

# Other Stories

## *with a Theme of Thinking for Oneself*

**Story Title:** The Old Farmer (*Estonia*)

**Book:** The Sea Wedding: And Other Stories from Estonia

**Author:** Selve Maas and Peggy Hoffman

**Publisher:** The Dillon Press, Inc., 1978

**Page(s):** 28-36

**Synopsis:** A farmer named Mehis overhears his two sons talking. The sons whisper that their father is getting old and must soon pass the farm to them. All of a sudden Mehis suddenly feels tired and old. A wise man tells him that if he sneezes three times, he will surely die. Alarmed, Mehis sneezes once when a butterfly lands on his nose. He sneezes a second time when entering a mill. When the miller asks Mehis to help him lift a sack of flour, Mehis sneezes a third time. Instantly, he collapses on the ground. Pigs lick his face. The miller yells at him. Mehis realizes he is still alive. He stands up, amazed. Henceforth, Mehis no longer listens to the gossip of others about him.

**Story Title:** Why the Platypus is Special (*Australia*)

**Book:** From the Dreamtime: Australian Aboriginal Legends

**Author:** Jean A. Ellis

**Publisher:** CollinsDove, a division of HarperCollinsPublishers, 1991

**Page(s):** 43-49

**Synopsis:** The animals that live on the land, the birds, and the water creatures all vie for Platypus to join their group. The land animals argue that Platypus should join their group because he is covered with fur like a mammal. The birds claim that Platypus should join their group because he lays eggs like they do. The water creatures say Platypus should join their group because he swims underwater. Platypus consults with his family. Then he announces that he will not join any group. Rather, he asks them to find ways they are similar to one another rather than seeing only the differences.

**Story Title:** The Skunk in Tante Odette's Oven (*Australia*)

**Book:** The Talking Cat and Other Stories of French Canada

**Author:** Natalie Savage Carlson

**Publisher:** Harper & Brothers Publishers, NY, 1952

**Page(s):** 3-16

**Synopsis:** A skunk has crawled into Tante Odette's outdoor oven and won't come out. She must bake bread soon—what if the skunk lets out its terrible smell while inside her oven? She won't be able to use the oven for years! Many try to help, but it is the simple-minded Rene Ecrette who coaxes the skunk to leave. How? "I just told him," says Rene, "that if he stayed in the oven any longer, he would begin to smell like Tante Odette's bread, and none of the other skunks would come near him." Rene Ecrette understood that even a lowly skunk has a sense of self-respect.