

***Momotaro, Peach Boy***  
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Once upon a time, in a small village in the country of Japan, there lives a kind old man and his good, honest wife.

One fine morning, the old man went to the hills to cut firewood, while his wife went down to the river to wash clothes. The old woman was scrub, scrub, scrubbing the clothes on a stone, when something strange came floating down the river. It was a peach- a very big peach, round peach! She picked it up- oof!- and carried it home with her, thinking that she and her her husband could eat it when he returned.

The old man soon came down the hills, and the old woman set the peach before him. The peach began to shake and wobble the table. As the old man and woman looked on in amazement, the peach split apart, and out came a baby boy.

The old man and woman took care of the baby. They were kind to him and raised him as their own son. They called him Momotaro, a fine name, as it means "Peach Boy."

Momotaro grew up to be strong and brave- which was a good thing for the village, because for many years the villagers had been bothered by the oni, who were greedy monsters who stole things from the villagers. Everyone in the village wished that the oni would stop bothering the village.

One day, when Momotaro had grown to be a young man, he said to his parents, "I am going to the island of the oni who steal from our village. I will bring back what they have stolen, and stop them from harming us ever again. Please make some millet cakes for me to take along on my journey."

The old man and woman were worried, but they made the millet cakes for Momotaro. And so he started on his way.

He had not gone far when he met a dog. "Where are you going, Momotaro?" asked the dog.

"I am going to the island of the oni to bring back what they have stolen from my village," said Momotaro.

"And what are you carrying in that sack?" asked the dog.

"I'm carrying the best millet cakes in all Japan," said Momotaro. "Would you like one?"

"Mmm, yes!" said the dog. "And I will come with you to the island of the oni. I will help you."

The dog ate the millet cake, than he and Momotaro walked on. They soon met a monkey.

"Where are you going, Momotaro?" asked the monkey.

"I am going to the island of the oni to bring back what they have stolen from my village," said Momotaro.

"I will come with you," said the monkey. And Momotaro thanked him and gave him a millet cake.

Now the three of them walked along, when soon they heard a call: "Momotaro, Momotaro! Where are you going?"

Momotaro looked around to see who was calling. A big pheasant flew out of a field and landed at his feet. Momotaro told him that he and his new friends were going to the island of the oni.

"Then I will come with you and help you," said the pheasant. Momotaro thanked him and gave him a millet cake.

So Momotaro went on his way, with the dog, the monkey, and the pheasant following close behind.

They soon came to the island of the oni. The oni lived in a big stone castle. The pheasant flew over the high castle walls. He swooped down and flew back and forth so fast that it scared the oni. The oni shouted and screamed and ran about in confusion.

Just then Momotaro, with the help of the dog and monkey, broke through the gate of the castle. Oh, what a scene! The dog and monkey ran about the legs of the oni, which tripped them up so much they had trouble standing. Momotaro ran left and right, waving his staff or walking stick. Many of the oni ran away, and soon it was just Momotaro and the oni King.

Momotaro ordered the oni king to collect all the treasure the oni had stolen. Momotaro and his friends gazed in amazement at the beautiful gowns and jewels and gold and silver that had been stolen from the village over the years.

And so Momotaro took all the riches back to the village. The village was never again bothered by the oni. And Momotaro and the old man and the old woman lived in peace and plenty for the rest of their lives.