The Ogre and the Troll[1]
How Math made Friends of an Unlikely Pair
By Anne Renee Brito

Troll lived under the bridge. In the good old days, before the interstate that passes the forest was built, Troll spent his days delaying people from crossing the bridge by asking them to solve Math problems. Then he would give a big, hearty Troll laugh. Now, only the occasional lost hiker or runaway child might try to cross his bridge. His days were long and lonely.

Can you give a big, hearty Troll laugh?

One day Troll smelled something in the air. It was the stench of rotting mushrooms mixed with wet dog. "Ogre!" he exclaimed with glee. Ogres were known not to be good mathematicians so he could delay Ogre on the bridge for a good long time and it would be fun.

Upon clearing his throat and filling his lungs using a deep breath, Troll called out in his best Troll voice: "Halt, who dares cross my bridge?"

"It is I," grumbled Ogre. "I have walked a million miles to get here and I intend to cross this bridge now." Both you and I know that the Ogre was mistaken.

Ogres only walk 2 miles per hour and he had only been gone from home for 30 minutes. Therefore, he could only have walked _____ mile(s).

"The king cleared the meadow that I called home, and built condos. I could no longer stand the children knocking on my door asking if donkey could come out to play. I don't know how many more times I could have told them that Shrek was a cartoon and donkeys don't talk.

If I told them 3 times a day, every day that would be _____ times a year or for _____ times in 2 years!

Troll replied, "Why didn't you just eat them? The children, I mean, why didn't you eat them?"

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[1] Suggested Grades 2 – 4 Skills: Division and multiplication with integers & students must write their own math problem involving division, multiplication with integers.

"Oh, that's another common misconception. Ogres are mainly vegetarians, though I might eat an occasional squirrel."

"Look, let me pass, I am on my way from Santa Fe to Florida to live on the beach and enjoy the sand and surf."

"Oh, I will let you pass, but first you must solve three math problems."

"Okay, this should be easy, everyone knows that Ogres are great at Math!"

Problem 1. Jack is on his way to town to sell his cow. Half way to town he sees an old woman waiting to cross the road. Being a most polite boy, Jack offers to help. When they had safely reached the other side, the woman thanked him for his help. "You are such a nice boy to help an old woman cross the road. Now I must do you a favor. I will give you three beans for your cow."

"Okay, " said Jack. He took the beans and headed home.

In town Jack could have sold the cow for $150.00. What would the value of each bean need to be equal to the fair market price of $150.00?

"Beginners luck," grumbled Troll. "The next one will be harder."

Problem 2. A frog spied a beautiful princess on the opposite bank of the river. The river was 15 feet across. Stones were placed every 5 inches, how many stones will he need to land on to reach the other side?

Troll responded at Ogre's correct answer with "Grrrrrrowl! This last one is very T R I C K Y and must be done well.

Problem 3. Help Ogre make up her own Math Problem that involves both multiplication and division with whole numbers. It must be HARD or Troll won't let Ogre pass.

Many days turned to night and back to day again. Days became weeks and weeks became months. Months became years. Finally, the two became weary of the game. "Look, Troll, all the many years that I have spent with you have been great fun, but now I am ready to continue my journey. Will you join me?"

"Okay," said Troll. He packed his bag. The two unlikely friends went off to Florida to have new adventures together, as buddies!