



Bright Star Touring Theatre

# Aesop's Fables

## Study Guide

### ***About the show:***

*Aesop's Fables* are a number of short moralistic stories credited to an ancient storyteller named Aesop. These stories, filled with personified animals, all showcase a particular character trait or moral judgment that can be a valuable lesson for the reader. Dating back some 2,600 years, *Aesop's Fables* have been celebrated throughout history and carefully studied by students across the globe!

Aesop was an African slave who lived in Ancient Greece from 620-560 BC. Little is known about his life, but his name appears with much frequency throughout the works of his contemporary playwrights and fellow writers, showing up in pieces by Aristophanes, Plato and more. He compiled fables from both his own imagination as well as Ancient texts. Throughout history, other writers dabbled in the art of fable writing, but none left their mark as much as Aesop. Today virtually every bookstore and library contains at least one volume of Aesop's works filled with hundreds of fables credited to him.



Our production opens with Lenny and Mabel, two Elizabethan traveling actors who happen upon an audience on their travels and decide to perform an impromptu show of some of their favorite material - *Aesop's Fables*! While our set design reflects the feel of Ancient Greece (the birthplace of the fable), our characters are traveling performers from the 1600s--a time in England when Aesop was extremely popular. We chose this time period for the play for many reasons, mainly because of its colorful and entertaining qualities for a young audience. In the Bright Star Theatre production, we scoured through hundreds of fables in order to find ones that carry both a familiar quality as well as an accessible message to a young audience. Phrases that have long peppered our vernacular and characters that we have seen in so many cartoons growing up are found within the very pages of this ancient text. We hope that your young people will discover the magic of these stories and perhaps be inspired to pull this 2,600 year old book off the shelf and discover them for the first time.

### **About Our Production:**

This production is a touring show with Bright Star Theatre. During its run, this production may be seen by audiences in as many as 15 different states! Professional actors join Bright Star from across the United States to tour our shows. In a typical week, they'll perform in 10-13 venues for all kinds of audiences. Our actors travel in minivans, averaging 800-1000 miles of driving *per week*, and they have performed for as many as 10,000 people *in one week*! After the show, our actors are available for you to ask questions about this production and their lives as actors - it's one of the most exciting parts of the Bright Star experience - and we hope you'll have a chance to have your question answered!



# Words to Know:

Theatre is a form of storytelling that has been entertaining people for thousands of years. Theatre has its own kind of language. Here are some terms that actors, directors, and other “theatre people” use all the time!

**Audition:** A hopeful actor will either read, sing or dance (or sometimes all three!) in order for the director to decide which actor she wants to cast in a particular role.

**Director:** The director reads the script, and tells the actors where they should go and what they should do. Each director has a different way of telling a story from every other director, and this means that each play will be unique from every other play!

**Set:** All of the scenery on the stage is part of what is called the “set.” It helps to paint a picture of where the story takes place, so it is easier for the audience to follow the play. For *Aesop’s Fables*, our actors use a backdrop, which is the colorful painted background.

**Costumes:** All of the clothes that are worn onstage by the actors are costumes. The hats, the wigs, the coats, and even the shoes are all part of the costumes!

**Props:** Anything that an actor carries during the show is a prop. Can you remember any of the props used by the actors in this play?

**Rehearsal:** Once the cast of the play is set, everyone on the show needs to practice to get ready for the show. This can take weeks, and that gives time for the sets and costumes to be built, and for the actors to learn their lines.

**Actors:** These are the people that you see on stage. They each have a character to play, and they spend a long time rehearsing before they perform. They have to learn where they should walk, when they should talk, and how their characters should act. It’s a lot of work!

**and of course -**

**Audience:** Perhaps the most important element in the show! The audience consists of the people who come out to watch the play. You were our audience for *Aesop’s Fables*!

# Seeing the Play:

Attending the theatre is very different than going to the movies or watching television. For one thing, the actors are real people who can hear and see everything that’s happening in the audience. It’s important to know a few rules before seeing a play:

- ★ Please be quiet and respectful during the performance so that those around you can hear what’s happening.
- ★ If something’s funny, it’s okay to laugh!
- ★ If you like the play, be sure to clap at the end.

What else can you add to the list?

## Word Search!

Find these words from *Aesop’s Fables* in the puzzle below!

AESOP  
BOY  
FABLES  
FOX  
GRAPES  
HARE

LENNY  
LION  
MABEL  
MOUSE  
TORTOISE  
WOLF

P	P	X	O	Q	F	G	T	G	G	Q	H	F	J	T
O	X	O	F	A	C	Q	R	O	W	O	L	F	F	B
S	D	F	L	N	B	A	H	L	R	H	R	W	Q	B
E	O	A	Y	Q	P	P	U	G	E	T	E	P	C	W
A	P	B	L	E	Y	N	N	E	L	G	O	Y	F	U
A	W	L	S	E	Z	F	U	I	M	K	P	I	I	O
I	N	E	R	N	B	S	U	Q	J	B	H	T	S	J
C	C	S	W	W	O	A	J	L	C	A	O	G	S	E
H	T	C	D	P	J	W	M	I	P	X	L	A	X	B
F	A	Y	E	E	G	I	Y	T	U	Z	L	I	J	A
L	Y	K	S	L	S	T	B	M	B	H	Q	D	O	B
I	M	U	P	Q	V	Z	C	G	X	A	O	M	O	N
B	O	V	T	M	X	F	F	G	I	R	A	Y	W	K
M	M	P	Z	O	V	N	Q	S	F	E	B	L	L	D
J	L	T	L	T	K	S	E	C	G	Y	L	Q	S	O

# Classroom Activities:

## Create an *Aesop's Fables* Newscast!

*This activity incorporates creative thinking, writing, and performance!*

1. Break students into small groups. Have each group create a segment of a newscast about *Aesop's Fables*. The possibilities are endless and the more creative, the better the result! Ideas for segments could include: an interview with the people of the town in "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," a cooking show with recipes for grapes, an follow-up story on the friendship between the Lion and the Mouse - even the weather and commercials could be tackled!
2. Discuss all the things that make a play possible. Have each group think about how costumes, props, and the set could help bring their news segments to life. If there's time, try to create some of these props or costume pieces from everyday items!
3. Time for performance! Have each group perform their segment of the news. Before you begin the "newscast" have students warm up their voices with an *Aesop's Fables*-themed tongue twister (actors do this all the time!) like:  
"Six short slow shepherds" -or-  
"Lions licking limes and lemons"  
Remind the other students about being good audience members while they watch their friends onstage!

## Fill In the Blanks!

*Each one of Aesop's Fables ends with a lesson or a moral - and many of those lessons have become familiar sayings that we still use today! Using the words below, fill in the blanks to complete some of Aesop's best known sayings!*

1. Beauty is only skin \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. \_\_\_\_\_ of a feather flock together.
3. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ your chickens before they've hatched.
4. Look before you \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Slow and steady wins the \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. \_\_\_\_\_ before you act.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ often are deceiving.
8. Little friends may become \_\_\_\_\_ friends.
9. Things are not always what they \_\_\_\_\_ .

**seem \* think \* race \* leap \* great  
birds \* appearances \* count \* deep**

## Resources on the Net!

[www.aesopfables.com](http://www.aesopfables.com)

*Online collection of some 650+ fables indexed by moral lessons! Includes audio clips!*

[www.first-school.ws/theme/fables.htm](http://www.first-school.ws/theme/fables.htm)

*Art projects for Pre-K to 1st grade involving fables!*

[www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php](http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php)

*Flash animations of various fables. Approved by Kidsites.com*

**You may wish to preview all sites for content!**

## Questions for Discussion:

1. What were your favorite moments in the play? Why were they your favorites?
2. What was your favorite lesson that you learned from the play? Why are these lessons so important and why are they included in the play?
3. Why do you think Aesop used animals to teach these lessons? Why have they remained so popular even after 2600 years?
4. If you were going to create a play about *Aesop's Fables* what things would you do differently and what things would you keep the same?

