

Talking about *Aesop's Fables*

by Aesop · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/aesop-for-children/

Warming up

Easy openers. Anyone at the table can answer these, including the youngest.

1. Tortoise and Hare, the Boy Who Cried Wolf, the Fox and the Grapes. Which fable did you meet first, and do you remember where?
2. If you were an animal in a fable, which animal, and what mistake would your fable warn everybody about?

The real conversation

Pick two or three, not all of them. Parents answer too, honestly.

1. 'Sour grapes' has meant the same thing for over two thousand years: the fox can't reach them, so he decides they were sour anyway. Have you ever decided something was dumb because you couldn't have it? Be honest; the fox wasn't.
2. By the end of the wolf fable, nobody believes the shepherd boy even when he's telling the truth. What does it actually take to be believed again once you've lied?
3. The tortoise wins because the hare stops running. Is the moral really 'slow and steady wins the race'? Everyone rewrite it in your own words, then compare. (Aesop's morals are the arguable part on purpose.)
4. The Wind and the Sun bet on who can get a traveler's coat off. The Wind blasts and fails, the Sun shines and wins. Where have you watched warmth beat force in real life? Where has it failed?
5. Nearly every fable is about somebody getting fooled: the crow by flattery, the frogs by their own wishes, the dog by his reflection. Which fooling in this book still happens every day, and where do you see it?

The big one

Save it for last.

People have kept these two-minute stories alive for well over two thousand years: enslaved storytellers, emperors, schoolkids, parents at bedtime. The shortest stories have lasted the longest. Why? And what lesson do people today need badly enough that your family would write the fable for it?

Do it *together*

Write the family fable. Take one small true thing that happened in your house this week (the argument over the front seat, the homework left to the last minute) and retell it as a fable: animals only, under a page, one-line moral at the end. Read them aloud and guess the true story behind each. The best one enters the family canon and gets retold at the next meeting, which is exactly how Aesop got started.