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# What is a fable?

Parents from all cultures want to teach the lessons of life to their children so that they can protect them from harm and ready them for the adult world. **A story that teaches an important moral lesson is called a fable.** Fables have been an important part of many cultures from the very beginning of human civilization. The fable form appeared early in the development of primitive people as part of the oral tradition. **It is often a story about animals with human characteristics.** The stories were told from parent to child over thousands of years, and this was how cultural values and the language were passed down through generations.

**The lesson of a fable is usually summed up in one sentence at the end - the moral. The moral often becomes a proverb** - a sentence that states a basic truth about life or gives a general rule of behavior. The first written fables that have been found come from Egypt, 1500B.C.

Aesop's stories have survived because they describe universal human problems and teach simple standards of right and wrong. Stories about talking animals teach lessons about the good and bad qualities of human beings, our virtues and vices. Hundreds of years after the death of Aesop, stories from Asia and ancient times were added to the fables. The stories of Aesop were translated into Latin in A.D. 315. Those Latin fables were immediately translated into English by John Caxton of England and printed in 1485. It has been said that in the Western world, books of Aesop's fables are second only to the Bible in popularity.



# AESOP— Ancient Fabler & Storyteller



The most famous fables come from a man named Aesop, who was born a slave in Greece around 620 B.C. It is known that Aesop was a native of Phrygia, in Asia Minor. He was ugly: flat-nosed, with thick lips, and a black skin from which he contracted his name (Esop = Ethiop).

As an adult, Aesop was given his freedom due his intelligence. Aesop traveled through many parts of Greece, teaching and talking with famous philosophers. Through stories he tried to teach lessons that warned about the bad qualities of humans, hoping that people who heard the stories would learn how to improve their behavior.

Although Aesop was renowned for his wit, his tongue would lead to his death. There are two legends of his death in the city of Delphi.

One day, the very rich king Croesus sent Aesop to give money to the citizens of Delphi. When Aesop saw the people's reaction to the money, he told them that they were too interested in money, and he sent the gold back to Croesus. The people in Delphi became so angry that they killed Aesop by throwing him over a cliff.

According to the other legend Aesop was very disappointed with what he found in Delphi, when he visited it. The main source of income of Delphi came from visitors. Delphi was famous for its learning, and wisdom. In an unguarded moment Aesop told: "Some persons standing at the seaside saw an object on the ocean, which seemed very important, but when it came closer, they found it to be a great mass of weeds and rubbish. Such, I find, to be the curiosity that brought me to Delphi."

When the authorities heard his remarks, they realized that if his opinions became known it would lead to the ruin of Delphi. They decided that he should not leave Delphi alive. They sent soldiers after him who accused him of stealing a sacred cup from the temple, which had been put in his bag. When Aesop permitted the search, the cup was found. He was pronounced guilty and sentenced to be thrown of a cliff into the sea. Later they regretted that deed, however, as they received universal condemnation for their action.

# VOCABULARY

Match the word with its definition.

<b>jealous</b>	feeling unhappy or mad due to a longing for what another person has
<b>greedy</b>	to give a compliment, especially for the purpose of gaining something
<b>luxury</b>	anything valuable that gives comfort but is not necessary
<b>admit</b>	simple or modest; describing a common person, not royalty
<b>flatter</b>	to say, often unwillingly, that something is true or valid
<b>humble</b>	wanting more than what one needs or deserves

Read and translate.

# WORDS IN CONTEXT

1.  
She is jealous, or envious, of her sister's independence.

2.  
When you feel jealous, you wish you had someone else's good fortune.

3.  
Some of the kids were jealous of all the special attention the new student received.

1.  
A greedy person has an extreme and selfish desire for more than what he or she needs or deserves.

2.  
A person who is willing to cause harm in order to get money might be called greedy.

1.  
A humble person is modest and meek, and has a low sense of his or her importance.

2.  
The poor peasant was humble, not boastful.

3.  
Their humble home contains few expensive things, but it overflows with love.

1.  
It is better to live simply in safety than to live in luxury and fear.

2.  
Going out to eat every day is a luxury, or treat, she cannot afford.

1.  
The criminal refused to admit that he'd committed the crime; instead, he kept denying it.

2.  
When armies surrender, they admit defeat, or concede.

1.  
He is less likely to flatter people than to insult them.

2.  
The moral from one of Aesop's fables is: Do not trust strangers who try to flatter you.

# CLOZE SENTENCES

**jealous**

**greedy**

**humble**

**luxury**

**admit**

**flatter**

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the vocabulary words in the word box above to complete the sentences below.

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ that I made a mistake, and I apologize for it.
2. I need to pay my rent and buy food before I spend any money on a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The king lived in a castle, while his \_\_\_\_\_ servant lived in a shack.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ person wants more than his or her fair share.
5. Another word for \_\_\_\_\_ is envious.
6. You \_\_\_\_\_ me with your compliments.



# The Fox And the Stork



## The Fox and the Stork

The fox had the stork over to eat soup. The fox put the soup in a flat dish. The stork could not eat any soup. He could not reach it with his long beak. The fox ate all the soup, and the stork went hungry. The next day, the stork invited the fox over for dinner. The stork put some meat in a jar with a long neck. The stork ate easily because his long beak fit into the jar. The fox could not get to the meat. This time he went hungry. The fox admitted that he had been wrong.

*Moral:* If you do mean things to others, they might do mean things to you in return.

# The Fox And the Crow





## **The Fox and the Crow**

The fox saw the crow fly to her favorite branch. She had a piece of cheese in her beak. The fox thought for a moment. He walked under the crow's branch and looked up at her. "You are the prettiest bird I have ever seen," said the fox. The crow looked down at the fox. "You fly so fast and gracefully. I bet you can sing, too," he said. The crow loved to hear compliments. She decided to sing for the fox. She opened her beak to sing. The cheese fell into the fox's mouth. When he was done eating, he said, "Thank you very much. That was all I really wanted."

*Moral:* Do not trust strangers who try to flatter you.



# The Crow And the Pitcher



## The Crow and the Pitcher

The crow had been flying all day, and he was very thirsty. He came across a pitcher that was half full of water. He could not reach the water in the pitcher to drink. His beak could not fit in the neck of the bottle. He tried tipping the pitcher, but it was too heavy. He saw that there were pebbles all over the ground. He began to drop pebbles one at a time into the pitcher. It took a very long time, but the water rose to the top. Then he drank all the water he wanted.

*Moral:* Doing things little by little is just as good as doing things all at once.



# The Peacock





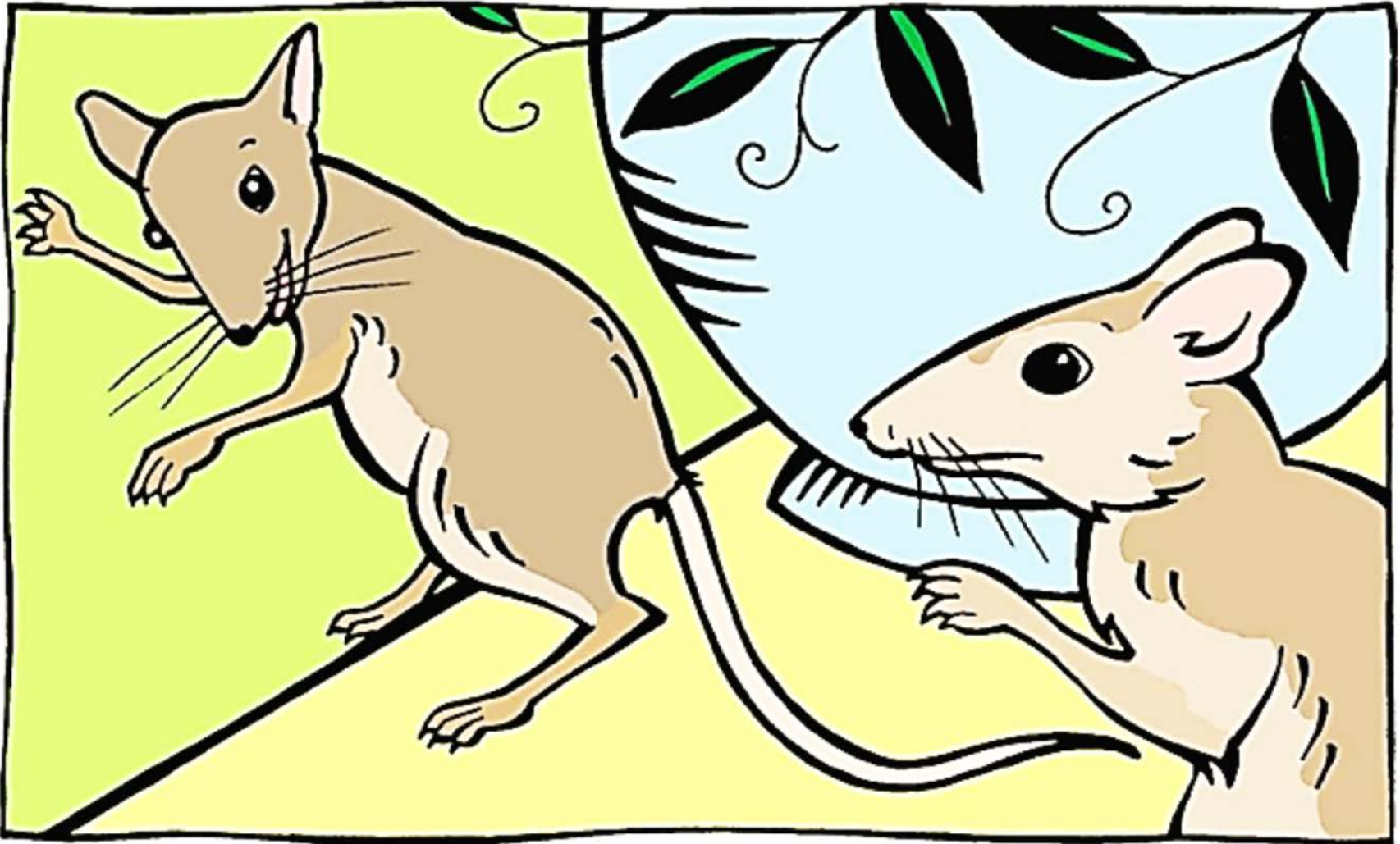
## The Peacock

Peacock's strange voice made people laugh. He wished he could sing beautiful songs like the nightingale. Peacock asked the goddess of animals for a new voice. The goddess replied, "You are jealous of the nightingale, but you should not be. The feathers on your neck shine with every color of the rainbow. And your tail looks like it is covered in gems. No one has it all. The falcon is very fast. The eagle is very strong. The parrot can speak. The raven is smart. The nightingale has a pretty song. You are big and beautiful. You are special just as you are."

*Moral:* No one can be the best at everything. Treasure your own gifts and talents.



# The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse

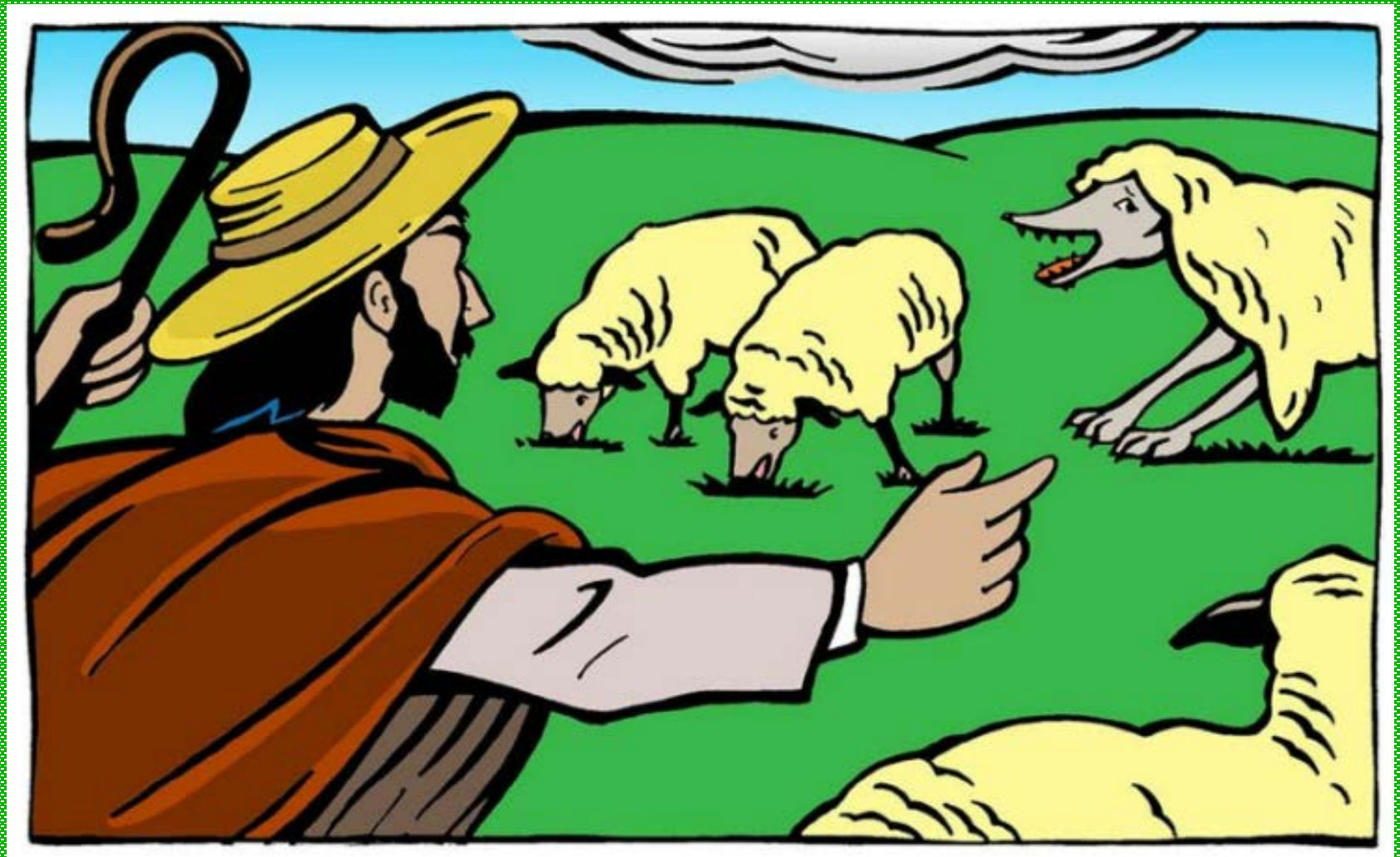


## **The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse**

The poor country mouse came to visit his cousin, the rich town mouse. There were many things to do in the city. The country mouse had never seen so many other mice. The city mouse warned the country mouse that there was a cat in the house. The country mouse was scared. He decided that he would rather live in the poor, quiet country than live in fear every day. With that, the country mouse happily left for his humble home.

*Moral:* It is better to live simply in safety than to live in luxury and fear.

# The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing





## **The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing**

A wolf put on a costume to look like a sheep. The wolf then went to a nearby pasture where there were many sheep. The shepherd let him into the pasture, thinking that he was a sheep. The wolf was about to bite a poor lamb when the shepherd saw what he was doing. The shepherd threw the wolf out of the pasture and told him not to come back. From that day on, the shepherd never let a sheep into the pasture until he checked it for sharp teeth.

*Moral:* The way things look is not always the way things are.

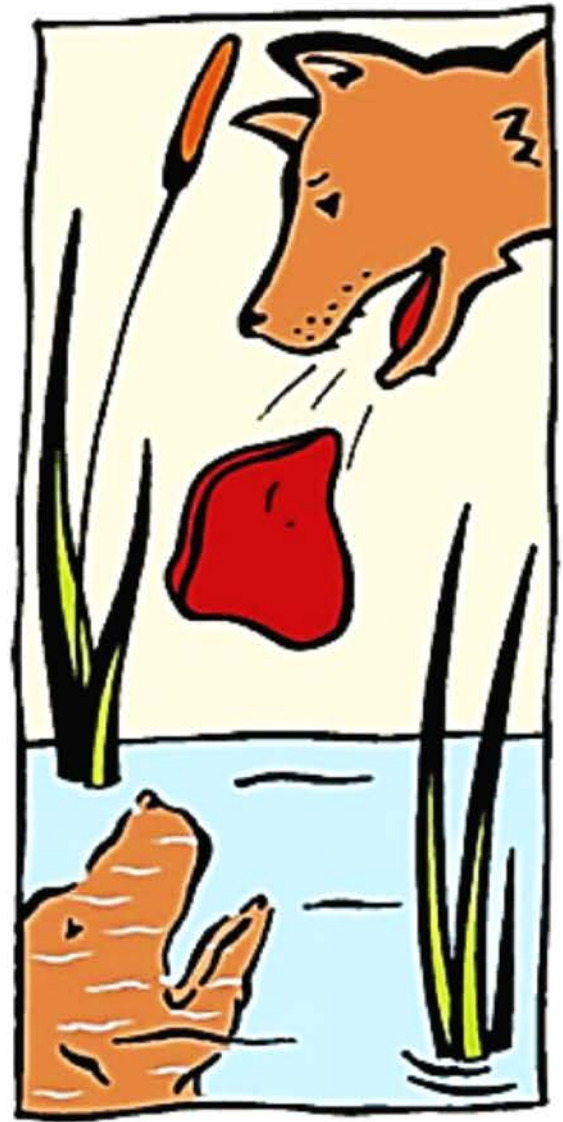


# The Dog and His Shadow

## The Dog and His Shadow

A dog was walking across the bridge over a stream. He had a nice piece of meat in his mouth. He looked down. He thought that he saw another dog. He thought the other dog had meat, too. He snapped at the meat in the dog's mouth. His own meat fell into the water. Then he realized it was not another dog after all. It was only his reflection.

*Moral:* If you are always greedy for more, you might lose what you already have.



# TEST

1. If you are not jealous, you are \_\_\_\_\_ with your own life.

- (a) unhappy
- (b) content
- (c) displeased

2. A greedy person is unlikely to consider \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) his or her needs
- (b) others
- (c) how to get more of something

3. A humble peasant is \_\_\_\_\_ royalty.

- (a) richer than
- (b) poorer than
- (c) the same as

4. A luxury is not \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) unnecessary
- (b) necessary
- (c) expensive

5. A person is most likely to admit \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) a mistake
- (b) a victory
- (c) an achievement

6. People usually flatter others to \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) be helpful
- (b) get something for themselves
- (c) hurt people's feelings

# QUIZ

Read each question carefully and choose the best answer.

1. What does the fox do at the end of "The Fox and the Stork"?
  - Ⓐ He has dinner with the stork.
  - Ⓑ He goes to sleep.
  - Ⓒ He admits that he was wrong.
  - Ⓓ He eats all the soup.
2. What do you think the expression "He is a wolf in sheep's clothing" means?
  - Ⓐ He likes living in a pasture with sheep.
  - Ⓑ He looks nice, but he is really mean.
  - Ⓒ He has sharp teeth.
  - Ⓓ He likes to fool shepherds.
3. Why does the country mouse move back to the country?
  - Ⓐ It is simple and safe.
  - Ⓑ Cats often come to visit.
  - Ⓒ Many other mice live there.
  - Ⓓ There are many things to do.



# QUIZ

Read each question carefully and choose the best answer.

4. How are all the stories in the book alike?
  - Ⓐ All the animals are smart.
  - Ⓑ They teach people how to behave.
  - Ⓒ They are about birds.
  - Ⓓ They make people sad.
5. How are the two foxes in the fables alike?
  - Ⓐ They are both shy.
  - Ⓑ They are both sneaky.
  - Ⓒ They are both vain.
  - Ⓓ They are both funny.
6. Why did the stork put the meat into a jar with a long neck?
  - Ⓐ It was harder for the stork to eat.
  - Ⓑ The stork thought the meat would taste better.
  - Ⓒ The stork wanted to teach the fox a lesson.
  - Ⓓ The stork had a short beak.



# QUIZ

Read each question carefully and choose the best answer.

7. Why did the peacock go to the goddess of animals?
  - Ⓐ He wanted to make a beautiful song.
  - Ⓑ He wanted to be fast.
  - Ⓒ He wanted to be big and beautiful.
  - Ⓓ He wanted to be strong.
8. What does it mean to **flatter** someone?
  - Ⓐ to give a gift to him or her
  - Ⓑ to get angry at him or her
  - Ⓒ to sweet-talk him or her
  - Ⓓ to teach him or her a lesson
9. How do you think the crow feels after he finally drinks from the pitcher?
  - Ⓐ pretty
  - Ⓑ unhappy
  - Ⓒ proud
  - Ⓓ thirsty

# QUIZ

Read each question carefully and choose the best answer.

10. What do the peacock's actions tell you about him?

- Ⓐ He is shy.
- Ⓑ He is smart.
- Ⓒ He is jealous.
- Ⓓ He is happy.

11. **Extended Response:** Tell which fable gives you the best lesson for your life and explain why.

# Discussion Questions

Why do the stories end in with a moral?

In the fable, *The Crow and the Pitcher*, the crow had a problem.

What was his problem and how did he solve it?

Why do you think the author wrote these fables?

What makes these stories fantasy?

Why do you think Aesop used a fox and a crow as main characters in several of his stories?