

HISTORY OF FABLES

Fables date back many centuries. Along with folk tales, legends and proverbs, fables constitute the earliest forms of storytelling. It is believed that fables originated in India, were then carried into Persia and from there spread into Greece and the rest of the world. Among the well known fables are those attributed to Aesop, a Greek slave, who lived around 550 B.C. Many are familiar with “The Crow and the Pitcher,” “The Hare and the Tortoise,” or “The Lion and the Mouse.” Fables can now be found in the literature of almost every country.

Fables are short stories featuring animals, plants and forces of nature which are given human qualities. This is referred to as *anthropomorphism*. Handed down from generation to generation, the purpose of a fable is to teach a particular lesson, value or to give sage advice. They also provide us with the opportunity to laugh at our foolishness and cry and comfort each other when faced with tragedy. They differ from parables and allegories which usually feature humans. They also differ from myths and legends which explain a particular natural phenomena such as seasons or why the sun rises in the east.

Fables are characterized by a lesson, the type of characters, its length which is generally short and the type of writing, which is many action and dialogue as opposed to description. But most importantly, the fable is universal. For that reason, it's important to teach fables. Not only do fables allow us to connect with other cultures but ultimately they reinforce what makes us human.

Finally, the fable also serves as a wonderful springboard to other forms of writing. The lesson becomes the theme in a short story or novel; how the lesson is taught becomes the plot in longer stories. Characters can be developed to create voice, dialogue and point of view.