

Name: _____ Class: _____

What is a Fable?

By Barbara Radner
2008

Fables are a popular form of storytelling, and chances are you've read one. But what makes a story a fable? In this informational text, Barbara Radner explores what a fable is. As you read, take notes on the features of a fable.

- [1] A fable is a story. A wise¹ author would write the fable to tell a lesson. Long ago, people wrote many fables. They wrote them to help other people learn. For example, the tortoise and the hare² is a fable. That fable tells people it is not wise to show off. It is wise to work hard.



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Most fables have animals in them. The animals talk. Of course in real life an animal can't talk. But in the fables they do. The animals often do foolish³ things. For example, in one fable there is a crow. It wants to get a delicious fruit. It takes it from a garden. And it gets it. But then as the crow soars⁴ it shows off. It opens its mouth to shout, "Look, I got the best fruit." But of course the crow loses the fruit. It falls out of its mouth because it opened its mouth to shout.

Fables have a moral. A moral is the lesson it teaches. The fable about the crow makes an important point. It tells you that people should be careful. It tells you that the crow was foolish.

There is another fable about the ant and the grasshopper. The grasshopper played all summer while the ant toiled.⁵ The ant got ready for winter. The ant was a hard worker. It dug a hole to stay in during winter. It carried food to that hole. When winter came, the ant was able to live. The grasshopper did not have any food. It had no place to stay. Winter was a great challenge for the grasshopper. It asked the ant for help. The ant was generous.⁶ The ant did help the grasshopper. The grasshopper learned a lesson. So did everyone who read the fable.

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1. **Wise (adjective):** having or showing knowledge and good judgement
2. a large rabbit
3. **Foolish (adjective):** lacking good sense or judgement
4. **Soar (verb):** to fly or rise high in the air
5. to work very hard
6. **Generous (adjective):** showing a willingness to give more of something than necessary

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is the central idea of the text?
 - A. Fables are light-hearted stories about animals meant to merely entertain readers.
 - B. Fables are old stories with lessons that people no longer tell.
 - C. Fables are stories about animals to help readers learn important lessons.
 - D. Fables are better than fantasies when telling stories that teach important lessons.

2. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Long ago, people wrote many fables." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "For example, in one fable there is a crow. It wants to get a delicious fruit." (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "Fables have a moral. A moral is the lesson it teaches." (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "The grasshopper learned a lesson. So did everyone who read the fable." (Paragraph 4)

3. Which of the following describes how the information is organized?
 - A. The author defines what a fable is and then provides examples of different fables.
 - B. The author compares her favorite fables and her least favorite fables.
 - C. The author provides examples of fables and then provides a definition of a fable.
 - D. The author describes fables and other forms of popular literature.

4. How do fables differ from other stories?
