Narrator: Once there was a very powerful emperor. He ruled over a huge land. But there was something that he was secretly embarrassed about. He didn’t have one single hair on his head.

The Emperor felt that he needed to wear wigs. He had more than a hundred of them in a special closet. They were the finest wigs and could easily be mistaken for real hair.

One day a traveling salesperson showed up at the Emperor’s castle with a very unusual product.

Emperor: What are you selling today? Make it quick, because I have a huge empire to run.

Salesperson: Oh, great Emperor, I have traveled here today with an amazing new product.
I want to offer you the very first batch. It's called Hair Today Magic Potion. It's just $19.99. And wait! That's not all! If you buy Hair Today Magic Potion, I will also throw in a free comb.

**Emperor (touching his wig):** Why would I need it? As you can see, I have a full head of hair.

**Salesperson:** Yes, your hair is very nice indeed. But perhaps you have a friend who could use this potion. I used to be bald myself. And as you can see, I grew plenty of new hair thanks to Hair Today Magic Potion.

**Emperor:** I'll take a hundred bottles. It's for my bald friend, of course.

**Narrator:** The Emperor began using Hair Today Magic Potion. Each night before he went to bed, he'd take off his wig and put three drops on his very shiny head.

Each morning, he'd talk to his two advisors, Mr. Twiddle and Mr. Twee. They were the only people the Emperor trusted. He'd ask them if the Hair Today Magic Potion was working.

Mr. Twiddle and Mr. Twee wanted to make the Emperor happy. They wanted to keep their jobs. So they told the Emperor what they believed he wanted to hear.

**Emperor:** What do you think, my trusted advisors, Twiddle and Twee? Do you think the potion is working?

**Twiddle:** Oh, I do. I definitely notice a difference.

**Twee:** Yes, you are starting to grow just a few hairs.

**Emperor:** Only a few?

**Twee:** Well, when I say a few, I mean, like, maybe twenty.

**Twiddle:** Or maybe fifty. They're very nice-looking hairs, I might add.

**Emperor:** Yes. I see them, too.

**Narrator:** The Emperor continued to use the potion. And his two trusted advisors continued to tell him that the potion was working. As the days went by, they began to tell more and more extravagant lies to the Emperor. Soon they even began to believe the lies themselves.
Emperor: Tell me, trusted advisors, how do I look today? Is the potion working yet?

Twiddle: Is it working? Are you kidding? You have grown a thick head of beautiful hair.

Twee: Yes, your hair is thick and straight and brown...

Twiddle: Well, I would say it's more wavy than straight. And it's more golden than brown.

Twee: But you have a lot of it. It's thick, no question.

Twiddle: Yes, you can throw away your wigs. You don't need them anymore.

Twee: In fact, if I do say so myself, Emperor, you need a haircut.

Emperor: A haircut! How wonderful. My hair is long and thick and black and curly.

Twee: Actually, it's golden and wavy.

Emperor: So it is. It's long and thick and golden and wavy.

Twiddle: And shiny.

Emperor: And shiny. It's long and thick and golden and wavy and shiny, and I need a haircut. Fetch me the imperial hairdresser at once.

Narrator: Twiddle and Twee ran off to find the imperial hairdresser. When they found the hairdresser, they described the Emperor's new hair in great detail.

By now, they were so caught up in their lie that they completely believed it themselves. And soon, they had the imperial hairdresser convinced that the Emperor had long thick golden wavy hair that needed to be cut.

Imperial Hairdresser: Oh, Emperor, what a fine head of hair you have.

Emperor (blushing): Thank you, thank you. Right now, there's a bit too much of it. It's just a little too long and thick and golden and wavy and shiny.

Imperial Hairdresser: It will be a pleasure to trim it. I will make you look fabulous!
Narrator: The imperial hairdresser set to work with scissors and a comb. The haircut required many hours of snipping and clipping and fussing and worrying and blow-drying. But at last, the imperial hairdresser was finished.

Imperial Hairdresser: Well, what do you think?

Emperor: Maybe just a little more off the back.

Narrator: The imperial hairdresser carefully clipped the scissors near the back of the Emperor’s head.

Imperial Hairdresser: Now what do you think?

Emperor: Perfect!

Twiddle: What a great style!

Twee: Everyone in the kingdom will want to get the same haircut.

Imperial Hairdresser: You look fabulous, Emperor, absolutely fabulous!

Twiddle: We should have a parade to show off your new hairstyle.

Twee: Yes, it will be inspiring for the people to see an emperor with hair that’s so long and thick and golden and wavy and shiny.

Narrator: And so Twiddle and Twee arranged an elaborate parade. There were jugglers and soldiers and horses. At the tail end of the parade, the Emperor marched proudly. He wasn’t wearing his crown. He wanted everyone to gaze at his wonderful new hairstyle.

As he passed through his empire, Twiddle, Twee, and the imperial hairdresser called out to the townspeople.

Twiddle: Everyone, behold the Emperor’s new hair.

Twee: Look at how golden it is! Look at how thick it is!

Imperial Hairdresser: The Emperor looks fabulous! Have you ever seen such fabulousness?
Townspeople: The Emperor’s hair is long and thick and golden and wavy.

Little Boy: He doesn’t have any hair.

Townspeople: And shiny! The Emperor’s hair is very shiny.

Little Boy (slightly louder): He doesn’t have any hair!

Townspeople (begin to chant): The Emperor’s hair is fabulous! The Emperor’s hair is fabulous! The Emperor’s hair is fabulous!

Little Boy (loudly): Can’t you people see? The Emperor doesn’t have a hair on his head!

Townspeople (gasp): The Emperor doesn’t have any hair!

Twiddle, Twee, Imperial hairdresser: The Emperor doesn’t have any hair!

Emperor: I don’t have any hair!

Narrator: At first, the Emperor was embarrassed. But he was also glad that someone was honest enough to tell him. He called for the little boy to come out of the crowd.

Emperor: Little boy, you were the only one who was brave enough to tell me the truth.

Little Boy: Well, you are still very handsome, Emperor. You look cool without any hair.

Emperor: Thank you. That’s very kind.

Narrator: The Emperor asked the little boy to walk beside him in the parade. The little boy became a trusted advisor and true friend to the Emperor. The Emperor stopped using magic hair-growth potions. He gave away his wigs to a family of traveling circus clowns.

From that point forward, the Emperor worked to run his empire kindly and wisely. No one cared that he didn’t have any hair. In fact, most people thought he looked quite handsome. Twiddle and Twee even shaved their heads to look just like the Emperor.

*the end*
History of the Tale

The Emperor's New Hair is based on "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen was a Danish writer who lived during the nineteenth century (1805-1875). Among his other famous stories are "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Princess and the Pea."

The fractured version of "The Emperor's New Clothes" and the original share the same themes. In both, everyone is afraid to tell the Emperor the truth. But a little boy speaks up and is rewarded for his honesty.

Discussion Starters

@ In The Emperor's New Hair (and in the original), matters get out of hand when people are afraid to tell the truth. Is it important to tell the truth?
@ Can telling the truth also be dangerous? Ask your students if it's possible to get into trouble by telling someone the truth. How does one decide when to tell the truth and when to spare someone's feelings?

Writing Prompts

@ This story features something called Hair Today Magic Potion. What if you could create your own magic potion? What would you call it and what would it do? Create an advertisement that describes the benefits of your potion.
@ Create your own fractured version of "The Emperor's New Clothes." Use one of the following three ideas: The Emperor's New Car, The Emperor's New Pizza, The Emperor's New Shoes.

Vocabulary Boosters

This story contains several words that may be new to your class:
emperor (noun): the leader of a kingdom or a large territory
batch (noun): a group or set of things
extravagant (adj.): extreme

Discuss these words with your students and invite them to use each in a sentence.