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Linda K. Garrity

Illustrated by Jackie Moore





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Introduction

oday's children enjoy studying fables for the same reason children of ancient times enjoyed them-they are entertaining and thought-provoking. This ancient folklore is an important part of our literary heritage; children need to understand the background and meaning of such expressions as "crying wolf," "sour grapes," or "dog in the manger." As they listen and verbalize the morals of various fables, they also gain proficiency in identifying the main point of a short story, a skill that is critical in comprehending literature. And, as a secondary outcome, children just might achieve the original goal of fables-wisdom about the ways of human beings, told through stories about animals.

Fabulous Fables is a comprehensive study guide for teachers, media specialists, and parents to use with children in second through fourth grade. (Second-graders enjoy fables, though many of them have difficulty with the abstraction of determining morals, especially at the beginning of the unit.) The book provides an organization and background for the unit of study, along with teaching strategies, enrichment activities, versions of the fables, and an annotated bibliography.

Fabulous Fables divides the unit of study into twelve lessons. Each lesson starts with an overview of the concepts or backgrounds of the unit, followed by suggestions for teaching the material. These teaching strategies use specific fables to exemplify each of the concepts. (Each lesson contains page references to the fable texts, which are located in the third section of the book.) The unit of study outlined in Fabulous Fables covers most of the major fables of Western civilization and several from Eastern civilization.

The concepts and teaching strategies are followed by a variety of enrichment or extension activities: drama, arts-and-crafts, writing, and research. Many of the activities include references to the reproducible activity pages found in the second section of the book. Since the program can be used with several age groups, there is a range in the enrichment activities; most of the duplicating pages, however, are aimed at the younger children. More complex activities are explained in the text.

The next section features several culminating suggestions–games and activities that require children to possess some knowledge of the fables and proverbs from the unit. Most educators realize that a variety of modes are needed to instruct children; a variety of approaches also makes learning a lot more fun, and that is important too.

Following the culminating activity pages are the fable texts. These have been added for the convenience of the teacher, but they should not preclude use of the many fine books on the market for children today.

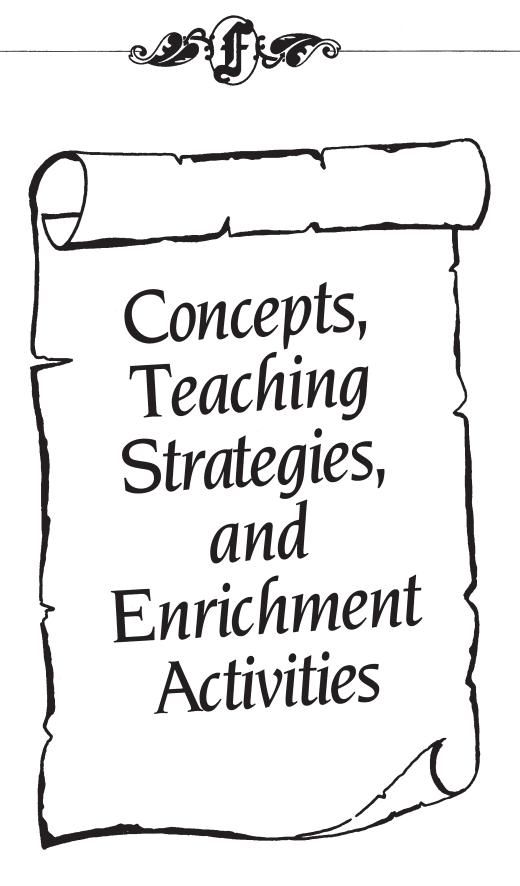
The final section contains an annotated bibliography with both individual fables and fable collections. Many of these materials are beautifully illustrated and should be shown, read, or made available for children to read to themselves. With educa-

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tional dollars so limited these days, the annotated bibliography can be of value to media specialists and teachers trying to build fable collections or even to parents seeking to purchase a few outstanding titles.

Fabulous Fables has been designed to be effective with children and easy for adults to use so that they can pass on a part of their literary folk heritage. The old fables have always been passed on to the new generation with the understanding that they, in turn, will continue the tradition. The discovery and enjoyment of fables, those witty little stories that marvel and mock the ways of humankind, are as enduring as folk wisdom itself.







Concepts, Teaching Strategies, and Enrichment Activites

LESSON CONCEPTS

A. Understanding Morals in Fables Lesson 1: The Uniqueness of Fables

Lesson 2: Proverbs as Morals Lesson 3: Fables with Multiple Morals Lesson 4: Fables with Opposing Morals Lesson 5: Folk Wisdom in Morals

B. Characteristics of Fables

Lesson 6: The Length of Fables Lesson 7: Setting Lesson 8: Animal Characters Lesson 9: Personification Lesson 10: Dialogue

C. The History of Fables Lesson 11: The Origins of Fables Lesson 12: Modern Fables

LESSON 1 The Uniqueness of Fables

Concepts

1. Fables have remained popular with young and old alike down through the centuries because they contain wisdom and are entertaining.

2. Fables have unique characteristics that set them apart from other forms of literature. In this lesson, we will look at these characteristics:

- Ancient fables are considered folklore because they have been handed down orally and have no single author.
- Fables always teach a lesson, called a moral. The moral is expressed in a concise, complete

sentence, and it is usually stated at the end of the fable, set apart by a small space and preceded by the word "Moral:". Sometimes the moral is merely implied, not stated.

Teaching Strategies

If the children in the class are already familiar with fables, ask if they can guess the name of one of the most familiar fables in the Western world. (The fables in Eastern literature will be covered later in the study.) Read aloud "The Tortoise and the Hare," page 39, without reading the moral at the end. Then discuss with the children what they have learned from this story. This discussion can lead into an explanation of a moral, which is a lesson that teaches ethical behavior and attitudes. Children usually start their understanding of morals by first comprehending the theme in their own words and then transferring the meaning to the commonly used proverb.

Now read "The Stag and the Hedgehog," page 39. What do the two fables have in common? How are they different? What different advice do they give on winning races? How would this advice apply to winning or succeeding in real life?

Enrichment Activities

Craft: To accompany "The Tortoise and the Hare," younger children will enjoy making the animals and re-enacting the famous race. See Activity Page 1.

Research: Why is this fable called "The Tortoise and the Hare," rather than "The Rabbit and the Turtle"? What are the differences between tortoises and turtles, and hares and rabbits? Children's encyclopedias contain the information about the animals, which will help children understand that the traditional terms are the better ones for the animals of the story.

Writing: Provide several editions of sports pages from newspapers. After older children have had the opportunity to peruse them, ask them to write sports headlines or even complete sports article parodies for the two racing fables.

LESSON 2 Proverbs as Morals

Concepts

Usually, the moral found at the end of a fable is a proverb.

• A proverb is a wise thought, stated very briefly.

• A proverb can be meaningful by itself, but a moral must accompany a text.

• Because proverbs are so brief and easy to remember, they have been used for centuries to teach children and make observations about life's events.

Teaching Strategies

The moral that most adults associate with the fable "The Hare and the Tortoise" is "Slow and steady wins the race." This moral is called a "proverb." It explains the important lesson learned from the story and, used by itself, it is also good advice. The moral to "The Stag and the Hedgehog," "You may need to deal with cheaters by cheating," is not a famous proverb. The difference between morals and proverbs is that all stories have a moral, but only fables have proverbs attached to them.

There are many collections of proverbs that have no fables connected to them at all. On the other hand, some proverbs are so universally associated with a specific fable that it is difficult to think of one without thinking of the other. (This is an abstract concept that you will need to refer to throughout the unit.) Discuss with children the morals or main ideas of current reading material; **Drama:** Because of the action involved, these two fables are fun for older children to dramatize for younger children.

Game: Younger children will enjoy making and playing the simple "Tortoise and Hare" race track game, which is made more interesting by using a card deck for advancement. See Activity Page 2.



it is not so difficult then to see that those main ideas are not in proverb format.

Proverbs are themselves a form of folklore because they have been handed down by word of mouth for generations. Proverbs have been used to teach children proper attitudes and behaviors in earlier times. In fact, children often used to hear the proverb "Children should be seen and not heard." That is an example of both the old-style expectations of children and also of a proverb used without a fable preceding it.

"The Crow and the Pitcher," page 41, is an example of a fable with two equally appropriate proverbs as morals.

Enrichment Activities

Craft: Older children can select a favorite, preferably short, proverb and create a cross stitch sampler using Activity Page 3. (See page 6 for a list of proverbs. Older children may be able to brainstorm some additional ones.) This is a quiet, time-consuming activity that will work well at the end of the day. There is a lot of planning and problem-solving involved. Some older children might want to try their hand at actual cross stitching, but in most cases the paper project will be more appropriate.

Craft: Younger children can practice their alphabetizing skills on this cut-and-paste activity on Activity Page 4.

Research: For examples of proverbs used in children's education, look up *The New England Primer, McGuffey's Eclectic Reader,* and also *Poor Richard's Almanack.*