

Eckerd Theater Company

presents

Aesop's Fables

Adapted by Julia Flood

**Expanding
the
Classroom**

*Aesop's
Fables*

**Adapted by
Julia Flood**



RUTH ECKERD HALL
RICHARD B. BAUMGARDNER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

About the Show

Aesop's Fables

For centuries, the wit and wisdom of Aesop's fables have been passed down from one generation to the next. In a lively storytelling style that invites interactive participation, *Aesop's Fables* will bring to life familiar favorites like *The Lion and the Mouse* and *The Hare and the Tortoise* along with tales not so familiar. A perfect introduction to Aesop and to the theater!

Eckerd Theater Company

Eckerd Theater Company (ETC) is a touring company of professional artists, educators and administrators under the umbrella of The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute, the education center for Ruth Eckerd Hall at the Richard B. Baumgardner Center for the Performing Arts in Clearwater, FL. ETC seeks to provide the finest in performance and arts education experiences to family audiences of all ages. Since its inception in 1988, Eckerd Theater Company has performed for more than one million young people and their families throughout the state of Florida and in venues as far north as Canada and as far west as the Mississippi River.

From eight local performances of its first production in 1988 through 125 performances in the 2010-2011 season, ETC has been a proud ambassador of Ruth Eckerd Hall, creating professional productions of original works, adaptations of classic literature, and the finest published scripts for the theater. ETC productions entertain while they explore such themes as diversity, multiculturalism, self-worth, loyalty and tolerance.

ETC began touring the state of Florida in 1991. National touring began in 1993. Since 1996, the Company has been on the Florida Arts on Tour roster, a state program providing funds to allow productions to travel to remote and underserved parts of the state.

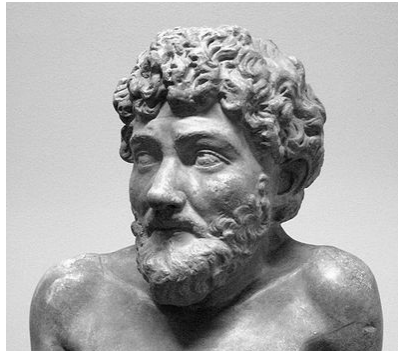
In 1998, Julia Flood took the reins as ETC Artistic Director. In 1999, a State of Florida Challenge Grant provided funds for The Florida Project, a collaborative process bringing national and Florida theater artists and educators together to develop a new theater-for-young-audiences piece about the South. ETC has been featured in showcases at both the Southern Arts Exchange (now Performing Arts Exchange), and at annual IPAY conferences (International Performing Arts for Youth).

Since February 2003, Eckerd Theater Company has made its home in the 182-seat Murray Studio Theater in The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute.

Background Information

The Life of Aesop

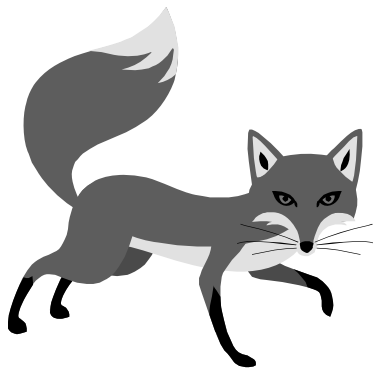
Although he was not the first to create fables, Aesop is generally thought of as the most famous fable teller. The earliest known Greek fable is the story of *The Hawk and the Nightingale* by Hesiod, told at least three hundred years before Aesop's time.



Much **speculation** surrounds the life of Aesop, but most scholars agree that he was born a slave in Greece around 620 B.C. He was owned by two masters, Xanthus and Ladmon. The brilliance of Aesop's mind made him famous. Although Aesop was a slave, Ladmon granted him his freedom, after which Aesop became an advocate for a wealthy Samian.



Once Aesop was free, he began to travel around the ancient republic of Greece. Plutarch claimed Aesop associated with many **philosophers** of his time. King Croesus of Lydia was impressed by Aesop's brilliance and sent him on diplomatic missions, including to Delphi, where Aesop was killed in 564 B.C. Some reports assert that he insulted the Delphians, who sentenced him to death on a false charge and threw him off a cliff. It is said that Delphi experienced **pestilence** and famine after killing Aesop.



After Aesop's death, his stories were passed down **orally** through many generations until they were written down, first around 350-280 B.C. (now lost) and in later versions in both Greek and Latin. They are still popular today.

Information courtesy of: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop>, www.aesopos.com, www.longlongtimeago.com/Itta_fables_lafontaine.html, ...panchatantra.html, www.musee-jean-de-la-fontaine.fr/jean-de-la-fontaine-fable-uk-218.html, www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/MarianneMoore.htm

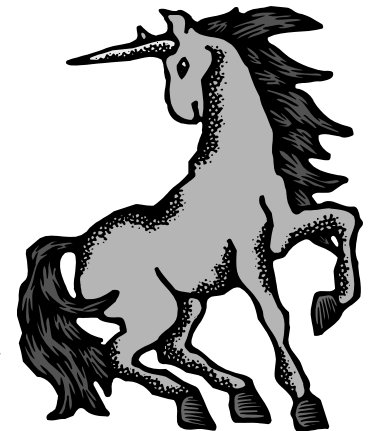
What is a Fable?

Literature and stories come in different forms such as **myths, tales, legends** and **fables**. Aesop's stories are mainly fables. A fable is a story told with **symbolism**, and a fable's purpose is to comment on human weaknesses and introduce a moral. Usually, the characters in fables are animals. Although these characters keep some of their animal traits, they also act and speak as humans. This makes it easier for the audience to identify with the stories.



Aesop is probably the most well-known fabulist (teller of fables), but there have been other important fable writers throughout history, including France's Jean de la Fontaine, who

wrote fables such as *The Hen with the Golden Eggs*. His fables were based on those of Aesop, Phaedrus and the Indian collection *Panchatantram*, portions of which date to 1,500 B.C. In the 20th century, writers still used fables to tell effective stories. George Orwell's book *Animal Farm*, a book that uses animals to make a political statement, is read in high schools and colleges throughout America. Marianne Moore, the famous American poet, has also written poems that use animals to comment on human experiences. See *Unicorns and Land Unicorns* is an example of her poetry.



Background Information

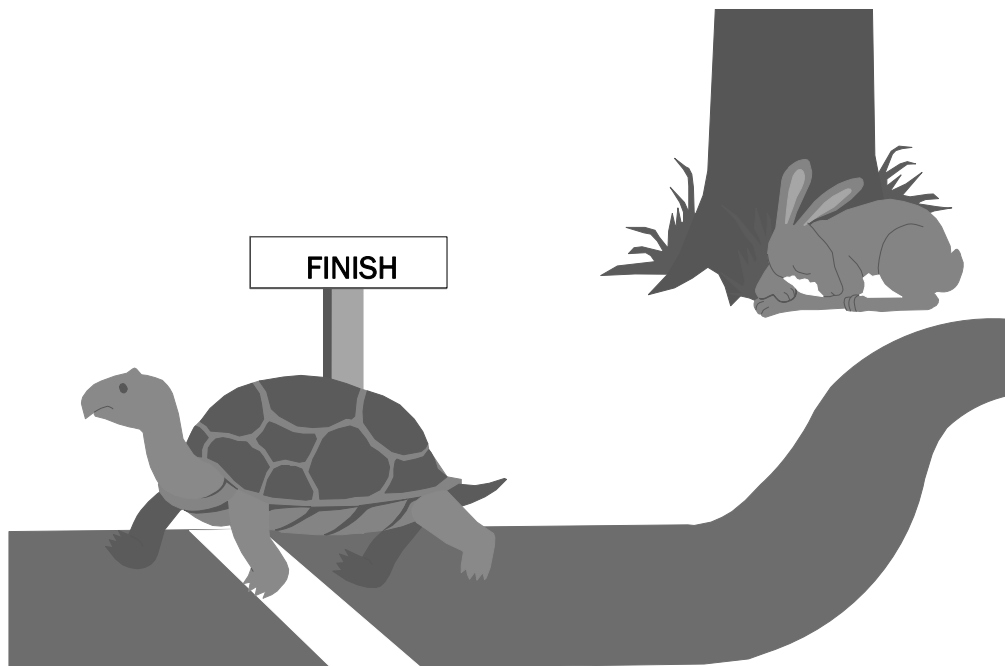
Morals in Literature

When you read or hear a good story, do you ever feel connected to it, as if you've been on the same journey as your favorite character? Sometimes stories have the power to make us feel the same emotions as the characters.

Sometimes stories can teach us something about ourselves. Most stories are written for a purpose, and writers try to consider what they want their audiences to feel when they are reading, hearing or seeing a story. The **moral** of a story usually reinforces the emotional journey of an audience. When characters learn lessons, they also share their experience and knowledge with the audience. For instance, in *Beauty and the Beast*, when Beauty starts to look past the Beast's ugly exterior, she finds they have things in common and that he has a kind heart. As an audience, we also gain greater insight into the Beast's character. The moral is that "appearances can be deceiving and beauty can be found within." This particular moral could be applied to anyone's life. Sometimes we find it easier to judge others by the way they look, just as Beauty did when she first saw the Beast. Thus, morals in literature have the ability to challenge readers to look at the decisions they make in their own lives. By experiencing how choices affect the characters we read or hear about, we can think about how these choices might affect our own lives.



The picture below illustrates part of one of Aesop's most famous fables, *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Fables commonly end with a short sentence that tells the moral of the story. If you look carefully at this picture, you'll see a hare sleeping in the woods while a tortoise crosses the finish line. The moral of this story is "Slow and steady wins the race."



Health Education: Responsible Behavior; Language Arts: Literature and Literary Analysis;
Theatre: Cultural and Historical Connections, Aesthetic and Critical Analysis, Applications to Life

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Vocabulary

Show Related

Colony—*Ecology* a group of organisms of the same kind living or growing in close association

Costume pieces—articles of costume or dress, used by actors to help them appear to be other characters

Fable—a short tale to teach a moral lesson, often with animals or inanimate objects as characters

Legend—a nonhistorical or unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical

Moral—the moral teaching or practical lesson contained in a fable, tale, experience, etc.

Myth—a traditional or legendary story, usually concerning some being or hero or event, with or without a determinable basis of fact or a natural explanation, especially one that is concerned with deities or demigods and explains some practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature

Orally—uttered by mouth; in storytelling, spoken, not the written word

Pestilence—a deadly or virulent epidemic disease

Philosopher—a person who offers views or theories on profound questions in ethics, metaphysics, logic, and other related fields

Props—stage furnishings and objects used or carried by actors in a play

Scene—a division of a play or of an act of a play, usually representing what passes between certain actors in one place

Scutes—a dermal bony plate, as on an armadillo, or a large horny plate, as on a turtle

Sequence—the following of one thing after another; succession

Speculation—the contemplation or consideration of some subject

Symbolism—artistic representations that stand for something else and often reveal truths

Tale—a report, narrative or story

Definitions primarily courtesy of <http://dictionary.reference.com>

Art Form Related

The Role of An Audience

Have you ever seen a play? If you have, you've seen how stories magically unfold before your eyes. Live theater is very different from television and movies. In television and movies, stories aren't put together the way they are in a play. For instance, most movies are shot out of **sequence**. It's possible for directors to shoot **scenes** from the end of the film before they film the beginning. In television and movies, the crew has many chances to capture the "perfect" moment on film. Sometimes scenes will be shot more than ten times in order to have everything just right. When you watch your favorite movie, it will always look the same, no matter how many times you watch it.

Theater, on the other hand, is different every time you watch it. You might see a play ten times, and each time you'll notice that something has changed. An actor may add or subtract a line, or a song may be sung in a slightly different style. In live theater, an audience is integral to the action onstage. Unlike the actors on a screen, actors onstage can hear audience reactions. Sometimes, the actors in a live show will even ask for the audience to participate in the show. With added responsibility comes added excitement. A stage show audience can help a show succeed.



Expanding the Classroom through Discussion

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. How is a fable different from other stories? What do you like or dislike about fables?
2. What do you expect to see in Eckerd Theater Company's presentation of *Aesop's Fables*? Why?
3. Do you think fables can be exciting and suspenseful? Why or why not?
4. Stories and fables are one way to teach moral lessons. What are some other effective ways?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the most important morals you have learned, either in class, at home, or in Eckerd Theater Company's presentation of *Aesop's Fables*?
2. How did the actors play many different characters? What did they use to change scenes?
3. What part of the show was the most surprising to you? Why do you feel this way?
4. Do you think animal stories and fables are a good way to teach morals? Why or why not?
5. Which fable was your favorite? Why?
6. Which fables did you know? Which were new to you?

Teacher Guided Activities

Preparing for the Show

Eckerd Theater Company's production of *Aesop's Fables* is a dramatic retelling of some of Aesop's most popular stories. Using the power of imagination, as well as a few **costume pieces** and **props**, actors will bring Aesop's fables to life! It would be impossible for Eckerd Theater Company to perform all of the stories credited to Aesop. There are more than 200 of them. To become familiar with Aesop's style of storytelling, read the following fable (not included in this production) to your students. After reading it, discuss the fable with your class and ask students to color the picture of the ant **colony** on page 7.

The Grasshopper and the Ants

as retold by Jerry Pinkney

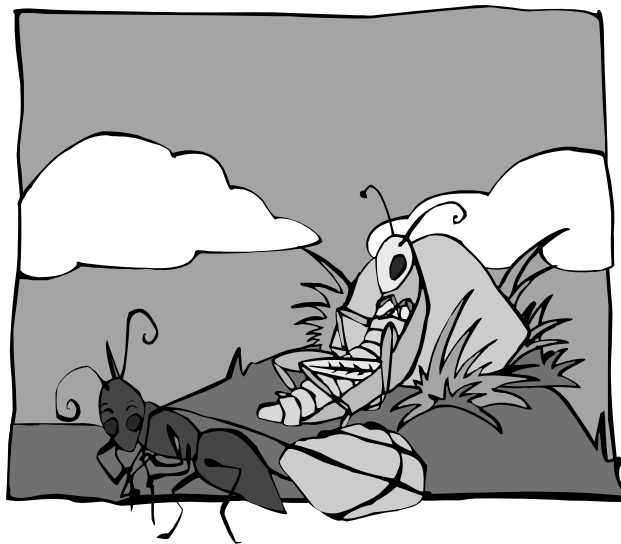


All summer long, a merry grasshopper spent his days making music. When he saw the ants marching past him in a line, carrying seeds and grain to store in their hill, he laughed at their toil. "How foolish, to work so hard in the hot sun!" the grasshopper cried. "Summer's the time to play and sing. There's time enough to worry about winter when the first snow falls."

But when the days grew short and the first snow fell, the grasshopper could find nothing to eat. Shivering in the cold, he came to ask the ants for help. "Please, can't you spare me a seed or a leaf?" he begged. "I'm too hungry even to sing!"

The ants shrugged in disdain. "We worked hard for our food and we have none to spare," they said. All summer long you made nothing but music. Now all winter long you can dance!"

Moral: Don't put off for tomorrow what you should do today.



Teacher Guided Activities





Eckerd Theater Company

The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute
1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL 33759-3219

www.eckerdtheatercompany.com

Writing Connections

Imagine that you have been given the task of entertaining your classmates with a fable, and if you do well, you'll have no homework. What moral would you like your fable to have? What animals could you use to tell your story? How could the actions of the animals be an example of your moral? Read the directions below to understand how to create your fable. In a classroom circle, tell your original fables to each other and enjoy everyone's unique insights and abilities!

Directions:

First, you need to understand what a fable is. A fable is a story that tells a useful truth, or moral. Many times, fables use animals as their main characters. Then, use your imagination to decide what lesson you'd like your fable to teach (e.g., "the early bird catches the worm"). Next, decide what kind of animals you want to use in your story (e.g., dog and cat, bird and fish, etc.) to illustrate your moral. Then, make sure that your story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Finally, share your fable with your class. Make sure that the last line tells the moral of the story!

Follow the Directions.
Use time order words: first, then,
next and last.

Language Arts: Literature and Literary
Analysis, Writing, Communication

Check your fable:
Did you include animals and a
moral?
Does your fable have a begin-
ning, middle and end?

Check for Errors:
Check your fable for spelling,
capital letters and proper
punctuation.

We want to hear from YOU! Write to us at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL

Support for Ruth Eckerd Hall is provided in part through the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, the National Endowment for the Arts, Pinellas County Cultural Affairs Cultural Tourism Grant Program, the City of Clearwater, the Bank of America Foundation, the Doyle Family Foundation and the Leading Ladies of Ruth Eckerd Hall. The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute and the Eckerd Theater Company are supported in part by Bank of America, the Broward County Student Enrichment in the Arts (SEAS), South Arts, The St. Petersburg Times Fund, Inc., Publix Super Markets Charities, Inc., Verizon Foundation, the Pinellas Community Foundation, Eckerd Family Foundation, The Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts and The MetLife Foundation.

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Additional Resources

Ask your school or local librarian for help in locating these books for you and your students!

Aesop's Fables

edited by Rochelle Larkin

Aesop's Fables

adapted by Jerry Pinkney

Multicultural Fables and Fairy Tales

by Tara McCarthy

The Random House Children's Treasury

edited by Alice Mills

The Little Hands Art Book

by Judy Press

Check out these Internet sites for additional information!

www.aesopfables.com/

<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/aesop/index.htm>

www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-turtle.html

www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/worldhistory/introancientgreece1.htm

Student Guide Curriculum Concepts

Page 1—Theatre: Aesthetic and Critical Analysis; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques, Creation and Communication

Page 2—Mathematics:

Measurement; Science:

Biology; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques

Page 3—Language Arts:

Reading, Communication;

Science: Biology; Theatre: Skills and Techniques, Aesthetic and Critical Analysis

Page 4—Language Arts:

Reading