



Fabulous, Fractured Fables
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Elementary School Writers-In-Residence

Grade Level: 2nd – 6th

Time Frame: 1 hour

Learning Objectives: Students will develop awareness of the fable literary form. Students will also discuss the terms anthropomorphic and personification, and will understand that authors write fables to point out or criticize problems and to impart moral lessons. Students will discuss and understand what a moral is. Students will organize their thoughts and writing skills in order to write a fable with a beginning, middle and end, and with a moral. Students will develop their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills in revisions. Students will redefine traditional fables for our modern world.

Prior Skills: None required

Required Resources: *The Lion and the Mouse* (Aesop) or another fable

Arizona Language Arts State Standards Addressed (Writing):

Strand 1: Writing Process

Concept 1, PO 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Concept 5, PO 1, 2, 3, 4

Prewriting: Students generate ideas through group discussion and brainstorm (Concept 1, PO 1). Students discuss the purpose of a fable (moral) and are tasked with developing their own updated fable with a moral (Concept 1, PO 2). Students consider old fables' audiences and how to reach a 21st Century audience (Concept 1, PO 3). Students maintain a record of their writing and must adhere to the time limit presented in class (Concept 1, PO 5-6).

Publishing: Students illustrate their work, must write legibly and use margins and correct spacing, and will present their fables to the class (Concept 5, 1-4).

Strand 2: Writing Elements

Concept 1, PO 1, 2, 3

Concept 2, PO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Concept 4, PO 1, 2, 3, 4

Concept 5, PO 1, 2, 3

Ideas and Content: Students will write a fable with a moral, complete with relevant details to both story and audience, and that show original perspective (Concept 1, PO 1-4).

Organization: Students will organize their story in paragraph/fable format (Concept 2, PO 1, 6). Their sentences will be connecting their ideas, and they will adhere to story formula, where they create a beginning, middle and end that are interesting, unique and detailed with sensory experience (Concept 2, PO 2, 3, 4, 5).

Word Choice: Students will select words that create images in readers' minds/carry the story, and use descriptive words and phrases that energize the writing (Concept 4, PO 1-2). They will be adhering to the vocabulary and style used in a fable (Concept 4, PO 3) and will use literal and figurative language in their stories (Concept 4, PO 4).

Sentence Fluency: Students will write simple and compound sentences that flow together when read aloud and sentence lengths and patterns will vary to enhance the flow of writing.

Strand 3: Writing Applications

Concept 1, PO 1

Expressive: Students will write a narrative that includes characters, a main idea, a sequence of events, setting, plot, sensory details, and clear language (Concept 1, PO 1).

Sequence of Activities:

I. Introduction: (5-7 min)

Ask the students what it would be like if animals could talk. Go around the room, letting students comment about how they think the world would be different if animals and birds could talk, and what they might say to us.

Tell the students that today we are going to talk about a type of story that often includes talking animals—the fable.

II. Collaborative Segment (20-25 min)

With the students, brainstorm some characteristics of fables. Have the students name some fables they have read or know, such as “The Ant and the Grasshopper”, “The Fox and the Grapes”,

“The Raven and the Pitcher”, “The Crow and the Cheese”, “The Dog and His Reflection”, “Belling the Cat”, and “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”.

Key concepts you want to get on the board are that fables are:

-Short

-Featuring **anthropomorphized** animals, birds, plants, mythical creatures, **inanimate** objects, or forces of nature

-Having a moral

Define ‘anthropomorphized’ and ‘inanimate’ for the students, if necessary. Give the students some examples of anthropomorphized animals in popular children’s television programs or books, such as Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc.

Have the students take turns reading the literary model aloud. After having read the literary model, have them define the moral of the fable, and have them discuss how the animals in the fable were anthropomorphized. This should take about five minutes.

Next, tell the students you are going to write an updated fable together, for the 21st century. With the students, brainstorm lessons that they think would be appropriate for a 21st century audience. Some lessons might be ‘If you are too distracted by the virtual world (television, computers, IMs, texting), you will miss out on the real world’ or ‘What we do to our Earth’s environment has consequences’ (this could be a fable with sea creatures joining together to express their unhappiness to an oil drilling company).

Together with the students, first decide on what the moral of your 21st century fable will be. If you have a particular theme or moral you want them to grasp, like the importance of family, protecting the environment, or working hard in school, you can guide the discussion toward that theme.

Next, decide what the characters in your fable will be. Focus on traditional fable characters, such as anthropomorphized animals, natural elements, or inanimate objects.

Include at least two characters in the fable. This would be a good time to discuss the concepts of ‘protagonist’ and ‘antagonist’.

Work with the students through the brainstorming/writing process, allowing the students to guide the process as much as possible, but stepping in to make editorial decisions when needed. The students should be able to create a fable to illustrate the moral they chose. Transcribe the students’ efforts onto the whiteboard and have them take turns reading the final product.

Note: If completely writing their own fable is too advanced for the students, have them update an existing fable, such as “The Tortoise and the Hare”, for the 21st century.

III. Activity Break (5 min)

Let the students get up from their desks and do a class activity that allows them to move and stretch. Suggested activity: 'Show me': Ask the students to show you what it looks like to be a melting stick of butter, a piece of frying bacon, a squirrel, a cloud blowing in the wind, a tree in a thunderstorm, a butterfly coming out of its cocoon, and other images that they will act out.

IV. Individual Writing (10 min)

Now, have the students write their own fables. They may choose to write traditional fables, or write updated fables for the 21st century. While the students work, go around the room and make sure that everyone understands the assignment and no one is struggling.

V. Sharing (10 min)

Allow the students who want to share their fables with the class to do so. Ensure that more shy students and reluctant participants are equally being chosen to share with more gregarious students.

Optional extension activity: Have students illustrate their fables.

Optional extension activity II: Have students work in groups to adapt their fables into skits and act them out for the class.

Literary models:

The Lion and the Mouse – Aesop

A lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the lion's nose. Woken from his nap, the lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor mouse. "Please let me go and someday I will surely repay you."

The lion was so amused at the idea of the little mouse being able to help the King of Beasts that he lifted up his paw and let her go.

Some weeks later, the lion was caught in a net. The hunters, who desired to carry the lion alive to their King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a wagon to carry him.

Just then the little mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the lion's sad plight, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes of the net, freeing the lion.

"You have helped me and now I have returned the favor. Was I not right - even a mouse can help a lion!" said the little mouse.

The Modern Lion and the Mouse

There was once a lion who was a famous movie star. All his movies brought in millions of dollars. He was always invited to go on talk shows, and he'd even written a book.

The lion was trying to get a nap one day in his trailer, when the new intern, a tiny mouse timidly knocked on the door. The lion snarled, "I said no autographs!" when he threw open the door, and the mouse nearly dropped the drink he was holding.

"Please sir, I don't want an autograph!" The mouse squeaked, "I'm your new assistant and brought you your latte."

The lion glared at the mouse, then reached down and snatched the coffee. He sniffed it and said gruffly, "Is this cinnamon? Never give me cinnamon on my lattes. Do you know what I did to the last guy who brought me a latte with cinnamon on it?"

The mouse was shaking so much his little knees were knocking. The lion saw how scared he was, and felt a little bad. He said, "Look, settle down. Just go and bring me a triple mocha with whipped cream and chocolate shavings and we'll be good."

A few days later, the lion was taking his cubs to school. Although he was wearing a baggy tracksuit, a baseball cap and dark glasses, a swarm of paparazzi had been waiting for him. The lion didn't want to answer all their embarrassing personal questions and didn't want them taking pictures of his cubs to sell to tabloid newspapers.

The lion was about to shove his cubs back into the car, when his little mouse assistant leaped out. "Sir, you go ahead and drive, I'll keep them busy," the mouse said.

With a combination of his public relations skills and his black belt in kung fu, the mouse kept the paparazzi from bothering the lion, so he and his cubs could drive away.

Later, the lion thanked the mouse and said, "Hey you know, you're a really good assistant. I'm going to call a couple of my friends and have them read that screenplay you wrote."

Moral: Even an intern can help a big shot.