

Castell Coch Aesop's Fables Education Resource Pack

Key Stage 2
Reading & Oracy

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Castell Coch Aesop's Fables

Education Resource Pack

Introduction

The aim of this pack is to help teachers approach a visit to Castell Coch in a creative, confident and imaginative way, focusing on pupil literacy.

This resource includes simple and more complex versions of 15 Aesop's Fables, and some illustrations from Castell Coch's drawing room.

We encourage teachers to select and adapt the material to ensure it meets topic and year group needs.

The images accompanying this resource may be used for educational/learning purposes. You are free to print them for classroom display as required.

Curriculum Links – Literacy framework

Reading – responding to what has been read, comprehension, response and analysis

Oracy – developing and presenting information and ideas – speaking, listening, collaboration & discussion

Booking a visit

Did you know that self-led visits to Cadw sites are free to education groups attending education establishments in the European Union?

To book your free visit, please follow these simple steps:

- Please book your visit at least ten working days in advance.
- Telephone the site to check the availability for the date you'd like to visit.
- Once you have agreed a date and time with the site, complete the online booking form at cadw.wales.gov.uk

We also offer interactive, curriculum-linked education activities at Castell Coch, including an Aesop's Fables literacy activity.

Health and Safety

Teachers and group leaders are responsible for carrying out risk assessments prior to the visit, in accordance with guidance issued by local education authorities. We offer free teacher familiarisation visits to enable teachers to write the risk assessments and plan activities before bringing a group to the site. The learning pages on the Cadw website offer advice for planning your visit and site specific information.

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Introducing Fables

Fables are stories with moral messages, which have been used to teach people for thousands of years. They were especially important in the times before most people could read and write as they were passed down through the generations orally, and were a good way of starting discussions about how to behave, and what is right and wrong.

Aesop was a slave who lived in Greece in the time of King Croesus (560-547BC), and who spent some of his life at court in Athens. Descriptions of Aesop suggest that he was probably very dark skinned, may have been an ugly, deformed dwarf. It's been suggested that the name Aesop stems from the Greek word for Ethiopia – Aethiop.

Many of the fables which we call Aesop's Fables today, have since been found on Egyptian papyrus dating back to 800-1000 years before Aesop's time.

We do not know when the fables were first written down, or in which language, but we know that a Byzantine scholar called Maximus Planudes wrote them down in Greek some time between 1270 and 1330, and also wrote a biography of Aesop. Aesop's fables were first printed in English by William Caxton in 1484, from his own translation made from the French versions.

This resource includes simple fables, marked with a dark blue icon castle, and more complex versions, marked with a light green icon castle, of 15 Aesop's Fables, and some illustrations from Castell Coch's drawing room. They can be used to explore the fables in preparation for a visit, or used to find the fables on the walls during a visit, or used to develop literacy following a visit.



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Pre-visit activities

Read one or two fables to the children every day for a week. The fables are very short, so could be read more than once. Ask the children if there are any animals in the stories that they have not heard of. Research these animals so that the children know what they look like before visiting the castle.

Once children are familiar with the fables, let them read the printed versions, and practice them to develop confidence about reading them aloud to classmates in the castle.

The simple versions of the Fables in this pack do not include the morals of the stories. The more complex versions of the stories have morals and discussion points at the end of each story. You could choose to discuss the morals of the stories before, during or after the visit.

Activities during the visit

Take the learners to the castle's Drawing Room. Let them explore the room, and ask them what they can see on the walls and ceiling. Can they suggest what the theme of the room might be?

Year 3 & 4 Activity

Sit the whole group down together in the middle of the room.

Give the learners the title of story, and ask if they can find the animals in the story on the walls.

Read the story out to the group.

Ask the learners if they can work out what the moral of the story is.

Ask the learners to tell you if they think the behaviour of each character in the story was right or wrong.

You could also use some or all of the discussion points on the more complex versions to stimulate discussion.



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Year 5 & 6 Activity

Put the learners into pairs or groups of three, and give each pair or group of three a story sheet.

Ask the learners to find the animals in their story on the walls. When they have found their animals, ask them to think about words which are often used describe their animals. Discuss with the class whether humans 'stereotype' animals by attributing certain characteristics to them, e.g. sly fox, loyal dog, thieving weasel. Can the learners suggest any stereotypes for the animals illustrated on the Drawing Room walls?

Ask each pair or group to read their story, to think about the animal stereotypes, and to discuss the moral and discussion points in their pair or group.

Ask some pairs or groups to read their story out to the class, and summarise their views on the moral and discussion points. Do the rest of the learners agree with their views? Why do they think Aesop used animals in the stories, rather than people?

Optional - you could follow this with a discussion about stereotyping – do we stereotype other kinds of people, because of their gender, age, colour of their skin, their religion, or their clothing or language? Is stereotyping always negative?

Plenary discussion – are Aesop's Fables still as relevant today as they ever were?

Post-visit activities

Learners could research Aesop's Fables, using the internet, or by looking at books.

Learners could compare other fables, parables, and moral stories, to Aesop's Fables.

Pupils could discuss whether we need new moral stories for the modern world, to take account of new technologies?

Pupils could write their own story with a moral, and illustrate it.



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Castell Coch Aesop's Fables

The first 15 fables in this section are written in simple language, do not include the morals of the stories and are marked with a dark blue castle.

They are suitable for use with Year 3 & 4 pupils, and lower ability older readers, or for using in activities where pupils suggest morals for the stories themselves.

The second 15 fables in this section are the same fables written in more complex language, including the morals of the stories and are marked with a light green castle.

They are suitable for Year 5 & 6 pupils, and higher ability Year 4 learners, or for activities where pupils discuss the relevance of the morals in the modern world.

The images are illustrations of twelve of the fables, from Castell Coch's drawing room walls.



The rat and the frog

Once there was a rat who asked a frog to help her get across a river.

The frog said he would help, and told the rat to climb on his back.

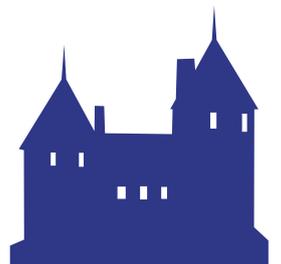
The frog tied his leg to the rat's leg with a piece of string, telling her that this was to stop her from being swept away if she fell off his back when they were crossing the river.

They set off across the river, but when they got to the middle of the river, the frog dived down to the bottom of the river, dragging the rat under the water and drowning her.

The frog started swimming to the riverbank, dragging the dead rat behind him. Before he reached the river bank, a hawk swooped down and snatched the rat out of the water.

The frog was still tied to the rat so he was carried into the air too.

When the hawk landed to eat the rat, he found the frog tied to the rat, and ate them both.



The rabbit, the weasel and the cat

Once upon a time, there was a rabbit, living in a nice cosy burrow under the ground. Each morning, he went out to find food in fields near his home.

One day, while the rabbit was out looking for food, a weasel went into the rabbit's burrow. The weasel had a good look around, and decided it would be a nice safe place to live. He started to settle himself in.

The rabbit came back, and tried to get into his burrow, but the weasel wouldn't let him in. The rabbit was angry and told the weasel to leave, saying that the burrow was his family home.

The weasel said that the burrow may have been the rabbit's home once, but that was his burrow now.

The rabbit and the weasel argued, and started to call each other names, and then they had a fight.

The rabbit was much bigger than the weasel, and could kick hard; but the weasel was much quicker than the rabbit, and had sharp teeth. As they fought, each animal began to realise that although they could hurt each other, neither of them could win the fight outright.

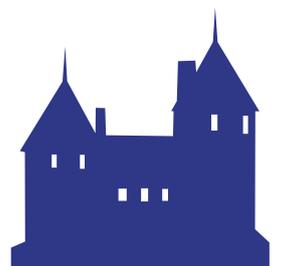


They got tired of fighting, and decided to ask somebody else to settle the argument about whose home the burrow should be.

They went to ask the wise cat to decide who was right. The rabbit and the weasel started talking at the same time, telling the cat what the problem was. The cat stopped them, and explained that if they both talked at once he couldn't listen to what either of them had to say.

The cat then told the rabbit and the weasel that she was rather deaf, and asked them both to move very close to her, so that she could hear them properly.

The rabbit and the weasel went right up to the cat, which promptly grabbed them, and killed them both.



The peacock and the magpie

Once there was a peacock who wanted to be king of all the birds.

He showed the other birds his fine feathers and all the colours in his fan tail.

The peacock was very good at talking, and he looked very pretty.

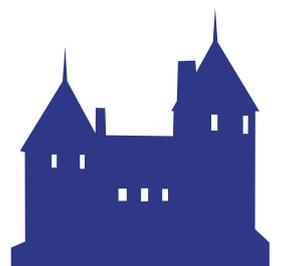
He told the other birds all about his big plans for the future, and they began to think that he would make a very good king.

The magpie thought that the peacock was not the best bird to be king.

The magpie spoke to the other birds, saying: “If we judge things by the way they look, the pretty peacock should be king. But, is he the best bird to keep us safe?”

The magpie asked the peacock: “What would you do to keep us safe if an eagle or cat comes to attack us?”

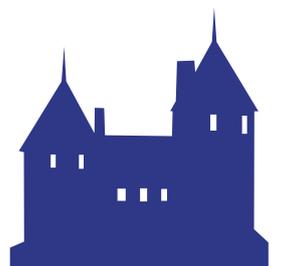
The peacock didn't know what to say. He didn't know how to keep the other birds safe.



The other birds started talking about whether the peacock was wise enough to be their king.

They talked about who would be the best bird to keep them safe, and which bird would be able to settle fights.

The birds decided the peacock wasn't the right bird to be king, and started looking and talking about all the birds to choose a bird would be a wiser, stronger, and better king.



The cats and the cheese

Once there were two cats, who were friends.

They often played with each other and had never had a fight.

One day, the cats found a large cheese.

They both liked cheese, and they decided to share it.

They couldn't agree on how to cut the cheese up fairly, as each cat wanted a bigger piece than the other.

The cats began to fight over the cheese instead of sharing it fairly.

A crafty monkey saw them fighting and said that he would share the cheese fairly for them.

The monkey cut the cheese in two, but he made sure one piece was bigger than the other.

The cats started to fight about which of them should have the biggest piece of cheese, so the monkey told them he would make the pieces the same size.

The monkey took the biggest piece of cheese, cut a small slice off it, and ate it.



The piece of cheese he had cut a piece from was now smaller than the other piece of cheese.

The cats started to fight about which of them should have the biggest piece of cheese, so the monkey told them he would make the pieces the same size.

The monkey cut a slice off the bigger piece of cheese, and ate it. This left one bigger and one smaller piece of cheese again.

The cats had another fight about who should have the biggest piece of cheese, and the monkey sliced more cheese off the largest piece.

Soon, there was only one small piece of cheese left.

Before the cats could fight about who should have the last piece of cheese, the monkey ate it.

When the cats started to complain about this, the monkey told them that it was his reward for all his hard work in sorting out their fight



The frogs who wanted a king

Once there were lots of frogs, who lived in a pond.

The frogs thought they needed a king, but didn't know where to get one.

The frogs prayed to God, asking for God to send a king to come and rule over them, and keep them safe.

God was a bit cross because he thought the frogs should have sorted their own king out.

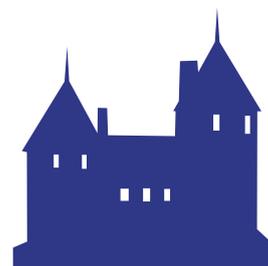
Instead of sending them a king, he made a large tree trunk fall from the sky into their pond.

“Let that be your king”, said God.

The tree trunk caused a large splash, and scared the frogs.

Once the frogs stopped being scared, they started hopping and playing on the tree trunk.

The frogs talked to the tree trunk, but it didn't answer, or move.



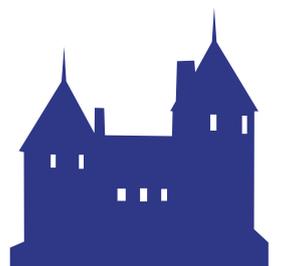
“This isn’t a king”, said the frogs, “Let’s ask God again, and make sure that he gives us a real king this time!”

While they were waiting for God to send them a new king, a stork – a large bird with long legs and a very big sharp beak - flew down to the pond.

The stork told the frogs that he was their new king, and that they all needed to come close to him so that he could tell them how he was going to rule over them and keep them safe.

The frogs hopped over to the stork, and sat around him in a circle.

Once they were all close enough, and sitting quietly, the stork snapped them all up with his big beak, and ate them.



The hare and the tortoise

Once there was a hare.

The hare was boasting to the other animals about how fast he could run.

“I have never won every race I have run in,” he said, “Is any animal here fast enough to race with me?”

The tortoise, who had been listening to the hare’s boasts carefully, said “I will race you”

All the animals laughed, and the hare said,

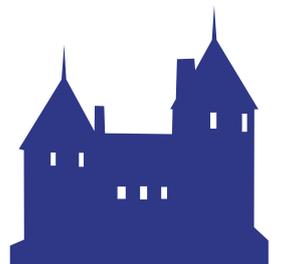
“That is a very good joke. I could dance around you all the way.”

“Don’t boast until you win,” said the tortoise, “Shall we race?”

The hare and the tortoise started the race.

The hare ran off as fast as he could, and was soon so far ahead of the tortoise that he thought he had time for a little rest.

It was a hot sunny day, and the hare lay down in the shade under a tree.



The hare had tired himself out with his fast running, and soon fell asleep.

Some while later, the tortoise quietly and slowly walked past him.

The hare had a dream that he had won the race, and he could hear clapping and cheers.

The hare woke up, and found that he really could hear clapping and cheers.

He ran towards the finish line, as quickly as he could.

When the hare got to the end of the race, he found that the tortoise had got there before him, and won the race.



The peacock and the crane

Once there was a peacock, who thought he was very good looking.

He often spent time looking at himself and thinking about how good he looked.

He was always showing off his big fancy tail feathers, to all the other birds.

One of the other birds, a crane, didn't think she was pretty.

The crane had straggly, scruffy, grey feathers.

The peacock boasted to the crane about his fine feathers, and made fun of how she looked.

He said, "Look at me; I am dressed like a king, in gold and purple and all the colours of the rainbow. You just look grey and scruffy."

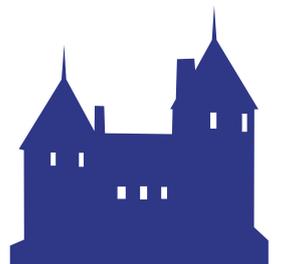
The crane was very hurt and sad.

She tried to make herself feel better by thinking about what she could do better than the peacock.



She knew that the peacock's pretty tail feathers were very heavy, and that he could not fly very well, or fly very far.

The crane said to the peacock, "My feathers are not as pretty as yours, but I can fly very high in the sky and sing to the stars. I can see the whole world from there, while you can only see what's near you while you walk on the ground below."



The dog and his reflection

Once upon a time, there was a greedy dog, which had been given a big, juicy bone.

He was carrying the bone home in his mouth.

The path the dog was walking on went over a small bridge over a river.

As he walked over the bridge, the dog looked down into the water, and saw another dog with a big juicy bone in his mouth.

The dog wanted the other dog's bone as well as his own.

He barked at the other dog, but when he did this, the bone fell out of his mouth.

He jumped into the water to steal the other dog's bone, only to be swept away by the fast water in the river.

The dog was scared that he might drown.

The dog managed to climb out onto the river bank, a long way down the river.



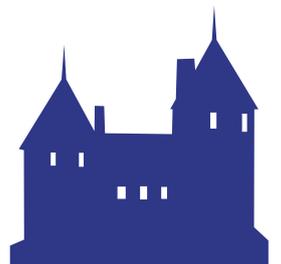
He stood there, dripping wet and very cold.

He knew that he had been stupid.

He had nearly died, had a much longer walk home, and had lost his bone.

The dog thought about it and knew that his actions had been too hasty.

He should have stopped to think about what he had seen and what to do instead of just jumping in without thinking.



The man and the nightingale

One summer's night, a man lay listening to a nightingale's beautiful song.

The man loved the song so much that he made up his mind to catch the nightingale and keep it, so that he could hear it singing every night.

The man made a cage and took it near to the tree.

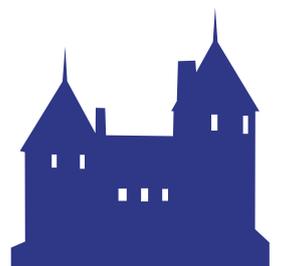
He threw some grains of rice on the ground and waited for the bird to come.

The nightingale saw the rice grains and flew down to eat them.

The man caught her and put her in the cage.

The man waited for many days for the nightingale to sing but she just sat on the floor of the cage, looking sad.

One day, the man got angry and asked the nightingale why she was not singing.



The nightingale said, “Nightingales in cages never sing. Let me go, and I will sing for you”.

“If you won’t sing for me, I’ll eat you.” said the man; “people have told me that a nightingale on toast is a lovely dinner:”

“Oh, please don’t kill me,” said the nightingale; “if you let me go, I’ll tell you three things which will be worth more to you than my poor body.”

The man wanted to know what the three things were, so he let the nightingale go.

The nightingale flew to the top of the tree, where he couldn’t catch her, and said,

“Silly man, here are the three things I promised to tell you:

“First, never trust anything a bird in a cage says.

Second, never let go of what you have.

Third, never cry over something that you have lost”,

The nightingale flew away, never to be seen again.



The fox and the stork

Once there was a fox who liked to play tricks on other animals and birds.

The fox was friends with a shy stork.

One day, the fox caught a chicken and made a lovely chicken stew.

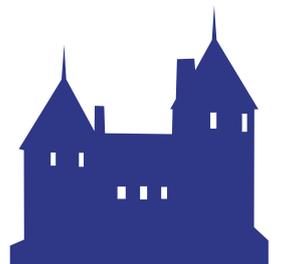
The stork called at the fox's home and smelt the stew cooking.

“Wow, that smells very good,” said the stork, as she stood at the kitchen door.

The fox was very, very hungry, and his stew was just ready to eat.

He knew he should really share the stew with his friend, but he wanted it all for himself.

The fox was sneaky, and he thought of a way of making it look as if he was sharing the stew, but really keeping it for himself.



He asked the stork to stay for tea, but he put the stew on a flat plate.

The fox knew that the stork would not be able to eat the stew from a plate, as her beak was long and pointy, and her tongue wasn't long enough to stick out of her beak lap the stew up.

The fox ate all his stew, and said how lovely it tasted.

The stork was very hungry and very sad, because she couldn't eat the stew.

The stork went home, and the fox ate all the stew from the stork's plate.

Two weeks later, the stork asked the fox to come for tea.

When he arrived, he told her the food she was cooking smelt lovely.

In fact, it smelt so good that his mouth began to water.

The stork told him that she had caught a big fish, and made a lovely stew.



The stork served her fish stew in tall jars.

The stork's beak went deep into her vase, and she ate all her stew easily.

The poor fox couldn't get his head into the vase and his tongue wasn't long enough to reach the stew.

He wasn't able to eat anything at all, and he went home hungry.



The cockerel and the jewel

Once there was a cockerel, which lived on a farm with other chickens.

He was a very proud and bossy cockerel, who thought he was the king of the farmyard.

One day, the farmer came and told all the chickens that he had no more corn.

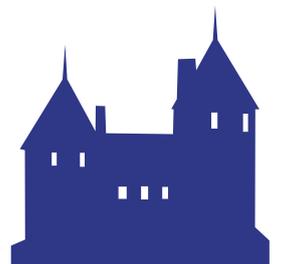
The farmer told them he had no money to buy more corn, and they would have to look after themselves and find their own food from now on.

The chickens all left the farm, and went into the fields looking for food.

They looked everywhere, but they could not find any food to eat.

They were getting very tired, and hungry, when the proud cockerel thought he saw a shiny grain of corn in the grass.

He made up his mind to pick it up before any of the other chicken saw it, so that he didn't have to share it.



He ran towards the grain of corn, but as he got close he could see that it was not a grain of corn at all, but a sparkly jewel.

“Oh”, said the cockerel, “I am sure that the person lost this jewel wants it back, but I am so hungry that all I want is food, and this is of no use to me.”

And he threw the jewel back into the long grass, never to be seen again.



The fox and the crow

Once there was a crow, who had found a piece of cheese, and who had flown high into a tree to eat it.

A fox was walking in the woods, looking for food.

The fox saw the crow and the cheese, and decided he wanted the cheese for himself.

The fox thought of a crafty plan to get the cheese from the crow.

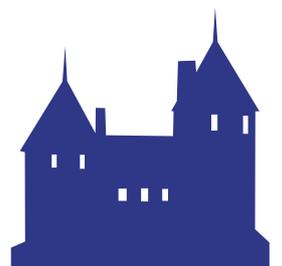
He looked up at the crow, and said,

“Oh, crow, how very pretty you are. Your feathers are black and very shiny. Your eyes are bright, and your beak is lovely.”

The crow thought she was the prettiest bird in the woods, and she loved it when people said nice things about her.

The fox could see that she had liked hearing the nice things that he had said.

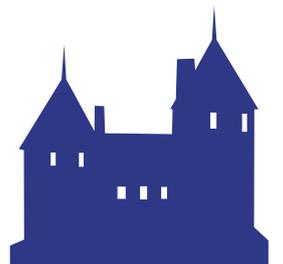
He asked “oh, lovely crow, a bird as pretty as you must have a good singing voice. Would you sing for me, please?”



The crow was so pleased at his nice words that she opened her beak to sing, and the cheese fell out of her beak to the ground below.

The fox gobbled up the cheese, and went on his way, with a grin.

The hungry crow watched him go, and knew that she had been fooled.



The quack frog

Once there was a poor frog, living in a marshy bog.

He made up his mind to make himself rich by making and selling a 'miracle medicine'.

The frog filled little bottles up with slimy bog water, and then he left his home in the marsh to sell his new 'medicine' to all the animals and birds.

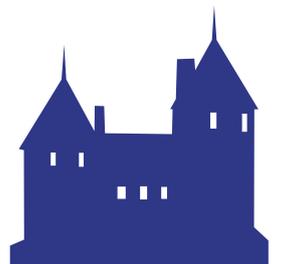
The frog told the other birds and animals that he was a very good doctor who could cure all illnesses with the medicine.

He told them his special medicine worked very quickly, tasted lovely, and would make any illness go away.

The animals and birds were all excited, and ready to buy some of this miracle cure. They went and got their money, and started to make a line in front of the frog.

The clever fox had heard what the frog had told the animals, and thought the frog was lying.

The fox shouted to the frog, so all the animals and birds could hear, "If you really are a doctor, and this really is miracle medicine, why haven't you used it to cure your own lame legs and spotty wrinkled skin?"



The frog was taken by surprise. He didn't know what to say at first.

By the time he started to say that his blotchy skin helped him hide in the pond reeds, and his lame legs were great for jumping, the other animals and birds had started thinking about what the fox's had said.

The animals and birds knew they had been too quick to believe the frog's good sales talk, and they all walked away without buying the medicine.



The owl and the birds

Once there was a very wise old owl.

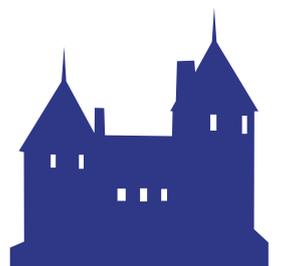
She knew she was going to die soon, so she called the rest of the birds to come to her.

When the birds were all around her, she told them three things:

The first thing the owl told them was that if they saw an acorn which had started to grow, they must pull it out of the ground.

She told them that when acorns grew into oak trees, mistletoe would start to grow on them. She told the birds that men would use the mistletoe berries to make a glue to spread on the branches of all the trees in the forest. Any bird that landed on the glue would be stuck, and caught and eaten by the men.

The second thing the owl told them was to follow the farmer and eat all the flax seeds he planted.



She told them that if they left the flax seeds to grow, the farmer would make linen from the flax plants, and weave the linen into fine nets, which would be used to catch the birds.

The third thing the owl told the birds was to pick up any feathers which fell from their bodies.

She explained that archers would come and collect the feathers, and use them to make flights for arrows, which would be used to shoot birds out of the sky.

The other birds thought that the owl was being silly, and told themselves that oak trees, flax seeds and feathers could not hurt them.

The owl, who felt sad that the other birds did not believe her, never gave advice again.

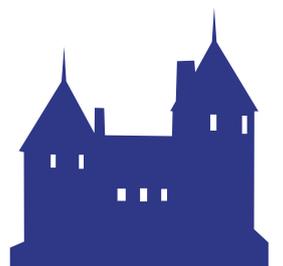
The oak trees grew and mistletoe grew on them. Men made glue from the mistletoe berries, and put it on the trees. Birds were caught and taken to a nearby castle for people to eat.

Other birds were caught in fine nets, which the farmer had woven and strung between the trees. The farmer took them back to the farm and ate them for dinner.



Finally, some bigger birds were killed by the archer, using his bow and arrows. He took them off to roast and share with the other soldiers.

The birds which were not caught or killed looked at the owl with new respect, and said she was the wisest of birds.



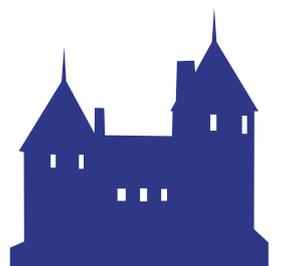
The pomegranate, apple tree, and bramble

The pomegranate tree and the apple tree had been arguing for months and months.

The pomegranate tree said it was the prettiest, and the apple tree disagreed, saying it was the prettiest.

All the other plants, birds and animals were getting very fed up of hearing them fighting.

One day, when they were fighting about it again, a bramble growing near them, tried to stop the fight by telling them not to argue about which of them was prettiest, as he was prettier than both of them.



The rat and the frog

Once there was a hungry country rat, which was travelling to town to see if she could make a better life for herself.

She came to a deep, wide, fast moving river, and didn't think she had the strength to swim across it.

She saw a frog sitting on the riverbank nearby. She knew that frogs were really good swimmers, who spend lots of time in water, and she decided to ask him for help.

The frog seemed friendly when she asked for his help, telling her to climb onto his back.

Once she was on his back, he tied her leg to his leg with a piece of string. The frog told the rat that the string would stop her from being swept away if she fell off his back when they were crossing the river.

They set off across the river, the frog swimming along strongly.

When they got to the middle of the river, the frog suddenly dived right down to the bottom of the river, dragging the rat under the water and drowning her.



The frog swam to the riverbank to untie himself from the rat, but before he could do so, a hawk flew down and snatched the rat up and flew off with it. The frog was still tied to the rat so was carried into the air too.

When the hawk landed to eat the rat, he found he had a frog as well as a rat, and ate them both.

What is the moral of the story?

People who do harm to others often destroy themselves when doing so.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

What do you think of the frog's behaviour?

The animals in most versions of this fable are a frog, mouse and kite. Lord Bute chose to have a frog, rat and hawk painted on Castell Coch's drawing room wall. Do you think it makes a difference to the story whether the creature which gets drowned is a mouse or a rat? Why?

A kite is a carrion bird – a bird that eats dead creatures – but hawks eat live creatures. Does the kind of bird make any difference to the fable?



The rabbit, the weasel and the cat

Once upon a time, there was a rabbit, living in a nice cosy burrow under the ground. Each morning, he went out to find food in fields near his home.

One day, while the rabbit was out looking for food, a weasel went into the rabbit's burrow. The weasel had a good look around, and decided it would be a nice safe place to live. He started to settle himself in.

The rabbit came back, and tried to get into his burrow, but the weasel wouldn't let him in. The rabbit was angry and told the weasel to leave, saying that the burrow was his family home.

The weasel said that the burrow may have been the rabbit's home once, but that was his burrow now.

The rabbit and the weasel argued, and started to call each other names, and then they had a fight.

The rabbit was much bigger than the weasel, and could kick hard; but the weasel was much quicker than the rabbit, and had sharp teeth. As they fought, each animal began to realise that although they could hurt each other, neither of them could win the fight outright.



They got tired of fighting, and decided to ask somebody else to settle the argument about whose home the burrow should be.

They went to ask the wise cat to decide who was right. The rabbit and the weasel started talking at the same time, telling the cat what the problem was. The cat stopped them, and explained that if they both talked at once he couldn't listen to what either of them had to say.

The cat then told the rabbit and the weasel that she was rather deaf, and asked them both to move very close to her, so that she could hear them properly.

The rabbit and the weasel went right up to the cat, which promptly grabbed them, and killed them both.

What is the moral of the story?

The strong are apt to settle questions to their own advantage.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today? How would you have settled the argument between the rabbit and the weasel.



The peacock and the magpie

Once upon a time there was a peacock who wanted to be the ruler of all the birds. He impressed the other birds with his fine feathers and all the wonderful colours in his fan tail.

The peacock told the other birds all about his plans for the future, and as he was talking, they were starting to agree that he would make a very good king.

However, the magpie didn't think the peacock was the best bird to be king, and spoke up, saying: "If we judge things by the way they look, the peacock should definitely be king, with all his finery. However, I'd like to ask the peacock what he would do if an eagle or cat attacked us?"

The peacock was completely speechless; he had no idea how to answer the magpie's question.

The other birds started discussing whether the peacock was wise enough to be king, or the best bird to defend them in an attack, and whether he had the other skills needed by a good king.

Finally, the birds decided the peacock wasn't the right bird to be king, and decided to start looking afresh for a bird who would be a wiser, stronger, and more worthy king.

Aesop's Fables



What is the moral of the story?

Judge people by their actions, not their appearance.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

What qualities and skills do you think are needed to be a good king?

Would a king of the birds need different skills and qualities to a king of people?

How does somebody demonstrate that they have these qualities and skills?

What is the best way of deciding who should be king?



The cats and the cheese

Should the king's son always become the next king?

Once upon a time there were two cats, who were friends. They often played together and usually got along very well.

One day, they found a large cheese. They both liked cheese, and they decided to share it.

They couldn't agree on how to divide the cheese, as each wanted a larger share than the other. They began to fight over the cheese instead of sharing it fairly.

A crafty monkey came along and offered to settle things by sharing the cheese between the cats. The monkey cut the cheese in two, but he made sure one piece was bigger than the other.

The cats started to argue over which of them should have the biggest piece, so the monkey told them he would make the pieces the same size.

The monkey took the biggest piece of cheese, cut a small slice off it, and ate it. The piece of cheese he had trimmed was left smaller than the other piece. The cats then began arguing about which of them should have the biggest piece of cheese.



The monkey cut a slice off the bigger piece of cheese, and ate it. This left the pieces unequal again. The cats carried on arguing, and the monkey carried on slicing bits of cheese off and eating them, until there was only one small piece of cheese left.

Before the cats could argue about who should have the last piece of cheese, the monkey ate it, saying that this was his payment for all his hard work in sorting out their problem.

What is the moral of the story?

When you quarrel, someone else gains.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

What do you think of the monkey's behaviour?

Would you let the monkey settle a disagreement between you and a friend? Give reasons for your answer.

How would you have settled the argument between the two cats?



The frogs who wanted a king

Once upon a time there were lots of frogs, who lived in a pool.

They thought their life was boring, so they prayed to God, asking for God to send a king to come and rule over them, and make their lives more interesting.

God was annoyed at being disturbed by something so trivial, and he made a large tree trunk fall from the sky into their pool.

“Let that be your King”, said God.

The tree caused a large splash, and frightened the frogs. Once they realised it wasn't going to move, they started hopping and playing on it. They talked to it, but it didn't answer, or move.

“This isn't a King”, said the frogs, “We've been fooled! Let's ask God again, and make sure that he gives us a real King this time!”

While they were waiting for God to answer, a stork – a large bird with a very big sharp beak - flew down to the pool. He told them that he was their new King, and that



they all needed to gather around him so that he could tell them how he was going to make their lives more exciting...

The frogs hopped over the stork, one by one, and gathered around him in a circle. Once the frogs were settled, the stork snapped them up with his big beak, and ate them all.

What is the moral of the story?

Be careful what you wish for.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

What qualities and skills do you think are needed to be a good king?

Would a king of the frogs need different skills and qualities to a king of people?

How does somebody demonstrate that they have these qualities and skills?

What is the best way of deciding who should be king?

Should the king's son always become the next king?



The hare and the tortoise

Once upon a time there was a hare. The hare was boasting to the other animals about how fast he could run.

“I have never yet been beaten in a race,” he said, “I challenge any animal here to race with me.”

The tortoise, who had been listening carefully, said “I accept your challenge”

All the animals laughed, and the hare said,

“That is a very good joke. I could dance around you all the way.”

The hare ran round the tortoise a few times, showing how fast he could run.

“Don’t boast until you win,” said the tortoise, “Shall we race?”

The hare and the tortoise decided on a course, and a finish line, and started the race.

The hare set off like the wind, and was soon so far ahead that he decided he could afford to take a rest. It was a hot day, and the hare lay down in the shade under a tree, and soon fell asleep.



Some while later, the tortoise quietly plodded past him.

The hare dreamt he was winning the race, and he could hear cheering and applause.

Suddenly, he woke up and realised that what he could hear was real, not a dream.

He raced towards the finish line, only to find that the tortoise had reached it before him, and won the race.

What's the moral of the story?

Slow and steady can win the race.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

How do you feel about people who boast a lot, and can do things quickly, but may not do them properly?

How do you feel about people who work steadily and slowly, until they finish what they started?

Do we need both kinds of people?



The peacock and the crane

Once upon a time there was a peacock, which was very fond of his own appearance, and thought he was very handsome.

He often spent time looking at his own reflection in the ponds in the woods.

He was the proudest of birds, and was always showing off his fine, beautifully coloured, tail feathers, to the other birds.

One of the other birds, a crane, didn't think she was beautiful at all, and was ashamed of her straggly, scruffy, grey feathers.

The peacock boasted to the crane about his fine feathers, and made fun of her appearance.

He said, "Look at my fine plumage, I am dressed like a king, in gold and purple and all the colours of the rainbow; while you have not a bit of colour on your wings"

The crane was very hurt and tried to think of something she could do better than the peacock. She knew he couldn't fly far or well – all those beautiful feathers weighed him down.

She replied to the peacock's cruel comments by saying, "I may not have such fine feathers as you, but can I soar to the heights of heaven and lift up my voice to



the stars, while you walk below, like a cock, among the birds of the dunghill.”

What is the moral of the story?

Judge people by their actions, not their appearances.

Fine feathers don't make fine birds.

Discussion points

What do you think about the moral? Is it still relevant today?

How do you feel about people who show off?

Do you judge people by their appearance?

Do you judge people by what they do?

Once upon a time, there was a greedy dog, which had been given a big, juicy bone.



The dog and his reflection

He was walking home with the bone in his mouth, when the path he was taking went over a small bridge over a river. As he walked over the bridge, he looked down into the water, and saw a dog with a big juicy bone.

He wanted the other dog's bone as well as his own, so he decided to steal it.

He barked at the other dog, dropping his bone when he opened his mouth. He jumped at the other dog to snatch his bone, only to find himself swimming for dear life in the fast current of the river.

Finally, he managed to clamber out onto the river bank. He stood there, sadly thinking about the good bone he had lost. He realized that he had been stupid, and had acted too quickly, chasing his own reflection, instead of stopping to think about what he had seen.

His own impulsiveness and greediness had caused him to lose the bone.

What is the moral of the story?

Think before you act.

Too much greed results in nothing.

Aesop's Fables



The labourer and the nightingale

One summer's night, a labourer lay listening to a nightingale's beautiful song. He loved the song so much that he decided to catch the nightingale and keep it, so that he could hear it singing every night.

He made a cage and took it near to the tree. He threw some grains of rice on the ground and waited for the bird to come. The nightingale saw the grains and flew down to eat. The labourer pounced on her and put her in the cage.

But, the nightingale never sang. He waited for many days for her to sing but she refused.

One day, he got angry and asked the nightingale why she was not singing.

The nightingale replied,

“Caged nightingales never sing. Let me go, and I will sing for you”.

“If you won't sing for me, I'll eat you.” said the labourer; “people have told me that a nightingale on toast is a dainty morsel.”



“Oh, please don’t kill me,” said the nightingale; “if you let me go, I’ll give you three pieces of advice which will be worth more to you than my poor body.”

The man was curious, so he freed her.

The nightingale flew to the top of the tree, where he couldn’t catch her, and said,

“Foolish man, here is the advice that I promised you:

“Firstly, never trust a bird in the cage.

Secondly, never let go of what you have.

Thirdly, never cry over something that you have lost”,

With that, the nightingale flew away.

What is the moral of the story?

Do not believe the promise of a prisoner.



The fox and the stork

Once upon a time there was a fox who liked to play tricks on other animals and birds. He was friends with a shy stork.

One day, the fox caught a chicken and made a lovely chicken stew.

The stork called at the fox's home and smelt the stew cooking.

“What a delicious smell,” she said. “What are you cooking?”
“I'm making chicken stew,” said the fox. “Well it smells very good,” said the stork, as she stood at the kitchen door.

The fox was very, very hungry, and his stew was just ready to eat. He did not want to share it with the stork but he felt that it was expected of him to give the stork some, so he thought of an unkind idea.

He invited the stork to stay for tea, but served the stew on a flat plate, from which the stork found it difficult to eat while the fox soon lapped up most of the food, and said how lovely it tasted. The stork was very hungry and very disappointed.

A week or two later, the stork invited the fox for a meal.



When he arrived, she told him that she had caught a big fish, and made a delicious stew.

The stork served her fish stew in a tall, elegant, vase.

The stork's beak went deep into the vase, and she was able to eat her stew with ease, but the poor fox couldn't get his head into the vase and his tongue wasn't long enough to reach the stew. He wasn't able to eat anything at all, and he went home hungry.

What is the moral of this story?

We should treat others as we would like to be treated.



The cockerel and the jewel

Once upon a time there was a cockerel, which lived on a farm with other hens and cockerels. He was a very proud and bossy cockerel, who often puffed up his chest feathers as he strutted around the farmyard.

One day, the farmer came and told all the chickens that all the corn had run out, and he didn't have any money to buy more. He told them he couldn't look after them any more, and they would have to go and find their own food from now on.

The chickens all left the farmyard, and went into the fields looking for food. They hunted high and low, but they didn't find so much as an ear of corn, or anything else they could eat.

They were getting very tired, and hungry, when the proud cockerel thought he saw a shiny grain of corn in the grass. He rushed to pick it up before anybody else saw it, but when he got close enough to see it properly, he realised that it was not a grain of corn at all, but a precious jewel.



“Oh”, said the cockerel, “I am sure that whoever lost this jewel would give a great deal to get it back. But as for me, I would choose a single grain of barleycorn before all the jewels in the world.”

And with that, he threw the jewel back into the long grass, never to be seen again.

What is the moral of this story?

Precious things are without value to those who cannot prize them.



The fox and the crow

Once upon a time, there was a crow, who had found a piece of cheese, and who had settled on a high branch to eat it.

A passing fox saw the crow and the cheese, and decided he wanted the cheese for himself. He realised that the crow and cheese were too high for him to steal it, so he thought of a crafty plan to get the cheese from the crow.

He looked up at the crow, and said,

“Oh, crow, how beautiful you are, with your glossy black feathers, bright eyes, and big black beak.”

The crow was very vain, and she loved it when people said nice things about her. She looked at the fox, who said,

“Is your singing voice as beautiful as the rest of you? Please sing to me!”

The crow was so flattered that she opening her beak to sing, and as she let out a caw, the cheese dropped from her beak to the ground below.

The fox gobbled up the cheese, and went on his way, leaving the crow hungry and feeling foolish.



What is the moral of the story?

Do not trust flatterers.



The quack frog

Once upon a time there was a frog, living in a marshy bog. He decided to make his fortune by making and selling a 'miracle cure'.

The frog filled little bottles up with slimy bog water, and then he left his home in the marsh to sell his new 'medicine' to all the animals and birds. He gathered all the animals and birds together, and told them that he was a very experienced physician (doctor), skilled in making medicine and able to cure all diseases.

The animals and birds were all excited, and ready to buy some of this miracle cure.

Among the crowd was a Fox, who called out, "You call yourself a doctor! Why, how can you set up to heal others when you cannot even cure your own lame legs and blotchy wrinkled skin?"

Despite the frog's protests about his blotchy skin being good for camouflage, and his legs being fantastic for jumping, the Fox's comments had made the other animals think again about buying his miracle cure, and they had all walked away.



What's the moral of the story?

If you try to cheat others, you'll be found out.

Physician, heal thyself.



The owl and the birds

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, there was a wise old owl. She gathered the rest of the birds together, and shared her wisdom with them in three pieces of advice:

Firstly, she told them to pull out of the ground, any acorns which had begun to sprout.

She explained that if they left the acorns to grow into oak trees, mistletoe would grow on the trees, and men would use them mistletoe to make quicklime to spread on the branches of other trees, which would make any bird that landed on it stick fast, and be captured.

Secondly, she told them to follow the farmer and eat all the flax seeds he planted.

She explained that if they left the seeds to grow, the farmer would make linen from the flax plants, and weave the linen into fine nets, which would be used to catch the birds.

Thirdly, she told them to pick up any feathers which fell during moulting, or at any other time.



She explained that archers would come and collect the feathers, and use them to make flights for arrows, which would be used to shoot birds out of the sky.

The birds thought that the owl suggested was being ridiculous, and that oak trees, flax seeds and feathers could not possibly be dangerous.

As time passed, and the oak trees grew and mistletoe grew upon them, some of the birds became stuck to branches which had been covered in quicklime, and were taken to a nearby castle for people to eat.

Other birds were caught in fine nets, which the farmer had woven and strung between the trees. The farmer took them back to the farm and ate them for dinner.

Finally, some bigger birds were killed by the archer, using his bow and arrows. He took them off to roast and share with the other soldiers.

The birds which survived looked at the owl with new respect, and said she was the wisest of birds. The owl, feeling that she had wasted her time by giving warnings which were ignored, never gave advice again.



What is the moral of the story?

Those who can see the consequences of actions a long way into the future, are often ridiculed.

Discussion points

Should younger people listen to the advice given by older people who have lived for a long time?

How do you feel if you've warned somebody about something and they ignore your warning?



The pomegranate, apple tree, and bramble

The pomegranate tree and the apple tree had been arguing for months and months.

The pomegranate tree said it was the prettiest and best tree, and the apple tree disagreed, saying it was the prettiest and best tree.

All the other plants, birds and animals were getting very fed up. They heard the same arguments every day.

One day, when they were fighting about it again, a common bramble growing near them, tried to stop the fight by telling them not to argue about which of them was prettiest, as he was prettier and better than both of them.

What is the moral of the story?

Unlike other Aesop's Fables, the moral of this story is not published with the fable.

It could be about the silliness of arguing over something so trivial, or it could be about a 'common' voice being as important as more respected voices.



Lord Bute was a very religious Christian man, and it's possible that this story is on the drawing room walls for that reason, as the pomegranate, apple and bramble are all symbols used in Christian imagery and writing.

The pomegranate tree is mentioned in the bible many times. The fruit, broken or bursting open, is a symbol of the fullness of Jesus' suffering and resurrection, and the fruit appears in many Christian paintings.

The apple is the fruit which Adam and Eve were forbidden from eating in the garden of Eden. Golden apples appear in many eastern European fairy tales, often stolen by birds.

The bramble is one of the oldest known food plants, and was mentioned in books older than the bible. It has long been thought of as a holy plant, which can keep evil spirits away. In Christianity the bramble symbolises the purity of the Virgin Mary, and some scholars think the burning bush seen by Moses was a bramble.

There is an ancient Greek story about the bramble being made king of all the plants after the olive tree, the fig tree, and the grapevine had all refused to become king. Perhaps this story is a newer version of that story, who knows?





The rat and the frog



The rabbit, the weasel and the cat



The peacock and the magpie



The cats and the cheese



The hare and the tortoise



The peacock and the crane



The dog and his reflection



The fox and the stork



The cockerel and the jewel



The fox and the crow



The owl and the birds



The quack frog



Pomegranate, apple tree and bramble