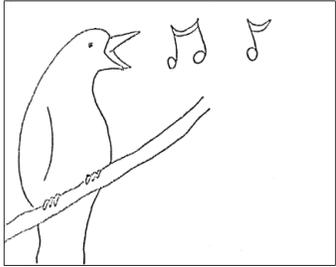


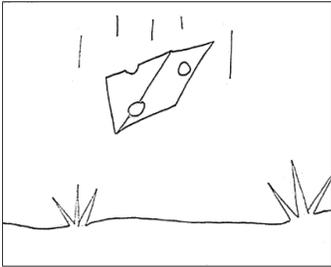
Fables

A fable is a story that uses animals, mythological creatures, or objects to illustrate a moral lesson. Some of the most famous fables were created by Aesop, a slave and storyteller who lived in ancient Greece. Aesop's fables have been translated all over the world and are still well known today.

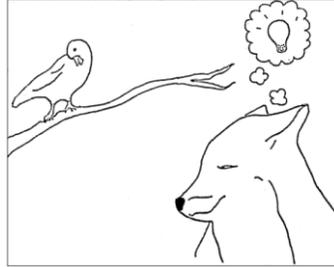
Look at the storyboard below, which shows pictures from the fable 'The Fox and the Crow'. The pictures have been jumbled up. Can you put them in the right order so that the story makes sense?



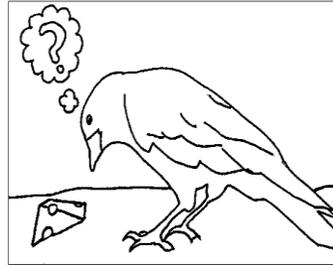
A) The fox tells the crow it has a lovely singing voice. The crow starts to sing.



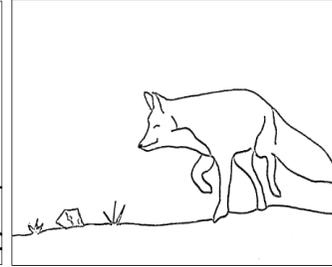
B) The crow drops the cheese and it falls to the ground.



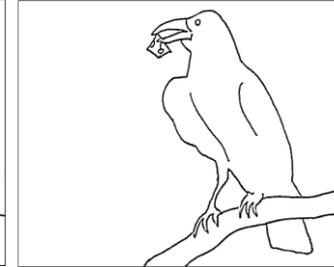
C) The fox has a cunning plan. He decides to trick the crow by flattering it.



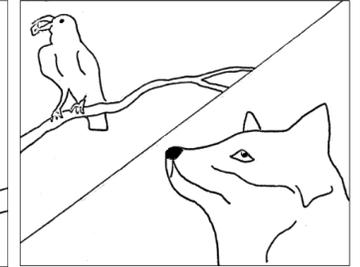
D) The crow finds a piece of cheese.



E) The fox takes the cheese.



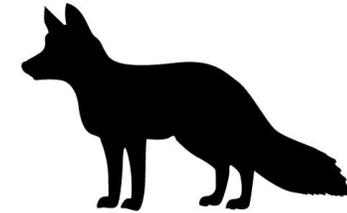
F) The crow takes the cheese to a branch to eat.



G) The fox sees the crow eating the cheese.

Which order do you think the pictures go in? Answers are on the bottom of the sheet.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



What, in your own words, do you think the moral of the story is?

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The Boy who cried Wolf

You have probably heard this one before. Perhaps you've even heard the expression 'to cry wolf', meaning 'to raise a false alarm' or 'to lie'.

In this fable, a shepherd boy who is looking after some sheep tricks the nearby villagers into thinking he is in danger by crying 'wolf!'. When the villagers come to rescue him they find that there is no wolf. This happens several times. One day a real wolf appears but when the boy cries 'wolf!' the villagers do not come, because they no longer believe the boy.

What is the moral?

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These are two more of the fables told by Aesop and translated many times and in many languages over centuries. You might have heard them before. What are the morals of each story?



The Tortoise and the Hare

This fable is so popular that it has given rise to the phrase 'slow and steady wins the race.'

In this fable, a hare is taunting a tortoise for being so slow, so the tortoise challenges the hare to a race. When they start the race, the hare speeds ahead but he is over-confident and stops to take a nap. While he sleeps, the tortoise passes him by, and the hare wakes to find that the tortoise has won the race.

What is the moral?

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Getting scientific...



Although 'The Boy who cried Wolf' warns us against lying, a study* has found that children who were told a version of the story in which the wolf eats the boy are actually *more* likely to lie after hearing it. This study found that only stories which highlight the positive value of honesty, rather than the negative consequences of lying, are effective in teaching children to tell the truth.

*Lee, K., Talwar, V., McCarthy, A., Ross, I., Evans, A., & Arruda, C. (2014). Can Classic Moral Stories Promote Honesty in Children? *Psychological Science*, 25(8), 1630–1636.

Can you think of any other fables you know already?

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Translating Fables

Fables have been translated between languages and cultures since ancient times. Some of the most famous fables we know today were written by the French writer, Jean de la Fontaine, in the seventeenth century. La Fontaine had a number of sources for his work, including Aesop.

But he did not just draw on European traditions when assembling his fables: he also adapted a collection of ancient Indian fables called *The Panchatantra* (पञ्चतन्त्र). *The Panchatantra* claims to illustrate a set of Hindu principles called 'nīti' (wise behaviour or thinking) to three ignorant princes.

Here is one fable that is included in *The Panchatantra*:

How a mouse freed an elephant

A herd of elephants accidentally tramples on the home of some mice. The mice beg the elephants to be more careful in the future, and avoid their home. The elephants agree. To thank them, the mice promise to return their kindness one day. The elephants laugh at this, believing the mice too small to be able to help an elephant.

But one day, the elephants were trapped by hunters in thick nets. They could not get free so they asked the mice for help. The mice chewed the nets holding the elephants and set them free. The mice and the elephants became firm friends.

This is a fable that exists in several cultures. In the Chinese version of the story, the mouse frees a tiger, rather than an elephant. In many European versions, the mouse frees a lion instead. Why do you think the bigger animal changes from one tradition to another?



Discuss with a partner the following questions...

- Is it possible to translate morals between different cultures?
- Is our understanding of what is good and what is bad the same in different countries?
- What is the point of using animals, rather than humans, to explain these stories?
- Do you think climate change will make these fables less effective? What if some animals become extinct – will someone in the year 3000 know that a hare is fast and a tortoise slow?

Write a fable to illustrate a moral of your choice on a postcard to an alien.


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Alien

Planet Mars

Milky way

The universe
