

AESOP'S FABLES



Aesop and His Fables

Of Aesop, we know little. Was he a slave, a cripple, a wild adventurer? A Greek, a Phrygian, a Macedonian? Did he find favor in the court of King Croesus or did the angry mob at Delphi put him to death for blasphemy?

While his character is legendary, there is no evidence that he existed; no attributed work surfaced until eight centuries after his supposed death. Yet almost 2,500 years after he is said to have lived, this weaver of tales remains one of the most popular authors in the world.

Aesop is perhaps the most famous of fabulists, but he is not the first. Fables — allegorical narratives that teach a lesson — first came to us in Sanskrit in the ancient Indian collection of tales, the “Panchatandra.” They were also popular in the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Aesop’s own fables were first printed in 1484, becoming only the third illustrated book produced in the English language.

Fables reappeared in 17th Century England and again in 19th Century France. In our century, one of the most stark renditions exists in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Writing in the 1940’s, humorist James Thurber gave fables a distinctively American flavor, and his stories still delight readers today with their saucy, contemporary charm.

Because fables are from man’s earliest days, when he lived closely with beast and nature in a life dedicated to survival, the tales speak of simple truths and lessons for everyday life. In that simpler world, it was common to imbue animals and aspects of nature with human qualities; hence their ability to speak and feel emotion. The characters serve as satirists of human foibles, and their messages of common sense transcend cultural and behavioral boundaries.

Timeless, humorous, universal: therein lies the beauty of fables, as true today in any language as they were in the beginning.

Cast and Credits

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Bullfrogs
Cat
Dolphin
Foxes
Goose
Lions
Mice
Monkey
Oxen
Peasant
Peasant's Wife
Stork
Sun
Traveler
Trees
Wind
Woodsman

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