

Fables

by Arnold Lobel

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Elanna Grover

A Perma-Bound Production

Note to the Teacher: This guide is not intended to be followed exactly. If you did all of the following activities, both you and your students would be tired of working with this book long before you finished. Instead you are meant to pick and choose among the suggested activities based on the needs and interests of your particular group. You are encouraged to make adaptations, or to supplement the guide with activities of your own creation.

Synopsis

Each of the twenty original fables in this collection is complete with a full page illustration and a moral.

1. "The Crocodile in the Bedroom" A crocodile loves the neat rows of flowers on his bedroom wallpaper. After viewing the disorder in his wife's garden of real flowers, he spends most of his time in bed.
2. "The Ducks and the Fox" Two ducks always take the same path to the pond. After meeting a fox and coming close to being caught, they decide to find a different route to the pond.
3. "King Lion and the Beetle" King Lion falls on his head in the mud when he bends over to make sure a beetle is really bowing to him.
4. "The Lobster and the Crab" A lobster and a crab bravely face danger when they go to sea in a leaky boat, and capsize in a squall. They take a relaxing walk on the ocean floor to calm their nerves after this adventure.
5. "The Hen and the Apple Tree" A hen becomes suspicious when an apple tree with furry toes, pointed ears, and sharp teeth suddenly appears in her yard.
6. "The Baboon's Umbrella" When his umbrella gets stuck, the baboon takes his friend's advice and cuts holes in it so that he can feel the warm sun. But when it starts to rain, he is soaked to the skin.
7. "The Frogs at the Rainbow's End" When three frogs go rushing off to find treasure in the cave at the end of the rainbow, they find a hungry snake instead.
8. "The Bear and the Crow" A bear sets out for town dressed in the height of fashion, only to return home to don a frying pan hat, paper bag shoes, and a bedsheet, because a crow tells him that fashions have changed.
9. "The Cat and His Visions" A cat, who went fishing, keeps revising his glorious vision of a fat fish on a china plate when he fails to make a catch.
10. "The Ostrich in Love" An ostrich decides he is too shy for love after spending a week admiring a young lady ostrich from afar.
11. "The Camel Dances" The camel spends hours practicing ballet only to be told by her friends that she is a terrible dancer. She ignores their opinion and gains many years of pleasure, dancing just for herself.
12. "The Poor Old Dog" A poor, homeless dog finds a gold ring lying in the gutter. He is sure the ring is magic and wishes for a coat, shoes, and a house to live in, but nothing happens. However, when he returns the ring to its rightful owner he is rewarded and eventually receives what he wished for.
13. "Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress" Madame Rhinoceros is persuaded to buy a dress she doesn't like by a saleslady who tells her that people will be filled with admiration and envy when they see her in it.
14. "The Bad Kangaroo" When the school principal comes to complain about a young kangaroo's behavior, he is greeted by parents who put thumbtacks on chairs and glue on door-knobs, keep firecrackers in the medicine cabinet, and throw spitballs.
15. "The Pig at the Candy Store" A pig who loves candy finds the door locked when he arrives at the candy store. He congratulates himself on his willpower, and goes home and eats salad for supper.
16. "The Elephant and His Son" A father elephant is so busy reading his newspaper that he fails to notice that his slipper is on fire until his young son tells him.
17. "The Pelican and the Crane" A pelican with terrible table manners is invited to take tea with a crane. The pelican cannot understand why he doesn't seem to have any friends.
18. "The Young Rooster" A young rooster fails to crow up the sun on his first attempt, but he crows the loudest crow that was ever crowed his second morning on the job.
19. "The Hippopotamus at Dinner" A hippopotamus's stomach is stuck between the table and his chair after he eats an enormous dinner.

20. "The Mouse at the Seashore" A young mouse sets off to see the ocean, and is attacked by a cat, birds, and dogs. The sight of the setting sun over the water compensates the mouse for all his troubles when, at last, he arrives at the ocean.

Objectives

1. Students will have opportunities to recall details, make interpretations, read critically, and respond creatively to the book
2. Students will expand their vocabulary through the use of context clues, class discussion, and word games and activities
3. Students will have opportunities for a variety of writing experiences
4. Students will become familiar with the characteristics of the fable as a genre, and will compare Lobel's fables to each other and to fables by other authors

Biographical Sketch

Arnold Lobel was born May 22, 1933 and died December 4, 1987. He was raised by his grandparents after his parents were divorced. He attended Pratt Institute where he met his wife, Anita, who is also a children's author and illustrator. They lived in New York and had two children, Adrienne and Adam.

The first spark of the idea which later became *Fables* was ignited when Arnold Lobel's publishers asked him to illustrate a new collection of Aesop's fables. He readily agreed, but after reading many of these fables he found that their violence and heavy-handed moralism was distasteful to him. He regretfully told his publishers that he did not want to do the book after all, and just to soften the blow, he added that perhaps he would be able to write some fables of his own, having no serious intention of doing so. Then when he broke his leg and was house-bound for five weeks, he thought again about his promise. He started with a list of favorite animals, and from this list he created the fables. (Get a copy of Lobel's Caldecott Medal acceptance speech from the library, and read aloud his own witty account of how he came to write *Fables*.)

Introductory Activities

1. Read several fables aloud and discuss the characteristics of fables:
 - they are usually very short stories
 - they teach a lesson or make a point about human nature
 - they usually have a moral which explains the point of the story
 - they usually have animal characters that act like humans
2. Read aloud *The Grasshopper and the Ant* by Aesop, *Frederick* by Leo Lionni, and "Cyril" by Florence Parry Heide from *Fables You Shouldn't Pay Any Attention To*. Compare the three authors' views about working for your food. Write a moral for *Frederick*. Discuss who was most to blame for Jennifer's death — Cyril, Jennifer, or the other squirrels.

Discussion Questions

1. "The Crocodile in the Bedroom" Is it worse to be too messy and disorganized or too neat and particular? Give reasons for your opinion.

2. "The Ducks and the Fox" Compare the two duck sisters in this fable to the crocodile and his wife in "The Crocodile in the Bedroom"
3. "King Lion and the Beetle" Do you think it was mostly the lion's fault or the beetle's fault that the lion fell on his head in the mud? Give reasons for your opinion.
4. "The Lobster and the Crab" Explain why the lobster and the crab took only a "small risk" when they went to sea in the storm.
5. "The Hen and the Apple Tree" The wolf did not fool the hen when he tried to disguise himself as an apple tree. What disguise would you suggest to the wolf that would successfully fool the hen?
6. "The Baboon's Umbrella" The baboon's friend gave him bad advice. What *good* advice would you have given the baboon to help him solve his problem?
7. "The Frogs at the Rainbow's End" Make a plan which would have helped the frogs to get the gold at the end of the rainbow without being eaten by the snake.
8. "The Bear and the Crow" Compare the crow in "The Bear and the Crow" to the saleslady in "Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress." How were their reasons for doing what they did different? Compare the bear and the rhinoceros in these two fables.
9. "The Cat and His Visions" Do you think that having a vision helps to make your wishes come true? Give reasons for your opinion, and support your opinion with examples from your own life.
10. "The Ostrich in Love" The ostrich was very happy even though his beloved never noticed him. How do you think the ostrich would have reacted if his beloved had talked to him and let him know she liked him?
11. "The Camel Dances" When is it important to consider the opinion of others and when should you just try to please yourself? Think about this question in relation to "King Lion and the Beetle," "The Bear and the Crow," "Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress," and "The Pelican and the Crane" as well as the camel.
12. "The Poor Old Dog" What would it be like if your wishes all came true immediately? Would there be disadvantages?
13. "Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress" How can you tell when someone's compliments are sincere and when they are only empty flattery?
14. "The Bad Kangaroo" Do you believe that the sayings "Like father, like son" and "Like mother, like daughter" are true? What are some ways that you want to be like your parents? Are there any ways that you do not want to be like them?
15. "The Pig at the Candy Store" Think of a situation where you have needed to use a lot of willpower. What are some things that strengthen your willpower and what are some things that weaken it?
16. "The Elephant and His Son" Sometimes a fable can teach more than one lesson. Write another moral for this fable.

17. "The Pelican and the Crane" What advice would you give the pelican to help him make some friends?
18. "The Young Rooster" The other animals complained when the rooster failed, and also when he succeeded. Write a new moral for the fable based on this fact. Why do you think the animals complained the second day? Compare the rooster's feelings about their complaints on the first day to his feelings on the second day.
19. "The Hippopotamus at Dinner" Think about the moral of this fable. Is there something you think you could not get too much of? Tell your classmates what it is and have them try to convince you that you would regret having too much of this thing.
20. "The Mouse at the Seashore" Do you think the mouse's parents should have let him go on such a dangerous journey? Why or why not?

Activities

1. Pick your favorite Arnold Lobel fable. Write and deliver a campaign speech telling why you think the fable you have chosen is the best one in the collection. Take a class vote before and after the campaign speeches and make a graph to show the results.
2. Gather some collections of Aesop's and La Fontaine's fables and list all of the morals on a chart. Have students try writing their own fables to go with one of the morals. Then read some of the original fables leaving off the moral, and see if students can write their own moral or match each fable with the appropriate moral from the chart.
3. Make a chart showing the human characteristics that each fable reveals. Example:
 King Lion and the Beetle — pride; arrogance
 The Frogs at the Rainbow's End — greed
 The Bear and the Crow — vanity
 Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress — gullibility
 The Mouse at the Seashore — determination; perseverance; courage
4. Think of an experience in your own life that parallels the situation in one of the fables. (example: "Poor Old Dog" — Is there a time when you had to wait for something you really wanted?)
5. Give medals to various characters in the fables. Make up categories for the awards such as bravest, wisest, most foolish, funniest, etc. Design a medal for each category and have an awards ceremony in which nominees and winners are announced and acceptance speeches are given.
6. Divide the class into small groups and let each group produce a puppet show of one of the fables. The groups can use paper bag puppets, finger puppets, sock puppets, stick puppets, etc.
7. Compare several versions of *The Hare and the Tortoise* or another fable. There are versions of *The Hare and the Tortoise* by Paul Galdone, Brian Wildsmith, R. Simon and P. Francois, Caroline Castle (illustrated by Peter Weevers), and William

Pene duBois. Compare both the story line and the illustrations, and decide which version you like best.

8. Look back through all the morals in *Fables* and vote on whether you agree or disagree with each of them. Pick several of the morals where there were students on both sides and have a debate.
9. In his Caldecott Award acceptance speech Arnold Lobel said that his Frog and Toad stories were really fables. Read some of these stories (*Frog and Toad Are Friends*, *Frog and Toad Together*, *Frog and Toad All Year*, and *Days With Frog and Toad*) and write your own morals for them.
10. Write a letter from a character in one fable to a character in another fable.
11. Play "What's My Line," a game in which one student takes on the role of a character from *Fables*, and the rest of the class ask questions that can be answered yes or no to try to guess who the character is.
12. Choose one of the characters from *Fables* and write a resumé for that character, including the job wanted, personal traits and past experiences that qualify the character for the job.
13. Make a wall hanging or a plaque of your favorite moral.
14. You are making your Christmas gift list and you need to buy presents for 10 of the characters from *Fables*. What will you get them?
15. Write riddles about three of the fables in this book.
16. *Fables* won the Caldecott Medal for best picture book in 1981. Read the Caldecott Honor Books for 1981 and decide how you would have voted if you were on the committee that gave the 1981 Caldecott Medal. The 1981 Caldecott Honor books were *The Bremen Town Musicians* by Ilse Plume, *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher* by Molly Bang, *Mice Twice* by Joseph Low, and *Truck* by Donald Crews.

Bibliography of Other Books

Other collections of fables:

Fables You Shouldn't Pay Any Attention To by Florence Parry Heide and Sylvia Worth Van Clief

Foxy Fables by Tony Ross

Fables of India by Joseph Gaer

Aesop's Fables selected and adapted by Louis Untermeyer

Twelve Tales from Aesop retold and illustrated by Eric Carle

Cry Wolf and Other Aesop Fables retold by Naomi Lewis

Borrowed Feathers and Other Fables edited by Bryna Stevens

Well-illustrated versions of single fables:

The City Mouse and the Country Mouse illustrated by Jody Wheeler

Bundle of Sticks retold by Katherine Evans

The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey retold by Katherine Evans

Androcles and the Lion retold from Apion, illustrated by Rocco Negri

The Lion and the Rat by La Fontaine, illustrated by Brian Wildsmith

Fables without morals:

The King's Fountain by Lloyd Alexander

The Truthful Harp by Lloyd Alexander

Frederick by Leo Lionni

The Crock of Gold by Joseph Jacobs, illustrated by William Stobbs

Ming Lo Moves the Mountain by Arnold Lobel

The Crane Maiden by Miyoko Matsutani

The Fisherman and His Wife translated by Randall Jarrell

Other Books by Arnold Lobel:

Mouse Soup

Mouse Tales

Owl at Home

Uncle Elephant

Book of Pigericks

Grasshopper on the Road

Giant John

FABLES ANSWER KEY

Part I

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. R | 11. A |
| 2. Q | 12. C |
| 3. H | 13. N |
| 4. J | 14. D |
| 5. E | 15. I |
| 6. G | 16. F |
| 7. O | 17. B |
| 8. K | 18. L |
| 9. T | 19. S |
| 10. M | 20. P |

Part II

Answers will vary.

Word Study

Note to the Teacher: Following is a very extensive list of vocabulary words and phrases which may be unfamiliar to your students. This list is not meant to be discussed in its entirety. It is here merely as a reference for the teacher. Many of these words are not necessary for story comprehension and to try to "cover" all of these words with the students would ruin their enjoyment of the book. Some vocabulary words felt to be most crucial to comprehension are marked with an asterisk.

increasingly p.2	advice p.12	appointment p.28
fond p.2	brilliant p.14	*conduct p.28
insist p.2	*rumor p.14	reflect p.28
entwined p.2	derby p.16	marzipan p.31
distress p.2	impressed p.16	*willpower p.31
*secure p.2	height of fashion p.16	temptation p.31
seldom p.2	disagree p.16	informative p.32
route p.5	proper p.16	*observation p.32
accustomed p.5	*attire p.16	entirely p.35
toothy p.5	smirked p.16	my pleasure p.35
bolted p.5	ridiculous p.16	*social failure p.35
*routine p.5	cackling p.16	summoned p.37
noble p.7	glorious p.19	croak p.37
go forth p.7	*vision p.19	drizzle p.37
devoted p.7	anticipation p.19	*disaster p.37
*respect p.7	beloved p.21	failure p.37
assure p.7	composed p.21	success p.37
strolling p.8	alas p.21	enormously p.37
foolhardy p.8	pirouettes p.22	glared p.38
venture p.8	relevés p.22	portions p.38
*squall p.8	arabesques p.22	satisfy p.38
voyage p.8	*fatigue p.22	morsel p.38
buffeted p.8	critics p.22	considerably p.38
turbulent p.8	spokesman p.22	budge p.38
capsized p.8	tattered p.22	remained p.38
out of the ordinary p.8	gutter p.25	forlornly p.38
odd p.11	profusely p.25	occasionally p.38
quiver p.11	adorned p.26	*regret p.38
outsmarted p.11	attractive p.26	alarmed p.40
*pose p.11	admiration p.26	terrors p.40
gibbon p.12	*flattery p.26	high time p.40
annoyed p.12	lavatory p.28	narrow escape p.40
disagreeable p.12	resist p.28	appear p.40
*predicament p.12	dashed p.28	*overwhelmed p.40
solution p.12	no doubt p.28	contentment p.40

Divide the class into partners and assign one of the fables to each pair. The partners should read the fable and list all of the words that are unfamiliar to either of them. They should find out the meanings of all those words and decide which *one* word is most important to understanding the fable. They should be ready to explain why they think the word they have chosen is more important than the others. Then they should think of a way to show the meaning of that word to the rest of the class. This may be done through a skit, a game, a picture, a poster, a word web of related words, examples from their own lives or other stories the class has read, etc. The partners should make a presentation of the word they have chosen before their fable is read by the rest of the class.

FABLES TEST

Part I Matching (5 points each)

Read the beginning of the sentence in Column B. Find the item which completes the sentence correctly in Column A. Write the letter of the item from Column B in front of the correct ending.

Column A

- ___ 1. ate so much dinner he was stuck between the table and the chair.
- ___ 2. went fishing and caught a large fat fish for his dinner.
- ___ 3. found a hungry snake waiting for them instead of gold, pearls, and diamonds.
- ___ 4. had parents who threw spitballs and put glue on doorknobs.
- ___ 5. listened to a crow, and put a frying pan on his head.
- ___ 6. met a sly fox on their way to the pond.
- ___ 7. was too shy to give his beloved a gift or to talk to her.
- ___ 8. went straight back to bed when he saw the real flowers in his wife's garden.
- ___ 9. paid no attention when her friends told her she was a terrible dancer.
- ___ 10. caught his slipper on fire with the ash from his cigar.
- ___ 11. fell in the mud when he bent over to make sure a beetle was bowing to him.
- ___ 12. suspected that there was a wolf in disguise.
- ___ 13. had to try twice before he crowed the loudest crow that was ever crowed.
- ___ 14. listened to his friend's bad advice and cut holes in his umbrella.
- ___ 15. found a gold ring and was rewarded with a purse full of coins.
- ___ 16. was told that her new dress looked very beautiful.
- ___ 17. went to sea in a leaky boat and sank to the bottom of the ocean.

Column B

- A. King Lion
- B. A Lobster and a Crab
- C. A Hen who saw a strange tree
- D. The Baboon who went walking in the jungle
- E. A well-dressed Bear
- F. Madame Rhinoceros, who went shopping
- G. Two Duck sisters
- H. Three Frogs who went to the rainbow's end
- I. A poor old homeless Dog
- J. A bad little Kangaroo
- K. The Alligator who loved his wallpaper
- L. The Pig who went to the candy store
- M. The Father Elephant, who told his son not to bother him
- N. A young Rooster
- O. An Ostrich who fell in love
- P. The Pelican, who came to tea with the Crane

- 18. found the door locked and was proud of his strong will power.
- 19. was attacked by a cat, some birds, and some dogs.
- 20. had terrible table manners.

Q. A Cat who had visions

R. The Hippopotamus

S. The Mouse, who wanted to see the ocean

T. A Camel who practiced ballet

Part II Bonus Point Question (10 points)

Write a paragraph comparing any two of Arnold Lobel's fables. Tell how the two fables are alike and how they are different.



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