

Parable

Definition of Parable

Parable is a [figure of speech](#), which presents a short story, typically with a [moral](#) lesson at the end. You often have heard stories from your elders, such as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, and *All is Vanity*. These are parables, because they teach you a certain moral lesson. Parable is, in fact, a Greek word, *parable*, which means “[comparison](#).” It is like a succinct [narrative](#), or a universal truth that uses [symbolism](#), [simile](#), and [metaphor](#), to demonstrate the moral lesson intended to be taught. Like [analogy](#), we find the use of parables in [verse](#) and [prose](#), specifically in religious texts, such as the *Upanishad* or the *Bible*.

Examples of Parable in Literature

Example #1: *The Cow* (From The Holy Quran)

The holy Quran narrates a parable in second chapter, *Al Baqra* 2: 259, in which a man happened to pass through hamlet – a place where people died centuries ago. The man doubted the power of God, and thought of how He would resurrect them on Doomsday. Subsequently, God caused him to die, resurrected him after a hundred years, and asked him how long he slept, to which he replied only a day. However, his food was still fresh, which he brought with him.

This shows that God has control over all things and time. The traveler’s donkey, on the other hand, was dead and had become a skeleton. Then, God joined the bones, muscles, flesh, and blood of the donkey again before the man, and brought it back to life. Hence, this parable taught us a moral lesson in three ways:

God can change time.

God has power over life, death, resurrection, and no other can have this power.

Humans have no power, and they should put their faith only in God.

Example #2: *The Good Samaritan* (From The Holy Bible)

Jesus told a very popular parable of a *Good Samaritan* in the holy Bible. The *Gospel of Luke* (10:29–37) describes that there was a traveler (who may have been a Jew), whom some people had robbed and beaten alongside the road, then left him. A Levite and a priest passed through that way, but both ignored the man.

Eventually, a Samaritan came by and helped the injured and miserable man, without thinking about his race or religious belief (generally, Samaritans despised Jews). Later, the traveler revealed himself to be the Christ. The moral of this parable is to help all those who are in need, without having prejudice for anyone due to perceived differences.

Example #3: *The Emperor's New Clothes* (By Hans Christian Anderson)

Hans Christian Anderson wrote a short parable, “*The Emperor's New Clothes*.” The author tells about the life of a silly and vain emperor, whom two cheaters approached, pretending to be artists. They suggested that he wear their clothes, which they said would make him invisible in front of incompetent and stupid people. The emperor agreed, and paid them to make such clothes, as he enjoyed wearing fancy dress.

In fact, they did not make any fancy suit; however, people started admiring them, so that they might not be considered useless and stupid. Therefore, the emperor took off his clothes and wore the invisible dress, which actually left him prancing around town naked. Nobody told him the truth except a young boy who screamed to see him. Thus, the moral of this parable is that people should have their own opinions, and they need not depend upon others' opinions.

Example #4: *The Prodigal Son* (From The Holy Bible, Book of Luke)

In the book of Luke (15:11–32), Jesus teaches about the love of God for humanity. In this parable, a rich father divides his estate – while he was still living – between his two sons. His younger son does not want to wait until his father’s death for his inheritance, and asks for it immediately. That son wastes the whole of his newfound wealth, and becomes miserable. Realizing he will need his father’s help to survive, he returns home to beg to become one of his father’s hired servants. Rather than being angry, the father welcomes his wayward son, celebrating his return.

The elder son, who had remained with his father the entire time, not wasting his inheritance, was perplexed by this, and refused to take part in the celebration. He said to his father:

“Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends...”

The father replies to the eldest son:

“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

When father dies, he leaves his remaining inheritance for the elder son. The tale conveys the symbolic message that God is like a fatherly figure, who loves humanity despite its rebellious nature, and those who follow His path, are welcomed by Him, even if they have strayed.

Function of Parable

Parable is a great teaching tool, because it often uses symbolic [imagery](#) and metaphors that the [audience](#) can easily recognize. Thus, the storyteller can convey complicated moral truths in such a way that they become relatable and understandable to one’s own life. Sometimes listeners have to discern the lesson that a parable conveys, and the audience also participates in arriving at the conclusion in this way. Generally, parables help readers understand philosophical issues or moral lessons in relatable terms, while

tellers could lead them in a better way to apply such principles in their daily lives.