

Teaching With Aesop's Fables

**12 Reproducible Read-Aloud Tales With Instant Activities
That Get Kids Discussing, Writing About, and Acting On
the Important Lessons in These Wise and Classic Stories**

by Theda Detlor

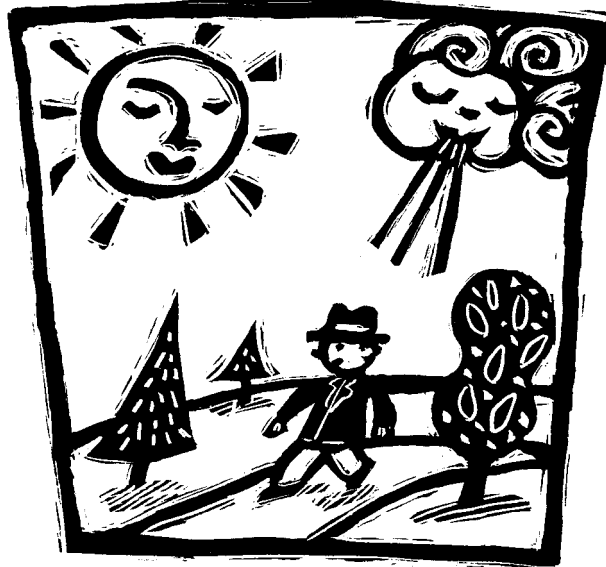


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*To all the beautiful children
who have graced my classes
over the years.*



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Introduction

One of my earliest memories is of my mother singing a made-up song to me. In the song, a puppy learns the hard way to look both ways before she crosses the street (of course, she is fully healed with the help of kisses from her mother)! Anytime I was tempted to run into the street to recover a runaway ball or chase a playmate, this song would replay in my mind. Although I knew that this story was not exactly about me, the fate of the symbolic dog was enough of a reminder.

As an adult, I realize that my mother was unconsciously using the ancient form of fable to teach me a lesson. Unlike direct confrontation, it involved no negative or defensive feelings about myself on my part.

I did not feel that my mother was lecturing to me about ways I must behave, nor was I made to feel guilty about my actions or inclinations. Instead, by relating to the puppy in the story, I was prompted to think about my own behavior.



Storytelling is an ancient and universal form of entertainment. One of its purposes has been to impart and clarify values and moral principles in an enjoyable, gentle, effective, and nonthreatening way. In the classroom, sharing and examining fables can help form trusting communities in which children practice ethical behavior and strive to create an ideal and moral world.

As events in our culture make apparent, it is important for children to have opportunities to learn, develop, and practice moral reasoning and understanding of ethical behaviors as they develop their skills in academic areas. The younger children are when this process begins, the better. Using fables in the classroom allows this awareness and development to take place in a fun, supportive way. I hope you will have as much fun with this material as my students and I have had. Your students and your classroom will become joyfully enriched!

Thea Detlor





Why Teach With Fables?

Working with fables enables children to:

Build literacy. The concise structure and language of fables have a wonderful effect on young readers and writers. Children learn to recognize predictable narrative structure and patterns and apply these to original writing.

Build ethical and moral development. Using the shared context of stories, children feel comfortable exploring the moral domain, developing critical thinking about ethical issues, and reflecting on their own values.

Build classroom community. Through discussion and debate, children learn to listen to each other and express their own opinions about ethical behaviors. They learn to extract and generalize meaning from stories and discuss real-life issues using moral reasoning. Such reflection gives children an ethical grounding in the classroom as they explore themes and values that will help create a caring and ethical community.

Develop an understanding of metaphor. Children are challenged to relate a concrete series of actions to a given moral, to abstract from the specific to the general, and to understand figurative language. This promotes higher-level thinking as children develop their abilities to interpret meaning and metaphor, make inferences and judgments, and create alternative solutions to problems.

Translate ethical issues into real life. Children develop and apply critical thinking about events in stories to a variety of ethical issues and apply proverbs to a variety of real-world events.

Who Was Aesop?

Aesop lived in Greece in the early sixth century. A slave after having been captured in war, he achieved a reputation for the great wit he demonstrated while telling tales in discussion and negotiation.

The fables have come to be used for a variety of purposes. While Aesop used them to make witty points to solve problems and reveal human truths, over time many of the stories were used in the education of children to open up the moral domain for discussion about behavior and values clarification in the classroom.

What's the Difference?

Fables are moral tales, often involving animals that represent people. They reveal human experiences and/or show conflicts over issues. They are generally short and concise stories.

Legends are traditional, historical tales of a certain people, handed down first orally and later in written form.

Myths are anonymous early stories designed to explain the mysteries of life, generally with larger-than-life characters. Every country and culture has its own myths.

Fairy tales are folk stories about real-life problems, usually with magical events, transformations, and royal characters. In contrast to myths, fairy tales are often told in an optimistic, ordinary, casual tone and have happy endings.

Folk tales are legends, myths, fables, or fairy tales that have been retold within a culture for generations and are well known through repeated storytelling.



Using This Book

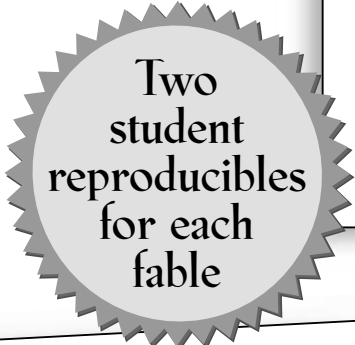
You can introduce the fables in any order you wish. The companion lessons offer many different opportunities for learning:

Sharing the Fable

Read the fable aloud or together. The fables may be reproduced so that children can follow along or read the stories themselves. You might also have one child retell the story while others act it out. To introduce children to the structure of the genre of fable, copy the chart on page 60 for each child. Children can add to their chart after hearing each fable.

Activity Page

Reproducible pages deepen reading comprehension and build writing skills. Copy the page for each child and walk through the writing activity together.



Fable


The Fox and the Grapes

A fox was walking through an orchard on a hot summer day when he spotted a juicy bunch of grapes. They were on a high branch, way above the fox's head. So he crouched down, leaped as high as he could, and snapped his jaws, but missed the grapes.

The fox stared up at the grapes. They looked so fat and purple and tasty, his mouth began to water. The fox backed up, got a good running start, and again leaped for the grapes. He snapped his jaws together with a terrific smack. But again, the grapes were beyond the fox's grasp.



The fox gazed up longingly at the grapes. There were so many of them. They were so round, so ripe, so purple, so perfect! He had to have those grapes. The fox backed up even farther, he ran even faster, he leaped even higher, and he snapped his jaws together even more loudly than before. But when he returned to the ground, still no grapes.

The fox looked up one last time and pronounced, "Those grapes are surely sour."



Moral One often despises what one cannot have.

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 **The Fox and the Grapes** 

retold by _____

First,	Next,	Last,
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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About the Moral

Depending on children's age and abilities, you might state the moral before you read the fable, or wait until children have heard the fable to discuss the moral. If you state the moral before the story, children might speculate as to its meaning ("What do you think 'it's better to bend than to break' might mean?"). If you wait until after the story, children might guess what the moral is ("What message do you think that story was trying to give us?").



Teaching the Tale

Explains what important value or idea the fable transmits to children.

Discuss the Fable

Whole-group discussion questions help you get the most from each fable.

Main Activity

A whole-group activity that allows children to explore the big ideas in the fable.

Writing Prompt

Gets children writing about the given moral. A reproducible activity page is included.

Teaching the Tale

The Fox and the Grapes

Children reflect on different ways to accept defeat or express disappointment and examine the practice of telling yourself something that isn't true in order to feel better.

Discuss the Fable

- ⓐ Can you think of a time when you wanted something that you just could not have?
- ⓑ What did the fox really mean when he said "sour grapes"?
- ⓒ Can you think of a time when you wanted to say "sour grapes"? What was it that you wanted?
- ⓓ If you had been the fox, what would you have done differently?
- ⓔ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

orchard
juicy
crouched
jaws
snapped
grasp
longingly
pronounced

Main Activity

Fruit and Fables

First, explain to children that many of our sayings come from fables, like "sour grapes." Next, explore other proverbs, idioms, or expressions that use fruit words! Discuss the meaning of these expressions with the group. Last, have children illustrate one or several of their choice, depicting an example. Display on a "fruitbow!" bulletin board!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⓐ Big apple (New York City) ⓑ Top banana (the boss in any group) ⓒ Life is just a bowl of cherries (life is good and happy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⓓ Peachy (great) ⓔ Plum (the best) ⓕ Rhubarb (strong disagreement or argument)
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Writing

See if children can retell the story with the beginning, middle, and end in order. Copy page 46 for children and have them illustrate the story in the comic-strip boxes and add captions to tell what the wolf was thinking or saying.

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Words to Watch For

You might preview or examine vocabulary words from the fable after the reading. See page 61 for a reproducible vocabulary-building exercise that can be used with any of the fables. With this worksheet, children can make meaning from new words based on the context of what they read or hear.

Classroom Conversations

Read real classroom conversations and see how the author, second-grade teacher Theda Detlor, guides children's understanding in discussions.

Across the Curriculum

Cross-curricular activities enrich children's experience of the fable.

Book Links

Recommended reading on similar themes.

Teaching the Tale

Across the Curriculum

Math
Pose some story problems:

- ⓐ If the grapes were 48 inches off the ground and, on his first try, the fox was able to jump only so that his mouth was 37 inches off the ground, by how many inches did the fox miss the grapes?
- ⓑ If on the second try, the fox jumped higher by 2 inches, by how many inches did he then miss the grapes?

Or, estimate how many grapes in a bunch!

Science
Find out how and where grapes are grown and what they are used for (grape juice, vineyards producing wine, and so on). Examine different varieties of grapes and discuss the variety in color. Have a grape taste test and vote on a favorite!

Classroom Conversations

One of the most commonly used expressions based on fables is "sour grapes," referring to the idea that people pretend that something they really want is unappealing if they cannot attain it. I tell children that the proverb can be shortened to the expression "sour grapes."

Teacher: ... Do you think the grapes in the story were sour?
Marjani: ... I think he only said that because he didn't want to feel so disappointed.
Teacher: ... Was anybody in the story fooled by the fox's words?
Maxi: ... It sounds like he was trying to fool himself.
Kristina: ... He was trying to save face.
Teacher: ... So what do you think the expression "sour grapes!" is referring to?
Kayla: ... Well, the fox wanted to have the grapes but he couldn't reach them, so he said they were sour.
Teacher: ... Good. So, if somebody said "sour grapes!" to you, what might he or she mean?
Kate: ... It would mean that I say I don't want something because I can't have it. Like if you and your mom went to the toy store and you eyed a toy and there was only one and someone else bought the toy and you said, "I didn't want it."

Book Links

Crow and Fox and Other Animal Legends, by Jan Thornhill (Simon and Schuster, 1993). A collection of traditional animal tales.

Mole's Hill: A Woodland Tale, by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt, 1994). Mole must find a way to save her home when Fox tells her to move out of her tunnel.

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The Crow and the Pitcher

It was a sweltering hot summer day. A crow, parched with thirst, came upon a pitcher of water. But the pitcher was only half full. The crow leaned and stretched and thrust out his beak as far as he could. No matter how hard he tried, he could not reach the water.

All of a sudden, the crow had an idea. He picked up a pebble in his beak and dropped it into the water. The water level in the pitcher rose just a tiny bit. So he dropped in another pebble, then another, then one more. The crow continued doing this for a long time. Finally, the water in the pitcher had risen high enough. The crow poked in his beak and drank to his heart's content!



Moral Little by little does the trick!



The Crow and the Pitcher

Children explore the concepts of pacing and persistence.

Discuss the Fable

After reading the fable aloud, you might ask children:

- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the story is?
- ⑥ Have you ever completed a task little by little?
- ⑥ How do you think the crow was feeling before he figured out what to do? How about after he found the solution?
- ⑥ The crow had to be patient while he worked slowly. Can you think of a time when you had to be patient, but then it was worth it?

Words to Watch For

sweltering
parched
pitcher
thrust
level
continued
risen
content

Main Activity

Story Theater

First, invite children to act out the fable after having heard it read aloud. Introduce several rules for “Story Theater” (you can do this activity with any fable):

- ⑥ Form a circle. The center of the circle is the stage.
- ⑥ Neither the actors nor the audience may physically touch each other.
- ⑥ When the actor is speaking, the narrator and the audience are listening.

Then, choose a narrator and an actor to play the crow. The narrator retells the story in his or her own words as the actors perform and the audience watches.

Writing

Copy page 10 for children and help them get started. You might first give children an example from your own life.



Name _____ Date _____

The Crow and the Pitcher



Give an example from your own life that describes the moral, “Little by little does the trick.”

Now draw a picture of what you wrote about.

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a thick black border, intended for the student to draw a picture of their example.



Across the Curriculum

Science

Invite a child to demonstrate the concept of volume by adding “pebbles” (marbles or snap cubes work well) to a water-filled pitcher. Introduce the concept of absorption by trying the same thing with a glass of water and popcorn. Why does the water level not change with the water and popcorn, as it does with the water and “pebbles”?

Social Studies

Help children experience physical limitations by inviting one child to try putting all the “pebbles” into the pitcher with only the thumb and index finger, and a different child to use the entire hand. Who is faster? Discuss how people with physical limitations might accommodate them (as the crow did by patiently picking up one pebble at a time with his beak).

Math

Pose a story problem such as: If the pitcher had 10 inches of water when half full, how many inches would it have if it were full?

Classroom Conversations

Teacher: . . . What might “little by little does the trick” mean?

Molly: I think it means when you can’t do something, don’t do it very fast. Take your time.

Gabriel: . . . I think it means never do things quickly.

Teacher: . . . Can you give me examples from your own lives showing how this message might or might not be good advice?

Molly: When I was little, I didn’t know how to say a lot of words. Then I tried and tried, and I did it!

Teacher: . . . We’ve got so many things to learn in second grade this year. Do you think we’ll learn them all in one day?

Kristina: . . . No! Little by little does the trick!

Book Links

A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder, by Walter Wick (Scholastic, 1997). Visually rich photographs and text describe the origins, characteristics, and uses of water.

Belling the Cat

Once upon a time, the mice held a meeting. They wanted to figure out what to do about their most dreaded enemy, the cat. Several mice spoke, proposing a variety of solutions. But then a very young mouse stood up and announced that he had a plan.

“The cat is so very dangerous,” said the young mouse, “because she’s sly and sneaky. She tiptoes along on little padded paws. Why, we never even hear her coming!”

The assembled mice nodded in agreement.

“My suggestion,” continued the young mouse, “is that we tie a bell around the cat’s neck. That way we could hear her trying to sneak up. We’d always have time to run and hide.”

The meeting of mice burst into applause. This was a wonderful idea, it was generally agreed. But then an old mouse stood up slowly. He had to strain to be heard above all the mouse chatter.

“The young mouse’s idea sounds good,” the old mouse said. “But now we have a brand-new problem. Who will hang the bell on the cat?”



Moral Easier said than done!



Belling the Cat

Thinking through ideas before putting them into action is always helpful!
In examining the fable and its moral,
children reflect on problem solving and thinking ahead.

Discuss the Fable

After reading the fable aloud, you might ask children:

- ① Do you think the mice should follow through with their plan? What do you think they should do?
- ② What do you think the moral of the fable is?
- ③ Can you think of an example from your own life that illustrates the moral?
- ④ Can you think of a different moral for the fable?

Words to Watch For

dreaded
proposing
solutions
padded
assembled
applause
generally

Main Activity

Easier Said or Easier Done?

First, have children think of a “problem” the class is having (for instance, it’s noisy outside the classroom and therefore hard to hear, the crayons break too easily, children are tracking mud into the classroom after recess, and so on).

Next, ask the group to list any and all solutions that they can think of, no matter how silly. List their ideas on chart paper.

Then, go through the list one by one and discuss how realistic each solution is. If the class decides it’s not a workable solution, everyone calls out, “Easier said than done!” Implement the solutions that are realistic.

Writing

Explain that the story is written mainly from the point of view of the mice. What do children think the cat’s perspective is? Ask children what the cat might have to say to the mice. Maybe the mice don’t need to be so afraid of the cat! Once the group has brainstormed a bit, give each child a copy of page 14 and invite them to write a letter from the cat introducing herself.



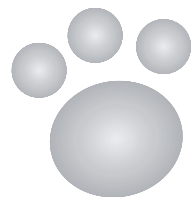
Name _____ Date _____

Belling the Cat

Write a letter from the cat to the mice.
What does the cat have to say?

Dear Mice,

From,
The Cat





Across the Curriculum

Physical Education

- ⑥ Play cat and mouse! Players hold hands in a circle. The child who is the cat begins outside the circle, and the child who is the mouse is inside the circle. Children raise and lower their arms to let the mouse in and out of the “mouseholes,” trying to keep the cat from catching the mouse by blocking it with lowered arms. When the mouse is captured, or after a two-minute limit, two other children have a turn.
- ⑥ Play Duck, Duck, Goose, but use the names Cat, Cat, Mouse.

Music

Let children experiment with different types of bells, observing how they are put together and what sort of sounds they make, and why. Let them sort the bells into different categories such as loud, soft, sounds they like, sounds that would or would not help the mice, and so on.

Science

Invite children to pretend they are mice. Then invite them to use materials such as blocks or other building devices to design a contraption that would somehow catch the cat or drop something on it!

Classroom Conversations

- Teacher:** . . What do you think “easier said than done” means?
- Hannah:** . . I think it means “plan ahead.”
- Teacher:** . . That’s another good moral. Explain why you think that.
- Hannah:** . . Well, when you plan ahead, you can figure out all the things you need to do to make something work. Just saying you can do something doesn’t always work.
- Teacher:** . . I think you thought of the problem the mice in this story have! Let’s listen to the fable. (Teacher reads fable.)

Book Links

- Mouse Count**, by Ellen Stoll Walsh (Harcourt, 1991). In this book, ten mice outsmart a hungry snake.
- Here Comes the Cat!**, by Frank Asch and Vladimir Vagin (Scholastic, 1989). Cat’s arrival causes excitement among residents of a mouse settlement.

The Lion and the Mouse

A little mouse once made the mistake of running across a sleeping lion's nose. It tickled like crazy and woke the lion up. With one sweep of his huge paw, the lion snatched up the mouse! He opened his mouth wide and prepared to eat the mouse.

"Oh no, please don't eat me!" shrieked the mouse. "I'd be just a tiny snack, not fit for the king of the beasts. If only you will spare my life, I promise that I will help you if you are ever in trouble."

A little mouse, helping the big king of beasts? That struck the lion as terribly funny. He roared with laughter, opening his jaw and letting this funny little mouse go free.

Several years passed. The mouse was busy gathering seeds when he heard a terrible roar. It was so loud and so powerful that it could only be the king of beasts. What's more, the lion sounded really scared. The mouse scurried in the direction of the lion's frightened roars.

When the mouse found the lion, he saw that the lion had fallen into a hunter's trap. He was all tangled up in thick rope. The mouse began to gnaw through one of the ropes with his sharp little teeth. It took a while, but eventually he broke all the ropes and the lion was free.

"I kept my promise!" said the mouse to the lion. "I knew I might be able to help you out sometime."



Moral Even the smallest friends can do big favors.



The Lion and the Mouse

Children reflect on keeping promises and doing favors. They can also discuss the idea that size doesn't matter when it comes to kindness.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ Have you ever felt too small to help out?
- ⑥ What advantages are there to being small?
- ⑥ Think of a time when you kept a promise. What was it like? Was it hard to keep? Why did you keep the promise?
- ⑥ Has someone younger than you ever done a favor for you?
- ⑥ Why do people do favors? Is it always because they hope to get a favor in return?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

tickled
sweep
snatched
shrieked
roared
scurried
frightened
gnaw

Main Activity

What Goes Around Comes Around

First, put this poem in a pocket chart, using index cards with the names of children in the blanks.

Next, discuss the importance of being helpful and friendly. Have children think of examples of a time when someone in the class helped them.

Last, have different children volunteer to read the poem and rearrange the names. You can create new versions, substituting "helped" with "smiled at" or "did a favor for."

I _____ helped _____
_____ helped _____
_____ helped _____
_____ helped _____
_____ helped _____

and _____ helped me.

What goes around comes around.

That's how it ought to be!

—Betsy Franco

Writing

Discuss with children the concept of favors. Have them list possible favors and then help them complete, cut apart and staple the booklet of favor coupons to give as a gift (copy page 18 for each child).





Favor Coupons

From _____

To _____



This coupon is worth _____



This little book
is full of favors
from me to you!



This coupon is worth _____

This coupon is worth _____

This coupon is worth _____



Across the Curriculum

Science

Research mice and lions! Why are mice so good at gnawing? How does their size help them? What else can mice do besides gnaw on things?

Art

Make a “favor chain”! With strips of different-colored construction paper, create a short chain. On each “link,” children write a favor that they have done or that was done for them by someone in the group. Add to the chain over time.

Language Arts

Many proverbs, idioms, and other common sayings come from fables, myths, or legends. Discuss and have children illustrate examples of the following:

- ☉ Good things come in little packages.
- ☉ Kindness brings kindness in return.
- ☉ You reap what you sow.

Book Links

Deep in the Jungle, by Dan Yaccarino (Atheneum, 2000). An arrogant lion learns to live peacefully with the animals who had feared him.

Rabbit Makes a Monkey of Lion, a Swahili tale retold by Verna Aardema, pictures by Jerry Pinkney (Dial, 1989). Rabbit and his friends outwit the king of the forest.

Classroom Conversations

Children were asked if they agreed with the moral, “Even the smallest friends can do big favors.”

Josh: I kind of agree with the moral. My mom helped me by getting me a book I wanted. But I helped her too by getting her a flowerpot.

Teacher: . . Did your size matter?

Josh: No, not then.

Teacher: . . Based on Josh’s example, can anyone think of another possible moral for this story?

Jacob: Maybe you could say that if you are nice to someone, they will be nice back to you.

Teacher: . . Can you give an example?

Jacob: Well, one day, I gave my sister a piece of candy and then she gave me a piece of her candy.

Eve: And sometimes, you think someone isn’t really nice, but if you are nice to that person, after a while, they might be nice back to you.

Marjani: . . That happened to me with a girl at my camp.

Teacher: . . Do you think both or either moral makes for good advice?

Tyler: Well, they are both about doing good things for other people. And I don’t think size matters.

The Tortoise and the Hare

As usual, the hare was bragging to all the other animals about his speed. “I’m faster than the wind, quicker than nightfall,” he said. “No one has ever beaten me. No one ever will. I challenge any animal here to race me.” The foxes and donkeys and frogs and serpents looked on in silence. No one would accept the hare’s challenge. Then a lone voice rose up. “I will race you,” said the tortoise.

“You!” said the hare, snickering. “Why, that’s a fine joke. I will dance around you all the way to the finish line!”

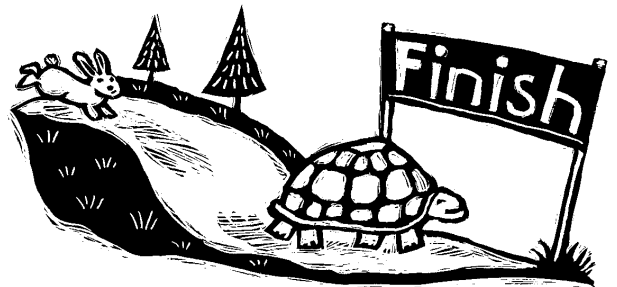
“We’ll see about that,” said the tortoise quietly. “Shall we race?”

The starting signal was given, and off went the tortoise and the hare. Almost at once, the hare darted over a hillside and was out of sight. The tortoise set off slowly, just plodding along. Soon the hare was way ahead of the tortoise. It was a hot day. He’d grown tired from running so fast. He thought about how far behind the tortoise would be by now. So the hare decided to take a little nap. On a soft, shady patch of grass, he curled up and went to sleep.

Steadily, slowly, the tortoise kept plodding along. The sun fell lower in the sky. The shadows grew longer. The hare woke up and stretched. “I wonder where that silly tortoise is now,” he said to himself. “I had a great nap. I’ll bet the tortoise is still miles behind me.”

The hare looked back down the road. Sure enough, there was no tortoise in sight. Then he looked up the road toward the finish line. Oh no! The tortoise, still plodding along, was now nearing the end of the race.

Then the hare ran the fastest he ever had. But it was too late. The tortoise crawled across the finish line. All the animals shouted, “Tortoise won, tortoise won!” The hare couldn’t believe it. And the tortoise just smiled to himself!



Moral Slow and steady wins the race.



The Tortoise and the Hare

Children will explore the concept of persistence—sticking to something and taking it step by step helps to ensure a job gets done!

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ What is bragging?
- ⑥ How do you think the tortoise felt when the hare told him he couldn't win?
- ⑥ Why do you think the tortoise won? How do you think he felt when he won?
- ⑥ How do you think the hare felt when he saw the tortoise win?
- ⑥ Can you think of a time when you "stuck to it" just like the tortoise?
- ⑥ When do you rush?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

bragging
silence
snickering
darted
plodding
curled

Main Activity

What Were You Thinking?

First, have two children volunteer to play the tortoise and the hare and sit in front of the group.

Then, invite the other children interview the tortoise and the hare as if they were on the news on television right after the race!

Last, the group asks them questions about their experience in the race, what they were thinking, how they felt, what they might do differently next time, and so on.

Writing

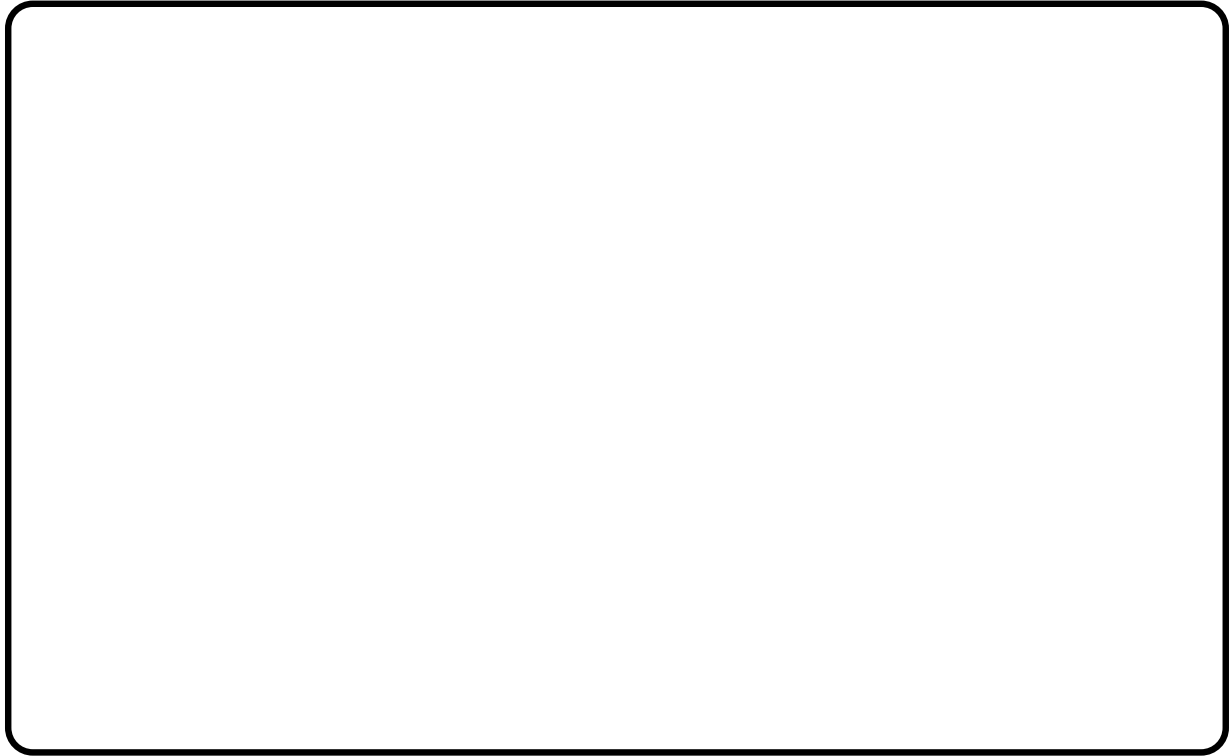
Have children think of a time when they didn't give up—when they completed a task slowly and steadily. They can describe and illustrate the experience on the reproducible sheet (page 22).



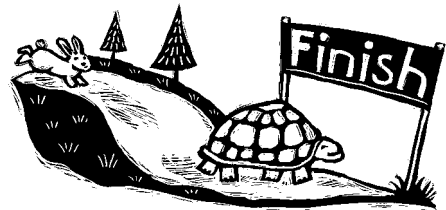
Name _____ Date _____

Slow and Steady Wins the Race!

Draw a picture of a time you really “stuck to it”!



Now write about what you drew.



Across the Curriculum

Science

Research tortoises and hares. Why can the hare run so fast? How fast can it run? (Can it run faster than a person? Faster than a car?) How does a tortoise move?

Movement

Invite two children to act out the race along a designated “racetrack.”

Language Arts

☉ Discuss the phrase “faster than the wind.” What else can children think of that is fast or slow? Have them create poetic similes such as “faster than a hummingbird” or “slower than ice cream melting.”

☉ Put the following poem in a pocket chart and have children take turns reading it aloud:

**The hare was very far ahead.
He didn't need to run.
Because he was so sure he'd win,
he had a little fun.
But tortoise never stopped to rest
until the race was done.
You won't believe who came in first.
So can you guess who won?**

—Betsy Franco

Book Links

Box Turtle at Long Pond, by William T. George, illustrated by Lindsay Barrett George (Greenwillow Books, 1989).
Box Turtle has a busy day at the pond.

Classroom Conversations

Children generally interpret this proverb literally and state that the moral is about how to win a race. I remind them that fables are about many situations in life. “For example,” I begin, “this morning, I was in such a rush to pack my two children their sandwiches for them to bring to school, that in my haste, I packed both lunch bags in one son’s knapsack and none in my other son’s knapsack. If I had taken my time, I would have made sure that each of my sons got his lunch.”

At this point, children begin to see that the moral is about working carefully rather than being caught up in speed. I attempt to direct the discussion to school-work habits: “How about when you do your schoolwork? Do you think this moral can apply?”

Gabriel: . . . Sometimes I try to write quickly. But if I wanted to write a book, it would take a long time, or else it wouldn't turn out to be good to read.

Teacher: . . . So what would be a better way to write your book?

Gabriel: . . . Slow and steady.

Teacher: . . . Are we talking about races?

Kate: No, it's not about a race. But what I wanted to say was that it's sort of the same as the proverb “little by little does the trick!”

The Wind and the Sun

One day, the Wind and the Sun got into an argument. “I’m much stronger than you,” said the Sun.

“Oh, really?” said the Wind. “I can bend tall trees. I can scream and howl and make all sorts of racket. You just sit there, with that goofy smile of yours. You can’t move anything. You don’t make any noise.”

“Well then, let’s have a contest,” said the Sun. “That will decide who is truly stronger.” At that moment, a man wearing a coat was walking along a country road.

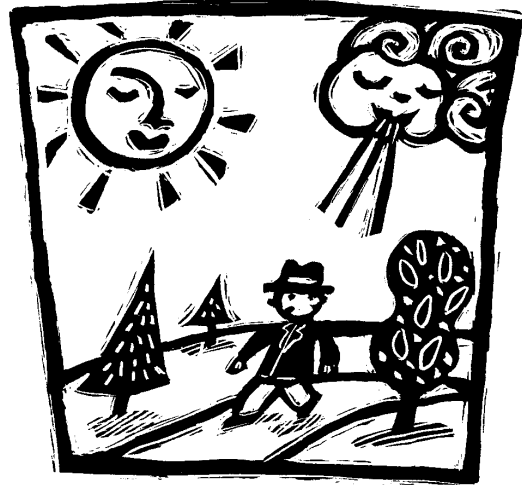
“Okay, here are the rules,” continued the Sun. “Whichever one of us can get that coat off that man is the strongest.”

“Fair enough,” said the Wind.

“You go first,” said the Sun. The Sun politely ducked behind a cloud and the Wind began to blow. She huffed and she puffed. The man simply pulled his coat closer around him. So the wind began to howl, causing dust to swirl and twigs to fly. But the man pulled his coat around him tighter still!

“My turn,” said the Sun. The Sun came out from behind the cloud. He beamed down on the man. He covered the man in light, bathed him in warmth. The man smiled up at the Sun, happy that the cold, harsh wind had died down. It was even getting rather hot walking along this country road. So the man took off his coat.

The Sun turned to the Wind. “Watch and learn, old friend,” said the Sun. “Watch and learn.”



Moral You can accomplish more with kindness than with force.



The Wind and the Sun

Children reflect on the strength and power of kindness.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ If you wanted to get someone to do something, how would you get him or her to do it?
- ⑥ When have you used kindness instead of force?
- ⑥ How does it feel when someone uses force on you to get what he or she wants?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?
- ⑥ Can you think of a time when it took strength and courage to be kind?
- ⑥ How is this moral like “you catch more bees with honey than with vinegar”?

Words to Watch For

argument
howl
racket
goofy
ducked
beamed
swirl
harsh

Main Activity

Words to the Wind

First, discuss as a group the idea that kindness is always the best strategy. Why are force and bullying never good ideas?

Next, write a collaborative letter on chart paper to the Wind, giving him advice! Children can explain to the Wind the error of his ways and give him some suggestions for the future.

Writing

Designate a bulletin board for the “Sunshine Awards”! Copy page 26 for children and have them think of an example of a classmate showing kindness toward them. Children complete and color their “Sunshine Awards” and cut them out for display on the bulletin board.







Across the Curriculum

Cooking

Make sun tea and discuss the benefits of sunlight. Simply put teabags into a large jar of cold water and let sit in the sun (or a warm, sunny windowsill) until warm.

Art

Make a stained-glass window and watch the sun shine through! Take different colors of tissue paper and cut them into small shapes. Children will need access to a shallow pan of liquid starch and a paintbrush. They place the shapes one by one on thin white paper and “paint” them down. Let dry, and hang in a window to watch the light come in.

Science

Research the sun and wind. Why does the sun shine? Why does the wind blow? What are the benefits of each? What do we need to be careful of?

Book Links

Mouse Match: A Chinese Folktale
by Ed Young (Silver Whistle, 1997).
Based on Chinese folklore. A father mouse visits the sun, clouds and wind.

Where Does the Sun Go at Night?
adapted by Mirra Ginsburg, illustrated by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey (Mulberry Books, 1981). Based on an Armenian song. At bedtime, the sun visits grandma, the sky, and grandpa, the wind.

Classroom Conversations

Children generally think of strength in terms of force. Yet if encouraged to reflect, children will come up with examples in their lives in which they were persuaded or they persuaded another to do something through kindness.

Scott: I think the moral means that if you are nice to someone, you will get what you want.

Teacher: . . Can anyone add to that?

Maxi: Well, I think it means don't force people. Talk nicely to them. Like, if someone was mean and someone else was nice, and another person had a toy and the mean one asked meanly and the nice one asked nicely, the nice one would get the toy.

Jacob: Once me and my sister were fighting over a paintbrush. But then I asked nicely, and I got it.

Kate: Once my friend and I were mean to my baby-sitter and I couldn't watch TV. But then I asked nicely and I could watch it again.

Hannah: . . So if you beg, beg, beg, or ask meanly, you won't get what you want. But if you ask nicely, you'll probably get it.

The Oak and the Reeds

There once was a mighty oak, with a big thick trunk, high strong branches, and roots that reached deep into the ground. All around the oak were hundreds of thin reeds.

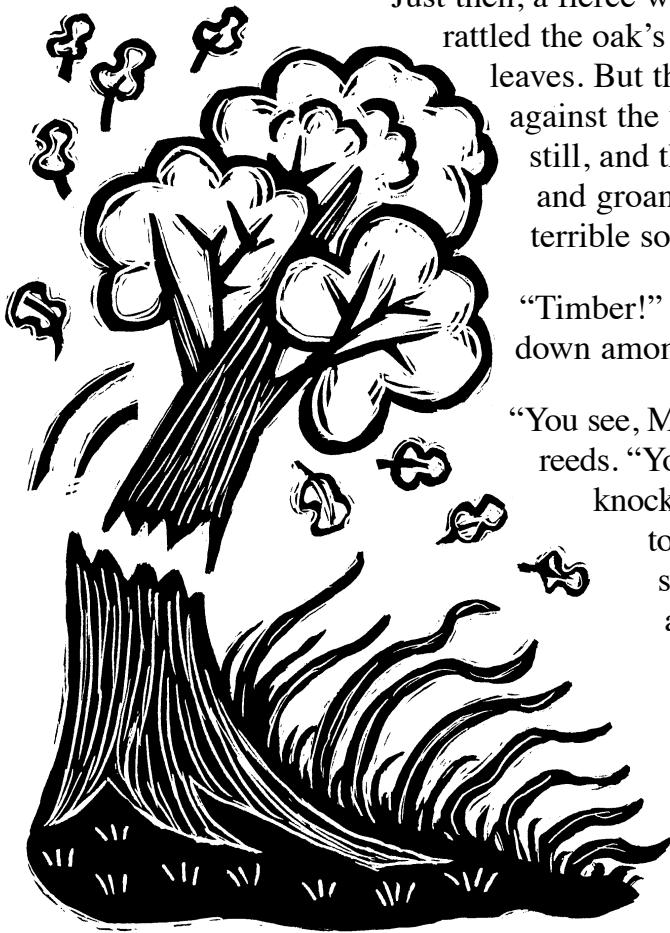
“You reeds are all so puny,” said the oak. “I’m stronger than the whole lot of you put together.”

“Don’t be so sure,” answered the reeds. “Don’t be so sure.”

Just then, a fierce wind whipped up. It rattled the oak’s branches and blew off its leaves. But the oak stood straight and proud against the wind. The wind grew fiercer still, and the mighty oak began to creak and groan. All at once, there was a terrible sound of splitting wood.

“Timber!” boomed the oak and fell down among the reeds.

“You see, Mr. Oak,” murmured one of the reeds. “You fight against the wind, so it knocks you down. But we reeds bow to even the gentlest breeze only to stand up straight again. Here we are, still standing. So I ask you, Mr. Oak, which of us is truly stronger?”



Moral Better to bend than to break.



The Oak and the Reeds

This fable provides a great opportunity to discuss flexibility and compromise.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ Why did the reeds think they were stronger than the oak?
- ⑥ Have you ever felt stubborn, like the oak?
- ⑥ Have you ever “bent,” or compromised a little, like the reeds?
- ⑥ Why does it take more bravery to bend, like the reeds?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?
- ⑥ What do you think it means to be “strong”?

Words to Watch For

roots
reeds
puny
fierce
whipped
rattled
mighty
boomed
creak
groan

Main Activity

Compromise Corner

First, ask children to think of certain classroom activities in which this idea of “it’s better to bend than to break” can be helpful.

Next, as a group, make and decorate a banner or sign that reads, “It’s better to bend than to break!”

Last, decide together where to display the banner (the free play corner may be a good choice).

Writing

Discuss with children instances from their own lives that illustrate the moral, then designate a bulletin board for the “Bending Reed Awards”! Copy page 30 for children and have them think of a time they or someone else compromised or found an alternative to being stubborn. Children complete and color their “Bending Reed Awards” and cut them out for display on the bulletin board.



Bending Reed Award



This award goes to



who



Across the Curriculum

Science

Sit in a circle with a thick stick and a drinking straw and demonstrate how one bends and the other does not. Why do children think this is so? Together, make two lists: one of materials that bend and the other of materials that break.

Movement

Have children pair off and face each other. One partner is the leader. With the help of slow, meditative music, the leader and his or her partner maintain eye contact while the leader moves slowly and smoothly in place and the partner follows. Afterward, discuss the exercise with children. Would it have worked so well if each partner insisted on doing only his or her own movements the entire time? When they work together and follow the other for a while, they can create wonderful movements by “bending instead of breaking.”

Book Links

Have You Seen Trees? by Joanne Oppenheim, illustrated by Irwin Rosenhouse (Young Scott Books, 1967). The author marvels at the sights and sounds experienced by an observer of trees.

A Tree’s Tale by Lark Carrier (Dial, 1996). This book is about a huge 400-year-old oak tree and what it sees during its lifetime.

Classroom Conversations

Teacher: . . . What do you think “It is better to bend than to break” means?

Philip: I think it means that it is better to bend something than to break something.

Teacher: . . . Good start. Let’s remember that the morals in fables are really about people’s lives. So if we are thinking about how people treat each other, what might this moral be about?

Marjani: . . . When one person says no to something the other person wants.

Teacher: . . . So how can the two people “bend” so that the fight could be resolved?

Kate: I think they can compromise instead of saying no. Once my brother said to me, “I want some candy.” I said no, but then I changed my mind.

Tyler: So it means to compromise. Once me and my friend were having a fight and we compromised it out.

Scott: For example, if I wanted to play shortstop and my friend did too, I would say to him that I will play third base and then we would switch.

The City Mouse and the Country Mouse

Once upon a time, City Mouse went to visit his cousin who lived in the country. The two mice took a walk in a meadow, then had dinner inside an old barn. Country Mouse served City Mouse a few nuts, a few barley grains, a few peas, and a few little pieces of cheese. This was not a fancy meal, but it was all Country Mouse had to offer.

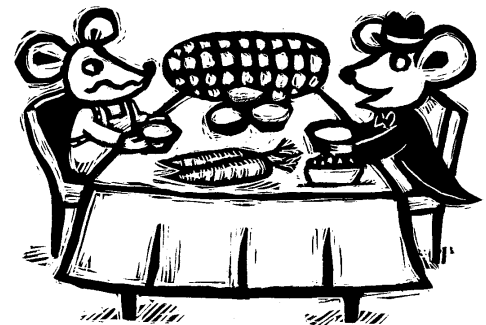
City Mouse turned up his long whiskery nose at the country food. “Cousin, you are living on scraps,” he said. “But maybe you don’t expect anything better, way out here in the country. Come with me and I will show you how to really live.”

The two mice set out for the city and arrived at City Mouse’s house late at night. They were both very hungry after the long trip, so they went into a grand dining room with a huge crystal chandelier. There, the mice found big mounds of jelly, heaping helpings of carrots, giant chunks of cheese, and entire ears of corn on the cob. The two mice began to nibble away at this feast.

All of a sudden, they heard loud barking and commotion. “What’s that sound?” asked Country Mouse.

“That’s only the dogs of the house coming home with their masters,” replied City Mouse. “Only dogs!” squeaked Country Mouse, terribly frightened. “What do you mean, only dogs!”

Just then, the dogs burst through the door, barking and growling. The two mice scurried into a hole in the wall. Once they were safe, Country Mouse turned to City Mouse. “I’m leaving,” said Country Mouse, already two feet out the door.



Moral Better scraps of food in peace than a fancy feast in fear.



The City Mouse and the Country Mouse

Children examine and appreciate diversity in lifestyles and the idea that we all have different viewpoints. Children also reflect on the idea that safety and comfort are what matter most in a home.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ What can you do in your town that you can't do anywhere else?
- ⑥ What do you like the most about where you live?
- ⑥ What makes a home "homey"?
- ⑥ Do you have a friend who is very different from you in some way?
- ⑥ Do you know anyone who lives very far away from you, in a very different type of house? How are you the same as this person? How are you different?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of this fable is?

Words to Watch For

meadow
barley
grains
scraps
grand
mounds
commotion
scurry

Main Activity

A Place of Our Own

First, as a group, name things that are special about your town or city. What can you do there that you can't do anywhere else? What good food can you enjoy in your town or city?

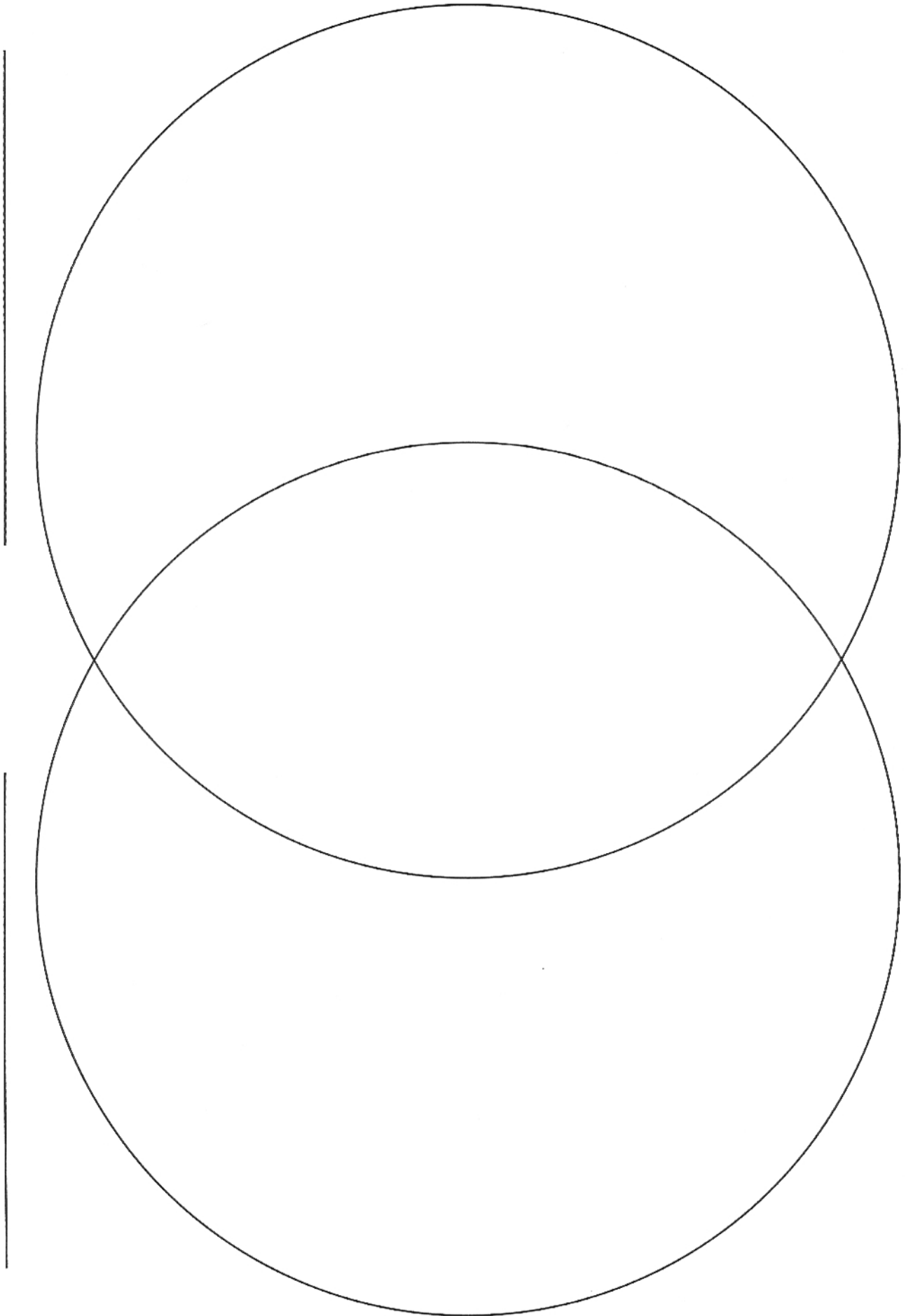
Next, on chart paper, write a collaborative introduction to a travel brochure about your town: "Come to [name of city or town]! Here, you can..." Include all the ideas that children mentioned.

Last, you might decorate and send your writing to the local city hall or chamber of commerce!

Writing

Copy the Venn diagram on page 34 (two per child). Children can complete two different Venn diagrams: one comparing the Country Mouse and the City Mouse, and one comparing themselves and a friend or family member.







Across the Curriculum

Cooking

Plan and make a picnic! Determine what type of food is specific to your region and use it in recipes. Or, ask each family to contribute a recipe that is special in their house and bind into a cookbook.

Math

Pose a story problem: If City Mouse and Country Mouse live 5 miles apart and there are 20 blocks in each mile, how many blocks apart do they live? Based on your answer to the first question, how long would it take the mice to run from one house to the other if they took 5 minutes to run each block?

Book Links

Veronica, by Roger Duvoisin (Knopf, 1961). A hippopotamus who seeks attention tries to find a city where she will be noticed.

City Dog, by Karla Kuskin (Clarion Books, 1994). A rhyming story of a city dog's first trip to the country.

Town and Country, by Alice and Martin Provensen (Crown, 1985). Describes life in a city and life on a farm.

Classroom Conversations

Children were asked if they had a moral for this fable. One child responded that the story seemed to be about one character being scared and the other not. So perhaps the moral was that different things scare different people.

Teacher: . . . Do you think that is the only way people might be different? I bet some of you like to eat some things and your friends like to eat other things.

Eve: Like I love candy corn and licorice and broccoli and my friend Sophie doesn't like any of that stuff.

Philip: My friend likes tuna fish and I don't.

Teacher: . . . Well, the moral to this story is, "Better scraps of food in peace than a fancy feast in fear." Which character in this fable do you think would say that?

The children agreed that it was only the Country Mouse who would say that since the City Mouse didn't seem to mind the danger. The children liked the moral they thought of, "Different people have different opinions about things." I also shared a similar expression, "Different strokes for different folks."

The Fox and the Stork

A fox invited a stork over for dinner. The fox served a very thin soup in a very shallow bowl. It was easy enough for the fox to lap the soup out of the bowl. But the stork pecked with her long narrow beak and couldn't get even one drop of soup.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Stork," said the fox. "It seems that my soup is not to your taste."

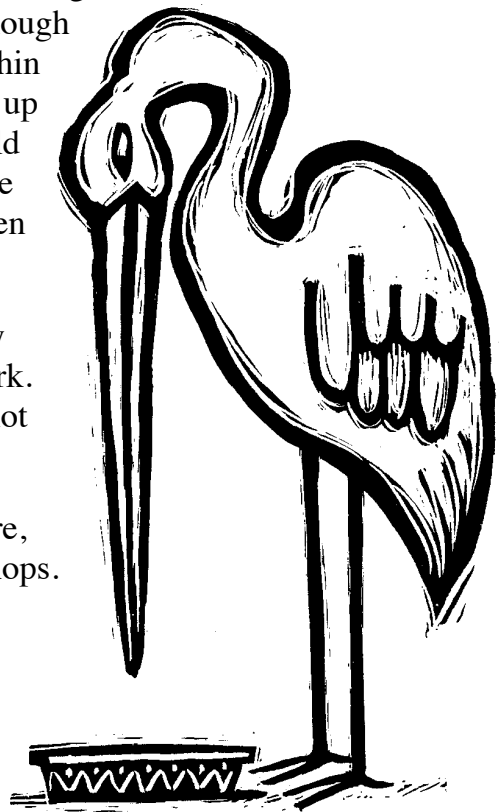
"That's quite all right, Fox," said the stork politely. "Why don't you come over to my house for dinner next Tuesday?"

Next Tuesday came around, and the fox visited the stork for dinner.

The stork served soup also, but in a jar with a long skinny neck. It was easy enough for the stork to stick her thin beak into the jar and slurp up the soup. But the fox could only lick the rim of the jar. He couldn't get even a drop of soup!

"Oh, I'm so dreadfully sorry, Fox," said the stork. "Perhaps the soup is not to your taste."

The fox just sat there, hungrily licking his chops.



Moral One who tricks others is bound to get tricked.



The Fox and the Stork

Children discuss the importance of being sensitive to the needs of others and the idea that two wrongs do not make a right.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ When a guest comes to your house for dinner, what do you and your family do to welcome him or her?
- ⑥ If you were the fox, what would you have done differently?
- ⑥ If you were the stork, what would you have done differently?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

invited
shallow
lap
pecked
dreadfully
slurp
rim
hungrily

Main Activity

Write a New Ending

First, ask children what they think “two wrongs do not make a right” means. Discuss the expression in terms of the fox and the stork both being inconsiderate hosts.

Next, have children develop an alternate ending to the story. How could the stork have acted differently in the end, as a more gracious host?

Last, write a collaborative story. Have children retell the story up to the first time the stork speaks, then develop an alternate ending. Write their story on chart paper and let children illustrate or decorate their effort.

Writing

Discuss the concept of guests and hosts. Children can make mini-books with tips on how to be a good host (copy page 38 for each child). Help children cut apart, assemble and illustrate the mini-books. They might choose two different animal characters for each page! Use a stapler to “bind” the book.



Make sure they are comfortable.



Be a Good Host:
Tips for Welcoming All Types of
Visitors to Your Home!

Give them something to eat.

Say "hello" and "welcome!"

Give them something to drink.

Invite them to play.



Across the Curriculum

Science

Why do the fox and the stork have such different ways of eating? Learn about these two very different kinds of animals. List five important facts you have discovered about each.

Language Arts

If you were trying to teach people to behave in kinder ways to each other, what advice might you give the fox and the stork in this story? Write a letter to the fox or the stork with your ideas.

Book Links

Rosie's Walk, by Pat Hutchins (Macmillan, 1967). Rosie the hen accidentally leads the fox into one accident after another while she herself remains unscathed.

Fantastic Mr. Fox, by Roald Dahl, illustrated by Donald Chaffin (Knopf, 1970). Three mean farmers do all they can to get rid of Mr. Fox.

Classroom Conversations

The story and its moral are an example of what *not* to do! I asked the group, “Even though Fox was wrong to serve Stork from such a shallow bowl, could Stork have done something different than merely paying Fox back in kind?” Children thought that the two should have discussed the problem and seen if they could come up with a way to be nicer to each other. Perhaps Fox just was not thinking when he served dinner to Stork, and perhaps he could learn how to treat others more sensitively. The class spoke about how we all make mistakes sometimes in assuming others might be more like us than they actually are, and we could learn to listen and be more aware of each other’s needs, rather than just doing the same things back.

At that point, the discussion turned to doing helpful things for others. Here, children liked the idea of being a good example for another and being paid back in kind. Kate gave this example: “Say you had two sandwiches in your lunch box and your friend forgot her lunch and you gave her one of your sandwiches. Then the next day, you fell down. Your friend would help you up and take you to the nurse.”

The Shepherd Who Cried “Wolf!”

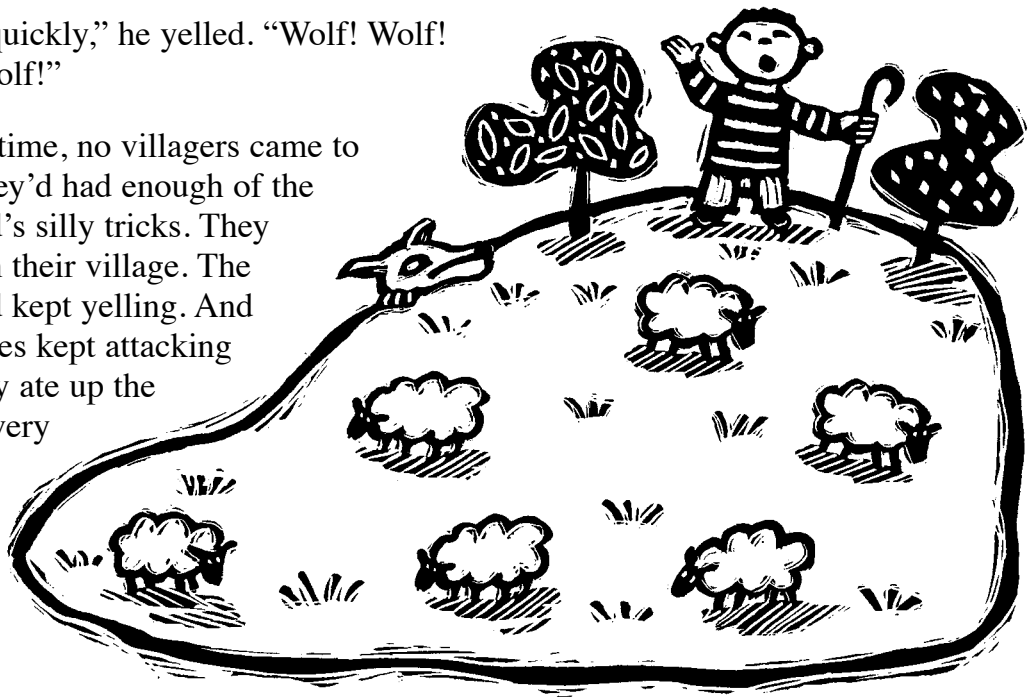
Once upon a time there was a shepherd who liked to play a trick on the villagers who lived nearby. He'd pretend that his flock of sheep was being attacked by wolves. “Come quickly,” he'd yell as loudly as he could. “Wolf! Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!”

Each time, every time, the villagers raced to rescue the shepherd's flock. But each time, every time, there were no wolves to be found. The villagers would turn and walk home. The shepherd would fall on the ground and roll around, screaming with laughter.

But one day wolves really did attack the shepherd's flock.

“Come quickly,” he yelled. “Wolf! Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!”

But this time, no villagers came to help. They'd had enough of the shepherd's silly tricks. They stayed in their village. The shepherd kept yelling. And the wolves kept attacking until they ate up the sheep, every last one.



Moral Liars are not believed, even when they tell the truth.



The Shepherd Who Cried “Wolf!”

Children explore the concepts of honesty and trustworthiness.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ If you were the shepherd, what would you have done differently?
- ⑥ How do you think the townspeople felt, being lied to?
- ⑥ If you were one of the townspeople, what would you have done differently?
- ⑥ Why do you think the shepherd wanted to “cry wolf”?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

flock
attacked
rescue
villagers

Main Activity

Telling the Truth

First, discuss the concept of lying with the group. Why is it important to tell the truth? They might share times when they felt like they wanted to lie or hide the truth.

Next, give several children index cards with a different sentence written on each:

I pulled my brother’s hair.

I didn’t do my homework.

I broke mom’s vase.

I was late to school because

I was moving slowly.

I didn’t pick up my toys like I was supposed to.

Last, have children read their sentence out loud and discuss the situations one by one. What can children do in situations in which it’s tempting to lie? Have children volunteer truthful explanations and solutions to these situations.

Writing

What advice would children give to the shepherd boy, who felt compelled to lie again and again? Have them write him a letter with their ideas (copy page 42 for each child).



Name _____ Date _____



Dear Shepherd Boy,

Here's what I would do in your situation.

From,



Across the Curriculum

Social Studies

A shepherd's job is herding sheep. Just look at the word: shep herd! Give a volunteer the job of "shepherd for the day." The shepherd does what the line leader usually does, or helps gather children when it's time to move from one activity to another.

Art

Have children fold a piece of paper in half. On one half, they draw a picture of what happens the first few times the shepherd cries wolf. On the other half, they draw what happens the last time.

Book Links

Strudwick: A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing, by Robert Kraus (Viking, 1995). Strudwick tries to trick the rest of the sheep by dressing up in wolf's clothing, but he is the one who is fooled.

My Big Lie, by Bill Cosby, illustrated by Varnette P. Honeywood (Scholastic, 1999). Little Bill doesn't tell the whole truth about why he comes home late for dinner and learns an important lesson about honesty.

The Honest to Goodness Truth, by Patricia C. McKissack, illustrated by Giselle Potter (Atheneum, 2000). Libby learns both not to lie and when to tell the whole truth.

Classroom Conversations

As in "The Fox and the Stork," the deterrent to doing something wrong is that something negative will be done to you in return (punishment). While this represents one level of moral development, we should treat others well not out of fear of punishment, but out of simple compassion for others.

Generally children respond that the shepherd was wrong to lie because then people never would believe him and something bad could happen. I answer that that might be a consequence of lying, but is that the only reason not to lie? This leads to a discussion on the importance of trust.

Teacher: . . . If you could change the ending of this story, perhaps to help the shepherd learn from his mistakes, what might you do?

Maxi: If I were one of the villagers, I wouldn't want to hurt the shepherd, but I wouldn't want to keep running to him. So I would put up hidden video cameras to watch him and I'd only help if he were telling the truth.

Teacher: . . . But how would you teach him to be more honest in the future?

The class thought that they would show him all the trouble they had gone to just to protect him.

The Fox and the Grapes

A fox was walking through an orchard on a hot summer day when he spotted a juicy bunch of grapes. They were on a high branch, way above the fox's head. So he crouched down, leaped as high as he could, and snapped his jaws, but missed the grapes.

The fox stared up at the grapes. They looked so fat and purple and tasty, his mouth began to water. The fox backed up, got a good running start, and again leaped for the grapes. He snapped his jaws together with a terrific smack. But again, the grapes were beyond the fox's grasp.

The fox gazed up longingly at the grapes. There were so many of them. They were so round, so ripe, so purple, so perfect! He had to have those grapes. The fox backed up even farther, he ran even faster, he leaped even higher, and he snapped his jaws together even more loudly than before. But when he returned to the ground, still no grapes.

The fox looked up one last time and pronounced, "Those grapes are surely sour."



Moral One often despises what one cannot have.

The Fox and the Grapes

Children reflect on different ways to accept defeat or express disappointment and examine the practice of telling yourself something that isn't true in order to feel better.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ Can you think of a time when you wanted something that you just could not have?
- ⑥ What did the fox really mean when he said "sour grapes"?
- ⑥ Can you think of a time when you wanted to say "sour grapes"? What was it that you wanted?
- ⑥ If you had been the fox, what would you have done differently?
- ⑥ What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

orchard
juicy
crouched
jaws
snapped
grasp
longingly
pronounced

Main Activity

Fruit and Fables

First, explain to children that many of our sayings come from fables, like "sour grapes."

Next, explore other proverbs, idioms, or expressions that use fruit words! Discuss the meaning of these expressions with the group.

Last, have children illustrate one or several of their choice, depicting an example. Display on a "fruitbowl" bulletin board!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ⑥ Big apple (New York City) | ⑥ Peachy (great) |
| ⑥ Top banana (the boss in any group) | ⑥ Plum (the best) |
| ⑥ Life is just a bowl of cherries
(life is good and happy) | ⑥ Rhubarb (strong disagreement
or argument) |

Writing

See if children can retell the story with the beginning, middle, and end in order. Copy page 46 for children and have them illustrate the story in the comic-strip boxes and add captions to tell what the wolf was thinking or saying.

The Fox and the Grapes



retold by _____

First,

Next,

Last,



Across the Curriculum

Math

Pose some story problems:

- ⑥ If the grapes were 48 inches off the ground and, on his first try, the fox was able to jump only so that his mouth was 37 inches off the ground, by how many inches did the fox miss the grapes?
- ⑥ If on the second try, the fox jumped higher by 2 inches, by how many inches did he then miss the grapes?

Or, estimate how many grapes in a bunch!

Science

Find out how and where grapes are grown and what they are used for (grape juice, vineyards producing wine, and so on). Examine different varieties of grapes and discuss the variety in color. Have a grape taste test and vote on a favorite!

Book Links

Crow and Fox and Other Animal Legends, by Jan Thornhill (Simon and Schuster, 1993). A collection of traditional animal tales.

Mole's Hill: A Woodland Tale, by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt, 1994). Mole must find a way to save her home when Fox tells her to move out of her tunnel.

Classroom Conversations

One of the most commonly used expressions based on fables is “sour grapes,” referring to the idea that people pretend that something they really want is unappealing if they cannot attain it. I tell children that the proverb can be shortened to the expression “sour grapes.”

Teacher: . . . Do you think the grapes in the story were sour?

Marjani: . . . I think he only said that because he didn't want to feel so disappointed.

Teacher: . . . Was anybody in the story fooled by the fox's words?

Maxi: It sounds like he was trying to fool himself.

Kristina: . . . He was trying to save face.

Teacher: . . . So what do you think the expression “sour grapes!” is referring to?

Kayla: Well, the fox wanted to have the grapes but he couldn't reach them, so he said they were sour.

Teacher: . . . Good. So, if somebody said “sour grapes!” to you, what might he or she mean?

Kate: It would mean that I say I don't want something because I can't have it. Like if you and your mom went to the toy store and you eyed a toy and there was only one and someone else bought the toy and you said, “I didn't want it.”

The Fox and the Crow

A crow had just found a delicious piece of cheese on a picnic table. She landed in a tree and prepared to eat this tasty morsel.

Just then a sly fox happened to be passing by. The fox spotted the crow and thought about how much he would like to eat that cheese.

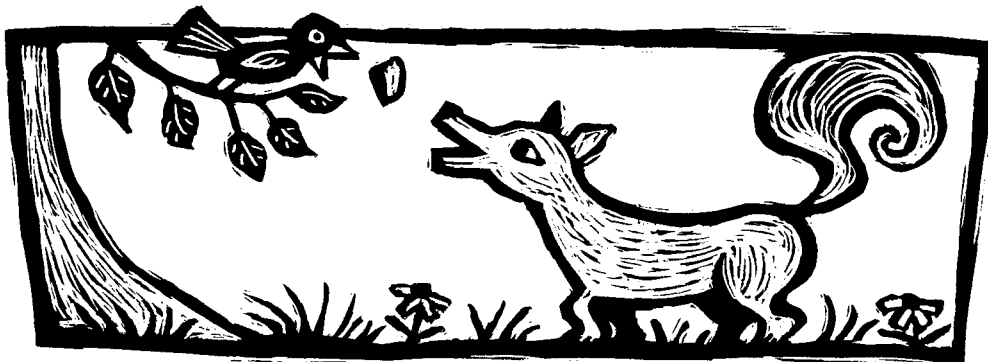
“Madame Crow,” called the fox. “You are a sight for sore eyes. My, but you are looking beautiful today.”

The fox had the crow’s attention now, most certainly. The crow looked down from the tree and the fox continued.

“You must be the most beautiful animal in all the forest. Now rabbits, I grant you, they’re pretty. And frogs may be fetching too. But you, Madame Crow, you are, without a doubt, the most lovely of creatures, with your slick black feathers, your shiny eyes. I wonder if your song is as glorious as you are. I would just give anything to hear you sing, Madame Crow.”

At this, the crow puffed up her chest, threw back her head, fluttered her wings, and began to sing: “Caw, caw, caw, caw!”

Of course, the cheese fell out of the crow’s beak. The fox caught it before it even hit the ground. Then he turned and trotted away in search of a pleasant place to eat a big tasty chunk of cheese.



Moral Never trust a flatterer.



The Fox and the Crow

Children examine the intentions behind a sincere compliment and insincere flattery.

Discuss the Fable

- ① What is a flatterer? What is flattery?
- ① How do you feel when someone gives you a compliment? What about when you give a compliment?
- ① How did the fox trick the crow?
- ① How is flattery different from giving compliments?
- ① If you were the fox, what would you have done differently?
- ① If you were the crow, what would you have done differently?
- ① What do you think the moral of the fable is?

Words to Watch For

tasty
morsel
sly
fetching
slick
lovely
glorious
puffed
fluttered
pleasant

Main Activity

Circle of Compliments

First, discuss the nature of sincere compliments with children.

Then, sit with children in a circle and begin by giving the child to your left a compliment. That child gives a compliment to the child sitting to his or her left, and so on.

Last, when you've gone all the way around the circle, discuss with children how it felt to give and receive compliments.

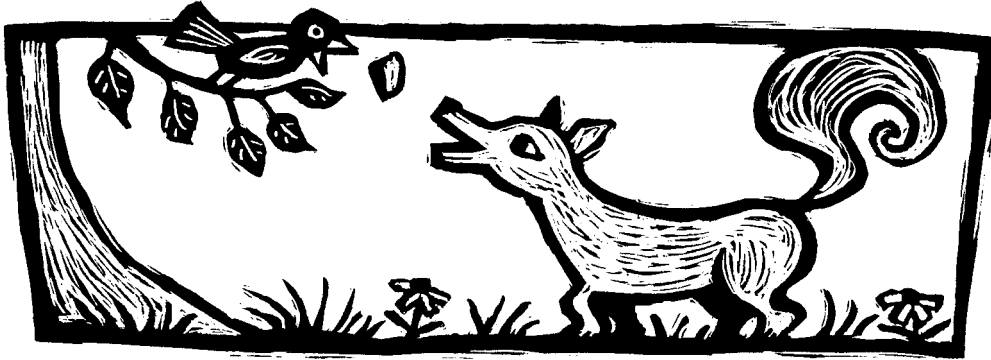
Writing

Foxes are often tricksters in Aesop's fables. Have children write their own tale about a tricky fox! Copy page 50 for children and let them use the writing prompt provided.



Name _____ Date _____

The Tricky Fox



Once there was a fox who played tricks.



Across the Curriculum

Math

Why did the fox want that cheese so much, anyway? Do a cheese taste test so that children can choose their favorite cheese! Include several different kinds of cheese and record children's favorites on a bar graph.

Science

This fable involves three of the five senses. Ask children which three senses the fox uses to flatter the crow in this story (seeing, touching, hearing). What are the other two senses? (tasting, smelling) If you were the fox, how might you flatter the crow using one of these two senses?

Book Links

The Crow Who Stood on His Beak, by Rafik Schami, illustrated by Althea Bell (North-South Books, 1996). An adventurous little crow goes in search of a magnificent peacock.

Aesop's Fox, by Aki Sogabe (Harcourt, 1998). Several of Aesop's fables are woven into a story about Fox's adventures.

Classroom Conversations

Teacher: . . . How do you know that the fox was giving flattery rather than compliments?

Jaclyn: He said those nice things because he really just wanted the cheese.

Teacher: . . . And how did he get it?

Eve: The crow felt so good. She wanted more compliments.

Teacher: . . . So what is flattery?

Gabriel: . . . It means you say something is beautiful but you don't really mean it. You use flattery to trick somebody.

Teacher: . . . You may have noticed that in Aesop's fables, foxes are characters who trick others. How is flattery like playing a trick?

Joshua: You play a trick using words. You trick somebody because they think you are being nice but you really aren't.

Teacher: . . . And what is a true compliment?

Marjani: . . . That's when you say nice things because you really mean them.

Teacher: . . . So do you think what the fox did was okay, since he got what he wanted?

Jenna: Well, maybe if he asked nicely, the crow would have shared the cheese with him anyway.

The Ant and the Grasshopper

On a warm summer day, a grasshopper leaped about a field, merrily singing. Nearby, an ant toiled hard under the hot sun. One by one, he hoisted heavy kernels of corn onto his shoulders and carried them back to his nest.

“Come join me,” said the grasshopper. “We’ll sing and dance and make beautiful music!”

“I have no time to make music,” said the ant. “I’m gathering food for the long winter ahead. I suggest you do the same, if you know what’s good for you.”

The grasshopper merely laughed. “I have plenty to eat today. Winter is a long time off. Why worry on such a lovely day?”

Summer turned to autumn, autumn to winter. Now the field was covered in snow. The ant was burrowed deep in his nest, warm and content. He had enough food to last the whole winter. But the grasshopper was no longer singing a happy song. “It’s freezing,” he shivered. “I’m starving. If only I had listened to the ant’s advice!”



Moral There is a time for work and a time for play.



The Ant and the Grasshopper

Children are exposed to the value of hard work and planning ahead.

Discuss the Fable

- ⑥ Can you think of a time when you wanted to play but someone told you that you had to work instead?
- ⑥ Do you think the ant wanted to work or play?
- ⑥ Do you do your homework or chores at a certain time each day? Do you have a special time for play?
- ⑥ What is your favorite chore at home? Your least favorite?
- ⑥ What do you think is the moral of the fable?

Words to Watch For

merrily
hoisted
toiled
gathering
merely
burrowed
content
advice

Main Activity

A Fable About Frederick

First, remind the group that modern authors can write original fables that change the endings and morals of the fables on which they are based. Read aloud *Frederick* by Leo Lionni. Ask children to listen carefully so that they can compare the two tales.

Next, analyze which elements were similar and which elements the modern author changed:

How are the field mice in *Frederick* similar to the ant in “The Ant and the Grasshopper”? How are they different?

How are the endings in the two stories different?

Do you think that Frederick was doing important work? Why or why not?

Last, discuss which story children like better. (While some children may prefer the clarity of Aesop’s tale, others prefer the inclusiveness of *Frederick*.)

Writing

Discuss how people remember to do things they have to do. A schedule helps us plan how much time we will have for work and how much time we will have for play! Copy page 54 for children and help them make their own weekly schedules.



_____ 's Weekly Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

Share the following poem:

**“Winter’s coming,” said the ants.
“We’d better get some food to store.”**

**“I’d rather sing,” said grasshopper.
“Preparing for winter’s such a bore.”**

**But when the chilly winter came,
the ants were ready for the cold,**

**and grasshopper was cold and thin.
He wasn’t feeling quite so bold.**

**The ants were nice – they let him share.
Next wintertime, he was prepared!**

—*Betsy Franco*

Science

Have children research how ants and grasshoppers prepare for winter. In what way do children think ants “have it easier”? What about grasshoppers?

Book Links

Night Visitor, by Ed Young (Philomel, 1995). In a dream, a young student becomes part of an ant colony.

Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices, by Paul Fleishman, illustrated by Eric Beddows. (Harper, 1988). Insect poems for children.

Classroom Conversations



While the grasshopper in Aesop’s tale is shown the foolishness of playing while others gather food, Lionni shows the dreamer or artist as one who sustains the spirits of others through his art during the long, hard winter. Unlike Aesop’s fable, Lionni’s tale includes the artist or nonconformist as an essential part of the community, to be accepted and appreciated. After a discussion on this topic, the children felt that the moral to *Frederick* should be people can work and share in different ways.

The group discussed how we all have different gifts and different strengths and we need not all be alike in order to help one another. In his own way, Frederick gave to the community as much as any of the food gatherers. This led children to rethink the role of the grasshopper in Aesop’s fable, and to now question its moral.

Creating Original Fables

After their immersion in the fables of Aesop, children can create original fables that illustrate a moral of their choice. Have children think about the many morals they have examined, discussed, and written about. Each of the fables they looked at contained a message to share—have them think about the message *they* would like to share!

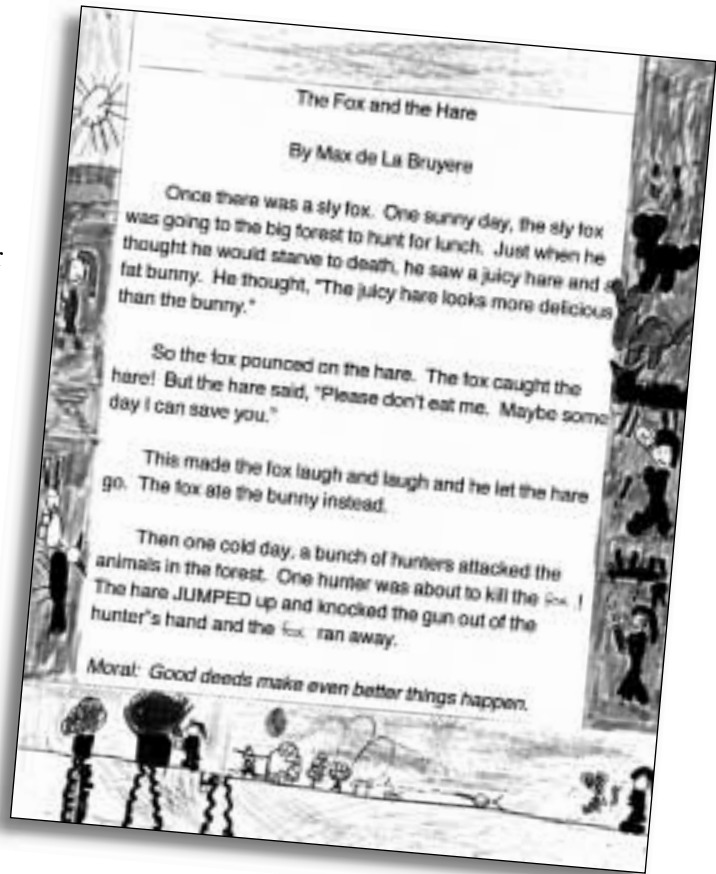
Have children volunteer ideas for morals to clarify their own thinking verbally and inspire those who haven't yet decided (you might share other children's ideas by reading aloud the morals on page 58). After sharing ideas, ask, "How can you show that in a story?" Children can orally brainstorm ideas for stories. (Remind them that fables usually use animals in place of people, but the animals act like humans, and that fables usually have only one given moral.) To clarify the structure of their own fable, reproduce page 59 for children and have them write their answers to the questions.

Tell children to think about some of the examples from their own lives they have reflected on in discussions. This may inspire a tale in which they could substitute animals for people. Once children answer these questions, they are ready to go with their plans and begin writing their stories.





Children might follow a writing process approach: referring to the structure they had written on their sheet, children can write a first draft, confer with classmates and the teacher to assess their work, and rewrite their fables. They proofread and edit their writing along with a teacher to check for grammar and spelling (children can use the spelling sheet on page 62 to make an individualized spelling list and copy their target words), then write a final draft and illustrate their work. They can use the stationery sheet on page 63 (make one copy for each child) for their final draft.



Plan a Fable Festival!

As a class, make invitations and practice presentation techniques. Each child can read his or her fable aloud to an audience of classmates and parents. Send invitations home inviting parents to come to the fable readings. Allow children a day or two of practice readings in which presentation techniques are emphasized (speaking loudly and slowly, reading with expression, sitting with a still body, and making eye contact).

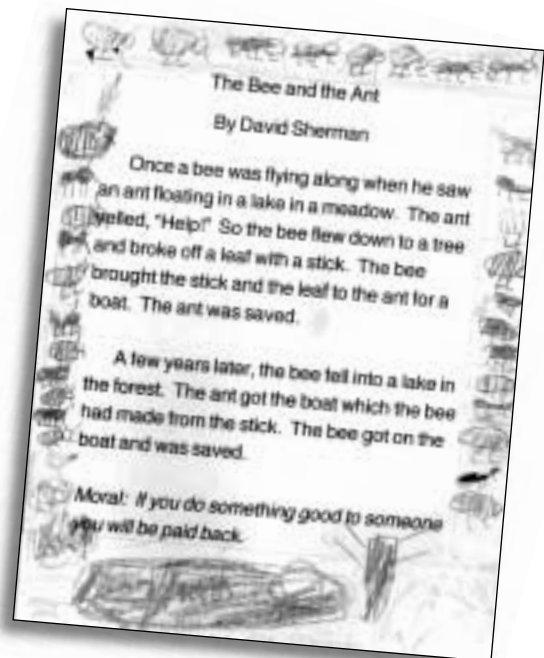
At the festival, introduce each child one at a time to sit in a special author's chair and read the fable to the audience. Display the finished fables on a bulletin board outside the classroom to share with the school community. You might make copies of all the fables and bind a full class copy along with a title page with the words "Our Fables for Our Times" for each child to take home. Keep a copy of this book for your class library and donate another to the school library!





Children's Chosen Morals

- Don't make promises you can't keep. —Hannah
You don't have to be an animal to help an animal. —Maxi
A person is never better than another person. —Jaclyn
Good deeds make even better things happen. —Max
Never play a practical joke. —Molly
Treat others the way you would have them treat you. —Jacob
Don't use drugs. —Kristina
Never give up. —Philip
Treat others the way you would like to be treated. —Jenna
You can become nicer by learning from good examples. —Gabriel
Be nice to nature and it will be nice to you. —Tyler
One good thing leads to another. —Joshua
If you are nice to others, others will be nice to you. —Kayla
Don't be selfish. —Scott
You can't keep doing the same thing forever. —Marjani
If you do something good to someone, you will be paid back. —David
Treat nature kindly. —Eve
Face your fears. —Kate



Name _____ Date _____

Create Your Own Fable!

Answer these questions as you begin to think about your fable.

What message or moral would you like to teach?

Who will your characters be? (Remember that fables often use animals that act like people.)

What problem will your characters need to solve?

How will your fable end?

Name _____

Date _____

Story Structure Chart

Title	Characters	Setting	Problem/Solution	Moral

Name _____ Date _____

My Vocabulary Words

Underline three words in this story that are new or especially interesting to you. Write those words on the lines.

Word 1 _____

Word 2 _____

Word 3 _____

Based on the other words in the fable, write what you think your words mean.

Word 1 _____

Word 2 _____

Word 3 _____

Use a dictionary to look up the meaning of your words.
Write those meanings here.

Word 1 _____

Word 2 _____

Word 3 _____

Write a sentence for each of your three words.

Word 1 _____

Word 2 _____

Word 3 _____

Name _____ Date _____

My Spelling Words

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____



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