

# Mercury and the Woodman

Adapted from Aesop's Fable

A Woodman was cutting a tree on the bank of a river. He struck the trunk so hard that his axe flew out of his hands and fell into the water. The Woodman stood sadly by the water's edge, not knowing how he would get the axe back. Mercury appeared and took pity on him. Mercury dived into the river and, bringing up a golden axe, asked him if that was the one he had lost. The Woodman replied that it was not, and Mercury then dived a second time. He brought up a silver axe and asked if that was his, but the Woodman said it was not. Once more, Mercury dived into the river. This time he brought up the missing axe. The Woodman was overjoyed at recovering his axe. Mercury was so pleased with the Woodman's honesty that he made him a present of the other two axes.

When the Woodman told the story to his friends, one of them was filled with envy. So the friend planned to let his axe drop into the water on purpose. Mercury appeared as before. He dived in and brought up a golden axe. The fellow cried, "That's mine, that's mine," and stretched out his hand eagerly for the prize; but Mercury was so disgusted at his dishonesty that he refused to give him the golden axe or to recover the one he had let fall into the water.

Then the man knew: \_\_\_\_\_ *(continued)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_