

[Aesop's Fables - Resource for Learning Activities](#) Has resources for 40 of Aesop's Fables as well as other famous literature selections, i.e. Shakespeare For detailed activities click on [Programme notes](#)

### **Drama techniques to support activities for Aesop's Fables:**

#### **Hot seating:**

A character is questioned by the group about his or her background, behavior and motivation. Even done without preparation, it is an excellent way of fleshing out a character.

Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs or small groups. The technique is additionally useful for developing questioning skills with the rest of the group. The traditional approach is for the pupil playing the character to sit on a chair in front of the group (arranged in a semi-circle), although characters may be hot-seated in pairs or groups. It is helpful if the teacher takes on the role of facilitator to guide the questioning in constructive directions however the teacher could take on the role of the character themselves.

#### **Freeze-frame:**

Working in small groups or a whole class, the children create a moment that shows the action in a narrative frozen in time, as if the pause button has been pressed. This allows them to think about what is going on for each of the characters in the frame, or to consider what is happening from different points of view. The moment itself may be the interesting thing, or they may be asked to think about what has just happened or is about to happen.

Make sure children have sufficient background knowledge of the context for the freeze-frame to understand their own role in the action or to discuss it.

#### **Thought tapping:**

When the freeze-frame has been created, the teacher moves quietly and slowly between the characters in the scene. At the teacher's given signal to an individual child, that child – in character – voices their thoughts aloud in a few words. This allows all the children to hear what some or all of the characters are thinking at that very moment. It gives clues about the role each child has chosen and can raise issues about different viewpoints. It also deepens children's engagement with the learning context being established.

**Slow motion:**

Select one of the characters in the freeze frame and ask the child to begin the action again, showing what happened next for that person, but moving slowly so that the rest of the class, still 'frozen', has time to think not only about what is happening but why. Another option is for the teacher or a child to narrate the slow-motion action that is taking place for one character.

**Thought tracking:**

Similar to thought tapping, this approach allows the class to follow one character's train of thought through the action for longer. For example, one or two children move through the freeze-frame in slow motion, speaking their thoughts aloud as they continue to reveal their feelings, viewpoints and/or motivation. Alternatively, other children track the freeze-frame players' thinking by speaking their thoughts aloud for them.

**Role on the wall:**

A character is depicted and developed in a visual way using a large format note making strategy. The teacher can use a flipchart, whiteboard, large screen or a big piece of paper displayed 'on the wall'. A simple character shape such as a stick person is drawn. The character may already be partly developed, for example through reading the first chapter of a class novel (What do we already know about this person?), or the children may be creating the character from scratch (What do we want this character to be like?). As children contribute their own ideas, the teacher adds brief notes to the visual in an appropriate position. Encourage children to talk and think about different dimensions of the character.

For example, if they focus on physical description ask them what kind of person this might be.

**Collective voice:**

The class sits in a circle and the teacher takes on the role of one speaker in a conversation. The whole class takes on the role of a single, second speaker. The teacher begins the conversation, talking to the 'other person' (the class) and any child can speak to continue the dialogue. A common purpose is for the children to find out some information from the first speaker or for them to give advice. This sounds complicated but is a powerful teaching convention and most children quickly adopt the strategy to take turns at speaking. If more than one child speaks at once, the teacher decides how to answer one or both. Children usually manage the 'corporate role' well because they are focused on what the first character (the teacher) has to say and they want to find out more. Once children are familiar with this convention, the class can take on the more responsible role of the character with information to pass on.

### **Overheard conversations:**

The children hear a conversation that they would not usually have access to and can use this extra information to consider its impact on a narrative or a situation.

For example, they have been using conscience alley to explore two different sides of an argument. The teacher introduces two or more characters who are in some way connected with whatever the situation is, and the class is able to listen to a conversation they have. For example, when the main character reaches the end of the conscience alley, the children all sit down and 'accidentally overhear' the conversation between two people walking along the road. An overheard conversation often needs to include specific information that impacts on the situation. The teacher can ensure that the right information is included, by taking part in the dialogue. Conversations can also be overheard to provide a range of different viewpoints about the same issue.

### **Generic activities for use with any of the fables Speaking and listening:**

- Orally tell and retell the story using props, puppets, masks etc.
- In pairs/small groups, retell the story as fast as you can.
- Orally retell the story from the point of view of a different character, e.g. a minor character.
- Play 'Word Tennis' – in pairs, retell the story one word at a time, each child saying the next word in the sentence.
- Play 'Who Am I?' – take turns to provide clues about one of the characters in a story; the others have to guess who it is.
- Listen to a fable and make brief notes of the main events. Use as the basis for orally retelling or reinventing the story.
- Retell the story around a circle, each member of the group adding the next part.
- Research a fable and present the information to a specified audience. • Identify features common to the different fables, or versions of the same fable.
- Take on the role of 'Theatre Critics' and comment constructively on performances of the fables.
- In pairs, create a dialogue for some or all of a fable.

### **Drama:**

- Use drama as a 'talk for writing' strategy. Drama activities can be used to support discussion and oral/written outcomes of a unit of work.
- Use drama techniques to promote discussion about the fables and/or to prepare for the writing of these/your own fables.
- Hot seat the characters. Video Conferencing may be used to hot seat characters across, or between, schools.
- Prepare and present a monologue in role.
- Play 'Author's Chair'. Take on the role of Aesop and answer questions in role

### **Reading:**

- Make multiple copies of the transcript and use as a whole-class/guided reading text.
- Additional suggestions for using the transcripts include:
  - Listen to the audio version alongside the transcript
  - Read part of the story and predict what might happen next.
  - Chop up the text and rearrange in correct order
  - Compare and contrast the tales: settings and characters, and investigate the language used
  - Take on the role of one or more of the characters and write about them using information that you have gathered from reading the story.
- Find the original fable
  - Note the differences (Compare and Contrast -
  - Why do you think the original fable has been changed in this way?

### **Writing:**

- Use the fables as the basis of a unit of literacy work. Outcomes may include:
  - creating a class anthology of fables (re- told or reinvented);
  - developing your own class/school radio station, record your fables and enjoy;
  - constructing multimedia/interactive fables using multimedia presentation software such as PowerPoint or similar.
- Rewrite a fable using different types of animals.
- Rewrite the story as a play script and act out in groups. Alternatively, create theatre programs, tickets, posters etc. and put on a show.
- Produce animated fables using simple stop-frame animation software. • Create contemporary adaptations of the fables.
- Create character profiles.
- Create a cartoon depicting one of the tales.
- Create 'mixed-up' fables, selecting elements from across the tales to create a 'new' fable.
- Re-write a fable in the first person – from the point of view of one character, then the other.
- Write in role: postcards, letters, emails, notes, messages in bottles, songs.
- Write poems around a tale.
- Write a non-chronological report/biography/first-person autobiography about Aesop.
- Summarize the tale. Extend to summarizing in 100 words.
- Write other [anthropomorphic](#) tales.