

## The Narrative style of a Fable

Adapted for ELT from Aesop's Animal Fables Picture and Story Book –  
Juvenile Productions LTD - 1947

**Aim:**

An enjoyable one/two hour lesson as a basis for writing a fable  
Students produce an original fable, using narrative target language

**Target Language:**

Verbs describing direct speech  
Use of adverbs and present participles for extra information about the speaker  
Inversion of subject and verb for dramatic emphasis

**Time:**

Either as a two-hour lesson, two one-hour lessons or a one-hour lesson plus homework.

**Teacher's notes:**

The lesson starts on an upbeat so energizes a tired writing class. A "Fable swap milling exercise" makes students retell their own fable eight times. Each repetition gains should gain in confidence and fluency and gives a chance to correct and elaborate. Encourage this. This first step also allows exposure to the target language pinpointed in the analysis stage later.

**Steps:**

- 1) Hand out one of the eight Fables (you may need to repeat them, depending on numbers) and one "Fable titles" / "morals" sheet to each student. Fold the latter so only the titles are showing. As you do this talk about what a Fable is and ask whether they have heard of "Aesop's Fables".
- 2) Give them the necessary time to understand and memorise (stress not word for word) the Fable.
- 3) Students mill and tell their fable to every other student, hearing one and ticking it off their titles list in return.
- 4) Sit down in pairs and unfold their sheet to match the tales heard with the morals listed. (Give plenty of time for discussion and questions to each other)
- 5) Explain the stories read well partly due to certain language features in them. Hand out the Analysis worksheet for individual and pair work (see sheet).
- 6) Write their own fable (see sheet). Encourage them to make it as serious or funny, modern or traditional as they wish.

## **The Lion and The Mouse**

Mr. Lion was lying asleep, but was awakened by a mouse running over his face.

"How dare you!" he roared, and raised his paw to kill the mouse.

"Please, Sir," begged Mrs. Mouse, "let me go, and one day I may do something for you in return."

"You help me! Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Lion; but he let her go.

One day Mr. Lion was caught in a net spread by hunters.

"I can't get out!" he roared angrily.

"But I can help you," said a tiny voice, and up ran the mouse, who nibbled and gnawed at the ropes until the Lion was free.

"There," she said proudly, "Had you not let me go, I would not have found a way to help you, after all".

## **The Crow and the Pitcher**

A very thirsty crow found a pitcher with very little water in it. Although he stooped and stretched, he could not reach the water.

"What shall I do?" thought he, looking around at the stony ground. Then he thought of a clever plan. He dropped pebbles into the pitcher, until the water rose high enough for him to drink.

## **The Cock and the Fox**

A Cock stood crowing on a treetop as Mr. Fox came walking by, longing to make a meal of him.

"Come down," drawled Mr. Fox. "I have very good news for you!"

"What news?" Asked the Cock cautiously.

"All the Birds and Animals have promised to love each other. Come down and be loved," coaxed the Fox.

But the Cock only looked far away, craning his neck.

"What do you see?" asked the Fox,

"A pack of Hounds, I think," called down the Cock.

Thereupon the Fox jumped up to run.

"Don't hurry!" crowed the Cock, "we are all friends now!"

"Ye-e-s," stammered the Fox, "but perhaps the Hounds have not heard the news."

"I see," said the Cock, smiling.

### **The Wolf and His Shadow**

Once Mr. Wolf went out for a walk in the early evening when the sun was setting. As he went along he was delighted by his enormous shadow.

"How huge I am," sang he. "Fancy being afraid of Lions! Why, I ought to be King instead of the Lion!"

So proud was he that he didn't notice the time and forgot that Lions come out to hunt at dusk. Suddenly a Lion sprang on him.

"Alas!" he cried. "Had I not been so vain, I would not have been caught."

### **The Hare and the Tortoise**

"I can run faster than you," boasted a Hare to a Tortoise.

"Very well," answered the Tortoise; "let us have a race, with Mr. Fox as judge, and see who wins."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Hare. "We will!"

So off they went as fast as they could. No sooner had they say off than the Hare left the Tortoise far behind.

So confident was the Hare that when he saw this he lay down for a rest, thinking "I am so fast that I can afford to have a nap and still win the race easily. But he slept so soundly that Mr. Tortoise not only came along but also passed him.

When Mr. Hare awoke he realised what he had done and tore on to the winning post, but he found Mr. Tortoise already there!

### **The Eagle and The Cocks**

Two Cocks in the same farmyard started to quarrel about which should be master. After the fight, the loser hid himself in a corner, but so jubilant was the winner that he flew onto the roof.

"It is I who won!" he crowed, so loudly that an Eagle overheard. The Eagle swooped down and carried him away.

So the beaten Cock became master of the farmyard, after all.

### **The Fox and The Crow**

Miss Crow had stolen a big piece of cheese, and flew on to a branch to enjoy it. A sly fox, who wanted the cheese for himself, came up and spoke politely to her. "Oh, Miss Crow, how beautiful you are! What a lovely beak, what lovely feathers you have! What pretty eyes! If only you could sing, you would be the most wonderful bird in the world!"

Very pleased to hear all this about herself, Miss Crow gave a loud caw to show that she could sing. Of course, hardly had she opened her beak when the cheese fell down, and Mr. Fox ran away with it, laughing heartily.

### **The Dog and His Reflection.**

A Dog once stole a piece of meat out of a butcher's shop, and hurried towards home as fast as he could. On the way, he had to cross a little bridge. As he trotted along it, he chanced to look at the water below.

"Hello!" said he, stopping. "Why, there's another dog there with an even better piece of meat than mine. Not only shall I have my piece of meat, but I'll have that piece also!"

Saying this, he snapped at the other dog, which was only his own reflection in the water. When opening his mouth to seize the other dog's piece of meat, his own fell into the stream and sank out of reach.

Tick the stories off as you hear them:

- The Lion and the Mouse
- The Crow and the Pitcher
- The Cock and the Fox
- The Wolf and his Shadow
- The Hare and the Tortoise
- The Eagle and the Cocks
- The Fox and the Crow
- The Dog and His Reflection

Match the morals of the stories below to the titles above

- A. People who work slowly and carefully often work better than people who work quickly but are careless.
- B. A way can always be found if you make up your mind to find it.
- C. People sometimes say nice things to you just to get something they want for themselves.
- D. If you rightly own a good thing be sure you do not lose it for something you are not certain about.
- E. Do not be too proud of yourself.
- F. Even the smallest may find a way to help.
- G. Do not let vanity make you careless
- H. Other folks can play tricks as well as you.

## Narrative Style Worksheet - Aesop's Fables

After reading through all eight fables, give one adjective to describe the character of each of the animals portrayed. Tell your partner the adjective and say why you chose it.

Now do exercises A, B and C, which show ways of helping the reader "see" the characters, in their mind's eye, while they read

- A. Underline all the verbs that describe the direct speech of the animals in the fables.
- B. Find two examples of adverbs which describe a manner of speaking in the fables.
- C. Find three examples of present participles (-ing verbs) which describe what the speaker is doing at the same time.

A lot of description is given in only a few words. A and B give you extra information about *how* the speaker speaks. C gives you extra information about what the speaker is *doing whilst* he is speaking.

Now write a two-line conversation between a hungry cat and a frightened mouse. Use examples of language from A, B and C.

Exercises D, E, F and G all give dramatic emphasis to the story by inverting the subject and verb of the sentence.

- D. Find five examples of subject verb inversion after direct speech.
- E. Find two examples of subject verb inversion in a conditional phrase.
- F. Find two examples of subject verb inversion after "so + adjective"
- G. Find three other phrases which need subject verb inversion.

Discuss exactly what is emphasised in each of the examples in D, E, F and G.

H. Choose one out of these three possible morals from imaginary fables.

- Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
- Do not believe all that you are told
- By changing your appearance you cannot change your nature.

Write a fable to fit illustrate the moral. Of course, try to use examples of the type of language shown in A-G in order to create a dramatic narrative style in your writing.

### Answer Key

- The Lion and the Mouse - F
- The Crow and the Pitcher - B
  - The Cock and the Fox - H
- The Wolf and his Shadow - G
- The Hare and the Tortoise - A
  - The Eagle and the Cocks - E
  - The Fox and the Crow - C
- The Dog and His Reflection - D

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"What shall I do?" **thought** he, **looking** around at the stony ground. Then he thought of a clever plan. He dropped pebbles into the pitcher, until the water rose high enough for him to drink.

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"Come down," **drawled** Mr. Fox. "I have very good news for you!"

"What news?" **Asked** the Cock **cautiously**.

"All the Birds and Animals have promised to love each other. Come down and be loved," **coaxed** the Fox.

But the Cock only looked far away **craning** his neck.

"What do you see?" **asked** the Fox,

"A pack of Hounds, I think," called down the Cock.

Thereupon the Fox jumped up to run.

"Don't hurry!" **crowed** the Cock, "we are all friends now!"

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"I see," **said** the Cock, **smiling**.

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"Very well," **answered** the Tortoise **slowly**; "let us have a race, with Mr. Fox as judge, and see who wins."

"Ha, ha!" **laughed** the Hare. "We will!"

So off they went as fast as they could. **No sooner had the Hare set off than** he left the Tortoise far behind.

**So confident was the Hare** that he lay down for a rest, **thinking** "I am so fast that I can afford to have a nap and still win the race easily. But he slept so soundly that Mr. Tortoise not only came along but also passed him. When Mr. Hare awoke he

realised what he had done and tore on to the winning post, but he found Mr. Tortoise already there!

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