

Imitation In Writing

AESOP'S FABLES

Background:

We are commanded in Scripture to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also commanded to imitate those brothers and sisters who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. To imitate something or someone means:

- To do or try to do after the manner of; to follow the example of; to copy in action.
- To make or produce a copy or representation of; to copy, reproduce.
- To be, become, or make oneself like; to assume the aspect or semblance of; to simulate.

This God-sanctioned method of learning is an essential tool for educating young people. For example, how is it that we teach a child to perform simple physical skills such as throwing and catching? “Hold your hands **like this**. Step forward as you throw **like this**.” – Imitation. How is it that we teach a child how to form his letters correctly? “Hold your pencil **like this**. Look at **this ‘a’**. Trace **this letter**. Now, you try to make an ‘a’ **like this one**.” – Imitation. How is it that we teach art? At Logos School students learn how to paint by imitating master painters of the past. “**This** is a good painting. Let’s see if you can **reproduce it**.” – Imitation. How is it that music is taught, or reading, or math? Very often the best instruction in any of these areas necessarily includes imitation. Why, when it comes to teaching young people writing do we educators regularly neglect this effective tool?

Educators in seventeenth century England knew the value of imitation as a tool through which they could teach style, particularly in the area of writing. The primary method of imitation in these English grammar schools was called **Double Translation**. In a double translation the teacher would translate a Latin work into English. The student was to copy this English translation over, paying close attention to every word and its significance. Then the student was to write down the English and Latin together, one above the other, making each language answer to the other. Afterwards the student translated the original Latin to English on his own. This was the first part of the translation. The second part took place ten days afterward when the student was given his final English translation and required to turn it back into good Latin.

Benjamin Franklin wrote of a similar exercise that he employed to educate himself a century later. When he was a young man he came across a particular piece of writing that he delighted in, *The Spectator*. *The Spectator* is a series of 555 popular essays published in 1711 and 1712. These essays were intended to improve manners and morals, raise the cultural level of the middle-class reader, and popularize serious ideas in science and philosophy. They were written well, the style was excellent, and Franklin wanted to imitate it. Here is Franklin’s method of “double translation” regarding *The Spectator*:

With that view (imitating this great work) I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should occur to me. Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

But he realized that he needed a greater stock of words in order to add variety and clarity of

thought to his writing.

Therefore I took some of the tales in the Spectator, and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the sentences and complete the subject. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure to fancy that, in particulars of small consequence, I had been fortunate enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think that I might in time become to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious.

Now the question is; “How can we employ a similar methodology?”

Sample

Imitation In Writing

AESOP'S FABLES

Instructions:

1. **CHOOSE A STUDENT-READER:** Send the fable home with a student the night before you begin the assignment. He should be prepared to read the fable for the class the next day. If you begin the assignment on Monday the fable can be given to a student early in the day so that he has time to prepare a bit before reading for the class.
2. **READ SILENTLY:** Have the students read the fable quietly to themselves, paying close attention to the story line. When they are done, they should underline the vocabulary words in the fable. Discuss, by means of questioning, who the characters are in the fable and what took place.
3. **STUDENT READS FABLE:** The student who was selected earlier to read the fable now comes to the front of the class and reads it.
4. **ORAL RETELLING:** The teacher calls on individual students to retell the fable in their own words. These oral summaries should be short and to the point.
5. **CHARACTERS:** At this point the students will list the main characters in the story.
6. **VOCABULARY:** Call on one student for each of the vocabulary words. That student will read the sentence in which the word is found, providing context, and then define the word for the class. Occasionally the student definition will need to be modified by the teacher so that it is an exact match with the vocabulary word in the fable. One word definitions work well. The idea here is to provide the students with a synonym for each vocabulary word which could be substituted into the sentence without distorting the meaning. Have the students write the definition of each word on the blank provided.
7. **OUTLINE THE PLOT:** At this point the students will go through the fable and summarize the plot one sentence at a time. Each fable has been divided by superscript numbers which correspond to the numbered blanks below, showing how to organize the outline. If the sentence or phrase being outlined contains a vocabulary word, it must be included as one of the words in the outline. These vocabulary words must be underlined in the outline to identify them as such. Initially this activity should be guided by the teacher and completed as a class. Providing every-other simple sentence or phrase for each section is helpful for younger students. There is some room for variation in the exact wording of the sentence or phrase.
8. **CLIP & PASS IN ORIGINAL FABLE:** Before the students begin rewriting the fable they must cut along the dotted line and pass the original text in. Some students will want to read through the fable one more time to better understand the sequence of the story.
9. **WRITE FIRST DRAFT:** The students are now ready to rewrite the fable using their outline to guide them. I allow my students to change the characters and some of the incidentals of the story in their rewrites as long as the original plot is identifiable. The exceptionally good writers in the class will thrive off of this opportunity to be innovative. The students who are less comfortable with writing will tend to stick to the same characters and incidentals, that is fine. All of the vocabulary

words must be used correctly and underlined in the rewrite. The students should skip lines on the first draft to allow room for editing.

10. EDITING: Students take their rewrites home for the parents to edit. This is most profitable when the parents sit down with the student and edit the fable together. Guidelines for editing can be sent home at the beginning of the year or communicated at Back to School Night so that parents know what is expected. I require that the edited first draft be due Thursday if the assignment was given Monday. This gives parents and students a few days to complete and edit the fable.

11. FINAL DRAFT: Time in class is provided for the students to work on the final draft. The students should not skip lines. I allow the students to draw a rubric at the beginning of their story if they like.

12. ASSIGNMENT DUE: The final draft will be due on Friday. They should turn in three items stapled together in the following order: Final Draft, First Draft and Outline. From time to time it is beneficial for the students to read their rewrites for the class. This activity could be scheduled on Friday when they are due.

13. GRADING: The grading sheet should be duplicated, cut out, completed, and stapled to each student's rewrite. This will help the teacher to focus on the essential aspects of the composition as he is grading it and will provide specific feedback to the student and parents regarding which areas will need more attention in the future. As a rule, I deduct one point for each mistake per page for sentence structure, spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

Proposed Schedule: (grades 2 and up)

Monday	Steps 1-9 (see instructions above)	60 minutes
Tues. & Wed.	Step 10	(no class time)
Thursday	Step 11	30 minutes
Friday	Steps 12-13	(as desired)

Student Example:

The Fox and the Woodcutter

¹A fox, running before the hounds, came across a woodcutter felling an oak and begged him to show him a safe hiding-place. ²The woodcutter advised him to take shelter in his own hut, so the fox crept in and hid himself in a corner. ³The huntsman soon came up with his hounds and inquired of the woodcutter if he had seen the fox. ⁴He declared that he had not seen him, and yet pointed, all the time he was speaking, to the hut where the fox lay hidden. ⁵The huntsman took no notice of the signs, but believing his word, hastened forward in the chase. ⁶As soon as they were well away, the fox departed without taking any notice of the woodcutter. ⁷Whereon he called to him and reproached him, saying, “⁸You ungrateful fellow, you owe your life to me, and yet you leave me without a word of thanks.” ⁹The fox replied, “Indeed, I should have thanked you fervently if your deeds had been as good as your words, and if your hands had not been traitors to your speech.”



The Fox and the Woodcutter

Name: Example

I. List the characters in this fable: fox, hounds, woodcutter, huntsman

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. felling: cutting down 3. reproached: scolded
2. inquired: asked 4. traitors: betrayers

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. Fox begs felling woodcutter. 6. Fox escapes without notice.
2. Woodcutter hides fox. 7. Woodcutter reproaches fox.
3. Huntsman with hounds inquires. 8. “I saved you!?!”
4. Woodcutter declares but points. 9. “Your hands are traitors.”
5. Huntsman misses signs.

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.

The Fox and the Woodcutter

(by Laurel McGarry – 3rd Grade)

A fox, who was being chased by hounds, came panting up to a woodcutter who was felling an oak and begged him to give him a safe place to hide. The woodcutter quickly advised the fox to take shelter under a piece of wood that he kept on the windowsill in his hut. Soon afterward the huntsman came and inquired, "Have you seen a fox? For I am chasing one." The woodcutter replied, "No, I have not seen hide nor hair of this fox you speak of (but all the time the woodcutter was pointing to his window where you could see a few red hairs of the fox). The huntsman took no notice of the signs but believed what he had heard and was off like a jackrabbit being chased by a dog. After the huntsman was quite gone the fox came out and started off in the opposite direction of the huntsman. The woodcutter reproached him and said, "You ungrateful, obstinate – thing!! You have no right to be called a fox!!" The fox's response was, "I would have thanked you fervently if your hand had not been a traitor to your speech, for I saw you point to me when you spoke to the huntsman." "You," screamed the woodcutter, "You – You'll pay for this!! I'm going to fell a tree on you!! I'll wipe out all the foxes in the world!! I'll do something really, really awful to you when you're not looking!!!!"

Finis

AESOP'S FABLES

Plot Outline	10	_____
Handwriting	10	_____
Vocab. Usage	20	_____
Sentence Structure	15	_____
Spell./Punct./ Cap.	25	_____
Story Line	20	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

AESOP'S FABLES

Plot Outline	10	_____
Handwriting	10	_____
Vocab. Usage	20	_____
Sentence Structure	15	_____
Spell./Punct./ Cap.	25	_____
Story Line	20	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

AESOP'S FABLES

Plot Outline	10	_____
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Spell./Punct./ Cap.	25	_____
Story Line	20	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

AESOP'S FABLES

Plot Outline	10	_____
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Spell./Punct./ Cap.	25	_____
Story Line	20	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

AESOP'S FABLES

Plot Outline	10	_____
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<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

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Total	100	_____

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Story Line	20	_____
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Total	100	_____

The Viper and the File

¹A viper, entering the workshop of a smith, ²sought from the tools the means of satisfying his hunger. ³He more particularly addressed himself to a file, ⁴and asked him the favor of a meal. ⁵The file replied, ⁶“You must indeed be a simple-minded fellow if you expect to get anything from me, ⁷who am accustomed to take from everyone, ⁸and never to give anything in return.”



The Viper and the File

Name: _____

I. List the characters in this fable: _____

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. viper: _____ 3. particularly: _____

2. means: _____ 4. addressed: _____

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. _____ 5. _____

2. _____ 6. _____

3. _____ 7. _____

4. _____ 8. _____

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.

The Ants and the Grasshopper

¹The ants were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. ²A grasshopper, perishing with famine, ³passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. ⁴The ants inquired of him, ⁵"Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" ⁶He replied, "I had not leisure enough. ⁷I passed the days in singing." ⁸They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."



The Ants and the Grasshopper

Name: _____

I. List the characters in this fable: _____

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. perishing: _____ 3. inquired: _____

2. earnestly: _____ 4. leisure: _____

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. _____ 5. _____

2. _____ 6. _____

3. _____ 7. _____

4. _____ 8. _____

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.

The Crow and the Pitcher

¹A crow perishing with thirst saw a pitcher, ²and hoping to find water, flew to it with delight. ³When he reached it, he discovered to his grief that it contained so little water that he could not possibly get at it. ⁴He tried everything he could think of to reach the water, but all his efforts were in vain. ⁵At last he collected as many stones as he could carry and dropped them one by one with his beak into the pitcher, ⁶until he brought the water within his reach and thus saved his life.

⁷Necessity is the mother of invention.



The Crow and the Pitcher

Name: _____

I. List the characters in this fable: _____

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. perishing: _____ 3. vain: _____

2. grief: _____ 4. necessity: _____

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. _____ 5. _____

2. _____ 6. _____

3. _____ 7. _____

4. _____

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.

The Fox and the Grapes

¹A famished fox saw some clusters of ripe black grapes hanging from a trellised vine. ²She resorted to all her tricks to get at them, ³but wearied herself in vain, for she could not reach them. ⁴At last she turned away, hiding her disappointment and saying: ⁵“The grapes are sour, and not ripe as I thought.”

It is easy to despise what you know you cannot possess.



The Fox and the Grapes

Name: _____

I. List the characters in this fable: _____

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. famished: _____ 3. vain: _____

2. resorted: _____ 4. despise: _____

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.

The Wolf and the Goat

¹A wolf saw a goat feeding at the summit of a steep precipice, ²where he had no chance of reaching her. ³He called to her and earnestly begged her to come lower down, lest she fall by some mishap; ⁴and he added that the meadows lay where he was standing, and that the herbage was most tender. ⁵She replied, "No, my friend, it is not for the pasture that you invite me, ⁶but for yourself, who are in want of food."



The Wolf and the Goat

Name: _____

I. List the characters in this fable: _____

II. Vocabulary: Underline the vocabulary words in the fable, and define them below.

1. precipice: _____ 3. mishap: _____

2. earnestly: _____ 4. herbage: _____

III. Outline this fable using a three or four word sentence or phrase for each numbered section. Be sure to include and underline all of the vocabulary words in this outline.

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

IV. Cut along the dotted line to remove the original fable. Rewrite this fable using your outline. Include and underline the vocabulary words in your rewrite. Check your work for the following: neat and graceful handwriting, title, indentation, spelling, punctuation.