



Phot by Gary Isaacs

Fables

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Study Guide

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Folktales, Fairy Stories, Fables, Myths and Epics

“A writer is not a great mind; he’s not a great thinker; he’s not a great philosopher; he’s a story teller.”

—Erskine Caldwell, *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1958.

Folktales are a part of that great sea of anonymous stories known as “folklore,” the accumulated wisdom and art of simple, everyday folk. In the broadest sense of the word, folklore includes superstitions, medicinal practices, games, songs, festivals, dance rituals, old tales, verses, fables, myths, legends and epics. Folklore is sometimes called the “mirror of a people.” It reveals their characteristic efforts to explain and deal with nature’s strange phenomena, to understand and interpret the ways of humans with each other, and to give expression to deep, universal emotions (joy, grief, fear, jealousy, wonder and triumph).

The **folktale** is perhaps the most familiar and appealing of the Folklore varieties. There are many theories as to how the folktale originated; some folklorists believe that the story was created by people at an early level of civilization and incorporated remnants of religious myth and ritual. Psychoanalytic writers have studied objects and ideas which appear frequently in these stories and have asserted they are symbols of emotional fantasy and/or that they originated in the dreams or nightmares of the storytellers. Psychologically, the tales serve to satisfy in symbolic form some of the basic emotional needs of the human race. Whatever their origin, folktales are “the cement of society; they not only express but codify and reinforce the way people think, believe, and behave.”¹

The **fairy tale** acquired many of its elements from Irish folktales. Fairies, witches, spells, enchantment and the romance between humans and supernatural beings hark back to 400 BC or earlier and were preserved by oral tradition. As the tales traveled through Europe, they mixed with Indian stories, court romances, religious myths, epics and the local color of the storyteller to form the almost endless variations that the Brothers Grimm and their successors have collected.

Fables are brief narratives that attempt to make abstract ideas of good or bad, wise or foolish behavior concrete and striking enough to be understood and remembered. Whether the characters are animal or human, they have one dominant character trait and engage in one single significant act, which teaches a moral lesson. Such maxims as “**Necessity is the mother of invention**” and

“**Don’t count your chickens before they hatch**” come directly from fables.

A **parable** is like a fable, but its characters are human, such as the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Prodigal Son, or the Good Samaritan. People are the object of lessons and parables; those of Jesus point out and amplify the moral. Finally, **proverbs** are the most highly condensed of fables. They tell no story but present a bit of wisdom succinctly and sometimes wittily: “**A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.**” **Proverbs, 15:1** “**He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it.**” **Ecclesiastes, 10:8**

If one says fable, one immediately thinks of Aesop, who supposedly lived between 620 and 560 BC as a slave in ancient Greece. Aesop was presumed to have used his fables for political purposes, protecting himself and veiling his opinions behind the innuendoes of his stories. Legend has it that he was insubordinate to the Oracle of Delphi and that he was hurled from a cliff, whether for his behavior or his politics is not known.

Phaedrus, a Greek slave in Roman Emperor Augustus’ court, translated Aesop’s fables into Latin and added a few of his own—enough to fill five volumes. Babrius, a Roman, collected Aesop’s fables into two books in the third century AD, which were used as textbooks in medieval schools. In the 12th century, the fables were translated and published in English.

Beside the Aesopian collection, there are other fabulists. *The Panchatantra*, meaning “five books,” was composed in Kashmir about 200 BC and is the oldest known collection of Indian fables. Also known as *The Fables of Bidpai or Pilpay*, the tales were used for the education of Indian princes. *The Panchatantra* stories are longer and more involved than Aesop’s fables, but contain both human beings and animals in a text on “the wise conduct of life.” Another collection of Indian fables is a group called the *Jatakas*. Jataka is a Buddhist word for stories concerning the rebirths of Gautama Buddha who, according to tradition, was reincarnated many times in the form of different animals until at

last he became Buddha, the Enlightened One. A collection, not so widely known, is the *Gesta Romanorum* (*Entertaining Moral Stories* or *Deeds of the Romans*) compiled by a monk in the Middle Ages. Either of English or German origin, the stories are more recitals of adventures of questionable taste rather than fables, but they doubtlessly reflect the ideas and manners of the age in which they were composed. And, of course, we cannot forget the modern fabulists, including French poet Jean de la Fontaine of (1621-1695); John Gay (1685-1732), the English composer of "The Beggar's Opera", and the contemporary American writer, Arnold Lobel, whose *Fables* are popular with American children.

While fables are simple, highly condensed lessons in morality, "myths" are far more complicated. They attempt to explain through complex symbolism the vital outlines of existence, including: cosmic phenomena, peculiarities of natural history, origins of human civilization and/or the origins of social or religious custom. The "explanations" may seem irrational and inconsistent to the modern science and technology-minded person, but they were created by, and appeal to, the imagination. Filled with a panoply of supernatural but human-behaving gods and goddesses, myths were accepted by primitive peoples because they were so closely connected to their sacred beliefs about nature and society.

In the source collections of myths, there are tales of human heroes, buffeted by gods and men but daring greatly, suffering uncomplainingly and enduring staunchly to the end. Some of these heroes (Odysseus, for example) have so many tales written about them that the collections of these stories make an epic. "Epic" comes from the Greek word "Epos" meaning song, but it has now come to signify some form of "heroic narrative wherein tragedy, comedy, lyric, dirge and idyll are skillfully blended to form an immortal work." ² The epic transfers our sympathies from gods to men and the man is usually an embodiment of the national ideals of courage, sagacity, beauty and endurance. Thus, we have the Greek Odysseus, the Norse Sigurd the Volsung, the English Robin Hood and King Arthur, the Indian Rama, the French Roland, the American Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill and John Henry. There is little preaching in the epics, but they give us something to chew on—ideals of conduct in human form.

"Folktales remain when nations, languages, and faith have long since died."

—Idries Shah, author and folklorist.

London. March 1979.



THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN OF FOLKTALES

“There is an almost uncanny persistence and durability in the tale which cannot be accounted for in the present state of knowledge.”³

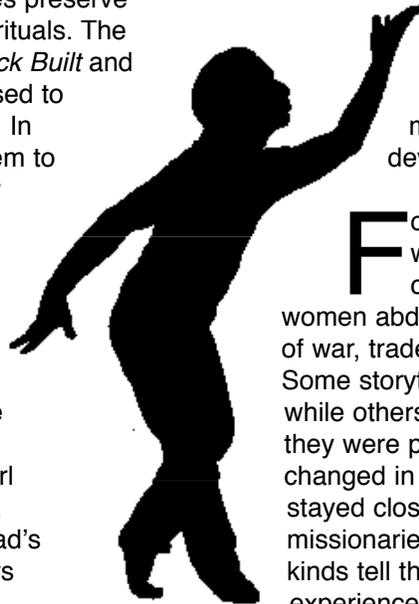
—Idries Shah

In *Children and Books*, the author May Hill Arbuthnot presents several theories about the origin of folktales. One theory is “monogenesis” or single origin—all folktales come from nature myths of a single ancestral group. The student who subscribes to this idea interprets any traditional story as a nature allegory. *Little Red Riding Hood*, for example, has been interpreted as symbolic of sunset and sunrise. The wolf is supposed to symbolize “night” and in many versions, he devours the little girl, who in her red cape represents the setting sun. When the hunters cut open the wolf and release Little Red Riding Hood from her imprisonment, that act is the embodiment of dawn.

Other scholars believe that many folktales preserve remnants of certain religious myths and rituals. The cumulative tales like *The House That Jack Built* and *The Old Woman and Her Pig* are supposed to have ritualistic origins in their repetitions. In other stories, spells and incantations seem to contain religious ceremonial content. For example, in the Grimm Brothers’ version of *Cinderella*, the heroine calls the birds to help her with this chant: “the good into the pot, the bad into the crop.” Later, the birds warn the Prince with this cry: “Turn and peep, turn and peep, There’s blood within the shoe. The shoe it is too small for her, the true bride waits for you.”⁴ In *The Goose Girl*, the girl taunts her admirer with this verse: “Blow, blow, thou gentle wind, I say. Blow Conrad’s little hat away.”⁵ These chants and others invoke nature’s powers in some way.

Those opposed to the “monogenesis” theory believe that folktales come from many origins or “polygenesis.” They believe that human beings everywhere are moved by the same emotions, so they insist that similar plots could develop in different parts of the world from situations common to all people. This theory would seem to account for the 345 variants of *Cinderella* found in the folktales of Egypt, India, Europe and the Native American cultures. However, modern social anthropologists point out that people are not the same the world over and that the same story in all its peculiar details could not have evolved independently among entirely different groups. But there is one certainty—almost all societies produce folktales and there are striking similarities among their stories.

European folktales had many and diverse origins. Most scholars distinguish two main ingredients: Indian and Celtic. From India came a multitude of talking beast tales and other stories which retained their entertainment value despite the moral and religious lessons added to them. During the 12th century, manuscripts of these stories were transmitted to the West through Arabic and Persian translation. They were carried by merchants and crusaders and circulated throughout Europe. From Ireland, the European folktales acquired the Celtic elements that make children call them “fairy tales,” i.e., fairies, witches and other-worldly creatures. Ireland’s isolation helped preserve its tales, but traveling storytellers took them elsewhere. By the 11th or 12th century, when they had been recorded in Gaelic, they circulated throughout Europe and mingled with other stories to evolve and develop into countless permutations.



Folktales were carried orally by migrations of whole peoples. Later they traveled from one country to another via soldiers and sailors, women abducted from their tribes, slaves and captives of war, traders, minstrels, bards, monks and scholars. Some storytellers embellished and polished the tales, while others debased them. If folktales traveled by land, they were passed on by many individuals and greatly changed in the process; if they traveled by sea, they stayed closer to the original. The process continues as missionaries, servicemen, women and travelers of all kinds tell their own versions of modern stories and experiences and will continue today during this production of *Fables*.

Idries Shah writes that there is a certain basic fund of human fiction which recurs again and again and never seems to lose its popularity. Many traditional tales have a surface meaning and a secondary meaning of inner significance which is rarely understood consciously but which nevertheless acts powerfully on the subconscious.⁶

Perhaps above all, the tale fulfills the function, not of escape, but of hope. The suspending of ordinary constraints helps people to reclaim optimism and to fuel the imagination with energy for the attainment of goals: whether moral or material.⁷

“The folktale is the primer of the picture-language of the soul.”

—Joseph Campbell

THE SUFIS

**“A man, never having seen water, is thrown blindfolded into it, and feels it. When the bandage is removed, he knows what it is. Until then, he only knew it by its effect.”
—Mualana Jalaluddin Rumi ⁸**

Sufism is a kind of mysticism that began to develop in the seventh century, the first century of Islam. The term “sufi” soon referred to all mystics whether or not they followed ascetic practices. Sufism arose out of various influences, among them the mystical overtone in some of the teachings of Muhammad, the founder of Islam; the desire to escape the hardships due to the social and political upheavals of the time and the tendency toward meditation in reaction to the worldliness and extravagance of the early caliphs.

By the ninth century, the Sufis claimed to have methods of finding mystic knowledge of God, or Allah. The Sufi mystic, described as a pilgrim on a journey, follows a path of seven stages: repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God and acquiescence to of God’s will. Then, with the grace of God, a higher level of consciousness is attained in which knowledge, the knower and the known, are realized as one. Some mystics believed that the supreme experience of union with God could not be expressed in words; others who tried to express it scandalized the very religious by ecstatically proclaiming their identity with God. Eventually, formal orthodox doctrines emerged. Statements, that the universe and God are actually one, further outraged the most devout who believed that God, as creator of the world, transcends it. Although most early Sufis conscientiously observed the religious law, some scorned it outright and proclaimed their inner light a sufficient source of religious guidance.

In the late 11th and early 12th centuries, the Islamic philosopher and theologian al-Ghazali finally reconciled the orthodox to mysticism. He de-emphasized the multi-deity aspects of Sufism, maintaining on the one hand, that the individual should strive to attain the Divine Presence but, on the other hand, that the good Sufi must live in peace with the rest of the community. His interpretation of Islam, which stressed the personal, emotional relationship of the individual to god, was accepted by the Islamic community within a century after his death. Sufism then became a vital force winning over many more people, especially in western Asia, to orthodox Islam.

In the eighth century, monastic Sufi communities were founded where devotees practiced mystical exercises. In the Middle Ages great Sufi orders, which had several million adherents, were established (about 100 orders still exist, many of them in Iran.) One of the most influential founders of orders was the Persian poet Jalal ad-Din Muhammed Din ar-Rumi, who, in addition to writing poetry, fables, jokes and other works, instituted devotional dances, particularly those of the whirling Dervishes. His disciples called Mevlevi, have their headquarters at Konya, Turkey. In addition to the members of these orders, many wandering Sufi beggars or fakirs have appeared over the centuries. From the Middle Ages onward, Sufism influenced many poets, especially in Persia where some of the most brilliant poetry has been Sufi.

Sufis have always insisted on the practicality of their viewpoint. The metaphysical is useless to them without practical illustrations of prudent human behavior, supplied both by popular legends and fables. Most fables contain at least some elemental truth and the fable form enables the absorption of ideas, which the ordinary patterns of thinking would hamper people from digesting. From the Sufi point of view, knowledge is not gained through a collection of information but through the knowing of things through actual experience. Only the search for truth is valid; the method to achieve both the desire for wisdom and motive is assimilation, not study. The Sufis believe that mankind is infinitely perfectible. They believe that the answer lies in liberating the mind so that by self-knowledge, intuition becomes the guide to human fulfillment and enlightenment. Traditional training suppresses and stills the intuition and keeps us from understanding the totality of life. Sufi philosophy can best be summed up in the watchwords of Jalal Din ar-Rumi: “He who tastes not, knows not.”

**“The Sufi’s world has extra dimensions. To him, things are meaningful in a sense which they are not to people who follow only the training which is imposed upon them by ordinary society.”
—Idries Shah. ⁹**

The Mulla Nasrudin

**“Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes, And pause awhile from letters to be wise.”
—Samuel Johnson, *Vanity of Human Wishes***

Mulla (Master) Nasrudin is the classical figure devised by the Sufis for the purpose of teaching that in certain situations, certain states of mind are necessary. The Nasrudin stories, known throughout the Middle East, constitute one of the strangest achievements in the history of literature and metaphysics. Superficially, most of the Nasrudin stories may be used as jokes, but it is inherent in the story that there are many depths of understanding. There is the joke, the moral—and the little extra which brings the consciousness of the potential mystic a little closer to realization. Individual “jokes” from the collection have found their way into almost every literature in the world and a certain amount of scholastic attention has been given to them. But to the Sufis, “they provide a basis for making available the sufi attitude toward life, and for making possible the attainment of Sufi realization and mystical experience.”¹⁰

Nobody really knows who Nasrudin was, where he lived or when. In his stories, he appears as a teacher, a judge, a beggar and various other guises, and “shows” us something, as he himself said. Reading some of the Nasrudin stories, we learn some Sufi ways of believing, one of which is that the wholly scholastic approach is the last one the Sufi will follow. For example:

Nasrudin, ferrying a boat across some rough water, said something ungrammatical. “Have you never studied grammar?” asked a scholar on board.

“No,” answered the Mulla.

“Then half your life has been wasted,” replied the scholar.

A few minutes later Nasrudin turned to the passenger.

“Have you ever learned to swim?”

“No, Why?”

“Then all your life is wasted—we are sinking!”¹¹

This is the emphasis upon Sufism as a practical activity, which denies that the formal intellect can arrive at truth and pattern-thinking cannot always be applied to reality.

Nasrudin, in his role as a Sufi teacher, frequently plays the part of the unenlightened man or the fool, in order to highlight a truth. This famous tale denying the superficial belief in cause and effect makes him the victim:

Nasrudin was walking along an alley way one day when a man fell from a roof and landed on top of him. The other man was unhurt—but the Mulla was taken to the hospital.

“What teaching do you infer from this event, Master?” one of his disciples asked.

“Avoid belief in inevitability, even if cause and effect seem inevitable! Shun theoretical questions like: If a man falls off a roof, will his neck be broken? He fell—but my neck is broken!”¹²

Because the average person thinks in patterns and cannot accommodate himself/herself to a really different point of view, he/she loses a great deal of the meaning of life. This individual may live and even progress, but will not really understand all that is going on.

The preparation of the Sufi mind cannot be adequate until the person knows that he/she has to make something of himself or herself and stop thinking that others can make it for him/her. Nasrudin illustrates this belief by this story:

“One day Nasrudin went into the shop of a man who sold all kinds of miscellaneous things.

“Have you leather?” asked the Mulla.

“Yes.”

“And nails?”

“Yes.”

“And dye?”

“Yes.”

“Then why don’t you make yourself a pair of boots?”¹³

Because the whole body of intellectual human thought is expressed in terms of external reasoning, Nasrudin, as the Sufi teacher, exposes again and again the falseness of ordinary assessment. Attempts at putting into speech or writing the mystical experience have never succeeded, because, “those who know do not need it; those who do not know cannot gain it without a bridge.”¹⁴ Two stories illustrate this Sufi precept:

Nasrudin is visited by a would-be disciple who watches every single action of the teacher as meaningful. When Nasrudin blows on his hand, the newcomer asks why.

“To warm myself in the cold, of course,” answers the Mulla. Shortly afterward, Nasrudin pours out two bowls of soup, and blows on his own. “Why are you doing that, Master?” “To cool it, of course.” At this point, the disciple leaves, unable to trust a man who uses the same process to arrive at different results—heat and cold.¹⁵

Nasrudin entered the Mosque and said to the people, “Do you know what I am going to tell you?” There were shouts of “No;” so he said, “Then I shall not bother with such ignoramuses.” The following day he asked the same question again from the pulpit. The answer was “Yes.” “Then I don’t need to tell you.” Nasrudin said and went out. The third time, when he repeated his question, the people cried, “Some of us do, some of us do not!” “Then let those who do tell those who do not know!” And he left the building.¹⁶

**Among the wise men, the wisest knows that he knows least;
among fools, the most foolish thinks he knows most.”**

—Antonio de Guevara. Marco Aurelio Faustina II

On Tree and Mountain

**“Sorrow is knowledge; they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o’er the fatal truth,
The tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.”**

—George Gordon Lord Byron, *Manfred* (1817), Act I, scene i.

The setting of *Fables* is a mound-like hill with trees and other kinds of vegetation growing from it.

Both tree and mountain are symbols in myth and folklore that have inspired scholarly research and writing as to their meaning.

The world tree, cosmic tree or universe tree is a motif that appears in many primal mythologies. In her book, *The Sacred Tree*, Mrs. J.H. Philpott says the Scandinavian “Yggdrasil” is the best example of the symbol, for it was the most holy seat of the Norse gods where they counseled every day. It was the greatest and best of all trees, for its branches spread over all the world and reached into heaven, while its roots went deep into the home of the Frost-giants where knowledge and wisdom were concealed. This same idea

occurs in folklore of the ancient Chaldeans, Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, as well as the mythologies of Japan and China. The early primal thinker must have wondered why the heavenly firmament with its sun and stars did not crash to earth as everything else did. The answer seems to be that it was supported at the central axis point by a large tree which upheld the sky roof as a pole upholds a tent. The earliest known version of a world-tree comes to us from the plain that borders the Persian gulf. The account represents the tree as growing in the garden of Edin or Eden, placed by Babylonian history at the mouth of the Euphrates River between 3000 and 4000 BC. It grew at the center of the earth and its roots reached down into the abysmal watery deep, where the amphibian Ea, god of wisdom, had his residence. Its foliage supported Zikum, the heavens.

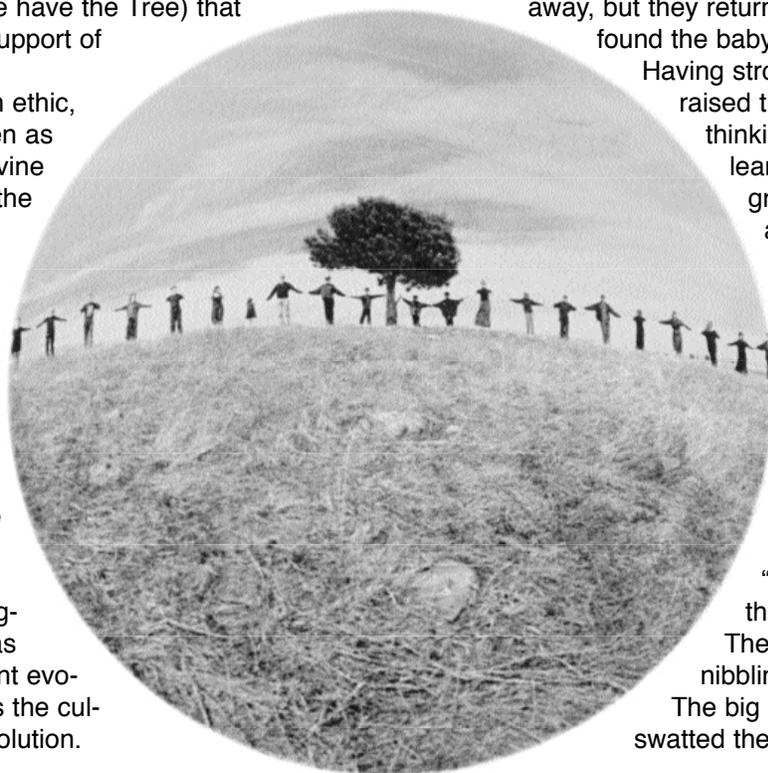
Side by side with that of a world tree, the concept of a world mountain seems to have prevailed in Northern Europe. "This mountain of the world whose head rivaled the heaven which had the pure deep for its foundation and was the home of the gods,"¹⁷ was much like the Mount Olympus of the ancient Greeks. In some cultures, the two ideas were combined. The Zia Indian tribe of New Mexico believed that the six regions of the world, North, South, East, West, Zenith and Nadir, were mountains bearing giant trees which housed the "cloud rulers" who sent rain. The six trees were specified as spruce, pine, aspen, cedar and two kinds of oak.

In addition, two positions of the world-tree appear in folklore. One is the vertical, Tree-of-Knowledge tradition, in which the tree extends between earth and heaven. It is the vital connection between the world of the god and the human world. In Buddhism, this tree is described as covered with divine flowers and gleaming with every kind of precious stone. It was beneath this tree that Gautama Buddha took his seat and resolved not to move until he had attained perfect knowledge. In Tree-of-Knowledge stories, oracle revelations, judgments or other prophetic activities are performed at its base.

In the horizontal Tree-of-Life tradition, the tree is protected by supernatural guardians. It is the source of terrestrial fertility and life. Human life is descended from it; its fruit confers everlasting life, and if it were cut down, all fertility would cease. "In the Tree-of-Life of the Egyptians, we have perhaps the earliest, certainly the most complete and consistent representation of this most ancient and seemingly universal symbol. In the midst of Paradise, (we have the Tree) that furnished the divine support of immortality."¹⁸

In the Judeo-Christian ethic, the Tree-of-Life is seen as an evolution of the Divine Life; the growth from the seed, sprout, roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit typify the entire cosmic process and show how glorious is God—its Source and Center.

Joseph Campbell, the scholar and mythologist, in the book *The Hero's Journey*, a biography, sees the tree as the culmination of plant evolution as the human is the culmination of animal evolution.



[The tree and the vegetable world represent the undestroyed simplicity and directness of the natural production of a form. A tree is symbolic, you might say, of home.—So the Garden (of Eden) is the natural realm of the vegetable world and man is put there as a nature being.—The Tree of Immortal Life is the tree of return. But the thing about the Book of Genesis is that God doesn't want man to return. He does not want man to realize he/she is immortal. He says 'Lest man should now eat of the Tree of Immortal Life and become as we are, therefore, let's put him out!' The guardians at the gate are a scary lot, and the flaming sword in between is the fear of going past that and losing your separateness. And so we're held out.]¹⁹

Maybe God's expulsion of man from the garden is a lesson to force us to use our knowledge and freedom of choice to make our own home, or as Voltaire's *Candide* said: "Cultivate our own garden."

Joseph Campbell's Fable

In the epilogue to *The Hero's Journey*, Campbell relates this fable. The origin is unknown.

A pregnant and starving tigress upon a little flock of goats. As she pounced on them, the extra exertion she expended brought on the birth of the tigress' cub and her subsequent death. The goats, of course, had run away, but they returned to their grazing place and found the baby tiger and its dead mother.

Having strong parental instincts, they raised the little tiger, who grew up thinking he was a goat. He learned to bleat and to eat grass, even though it did not agree with his digestive system. By the time he reached adolescence, he was a pretty miserable specimen of his species.

One day a male tiger attacked the little flock of goats and again they scattered. When he saw the little tiger, he was astounded. "What, you living here with these goats?" he asked.

The little tiger bleated and began nibbling grass in a timid fashion. The big tiger was so mortified that he swatted the little one a couple of times

and then took him by the neck and carried him to a pond. The wind was not blowing and the pond was perfectly still.

The big tiger told the little one to look into the pond. And for the first time in his little life, the little tiger saw his actual face. The big tiger put his face near him and said, "You see? You've got the face of a tiger; you're like me. Now be like me!"

The big guy picked the little one up and took him to his den, where there were remains of a recently slaughtered gazelle. The big tiger took a chunk of the meat, and told the little one to do the same.

The little tiger backed away. "I can't. I'm a vegetarian," he said. "No," said the big one, "none of that nonsense." And he shoved the meat down the little tiger's throat, who gagged on it. (And Campbell adds, "As we all do on true doctrine.") Nevertheless, the meat got into the little guy's system since it is his proper food and it activated his nervous system. Moved by the proper food, he gave a little

tiger roar. And the big tiger said, "There we are. Now we've got it. Now we'll eat tiger food!"

The moral here is that we're all really tigers living as goats. The function of sociology and most education teaches us to be goats. But the function of proper interpretation of myths and meditation is to introduce you to your tiger face—your inner self. But that poses a problem. You've found your tiger face, but you still live with goats. What to do? What to do? Campbell's lesson is: you wear the outer garment of the law and behave like everyone else. But you wear the inner garment of the mystic way and that is the great secret of life. "So with that I commit you all to be tigers in the world. But don't let anybody know it!"²⁰

Notes

1. Arbuthnot, p. 233.
2. Arbuthnot, p. 298.
3. Shah, pvii.
4. Grimm, p123.
5. Grimm, p410.
6. Shah, pvii.
7. Shah, pvii.
8. Shah, p34.
9. Shah, p55.
10. Shah, *The Sufis*. p57.
11. Shah, *The Sufis*. p58.
12. Shah, *The Sufis*. p59.
13. Shah, *The Sufis*. p69.
14. Shah, *The Sufis*. p79.
15. Shah, *The Sufis*. p80.
16. Shah, *World Tales*. p84.
17. Philpott, p122.
18. Gaskell, p767.
19. Cousineau, p170.
20. Cousineau, p231.

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Activities

Folklore

The Myth: one of the earliest kinds of folklore. The myth was used to explain events to people before there were scientific explanations. People have always wanted to know the “why” of events in the world. Myths symbolically illustrated and explained the outlines or pattern our existence including: life and death, the great forces of nature, cosmic phenomena, and the beginning of civilization. They are closely related to sacred beliefs and filled with supernatural beings that behave a lot like humans.

Pretend that you do not belong to a scientific society and that you do not know the scientific reasons for events that happen in the world. Create a myth to explain the existence of the sun, stars, moon, lightning, thunder, the four seasons, life and death, or the beginning of life.

The Fable: teaches people how they should live. They are highly condensed lessons in morality. Most fables tell stories about animals, and then state a moral at the end.

Create a fable using animals as characters. One famous fable is the story of the tortoise and the hare. The hare and tortoise are in a race. The hare ran ahead of the tortoise and then lay down for a nap. He thought he had hours to waste before the slow tortoise could catch up with him. But the tortoise plodded steadily along and won the race. The story points out a moral. The slow person who works steadily will do more than the swift person who works only in spurts.

The Parable: is like a fable, but its characters are human beings, like the “Good Samaritan.” People are the object lessons, and parables point out and amplify the moral. It uses events and facts of everyday life. These happenings illustrate a moral or spiritual truth contained in the story. Greek and Latin writers used the parable, but the best examples of the parable is found in the Bible.

Create a parable, remember to use humans as characters and have them illustrate a lesson in morality. Remember, that like the fable, the parable is short and to the point.

The Proverb: is a saying that tells a truth or some piece of useful wisdom in a short sentence. The language is usually picturesque. Example “Waste not, want not.” “Pride goeth before destruction.”

Now you try and create some wise sayings about homework, attending school, trying your best, etc.

The Fairy Tale: amuses and entertains. It takes place in a “never-never land,” where supernatural events occur. All fairies know how to use magic. “Cinderella” is a fairy tale.

Create a fanciful and entertaining fairy tale of your own. Use lots of magic and make your setting as colorful as you like.

The Epic: used to mean song but has come to mean a legendary, heroic story often in poetic form. The epic makes us sympathize with human beings and their struggles. There is a little preaching in the epic but usually they depict glorified ideals of human conduct. Examples are *The Odyssey*, *Idylls of the King* (about King Arthur), and we might stretch the definition to include narratives of Robin Hood, William Tell, and Paul Bunyan. The tales of these heroes are also classified as legends.

Write an story that might classify as epic in style. It could be about a student, teacher or parent, etc. Just remember that the story should be heroic in style and our sympathy should be with the main character who attempts to overcome tremendous odds while maintaining acceptable human conduct.

Lesson 1: An Old Tale from India

Long ago in India, six blind men lived together. All of them had heard of elephants but had never “seen” one. Though they were blind, they traveled to the Rajah’s palace to acquaint themselves with an elephant. In the courtyard each of them touched a different part of the huge animal and each came away with a different impression:

- An elephant is like a wall. (his side)
- An elephant is round like a snake. (his trunk)
- An elephant is sharp like a spear. (his tusk)
- An elephant is like a tree. (his leg)
- An elephant is like a fan. (his ear)

They could not agree on a description of the animal and argued out of control. The Rajah overheard and explained to them that each touched only on part but all parts had to be put together for a true impression. The blind men decided that each of them had a different perception, and “To find out the whole truth we must put all the parts together.”

Questions:

1. Name the five senses.
2. What role does our senses play in our understanding of our world?
3. Can sighted people be fooled just like blind people when they do not pay attention to the “whole picture?”
4. Advertising plays tricks on our senses. Lots of times television advertisements make toys seem like a lot more fun than they actually are.
 - a. Name some toys that you asked your parents for because they seemed like a lot of fun in the television ad.
 - b. Are they as much fun to play with as you first thought?
 - c. Did the television advertisement fool you into thinking that the toy would be more fun than it is? Did the ad deceive your senses through sight and sound?
 - d. Why did you believe the advertisement?
5. Advertisements tempt teenagers and grownups also. Watch the ads for sports equipment, automobiles, and clothes. Electronic equipment is the latest to be glamorized in advertisements. More and more money is being spent on top-of-the-line computers, electronic beepers, second and third private telephone lines, Internet e-mail access, and fancy telephone answering services. Sometimes these items are necessary for business and family communication in our busy and complicated society but many times people find it hard to distinguish between their wants and their actual needs. Some of these items have become status symbols.
 - a. What questions could you ask yourself in order to make a good decision when buying something new?
 - b. Why do you think many sports heroes make far more money endorsing (supporting or telling people how good it is) a brand of shoes, a drink, a car, or food in an advertisement than they do actually playing sports?
 - c. What is a status symbol?

Lesson 2: The Bad Kangaroo by Arnold Lobel

There was a small Kangaroo who was bad in school. He put thumbtacks on the teacher’s chair. He threw spitballs across the classroom. He set off firecrackers in the lavatory and spread glue on the doorknobs. “Your behavior is impossible!” said the school principal, “I am going to see your parents. I will tell them what a problem you are!” The principal went to visit Mr. and Mrs. Kangaroo. He sat down in a living-room chair. “Ouch!” cried the principal. “There is a thumbtack in this chair!” “Yes, I know,” said Mr. Kangaroo. “I enjoy putting thumbtacks in chairs.” A spitball hit the principal on his nose. “Forgive me,” said Mrs. Kangaroo, “but I can never resist throwing those things.” There was a loud booming sound from the bathroom. “Keep calm,” said Mr. Kangaroo to the principal. “The firecrackers that we keep in the medicine chest have just exploded. We love the noise.” The principal rushed for the front door. In an instant he was stuck to the doorknob. “Pull hard,” said Mrs. Kangaroo. “There are little globs of glue on all of our doorknobs” The principal pulled himself free. He dashed out of the house and ran off down the street. “Such a nice person,” said Mr. Kangaroo. “I wonder why he left so quickly.” “No doubt he had another appointment,” said Mrs. Kangaroo. “Never mind. supper is ready.” Mr and Mrs. Kangaroo and their son enjoyed their evening meal. After the dessert, they all threw spitballs at each other across the dining-room table

Moral: A child’s conduct will reflect the ways of his parents.