# Aesop's Fables: A 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Literacy Focus Unit Created by Katie Miller, Jessica Grandlinard, Kayla Yates, and Luke Schroeder

#### FEATURED SELECTION

"The Hare and the Tortoise" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

One day, a hare comes upon a tortoise. The hare initiates a challenge of foot speed. The tortoise accepts and the race begins. The hare, who was obviously faster, sprints ahead. He gets so far ahead that he loses sight of tortoise and begins to get distracted. The hare eventually forgets about the race and falls asleep. When he wakes up, he remembers he was racing, but by that time, the tortoise had already crossed the finish line. Moral of the story... "slow and steady wins the race"

#### **RELATED MATERIALS**

"The Shepherd Who Cried Wolf" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

This short fable discusses the consequences of begging for help when a young boy claims that a wolf is attacking his flock. One day a wolf really does and no one believes him.

"The Lion and The Mouse" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

In this story a mouse awakens a lion and the lion threatens to harm him. The mouse convinces the lion that having him as prey is not worthy. When the lion is later in distress, the mouse comes to the rescue remembering what the lion had done for him.

"The Honest Woodcutter" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

This fable consists of a man who accidently throws his axe into the water. When Greek gods offer him a gold or silver axe, the man is honest and says that it is not his. In return he gets all three. A deceitful man tosses his axe into the river in hopes of the same reward but lies and does not receive even his own axe back.

"Country Mouse and City Mouse" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

Two friends share their lives by inviting one another to their homes. The city mouse enjoys a small meal in the country but invites the country mouse to the city for something extravagant. Their meal is interrupted by dogs and the country mouse decides he prefers simplicity.

"The Ox-Driver and Hercules" by Aesop. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishers, 2003.

One day a man is driving his wagon that sinks into mud. He prays for the help of Hercules but the god responds that "Gods help those who help themselves."

(There are many more supplementary materials that we will allow students to choose from for their skits or to aid them in writing their own fable. They will not be limited to those above but we cannot summarize them all!)

#### **GOALS**

- Students will examine the concept of the fable.
- Students will make connections between the morals in the fables and real life.
- Students will understand figurative language and how it is used in literature.
- Students will develop public speaking skills.
- Students will develop teamwork skills by working with a group to create a skit about a given fable.
- Students will develop reading fluency by reading a selection of Aesop's fables.
- Students will develop reading comprehension skills by analyzing a selection of Aesop's fables.

#### INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

English 3.3.2 Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Literary Text: Comprehend basic plots of classic fairy tales, myths, folktales, legends, and fables from around the world

#### **UNIT PLAN**

#### Pre-reading

Activity: Students will choose a partner and compete in a three-legged race outdoors. After the race, the entire class will discuss what happened during the race. What worked? What didn't work? Did you have to go fast or slow? What did you learn? Sometimes, slow and steady wins the race. Have you heard this saying before? Teacher will discuss and define a fable. After discussing a fable, the students and teacher will compare a fable to other genres. The teacher should also give students background information on famous writers of fables, including Aesop. The teacher should also mention the Perry Index, a way that all of the fables are organized and the number they are assigned in the overall text.

Introduce "Tortoise and the Hare" (prior knowledge, vocab, word walls) Grouping: Whole group instruction

#### Reading

Activity: The teacher will read "Tortoise and the Hare to the entire class. After a discussion of "Tortoise and the Hare", students will read other fables in small groups. Each small group will read a different fable provided by the teacher.

Grouping: Whole group, Small Groups

# Responding

Activity: After reading their fables, the students will participate in a whole class discussion. The class discussion will focus on the morals of the stories they have read and personal connections to students' lives. After the discussion, students will write their thoughts and feelings about the fables they read in a journal.

Grouping: Whole group, Individual

## **Exploring**

Students will go to the computer lab and explore different fables. Students should go to these websites: http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php; http://www.aesops-fables.org.uk/and explore various fables and Aesop. Students will write the morals of three different fables and journal about their favorite fables. If a student finishes early, encourage them to explore more fables than what is required. Student may also choose to use time to consult the dictionary and look up unfamiliar words that are often used in Aesop's literature. For example, students may not understand that the word "hare" means rabbit. Grouping: Individual

# Applying

Students will perform a short skit based on the fable they read in their small groups. Props will be included. After the skits have been performed, students will write their own fable, complete with a moral. Students will have time in class to work on both of these projects.

Grouping: Small Groups

## Supplemental Materials

Websites (computers) visit http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php Books (library access) Skits (props/costumes)

TIME SCHEDULE

Day 1 Students will compete in a three-legged race. Have students brainstorm ideas of genres of literature. As a warm up activity the teacher will provide a worksheet with various titles. Students will use experiences with the given books/ context clues to guess what genre it may be. (For example, a book with a dragon in the title is likely fiction.) Have students give examples of books from the following genres: fiction, fantasy nonfiction, mystery, historical fiction, biographies, etc. After they identify the different elements of other genres we will cover the specific elements that make it a fable.

Day 2
Introduce Aesop
(history of Aesop)
biography
handout/worksheet.
Teacher can have
basic facts outlined
on the bulletin
board including
years that he lived,
where he lived, etc.
Students will be
challenged to find
more in depth facts
on their own.

Day 3 Concepts of figurative language, symbols and representations, present a list of euphemisms and clichés. Connect these to life situations. Language experience approach used to compile a list of clichés, and then leave these lists in plain sight for all to see. Students will then explore examples of metaphors, similes, word play, highly descriptive language, etc.

Day 4
Discuss Tortoise
and Hare,
teacher will read
to class, whole
class discussion,
questions that
prompt critical
thinking,
Aesop's
language. Grand
conversation.
Choose word
wall words.

Day 5
Partner up
students, each
pair will be
given the fable
"The Boy
Who Cried
Wolf". They
must read the
fable, identify
the cliché, and
respond by
drawing a
picture.

Day 6 Quick review of fable concepts such as the morals and the characterization. Do a mini lesson on figurative language and symbolism, word wall, make word maps of key words (hare, shepherd, vocab)	Day 7 Review previous reading with group, discuss theme (teacher will do a mini lesson on theme) groups will discuss reasoning behind character selection.	Day 8 Library day (use this day to work on finding appropriate materials, using library categorizing systems) task: find a book that could be considered a fable, or that has components of a fable.	Day 9 Oral presentation of findings through the library, assign small groups (4-5 students) and give each group a fable. Today these groups will read their fable.	Day 10 Analyze the given fable, create lists of fable elements, lists of words they don't know, reasoning behind character selection, make connections
Day 11 Review fable as a group, assign skit project. Deadlines, criteria. Students will brainstorm ideas with their groups.	Day 12 Computer lab day. Students will be given certain websites to explore which supplement the fables. Some of these options will include videos. Some of this time will be used to do research for the skit project.	Day 13 In class opportunity to collaborate with group, write script, assign parts. Teacher will need to monitor progress.	Day 14 Rehearsal, bring in props, make sure skit is teacher approved, practice. Perform for teacher.	Day 15 Present in front of class and parents are invited.
Day 16 Full class discussion, how did the skit go, was it fun, what was easy, what was hard, self reflection. Students can also write about this experience in their journal.	Day 17 Overview of the writing process, review necessary elements of a fable, assign "create your own fable" project, do pre-writing (brainstorming) choose your moral for your own fable	Day 18 Rough draft (in class)	Day 19 Peer edit (revisions, editing)	Day 20 Publish fables, compile fables into a class book. No longer Aesops fables, but now "insert teachers name here's Fables!" create Perry index for this book.

# Make Your Own Fable



Name:	Teacher: LRS, KNM, JAG, KMY		
Date :	Title of Work:		

Date	<del></del>	Title	or work.		-
	Criteria				Points
	1	2	3	4	
Grammar, Spelling, Sentence Structure	More than 6 errors, poor sentence structure, difficult to understand	4 or 5 errors, mediocre sentence structure, confusing or unclear meaning	2 or 3 errors, acceptable sentence structure, clear meaning	1 or 0 errors, exciting sentence structure, very easy to understand	
Elements of a Fable	No symbolism, nonsensical character choice, no moral present	Some symbolism, poor character choice, beginnings of a moral present		Includes symbolism, excellent character selection, and an interesting or profound moral is present	
Content Quality	Poor language, no transitions, lack of story	Mediocre language, developing transitions, some semblance of story	Engaging language, appropriate transitions, appropriate story	Exciting language, transitions, interesting story	
Writing Process	No evidence of pre- writing, drafting, revision, and editing	-	-	Evidence of pre-writing, drafting, revision, and editing	
				Total>	

Teacher Comments:

Checklist for SkitParticipation/effortUse of props/costumeAccurate representation of lesson
Checklist for items completed in entire unit
Worksheet on genres
Info about Aesop/worksheet
Class discussion on clichés
Class discussion on "The Hare and the Tortoise"
Draw a picture of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"
Word map of key words
Find a book considered a fable (library day)
Oral presentation about library day
List of fable elements
Completion of skit
Appropriate use of lab day
Write your own fable