

FABLES – INTERPRETING MEANING

What is a fable?

A fable is a short, concise animal tale, most often told or written with a moral tagged on in the form of a proverb. Fables will generally contain the following characteristics and patterns:

- The story will be very brief and concise. Time and place are usually irrelevant.
- The characters are usually animals and will be named in the title.
- The downfall or blunder of a character will lead directly to the conclusion and moral of the story.
- The moral will be stated in one sentence and will teach an easily understood lesson.

The Dog and the Shadow

It happened that a dog had gotten a piece of meat and was carrying it home in his mouth to eat it in peace. Now, on his way home, he had to cross a plank lying across a running brook. As he crossed, he looked down and saw his own shadow reflected in the water beneath. Thinking it was another dog with another piece of meat, he made up his mind to have that also. So he made a snap at the shadow in the water, but as he opened his mouth, the piece of meat fell out, dropped into the water, and was never seen again.

Be careful that you don't lose everything while grasping at shadows.

The Lion and the Mouse

Once, when a Lion was asleep, a little mouse began running up and down upon him. This soon awakened the lion, who placed his huge paw upon him and opened his big jaws to swallow him. "Pardon, O king," cried the little mouse. "Forgive me this time, and I shall never forget it. Who knows but what I may be able to do you a favor in return one of these days?" The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him that he lifted up his paw and let him go. Some time after, the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters, who desired to carry him alive to the king, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a wagon on which to carry him. Just then the little mouse happened to pass by, and seeing plight of the lion, went up to him and gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts.

The Bat, the Birds, and the Beasts

A great conflict was about to come off between the Birds and the Beasts. When the two armies were collected together, the bat hesitated, not knowing which to join. The birds that passed his perch said, "Come with us."

But he said, "I am a beast."

Later on, some beasts who were passing underneath him looked up and said, "Come with us."

But he replied, "I am a bird."

Luckily, at the last moment, peace was made, and no battle took place, so the bat came to the Birds and wished to join in the rejoicings; but they all turned against him and he had to fly away. He then went to the Beasts but soon had to fly away, or else they would have torn him to pieces.