

# Understanding Theme with Fables

In Aesop's fables, the moral of the story (theme) is written in the last line. In the following fables, the last line or theme has been removed. I have also made some slight changes to the originals.

**Directions:** Determine the moral or theme of these fables and explain your interpretations.

## 1. The Ant and the Grasshopper

In a field one summer's day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An Ant passed by, bearing along with great toil an ear of corn he was taking to the nest. "Why not come and chat with me," said the Grasshopper, "instead of toiling and moiling in that way?" "I am helping to lay up food for the winter," said the Ant, "and recommend you to do the same." "Why bother about winter?" said the Grasshopper; we have got plenty of food at present." But the Ant went on its way and continued its toil. When the winter came the Grasshopper had no food and found itself dying of hunger, while it saw the ants distributing every day corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew.

What did the Grasshopper learn?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

## 2. The Monkey and the Cookies

A monkey put his hand into a jar of cookies. He grasped as many as he could possibly hold, but when he tried to pull out his hand, he was prevented from doing so by the neck of the cookie jar. Unwilling to lose the cookies, and yet unable to withdraw his hand, he burst into tears and bitterly lamented his disappointment.

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

## 3. The Bundle of Sticks

An old monkey on the point of death summoned his sons around him to give them some parting advice. He ordered them to bring in a bundle of sticks, and said to his eldest son: "Break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the sticks. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful. "Untie the bundle," said the father, "and each of you take a stick." When they had done so, he called out to them: "Now, break," and each stick was easily broken. "You

see my meaning," said their father.

What was the father's meaning? .

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 4. The Dogs and the Hides

Some dogs famished with hunger saw a number of cowhides steeping in a river. Not being able to reach them, they agreed to drink up the river, but it happened that they burst themselves with drinking long before they reached the hides.

What is the moral of the story? .

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 5. The Monkey and the Snake

One winter a Monkey found a Snake stiff and frozen with cold. He had compassion on it, and taking it up, placed it in his bosom. The Snake was quickly revived by the warmth, and resuming its natural instincts, bit the monkey, inflicting on him a mortal wound.

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 6. The Fir-Tree and the Bramble

A FIR-TREE said boastfully to the Bramble, "You are useful for nothing at all; while I am everywhere used for roofs and houses." The Bramble answered: "You poor creatures, if you would only call to mind the axes and saws which are about to hew you down, you would have reason to wish that you had grown up a Bramble, not a Fir-Tree."

What lesson does the Bramble teach the Fir-Tree?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 7. The Flies and the Honey-Pot

A number of flies were attracted to a jar of honey which had been overturned in a housekeeper's room, and placing their feet in it, ate greedily. Their feet, however, became so smeared with the honey that they could not use their wings, nor release themselves, and were suffocated.

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 8. The Fox and the Cat

A Fox was boasting to a Cat of its clever devices for escaping its enemies. "I have a whole bag of tricks," he said, "which contains a hundred ways of escaping my enemies." "I have only one," said the Cat; "but I can generally manage with that." Just at that moment they heard the cry of a pack of hounds coming towards them, and the Cat immediately scampered up a tree and hid herself in the boughs. "This is my plan," said the Cat. "What are you going to do?" The Fox thought first of one way, then of another, and while he was debating the hounds came nearer and nearer, and at last the Fox in his confusion was caught up by the hounds and soon killed by the huntsmen.

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story: The fox was killed because of his indecision.

#### 9. The Fox and the Crow

A Crow, having stolen a bit of meat, perched in a tree and held it in her beak. A Fox, seeing this, longed to possess the meat himself, and by a wily stratagem succeeded. "How handsome is the Crow," he exclaimed, in the beauty of her shape and in the fairness of her complexion! Oh, if her voice were only equal to her beauty, she would deservedly be considered the Queen of Birds!" This he said deceitfully; but the Crow, anxious to refute the reflection cast upon her voice, set up a loud caw and dropped the flesh. The Fox quickly picked it up, and thus addressed the Crow: "My good Crow, your voice is right enough, but your wit is wanting."

What is the moral of the story? .

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 10. The Goose with the Golden Eggs

One day a monkey went to the nest of his Goose and found there an egg all yellow and glittering. When he took it up it was as heavy as lead and he was going to throw it away, because he thought a trick had been played upon him. But, on second thought, he took it home and soon found to his delight that it was an egg of pure gold. Every morning the same thing occurred, and he soon became rich by selling his eggs. As he grew rich he grew greedy; and thinking to get at once all the gold the Goose could give, he killed it and opened it only to find nothing.

What is the moral of the story? .

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 11. The Fox and the Crane

At one time the Fox and the Stork were on visiting terms and seemed very good friends. So the Fox invited the Stork to dinner, and for a joke put nothing before her but some soup in a very shallow dish. This the Fox could easily lap up, but the Stork could only wet the end of her long bill in it, and left the meal as hungry as when she began. "I am sorry," said the Fox, "the soup is not to your liking." The Crane, in his turn, asked the Fox to dine at his home the next night. When they were seated at table all that was for their dinner was contained in a very long-necked jar with a narrow mouth, in which the Fox could not insert his snout, so all he could manage to do was to lick the outside of the jar.

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

#### 12. The Fox Who Had Lost His Tail

A Fox caught in a trap escaped, but in so doing lost his tail. Thereafter, feeling his life a burden from the shame and ridicule to which he was exposed, he schemed to convince all the other Foxes that being tailless was much more attractive, thus making up for his own deprivation. He assembled a good many Foxes and publicly advised them to cut off their tails, saying that they would not only look much better without them, but that they would get rid of the weight of the brush, which was a very great inconvenience. One of them interrupting him said, "If you had not yourself lost your tail, my friend, you would not give us such advice."

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story:

### 13. The Hares and the Frogs

The Hares were so persecuted by the other beasts that they did not know where to go. As soon as they saw a single animal approach them, off they used to run. One day they saw a troop of wild Horses stampeding about, and in quite a panic all the Hares scuttled off to a nearby lake, determined to drown themselves rather than live in such a continual state of fear. But just as they got near the bank of the lake, a troop of Frogs, frightened in their turn by the approach of the Hares scuttled off, and jumped into the water. "Truly," said one of the Hares, "things are not so bad as they seem."

What is the moral of the story?

Explain how your answer relates to the story: