried, she could only unwind a little bit before the thread would break.

Then she tried many other ways of getting the thread to unwind from the cocoon. Finally she found a way.

She put the cocoons in a hot place, and the little sleepers soon died. Then the cocoons were thrown into boiling water to make the threads soft. After that, the long threads could be easily unwound.

Now Si-ling had to think of something else. She had to find a way to weave the threads into cloth. After many trials, she made a loom—the first that was ever made.

She taught others how to make looms and how to weave the fine silk threads. Soon hundreds of people were making cloth from the threads of the silkworm.

This cloth was among the most beautiful in the world. It caught the rays of the sun. It was almost as if the cloth had a life of its own.

Traders came from other lands. They saw the beautiful cloth that was worn by the Chinese people. They wanted to buy this cloth and take it back to sell to other countries.



THE GODDESS OF THE SILKWORM

The next morning Hoangti and the empress walked under the trees again. They found some worms still winding thread. Others had already spun their cocoons and were fast asleep.

In a few days all of the worms had spun cocoons.

“This is indeed a wonderful, wonderful thing!” said Si-ling. “Why, each worm has a thread on its body long enough to make a house for itself!”

Si-ling thought of this day after day. One morning as she and the emperor walked under the trees, she said, “I believe I could find a way to weave those long threads into cloth.”

“But how could you unwind the threads?” asked the emperor.

Hoangti was the emperor of China. He had a beautiful wife whose name was Si-ling. The emperor and his wife loved their people and always thought of their happiness.

In those days the Chinese people wore clothes made of skins. By and by animals grew scarce, and the people did not know what they should wear. The emperor and empress tried in vain to find some other way of clothing them.

One morning Hoangti and his wife were in the beautiful palace garden. They walked up and down, up and down, talking of their people.

Suddenly the emperor said, “Look at those worms on the mulberry trees, Si-ling. They seem to be spinning.”

Si-ling looked, and sure enough, the worms were spinning. A long thread was coming from the mouth of each, and each little worm was winding this thread around its body.

Si-ling and the emperor stood still and watched the worms. “How wonderful!” said Si-ling.

