

Lesson Plan: Weaving Your Own Fable

Subject: Language Arts, Visual Arts, Critical Thinking

Grade Level: Homeschool, adaptable for Grades 2-5

Focus Text: "The Fabled Life of Aesop" by Ian Lendler, illustrated by Pamela Zagarenski

Materials Needed:

- The book: "The Fabled Life of Aesop" by Ian Lendler
- Plain paper for writing and drawing
- Pencils and erasers
- Art supplies (crayons, colored pencils, markers, watercolors, or even collage materials like old magazines or fabric scraps)
- Optional: "My Fable Planner" graphic organizer (a simple sheet with boxes for: My Experience, The Moral, Animal Characters, Problem, and Solution)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Identify the three key components of a fable: animal characters that act like humans, a clear problem or conflict, and a moral or lesson.
- Transform a personal experience into an original, written fable that includes a moral.
- Create an illustration for their fable that incorporates symbolic elements, inspired by Pamela Zagarenski's art style.

Lesson Activities & Procedure

Part 1: The Hook - The Power of a Story (10 minutes)

1. **Engage with a Question:** Start with a curious question. "Imagine you got in trouble for something you didn't do. You can't just say 'I didn't do it.' How could you use a short, clever story about animals to explain your side and teach the other person a lesson?"
2. **Introduce the Book:** Explain that today you'll be reading about a real person named Aesop, who was a slave in ancient Greece. He was famous for using exactly these kinds of clever stories—called fables—to get out of trouble, share wisdom, and even win his freedom.

Part 2: Reading and Exploring the Fable (20-25 minutes)

1. **Interactive Read-Aloud:** Read "The Fabled Life of Aesop" aloud together. Pause at the fables integrated into the story (e.g., "The Wolf and the Lamb," "The Tortoise and the Hare").
2. **Guided Discussion Questions:** As you read, stop and ask thoughtful questions:
 - **About the Story:** "Why do you think Aesop told a story instead of just answering the question directly? Was it safer? Smarter?"
 - **About the Fables:** "In the fable of the boy who stole the figs, what lesson was Aesop trying to teach his master, Xanthus?"
 - **About the Illustrations:** "Look closely at the pictures. Pamela Zagarenski uses a lot of crowns and teacups. What do you think they might mean or represent in the story? Do you see any other repeating symbols?" (This encourages visual literacy and interpretation).

Part 3: Deconstructing a Fable (10 minutes)

1. **Identify the Recipe:** After reading, say, "All of Aesop's fables have a secret recipe. Let's figure it out." Choose one fable from the book, like "The North Wind and the Sun."
2. **Break It Down:** On a piece of paper, work together to identify the three main ingredients:
 - **Characters:** Who are they? (The North Wind, the Sun). Notice they are animals or forces of nature acting like people.
 - **Problem:** What is the conflict? (They argue about who is stronger and try to get a man's coat off).
 - **The Moral:** What is the big idea or lesson? (Persuasion is better than force).

Part 4: Your Turn! Brainstorming Your Fable (15 minutes)

1. **Connect to Real Life:** Say, "Now you get to be a modern-day Aesop! The best fables come from real life. Think about a time you learned a lesson." Provide simple prompts:
 - A time you didn't listen to advice and it went wrong.
 - A time you shared something (or didn't) and what happened.
 - A time you worked really hard for something.
 - A time you judged someone too quickly.
2. **Plan Your Fable:** Use the "My Fable Planner" graphic organizer or just a blank piece of paper.
 - **Step 1: The Moral.** First, write down the lesson you learned from your experience (e.g., "Slow and steady wins the race," or "Don't count your chickens before they hatch," or a new one like "Asking for help makes the job easier.>").
 - **Step 2: Choose Your Characters.** Turn yourself and the other people in your memory into animals. Think about their personalities. Is a stubborn person a mule? A quiet, wise person an owl? A fast, impulsive person a jackrabbit?
 - **Step 3: Outline the Story.** Briefly jot down the problem and how the characters solve it (or fail to solve it), leading to the moral.

Part 5: Creating Your Masterpiece (30-45 minutes)

1. **Write the Fable:** Using the plan, write out the full fable. Encourage using descriptive words. Keep it short and to the point, just like Aesop's fables. End the story by clearly stating the moral.
2. **Illustrate with Meaning:**
 - **Channel Zagarenski:** Remind the student of the unique art in the book. It wasn't just a picture of what happened; it had feelings and symbols.
 - **Add Your Symbols:** Ask, "What symbol could you add to your picture to show the main idea?" For a story about sharing, maybe there are keys and locks. For a story about being patient, maybe there are little seeds or clocks hidden in the background.
 - **Create the Art:** Let the student choose their art supplies. They can use mixed media (drawing with marker and adding watercolor washes, or gluing on small paper shapes) to create a layered look similar to the book's illustrations.

Closure and Assessment

1. **Author's Chair:** Have the student present their finished fable and illustration. Let them read the story aloud and then explain the choices they made in their illustration, especially the symbols they included.
2. **Reflection:** Ask one final question: "Aesop used stories to gain his freedom. What kind of power do you think stories have in our world today?"
3. **Assessment is the Final Product:** The quality of the final product—the written fable and its illustration—will demonstrate if the learning objectives were met. Evaluate based on:
 - Does the fable contain the three key elements (animal characters, problem, moral)?
 - Is the moral clearly connected to the story?
 - Does the illustration thoughtfully attempt to include symbolic elements beyond a literal

depiction of the scene?

Differentiation and Extension

- **For Younger Students (Grades 1-2):** Focus on oral storytelling. The student can dictate their fable to you while you write it down. The illustration can be the primary focus of their work. Simplify the concept of a "symbol" to "a special picture that shows the feeling of the story."
- **For Older Students (Grades 4-5):** Challenge them to write a more complex fable with a less obvious moral. They could also write a short biography of their own life, interweaving two or three original fables at key moments, mimicking the structure of "The Fabled Life of Aesop."
- **Extension Activity:** Create a small, bound "Book of Fables" with several original stories and illustrations.