

Story 1937 (1995 Tape 4)

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Why a Little Laz¹ Went Puffing Around

One day little Temel's² mother took him to a shop and bought him some new clothes. Afterwards little Temel began walking up and down the streets in his section of the city. He wanted everyone to see his new clothes. As he walked along, he kept blowing out his breath, "P-f-f-f! P-f-f-f! P-f-f-f!"

One of his friends asked him "Temel, why do you keep making that p-f-f-f, p-f-f-f, p-f-f-f sound?"

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

²Temel (like Dursun) is a name given to so many Laz males that it automatically signals Laz to most Turkish audiences. Because Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid people, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any stupid person, whether or not he happens to be Laz.

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Temel answered, “I am a very neat person, and I make that sound to keep any dust from getting on my new clothes.”³

³The child is using here literally a Turkish idiomatic expression that is figurative. The word toz means dust, but the expression Toz kondurmamak means to avoid having one’s name or reputation sullied.