

Read the Chinese story and answer the following questions.

Three Liars Make a Tiger

1. The Warring States Period* was an era of division in ancient China. States attacked one another, which often resulted in weak national power and misery of people. In order to avoid years of war, some states had signed friendship treaties with other states, forming alliances and no longer attacking one another. To show that the king of the state would definitely keep his promise, he would send his prince to another state as a hostage. Against this background, the Prince of Wei was sent to the State of Zhao as a hostage, and the King of Wei assigned the minister Pang Cong to accompany him.

2. Pang Cong knew that there were often rumours in the imperial palace that would seriously slander him. He didn't know when he would come back after he went to the State of Zhao. He was afraid that the King of Wei would believe these rumours. Just before leaving, Pang Cong went to the king and said, "My lord, if someone told the lord today that a tiger appeared on the street, would the lord believe it?" The king replied, "I wouldn't believe it." Pang Cong asked again, "If another person said that there were tigers on the street, would the lord believe it?" The king replied, "Then I would be doubtful." Pang Cong continued to ask, "If a third person also said that a tiger appeared on the street, would the lord believe it?" The king replied, "Then I would believe it."

3. Pang Cong went on to say, "There is definitely no tiger on the street. But as the number of people spreading the rumours increases, people can't help believing them. After I have gone to the State of Zhao, there must be many people who would take advantage of my absence, criticise and slander me in front of the lord. Please be careful not to be deceived by rumours!" The king agreed.

4. After Pang Cong left the State of Wei, many people spoke ill of him in front of the king. Although the king didn't believe it at first, as time passed by, his heart was shaken. After the prince and Pang Cong returned to the State of Wei, the king alienated Pang Cong and stopped appointing him as minister. Pang Cong's worries became a reality.

5. This fable tells us that we should not be gullible about what most people said. Instead of believing in hearsay, we need to look for relevant evidence through reliable sources and make correct judgments based on facts. Otherwise, "three liars make a tiger" and the rumours may be mistaken as the truth.

*The Warring States Period refers to a period of time (475 BC – 221 BC) in ancient history characterised by warfare.

