

Moral

Definition of Moral

Derived from the Latin term “*morālis*,” moral means a message conveyed by, or a lesson learned from, a story, a poem, or an event. It is not necessary that the author or the poet has clearly stated it. It can be left for the audiences or the learners to derive. However, at times, moral is clearly stated in the shape of a [proverb](#).

The moral to a story is a universal aspect of the majority of fictional literature that it not only entertains, but also it serves the purpose of instruction, information, and improvement of the audiences. The chorus in the classical [drama](#), for example, commented upon the proceedings and drew out a message for the [audience](#). The novels of Charles Dickens, on the other hand, address the drawbacks of the social and economic system of Victorian Britain, carrying morals of their own type, which are implicit.

In children’s literature, morals are exclusively introduced by the phrase, “The moral of the story is ...” Modern story telling does not employ these explicit techniques, but uses [irony](#) and other devices to convey it.

Examples of Moral in Literature

Mostly, Aesop’s fables are considered to have strong moral conclusions. However, almost all literary writings have some morals to be conveyed to readers. Literary works aimed at children are replete with moral lessons. They provide children with positive lessons and guidelines for the future. Maxims like “Be friends with whom you don’t like,” “Don’t judge people by the way they look,” and “Slow and steady wins the race” are normally the lessons found behind many stories.

Example #1: *The Fox and the Grapes* (By Aesop)

“Again and again he tried after the tempting morsel, but at last had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: ‘I am sure they are sour.’ “

These are the closing lines taken from Aesop’s *The Fox and the Grapes*. It is through the last statement that the fox expresses its dislike of grapes, which it had tried again and again to grasp. This particular story by Aesop discusses a general habit of the people who cannot admit their defeat. Instead, they pass on the blame to someone or something else. The same is the case with the fox in this story, who fails after several attempts.

Example #2: *Dr. Faustu* (By Christopher Marlow)

“My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
Alders and serpents let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not: come not Lucifer:
I’ll burn my books: Ah Mephistophilis!”

One can easily detect the horror and terror expressed by Dr. Faustus in his final [soliloquy](#). His fall indicates that, in spite of being an educated person, he made a great mistake by selling his soul to the devil. His repentance from his misdeeds leads the reader to realize that the path of the devil is doomed. The story of Dr. Faustus symbolizes the eternal struggle between good and evil, and vice and virtue.

Example #3: *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (By Samuel Johnson)

“I have here the world before me; I will review it at leisure:
surely happiness is somewhere to be found ... Happiness must be
something solid and permanent, without fear and without
uncertainty.”

In his famous novel, *Rasselas*, Samuel Johnson narrates the story of a prince who escapes from the valley of happiness in search of eternal

happiness, which he ultimately finds nowhere. And this is the moral lesson of this tale.

Function of Moral

During the period 1780 to 1830, morals were associated with the main purpose of literature, especially literature written for children. In the 18th century, the works by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau focused their attention on children as the audience of literature. However, as it has been stated by E. M. Forster: every good story has a moral, and every bad story is a moral, now it is necessary to deduce the moral. This is because ultimately the aim of literature is to make the world a better place, which is impossible without teaching morals. Therefore, moral is necessary for a piece of literature, which then functions as the main gist of any literary piece.