

Tiny Tales Teaching Guide

Tiny Tales *Teaching Guide*

**IDEAS FOR TEACHING WITH 100-WORD
STORIES**

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About This Book

For twenty years, I've taught mythology and folklore courses at the University of Oklahoma. My students read traditional myths and legends, and then they write their own stories inspired by the reading. When people retell old stories in new ways, you never know what will happen; no two stories ever turn out the same. There are an infinite number of possibilities, and the more stories you write, the more ideas you'll come up with.

In this book, I've collected some stories and storytelling ideas drawn from these collections:

Tiny Tales from Aesop

Tiny Tales from India

Tiny Tales of Nasruddin

These "Tiny Tales" books are available free online (epub, PDF, etc.), and they are Creative-Commons-licensed so you can create your own textbook;

more about that below. You will find all three books in all the different formats here:

100Words.LauraGibbs.net

For each story included in this Guide, I've suggested a storytelling idea based on changes to the plot or characters, or a change in style. These are just suggestions. There are always other possibilities... endless possibilities: there's no limit to creativity.

Because the stories are very short, there's lots of room to expand. Each "tiny tale" is just 100 words long, so you might expand the story to 200 words, or 500, or 999. Perhaps 567 or maybe 234. The specific number isn't important; the goal is just to have a length in mind so you can find your focus and know when to say the story is done.

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Here are just a few ideas about how you can reuse (repurpose, remix, etc.) these stories for your own projects:

* ***Create your own class textbook.*** You can use the plain-text version of this Guide and/or the Tiny Tales books to create a textbook for your class. Just copy-and-paste the stories you want to use and then interweave your own notes and commentary, adjusting each story as needed to align with your students' skills and interests.

* ***Help your students create their own story anthologies.*** Each student can create their own personal story collection, rewriting their favorite stories in their own way, along with "author's notes" about the original story and how they've changed that story to make it their own.

* ***Illustrate the stories.*** You and your students can create your own art or use Creative-Commons-licensed illustrations to produce

illustrated versions of your stories. You can also make memes to accompany the stories, or turn them into cartoons.

* ***Perform the stories.*** You can adapt the stories into dramatic scripts for podcasts, puppet shows, etc., with students playing the roles of the different characters, adding the sound effects, music, and so on.

Finally, the most important advice of all: as you reuse, repurpose, and remix the stories... let your imagination run wild, and have fun!

Stories and Storytelling Ideas

1. THE LION'S SHARE [AESOP 1]

A lion, a cow, a goat, and a sheep were working together as partners.

They managed to kill a stag, and the lion divided their prize into four equal parts.

"The first part is mine," he said, "because I am the lion. The second part goes to me because I am the strongest. Next, I will take the third part for myself on account of my exceedingly hard work. Finally, if anyone so much as touches the fourth part, they will know my wrath!"

That is the lion's share: he pretends to share, but he takes it all for himself.

This Aesop's fable is the origin of a phrase people still use today: the lion's share. Write your own version of "the lion's share" with humans instead of animals as the characters.

2. THE ANGRY LION [AESOP 2]

There was once an enraged lion, filled with anger and hatred, hoping to find another lion he could fight with and kill.

Then, as he was looking down into a well, there it was: a lion had fallen in there.

It was just his own reflection in the water, of course, but he saw what he wanted to see.

The angry lion, convinced he had found the enemy he was hoping to find, sprang and jumped into the well, and he drowned.

So it is that those who are angry often do more harm to themselves than to anyone else.

Can you think of another emotion that, like anger, leads people to be their own worst enemy? Write a story about that emotion, choosing an appropriate animal to embody that emotion.

3. THE LION AND THE BULLS [AESOP 4]

A lion wanted to attack two bulls, thinking they would make a very fine feast.

The two bulls joined forces, however, and turned their horns towards the lion, so he could not get between them. Combining forces, those bulls were stronger than the lion.

Since the lion couldn't fight both bulls at once, he resorted to subterfuge instead.

"If you betray your partner to me, I promise not to touch you!" he said to each one, separately. "I'll kill the other one; I won't kill you."

Using this trick, the lion managed to kill both bulls easily, one by one.

We get to hear from the lion in this story, but not the bulls. Add more dialogue so that we can hear the back-and-forth between the lion and each of the bulls.

4. THE LION AND THE MOUSE [AESOP 5]

As a mouse ran over a sleeping lion, the lion awoke and grabbed her.

"Let me go, please!" squeaked the mouse. "I'll repay your kindness, I promise!"

"What could you ever do for me?" scoffed the lion. "I'm letting you go only because it's not worth my time to kill you."

A few days later, the lion was caught in a hunter's snare. He roared in terror, and the little mouse ran to the rescue, gnawing through the ropes and freeing the lion.

"I was wrong about you," said the grateful lion. "You're a good friend to have after all."

The story starts with a mouse running over a sleeping lion. How did that happen? Add something to the start of the story to tell us just where and when and why and how a mouse ended up running over a sleeping lion.

5. THE LION'S ARMY [AESOP 6]

There was a fierce war between the beasts and the birds, and the lion had taken command of the army of beasts, with tigers and bears, leopards and wolves, and all sorts of mighty warriors in his ranks.

The donkeys and rabbits wanted to enlist too.

The tigers and bears and other warriors scoffed, but the lion accepted the volunteers gladly. "The donkeys will be my trumpeters," the lion said, "and the rabbits will be my couriers."

The greatest commanders know how to make the best use of all their soldiers, based on the strengths of each and every one.

The story mentions a war between the beasts and the birds. Who do you think is in command of the bird army? Write a story about how the bird-commander organizes their army as the lion does.

6. THE LION CUB AND MAN [AESOP 7]

"Don't fight Man," said the Lion to his Cub, but the Cub didn't listen. The Cub went looking for Man.

He saw a Bull. "Are you Man?"

"No, I bear Man's yoke."

Next he saw a Horse. "Are you Man?"

"No, Man rides me."

Then he saw someone splitting logs with wedges: a Man!

"Fight me, Man!" said the Cub.

"I will! But first, help me split this log."

When the Cub put his paws in the crack, Man knocked out the wedge, trapping the Cub's paws.

The Cub finally pulled loose and went home with bloody paws, lesson learned.

Imagine a conversation between the cub and the father-lion when the cub gets home and tells his father about meeting the horse, the bull (plus any other animals you want to add), and finally the man.

7. THE LION IN LOVE [AESOP 8]

A lion had fallen madly in love with the daughter of a woodcutter.

"Please let me marry your daughter," the lion said to the woodcutter. "I will love and cherish her always."

"My daughter is a tender and delicate girl," the man replied, "and she cannot endure a lion's claws and teeth."

"Do not fear," said the lion. "I will have my teeth and claws removed, and then I will marry your daughter."

The lion did as he promised, but when he returned to the woodcutter to arrange the marriage, the man beat the defenseless lion and drove him away.

What do you think the woman is thinking and doing through this whole story? Write the story from her point of view in diary entries day by day as the events of the story unfold.

8. THE LION AND THE MAN DEBATING [AESOP 9]

"I'm stronger than you!" roared the lion.

"No, you're not!" shouted the man. "I'm stronger than you, and I'll prove it."

The man took the lion to see a painting of a man killing a lion. "Just look at that!" he declared triumphantly.

"A man painted that painting," the lion scoffed. "If a lion could paint, he would paint a lion killing a man. Come on, and I'll show you some real proof."

The lion then took the man to the circus where a lion really was killing a man.

"This isn't pretend," the lion told him. "This is real."

Pick another animal character who is having a debate with a human being so that your animal character, like Aesop's lion, wins the debate.

9. THE OLD LION AND THE HORSE [AESOP 11]

An old lion was stalking a horse, but he was no longer strong, so he decided to play a trick instead.

"I'm a doctor," he shouted to the horse, "and I see that you're limping."

The horse, however, was also a trickster. "What good luck!" he said. "I've got a thorn in my hoof. Please remove it if you can."

Then, when the lion bent down to inspect the hoof, the horse kicked him in the head and ran off.

"That horse tricked this old trickster, fair and square," said the stunned lion, "and I've got only myself to blame."

Imagine the horse runs into a friend (another horse, or some other animal) after this episode. How would the horse tell the story in his own words?

10. THE WILD DONKEY [AESOP 16]

An onager who had strayed from his herd in search of grass saw a donkey eating a bundle of barley straw.

“That barley straw looks tasty,” thought the wild donkey, “and how fat he looks. He must be a lucky donkey indeed!”

Then the wild donkey watched as a man put heavy bundles on the donkey’s back. The man shouted at the donkey, and then he threatened the donkey with a whip.

At that, the onager turned and ran. “I was wrong; that donkey is not lucky after all. I would never sell my freedom in exchange for barley straw.”

Come up with another pairing of a wild animal and a tame animal to tell a similar story about life in the wild versus domesticated life.

11. THE HORSE AND THE DONKEY'S LOAD [AESOP 19]

A tanner was driving his donkey and his horse to market, and the donkey staggered under the weight of his load.

"Help me, horse!" said the donkey. "I need you to take just a little bit of the load. Have mercy!"

"Bearing the load is your job!" replied the horse. "I'm no donkey."

Soon afterwards, the donkey collapsed and died.

The tanner skinned the donkey, and then he put the donkey's load on the horse, along with the donkey's skin.

"Woe is me!" groaned the horse. "I refused to help the donkey, and now I'm bearing the whole load myself."

Can you think of a way to tell this story with human characters in place of the animals?

12. THE DONKEY IN WINTER [AESOP 21]

It was Winter, and the donkey longed for Spring, with fresh grass to eat and a bit of warmth.

But when Spring came, bringing fresh grass, there was so much toil and labor that it was worse than Winter.

The donkey longed for Summer, but the labor was even greater then and the weather was even hotter.

He began to long for Fall, but Fall brought harvest loads to carry and provisions to lay in before the snows arrived.

Then it was Winter, and once again the donkey longed for Spring, with some fresh grass and a bit of warmth.

This story might make a good song. The four seasons can provide a structure for the verses, with a repeating chorus in between.

13. THE TWO DONKEYS [AESOP 22]

Two donkeys were going to town, one carrying bags of oats, and the other, bags of money.

The donkey carrying money was adorned with all sorts of foppish frippery, including bells that went jingle-jangle as he walked.

The other donkey was as plain as the load he was carrying.

Bandits fell upon them, and they attacked the donkey with the money, stripping him of his cargo and his fine adornments, thrashing him cruelly, but they paid no attention to the donkey with the oats.

“What a fine thing it is,” thought the humble donkey, “not to have anything worth robbing.”

Tell this story with a different pair of animals, or maybe with human characters instead.

14. THE FOX AND THE DRAGON [AESOP 25]

A fox digging in the ground found herself in a dragon's den filled with golden treasure.

"I beg your pardon," she said to the dragon. "I ended up here by accident, and I'll be on my way. Before I go, though, I'd like to know just what you plan to do with all this treasure."

"I have no use for the treasure," said the dragon, "but it is my fate to spend my life here guarding the treasure, night and day."

"Then you're a wretched creature indeed," replied the fox. "You do possess a treasure, but I envy you not."

How do you think the dragon ended up guarding that treasure? Write a story that explains why it is the dragon's fate to spend its life guarding that treasure.

15. THE FOX MEETS THE LION [AESOP 28]

There was once a fox who had never seen a lion before.

The first time she happened to run into a lion she was so scared that she almost died of fright.

When the fox ran into a lion the second time, however, she was still scared, but not as scared as the first time.

Finally, the third time that the fox saw a lion, she walked right up to him and started a conversation.

The moral of the story is that some things are frightening at first, but they are not as scary when you become familiar with them.

Write a story where one animal gets used to another animal, or about a human getting used to something that started out scary.

16. THE FOX VISITS THE LION [AESOP 30]

There was once a lion, king of the animals, who had grown old. He lay in his cave, pretending to be sick. Many different animals came to visit their king, and he devoured the animals one after another after another.

The fox also came, but stood cautiously in front of the cave, greeting the king from there. "I salute you, Your Mightiness!" shouted the fox.

"How good to see you, my dear fox!" replied the lion. "Why don't you come closer?"

"Because I see many tracks of animals going in," replied the fox, "but no tracks of animals coming out."

The fox is still standing there at the end of the story. Is there something the lion could do or say that might succeed in tricking the fox after all?

17. THE FOX WITH A SHORT TAIL [AESOP 34]

A fox had gotten trapped in a snare, and lost his tail as a result.

He then ran into some other foxes. "My brothers, where are you going?" he asked.

"We're on our way to the lion's palace," they replied.

"The lion's palace? I was just there, which is where I learned about the latest fashion: short tails!"

When they heard this, the other foxes immediately cut off their tails too.

Then the fox burst out laughing, glad to have these partners in his misery. "They may not have shared my danger," he said, "but now they share my shame."

What do you think will happen when the other foxes show up with their short tails at the lion's palace?

18. THE FOX AND THE GRAPES [AESOP 36]

A hungry fox was walking along the road when she saw some grapes growing up high on a trellis.

“Those grapes look delicious,” thought the fox. “What a lovely purple color too! That means they’re ripe. I just need to jump up there and grab them.”

So the fox jumped up as high as she could, but the trellis was out of reach.

She tried again. No luck.

Then she tried one last time. Still no luck.

“I knew the grapes were sour anyway,” she said loudly, just in case anybody was listening.

The fox then continued on her way.

This famous phrase “sour grapes” refers to someone who pretends they don’t want something only because they cannot have it. Write your own “sour grapes” story about an animal or a human character.

19. THE FOX AND THE BOAR [AESOP 38]

A fox was strolling through the woods and saw a boar rubbing his tusks against a tree, back and forth, back and forth.

As always, the fox was curious. "What are you doing that for?" she asked the boar.

"I'm readying my weapons!" the boar replied. "The sharper my tusks, the more ready I'll be to fight."

The fox looked around. "But I don't see any enemies," she remarked.

"That's the idea exactly! I'm sharpening my tusks now," replied the boar, "because there will be no time to ready my weapons when the enemy arrives and the actual fighting begins."

Write a follow-up story where the fox applies the lesson she learned from the boar.

20. THE FOX AND THE ROOSTER [AESOP 39]

“Dear rooster,” said the fox, “the beauty of your feathers dazzles me, as does the sound of your cock-a-doodle-doo. You are a magnificent creature indeed!”

The rooster beamed with pleasure, and the fox continued, “And you are a prophet of events to come, announcing the sun’s arrival each dawn.”

As the fox was speaking, he crept closer and closer to the rooster. Finally, he snatched the foolish bird in his teeth.

“You knew when the sun would rise this morning,” the fox said, laughing, “but you failed to predict that I was going to have rooster for my supper tonight!”

The rooster is still alive at the end of the story. Can you think of a way for the rooster to trick the fox and escape?

21. THE FOX AND THE STORK [AESOP 41]

The fox invited the stork to dinner. The main course was soup in a shallow bowl. The fox licked the soup with her tongue, but the stork couldn't eat with her beak. She went away frustrated and hungry.

A few days later, the stork invited the fox to dinner, and she served the food in a glass vase with a narrow neck. The fox could see the food but she couldn't get to it with her tongue, while the stork was able to easily eat the food with her beak.

Thus the stork got her revenge: turn-about is fair play.

What happens next? Do you think the fox and the stork have learned to be friends now, or are they going to keep seeking revenge?

22. THE WOLF BECOMES A MONK [AESOP 48]

A wolf had grown old and couldn't hunt, so he decided to put on a monk's habit and go begging from door to door.

Sure enough, the disguise worked, and the wolf was eating pretty well.

He later ran into one of his fellow wolves.

"What are you doing in the robes of a monk?" asked the other wolf indignantly. "That's not how a wolf should live!"

The old wolf replied, "What do you expect me to do? My teeth are gone, and my tired old legs can't run anymore. I have to either get religion or prepare to starve."

Write your version of "how the wolf became a monk." Do you think the wolf found a monastery that accepted him? Or did he just steal those robes?

23. THE WOLF AND THE PORCUPINE [AESOP 49]

A wolf came across a porcupine. He was a fierce-looking creature armed with darts, so the wolf kept his distance.

At the same time, the wolf was quite hungry, and the porcupine would make a very fine snack if only he would lay aside his darts.

“Dear porcupine,” said the wolf, “don’t you know that we animals are living at peace? It is bad manners for you to be going around armed, as if there were war between us.”

The porcupine bristled. “I’m no fool,” he replied. “When I see a wolf nearby, I am at war, not at peace.”

Imagine that the wolf tries to persuade different animals to trust him. What animal might be foolish enough to believe what the wolf says?

24. THE WOLF AND THE CRANE [AESOP 50]

A wolf was choking on a bone that had stuck in his throat.

"Help me!" he groaned. "Somebody! Anybody! Help me!"

But nobody wanted to help the wolf.

Then the wolf saw a crane.

"Use your beak to get this bone out of my throat!" he begged. "I'll give you a reward."

So the crane extracted the bone from the wolf's throat.

"Give me my reward!" said the crane.

"Your reward," snarled the wolf, "is that you were able to escape my jaws alive. Now go away before I decide to eat you after all!"

Don't expect rewards from wolves.

Imagine that the crane runs into one of her friends after this encounter with the wolf. How would she tell the story in her own words?

25. THE WOLF AND THE LAMB AT THE STREAM [AESOP 54]

A wolf and a lamb both came to the same stream to drink; the wolf upstream, the lamb downstream.

The wolf eyed the lamb hungrily, thinking of some excuse to kill and eat him. "Stop muddying my water!" he howled.

"I don't understand," bleated the lamb. "The water flows down from you to me, not up."

The wolf invented another excuse. "I remember you insulted me six months ago!"

"I wasn't even born then," said the lamb. "I'm only three months old."

"Well, that must have been your father!" snarled the wolf, who then attacked the lamb and devoured him.

Put this same wolf in a situation later on where he is the one begging for mercy.

26. THE WOLF AND THE LAMB IN THE TEMPLE [AESOP 55]

A wolf was chasing a lamb, but the lamb managed to run inside a temple.

The wolf dared not enter the god's own house, so he stood at the temple's outer door and shouted to the lamb inside, "What do you think is going to happen now, lamb? The priest of the temple is going to catch you and sacrifice you to the god of this temple. You might as well come outside now and get it over with."

"I'd rather die as a sacrificial victim in here," the lamb shouted back, "rather than become food for you out there."

You could include the temple's god or goddess as a character in the story. Pick a god or goddess, do some research to learn more, and then expand the story based on what you learned.

27. THE FRIENDLY WOLF [AESOP 56]

A man once owned twelve sheep. He wanted to take a trip, so he entrusted his sheep to a friendly wolf.

"I'll be glad to watch them," said the wolf.

On the first day, the wolf ate one sheep, another the next day, and by the time the man returned, there were only three sheep left.

"What happened to the rest of my sheep?" the man asked.

"They died unexpectedly," said the wolf.

"Show me their skins," said the man, and there he saw the wolf's teeth-marks.

"You are a murderer!" shouted the man, and he had the wolf hanged.

Tell this story with the sheep as speaking characters. What do you think the sheep would talk about with the man, with the wolf, and with each other?

28. THE LAMB AND THE NANNY-GOAT [AESOP 59]

The sheepdog was surprised to find a lamb among the goats.

"Your mother isn't here," said the sheepdog. "She must be over there, with the sheep."

"Not so," said the lamb. "My mother is the one who gave me her udder to suck. Even though she also had children of her own to feed, it is this nanny-goat who gave me milk. She is the one I call mother."

"A goat can't be your mother!" said the sheepdog.

"Yes, she can," said the lamb. "That sheep may be my mother in body, but this nanny-goat is my mother in love."

Use this story as inspiration to write your own story about an animal foster-parent and their foster-child.

29. THE DOGS AND THE RIVER [AESOP 60]

Some hungry dogs were roaming the countryside looking everywhere for something to eat.

One of the dogs saw an animal hide floating in the river, and he barked to his fellows, summoning them to come help.

"We're going to have to drink it!" said one of the dogs.

"Drink what?" asked another.

"We've got to drink the whole river!"

And so the dogs began drinking, lapping the water, gulping and guzzling in hopes of draining the river so that they could retrieve the hide.

Finally the dogs drank so much that they burst, and they never did get the hide.

Add an interloper to this story, a character who comes along and tries to warn the dogs about the mistake they are making.

30. THE WAR OF THE RABBITS AND THE EAGLES [AESOP 64]

The rabbits and the eagles were at war, and the rabbits were losing.

The eagles were able to seize the rabbits with their talons and beaks, but the rabbits had no weapons of their own.

"If we don't have weapons," said the leader of the rabbits, "then we must have allies!"

The rabbits then decided to ask the foxes to be their allies, but the foxes refused.

"We might be willing to help you," they said, "if we did not know just who you are and who you are fighting against."

It is hard to find allies when you're losing.

Write a story where the rabbits do manage to find some allies after all. Will the rabbits and their allies be able to defeat the eagles?

31. THE RABBIT AND THE WEASEL [AESOP 66]

While the rabbit was away nibbling grass in the meadow, the weasel occupied her rabbit hole.

When the rabbit came back, the weasel said, "Go away! This is my house now."

"That's not fair!" protested the rabbit. "I demand justice!"

So the weasel proposed that they take their case to the local court, where the judge was an old cat.

"Come closer, my dears!" the cat told them. "I'm rather deaf, and I can't hear what you are saying. Closer! Closer!"

And as soon as the rabbit and weasel got close enough, the cat grabbed them and devoured them both.

Can you think of a way for the rabbit and/or the weasel to escape from the cat?

32. THE RABBIT'S RESOLUTION [AESOP 67]

The animals were holding an assembly.

All the animals had complaints they wanted to make, and the assembly dragged on and on until the rabbit proposed a resolution.

"It's time to declare equality among the animals. Instead of this animal complaining about that animal, one against another, every animal should be treated with the same respect and dignity as every other animal," shouted the rabbit, "regardless of how powerful they are. Equal rights for all!"

The lion, however, opposed the rabbit's resolution.

"Let the rabbit shout all he wants," growled the lion. "His words have no claws and no teeth."

Keep on with the debate. What will the other animals say? What will be the final decision of the assembly?

33. THE FUNERAL OF THE LION-QUEEN [AESOP 68]

The lion's wife had died, and all the animals came to her funeral.

They were all weeping for their queen, except for the deer. The lion-queen had eaten many fawns, and the deer was glad she was dead.

"Why do you not weep?" asked the lion angrily.

The deer quickly thought up a story. "Our queen came to me in a dream," she said, "and told me she had reached the Elysian Fields with all the other blessed animals. She doesn't want us to grieve for her."

The lion rejoiced and even rewarded the deer.

Sometimes a lie is safest.

What other details could the deer invent about the lion-queen in the afterlife? Do some research about the mythological Elysian Fields (also called "Elysium") to find some good details to use.

34. THE DEER AND HIS REFLECTION [AESOP 71]

A deer was drinking water from a pond when he noticed his reflection.

"My legs are so scrawny and thin," he complained. "But look at my horns: they are so tall and beautiful!"

Then he heard hunters and their dogs coming his way.

He ran!

The deer's legs carried him swiftly across the meadow but when he reached the woods, his horns got tangled in the branches. The hunters caught him there and killed him.

"What I thought was my crowning glory has killed me," he thought as he was dying, "while what I scoffed at could have saved me."

Can you imagine a story about another animal who, like this deer, has a problem with negative body-image?

35. THE DEER AND THE VINE [AESOP 72]

A deer was on the run from a hunter.

As she looked around desperately for a place to hide, she saw an enormous vine, so she got behind the vine and stood there, waiting.

The hunter showed up, and he also stood there, looking around and catching his breath.

The deer, who was hungry, began to munch on the vine.

As the deer ate, the branches of the vine moved.

Silently, the hunter took aim and shot the deer.

Pierced by the arrow, the deer exclaimed, "It's my own fault! I should not have harmed the vine that saved me!"

Write a version of this story where the vine has a speaking role, with dialogue between the deer and the vine and/or dialogue between the vine and the hunter.

36. THE DEER AND HER FRIENDS [AESOP 73]

There was a deer who was sick, so she lay down in a grassy field to rest. When they heard she was sick, her friends came to visit her.

The rabbit came. "I hope you feel better soon!" he said. He also nibbled on the grass near the deer.

The sheep came, and the cow, and the goat, even the little grasshopper. They all brought good wishes, and they also ate the grass.

So, when the deer did begin to feel better, all the grass was gone; there was nothing for her to eat nearby, and she died of hunger.

Expand on this story so we get to hear the deer's words and/or her thoughts.

37. THE KING'S DANCING MONKEYS [AESOP 76]

There was a king who built a school for dancing monkeys.

“Let them be educated in all the dances!” he proclaimed.

So the monkeys studied all the dances.

Finally the time came for the royal performance.

The king was delighted to see his monkeys dancing so beautifully, and the audience applauded every dance.

A joker in the crowd, however, decided to throw some nuts onto the stage. The monkeys went wild, forgetting all their dances as they scrambled to grab the nuts. Then the monkeys even started throwing nutshells at the audience.

That was the end of the dancing monkeys.

Who is this “joker” in the story? Tell us more about this joker and their motivation for disrupting the performance of the king's dancing monkeys.

38. THE CAT AND THE CHICKENS [AESOP 80]

The cat heard that the chickens were feeling poorly.

"They need a doctor!" the cat said to herself.

So, the cat got dressed up, equipped herself with a doctor's bag filled with medical instruments of various kinds, and went to visit the chickens.

"Greetings, my good chickens!" she said.

"What do you want, cat?" squawked one of the chickens.

"I heard that you were not feeling well," replied the cat. "So I've come here to help."

"Oh, the best help you can offer is to go far away!" said the chicken. "The farther away you go, the better we feel."

Imagine that the cat tries to trick the chickens with some other disguises. Is there a disguise that will finally fool the chickens after all?

39. THE CAT AND HER NEIGHBORS [AESOP 81]

An eagle, cat, and sow lived together in a tree: eagle on top, sow at the bottom, and cat in-between.

The cat said to the eagle, "Beware: the sow is digging up the tree's roots in order to topple it and eat your chicks."

To the sow she said, "The eagle craves your little piglets."

The eagle dared not leave her chicks unguarded, nor did the worried sow venture forth to find food, so they both finally starved to death.

The cat and her kittens then had the whole tree to themselves, and they fed on the chicks and piglets.

This story could make a good song! You can narrate the action in the verses with a repeating chorus in between.

40. THE CAT AND THE STORK [AESOP 82]

A stork was carrying an eel home to feed to her chicks.

The cat saw her, and while he enjoyed eating eels, he didn't like to get his feet wet. "O stork," said the cat, "you have such lovely white feathers. Is your beak all white on the inside too?"

The stork kept her beak shut and said nothing.

The angry cat then said, "Ugh! Why would you eat anything so nasty as an eel? You must be a nasty creature yourself!"

The stork kept her beak shut and said nothing.

If you're wise, you'll ignore both flattery and insults.

Tell your own story about flattery-and-insults using a different pair of animals, or maybe with a pair of human characters.

41. CAT AND FOX, PHILOSOPHERS [AESOP 84]

The cat and the fox were traveling together, sharing philosophical thoughts about beauty, truth, the nature of existence, good and evil, and so on.

Along the way they saw a wolf eating a sheep.

"How immoral!" said the cat.

"I concur!" said the fox. "It's most unethical!"

Then they passed a barnyard where they saw a hen and her chicks. The fox seized the hen and devoured her, while the cat devoured the chicks.

Having satisfied their hunger, they continued on their journey, philosophizing as before.

Many who condemn criminal behavior will behave like criminals themselves, given the right opportunity.

Make up your own story about a pair of hypocritical animals, or maybe a pair of hypocritical people.

42. COUNTRY MOUSE AND CITY MOUSE [AESOP 92]

A country mouse entertained his city cousin with a meal of barley and carrots, but the city mouse scorned this rustic fare.

“Come with me to the city,” he said, “and enjoy some fine dining.”

The city mouse led his country cousin into a dining room where the table was laden with bread, cheese, meat, and delicious sweets too.

They had just begun to enjoy the feast when a cat pounced up on the table; the two mice ran for their lives.

“I prefer my peaceful poverty to your deadly luxury!” said the country mouse, and then he scurried home.

Write your own story about a different pair of country and city creatures, or you might write a human version of the story.

43. THE MOUSE OBSERVES THE WORLD [AESOP 96]

"Don't go outside the mouse-hole," said the mouse-mother to her daughter.

But the little mouse disobeyed: she ventured outside where she saw a rooster scratching the ground with its talons. The rooster terrified her.

Next she saw a cat sitting by the fire, licking its fur. The cat looked so sweet!

Then she ran back into the mouse-hole.

"Mother," she said, "I saw a diabolical creature with feathers and a saintly creature with fur."

"You have it mixed up," her mother explained. "There is nothing to fear from the feathered rooster, but you must never go near that furry cat!"

Write a story about the mouse venturing outside the hole again so that she is fooled again by the appearances of the animals that she sees.

44. THE FOX WHO PLAYED DEAD [AESOP 106]

There was a hungry fox who decided to fool the birds by playing dead. She threw herself down on the ground, and lay there motionless, pretending to be a corpse so that the birds wouldn't be afraid to fly right up to her.

The crow, however, took a close look and saw the fox was still breathing. So he fluttered around the fox and mocked her. "You might be able to fool other birds," cawed the crow, "but you can't fool me. My eyes are as sly as your thoughts."

As the saying goes: It takes one to know one.

Imagine the crow and the fox going into partnership. What kind of trouble could they get into together?

45. THE SWALLOW AND THE NIGHTINGALE [AESOP 114]

The swallow, flying through the woods, heard the nightingale singing.

“Dear nightingale,” said the swallow, “your song is so beautiful! Why do you conceal yourself here in the woods? Your song is worthy of a royal audience! Leave this wilderness behind and come with me to where the people live. I will escort you directly to the palace of the king.”

“No, dear swallow,” replied the nightingale, “I don’t want to go to the homes of men, nor even to the palaces of kings. I prefer this solitude where I can sing my songs for God and for the angels.”

Imagine that the swallow finally persuades the nightingale to come to the palace. What do you think will happen when the nightingale goes to see the king?

46. THE NIGHTINGALE'S ADVICE [AESOP 115]

A bird-catcher captured a nightingale.

"If I teach you three secrets," she begged, "will you set me free?"

The man agreed.

"First: when you lose something, let it go. Second: don't grieve. Third: don't believe in the impossible."

"Thank you!" said the man, and he set the nightingale free.

"By the way," she added, "there's a ruby in my stomach as big as an apple."

The man started weeping.

"Apply the secrets!" the nightingale said. "Let it go, don't grieve, use your brain: how could I have a ruby that big in my stomach?"

Laughing, the nightingale then flew away.

This story is very condensed. See what happens when you expand on the dialogue and add more details about what the characters are thinking.

47. THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE GLOW-WORM [AESOP 116]

There was a nightingale singing in the woods one night, and a glow-worm came to listen to her song.

“You sing nicely,” said the glow-worm. “But look at me! I glow in the darkness. I am radiant! I am a burst of light! You might say that I am a heavenly star who dwells here upon the earth! Take a look!”

The nightingale laughed at the glow-worm and said, “The darkness allows you to shine, it’s true, but as soon as the sunshine dispels the shadows, everyone will see you for what you are: a nasty little insect, nothing more.”

Do some research about the glow-worm’s bioluminescence and retell this story using some scientific details about the “glow” of the glow-worm.

48. THE FROGS AND THE SUN [AESOP 123]

The Sun had decided to take a wife, and he invited all the animals to come to his wedding.

The frogs were leaping and jumping with excitement when they heard the news.

“There will be music at the wedding!” croaked one of the frogs.

“And dancing!” croaked another frog.

“And lots of food too!” croaked yet another.

A wise old frog rebuked them. “Stop rejoicing, you fools!” he said. “The Sun’s marriage is bad news for us all. His heat is bad enough already. Just imagine how much worse it will be after he gets married and starts a family!”

Do some research about climate change, and then include some of what you learned in your own version of this story.

49. THE MOUSE AND THE FROG [AESOP 124]

The mouse hated the frog, and the frog hated the mouse.

Over time, their hatred turned into outright warfare.

"I shall rule the swamp," declared the mouse.

"Never!" replied the frog. "This swamp is mine!"

The mouse attacked, ambushing the frog, but the frog fought back bravely. They both wore armor made of dried mud and wielded tiny swords made from the marsh-grass

As the battle dragged on, a hawk saw what was happening and swooped down, catching both frog and mouse unawares, gobbling first one and then the other.

Thus ended the war between the frog and the mouse.

The story doesn't have much detail about the frog and mouse fighting. You could write a version of the story with lots of visual detail so that your readers can "see" the battle.

50. THE BOYS AND THE FROGS [AESOP 126]

There were some boys out playing one day, skipping rocks across the water of a pond.

“Look!” shouted one of the boys. “There’s a frog! Let’s hit him.”

The boys then started throwing rocks at the frog, who plunged back down under the water. The boys waited, and each time a frog dared to stick his head out of the water, the boys threw their rocks.

Finally one of the frogs rose up from the water and spoke to the boys. “Boys!” shouted the frog. “This is just some game for you, but for us it is life or death.”

Imagine a later event where one of the boys applies the lesson he learned from the frog.

51. THE PORCUPINE AND THE SNAKE [AESOP 127]

The winter was cold, and the porcupine needed to find shelter. He went from one house to another, and all refused him, until finally he arrived at the snake's house.

"Let me in, snake!" said the porcupine.

The good-hearted snake let the porcupine in.

The porcupine then got nice and warm, but the snake's house was small, and the snake did not like being pressed against the porcupine's prickles.

"There's not room for both of us," said the snake.

"Well, you can leave if you want," replied the porcupine, "but I'm going to stay."

Possession is nine-tenths of the law.

Tell this story about a different pair of animals who also find it hard to share a small living space.

52. THE DRAGON AND THE EAGLE [AESOP 128]

A dragon and eagle were fighting, and the dragon had wrapped itself around the eagle, trying to squeeze him to death.

A farmer saw what was happening, and he freed the eagle from the dragon's coils. The eagle then soared up into the sky.

What the farmer did made the dragon angry, so the dragon spit poison into the farmer's drinking water.

The farmer was about to drink, knowing nothing of the poison, but the eagle flew up and knocked the cup from the farmer's hands.

Although the farmer did not realize it, the grateful eagle had saved his life.

In this story, the animals don't talk. Write a version of the story where the animals speak with each other and/or with the farmer.

53. ZEUS AND THE WEDDING GIFTS [AESOP 129]

Zeus, King of the Gods, was celebrating his marriage to Hera, the Queen of Heaven.

He invited all the animals to attend the festivities, and he expected that all the animals would bring wedding gifts according to their abilities.

The bee brought a gift of honey, for example, and the cow brought milk. The monkey performed a dance, the nightingale sang a song, and so on.

Then the snake arrived, carrying a rose in its mouth.

Zeus, however, refused the snake's gift.

"There's nothing but poison that comes from your mouth," Zeus said, "even if it looks like a rose."

Write a version of the story where the goddess Hera gets to play a major role. Do some research about Hera, and then use what you learned to add more details to the story.

54. ZEUS AND THE DOGS [AESOP 130]

The dogs were frustrated with their lot in life, so they sent ambassadors to Zeus with a petition.

But when the dogs beheld the god, they were terrified and pooped all over the halls of Olympus.

“That smells really bad!” shouted Zeus.

The dogs sent more ambassadors, and this time they stuffed perfume into their ambassadors’ behinds.

When Zeus appeared, these dogs also pooped, and the mix of poop and perfume smelled even worse.

Zeus expelled the ambassadors from Olympus.

Even now the dogs are still looking for their lost ambassadors; that’s why you see them sniffing each other’s behinds.

This story is an “aetiological” story, an explanation (Greek “aetion”) of a natural phenomenon. Can you think of a different way to explain why dogs sniff each other’s behinds?

55. ZEUS AND THE CAMEL [AESOP 132]

The camel was jealous of the bull. "Just look at those horns of his, while I have only these long, floppy ears. I'm defenseless against all the other animals. I must have horns!"

So the camel prayed to Zeus. "I implore you, O King of the Gods! Please give me horns!"

But Zeus just laughed at the camel's request. "You would look ridiculous with horns," he said. "Not only do I refuse your request, I'm also going to shorten your long ears. Be content with what you have!"

The moral: Many who seek to have more end up with less.

This story provides an explanation of why the camel has such short ears. Can you think of a story to explain how the camels got their humps?

56. ZEUS AND THE RABBIT [AESOP 133]

The rabbit admired the horns on the head of the stag, so he prayed to Zeus to grant him the honor of horns.

“You have given other animals many gifts, but I have nothing except swiftness of foot. I would like to have horns just like the stag!”

Zeus agreed to the rabbit’s request and placed horns upon his head.

The horns were very heavy, though, and the rabbit could barely move beneath their weight. He was no longer swift of foot as before, and he looked ridiculous.

The moral: Beware of honors that do you dishonor in the end.

Write your own story where an animal asks for a gift from the gods and ends up with an unexpected result.

57. APHRODITE AND THE CAT [AESOP 134]

A young man fell in love with his cat, so he prayed to Aphrodite. "O Goddess of Love, please change my cat into a woman!"

Aphrodite agreed.

Before the young man's eyes, the cat transformed into a beautiful woman, and they got married.

But Aphrodite was curious. "I wonder if this woman will behave like a woman or like a cat." To find out, she tossed a mouse into the midst of the wedding festivities.

The bride let out a meow, got down on all fours, and started chasing the mouse.

Appalled, Aphrodite turned the woman back into a cat.

Tell the story in the form of the man's diary as he records what happens day by day. Or you could tell the story from the point of view of the cat/woman.

58. ZEUS AND THE JAR OF GOOD THINGS [AESOP 138]

When Zeus created the earth, he took all the good things and put them in a jar.

He then chose a man to keep the jar. "Don't open it!" Zeus said.

"I promise not to open it," said the man.

But of course the man opened the jar, and all the good things flew back up to Zeus.

The man closed the jar as fast as he could, but the only thing still left inside the jar was Hope.

That is why people never lose Hope, who keeps promising she will get the other good things to come back someday.

This is a variation on the famous myth of Pandora's box. Write a story about a character on a quest to find this jar (or box) and what they do when they find it.

59. ATHENA AND THE SHIPWRECK [AESOP 139]

A rich man of Athens was making a voyage across the sea.

In a fierce storm, the winds and waves broke the ship to pieces. All the passengers were thrown into the water and had to swim for their lives.

The rich man, however, did not swim. Instead, he called upon Athena, goddess of his city. "O Athena, I'll give you a thousand gold pieces if you rescue me from the sea."

One of the ship's sailors swam by and shouted at him, "While you bargain with Athena, you should also try swimming!"

The goddess helps them that help themselves.

Do some research to learn more about Athena and weave those details into the story. What do you think finally happened to the rich man of Athens?

60. HERCULES AND THE FARMER [AESOP 140]

A farmer's wagon got stuck in the mud, and the oxen could not pull it out.

The farmer fell to his knees and implored Hercules to come to his aid. "O Hercules," he cried, "help me!"

Then a voice boomed from the sky as loud as thunder. It was the voice of Hercules.

"You fool!" said Hercules. "Put the whip to your oxen and put your shoulder to the wheel. Use all your strength to do what you can. You should only call on me when you have exhausted your own powers."

Help yourself, and the god will help you.

Hercules lived as a mortal on the earth, and after his death he was worshiped as a god. Do some research about the cult of Hercules and use those details in your story.

61. FORTUNA AND THE FARMER [AESOP 142]

A farmer dug up a buried treasure.

“O Earth,” he exclaimed, “what a great treasure you have bestowed upon me! I will give you my thanks forever.”

The goddess Fortuna then appeared before the farmer. “What are you thanking her for? Just who do you think gave you this treasure? I did, Fortuna, Goddess of Luck! You should thank me for this gift, not the earth,” she shouted.

Then she added, “Thank me now and forever, or else your luck might change from good to bad. Remember: just as I gave you this treasure, I can also take it away.”

The goddess Fortuna (Fortune) has a wheel called “The Wheel of Fortune.” Do some research to learn more, and then use what you learned to expand on this story.

62. THE FARMER AND THE WHEAT [AESOP 143]

A farmer disliked the wheat's bristly beard because the sharp bristles cut his hands.

He decided to pray to Demeter, the goddess of crops and fields, for help. "O Demeter," prayed the farmer, "I beg you: let the wheat grow with all the grain but without the bristles."

The goddess granted the farmer's request, and the wheat no longer had any protecting bristles.

As a result, the birds came and ate all the grain.

The farmer regretted his request.

"In exchange for a small comfort," he said, "I have given up a great gain."

Be careful what you pray for.

This is an ecological story: the farmer makes a selfish request that upsets the ecological balance. Write your own ecological story where the selfish request of a human or animal character upsets the ecological balance.

63. PROMETHEUS AND THE SATYR [AESOP 145]

The Titan Prometheus stole fire from the heavens and brought it down to earth.

A satyr was fascinated by the fire and tried to embrace it, wrapping his arms around the flames. "Ouch!" he shouted. "That hurts!"

"You have to be careful," cautioned Prometheus. "The fire will burn your beard if you get too close."

"I don't understand," said the satyr. "Why would you bring us something so dangerous?"

"Fire gives heat, and fire gives light," said Prometheus. "It's up to you to learn how to use it wisely. The danger lies not in its use, but in its misuse."

The legend of Prometheus stealing fire from the heavens is a famous Greek myth. Do some research about that myth, and then use what you learned to expand on this story.

64. HERMES AND THE TRAVELER [AESOP 147]

There was a traveler making a long journey, and he had grown hungry along the way.

“O Hermes,” he prayed, “please help me! With your divine power, bring me good luck so that I can find something to eat. I promise to give you half of whatever I find!”

The traveler then found a bag of almonds lying on the road. He ate the nuts, and afterwards offered the shells to Hermes.

“Behold, Hermes,” the traveler said solemnly, “here is half, just as I promised.”

A greedy person will even cheat the gods in order to get what he wants.

Do some research about the god Hermes and use what you learned to include Hermes in the story. What do you think Hermes will do after the traveler offers him the shells?

65. HERMES AND THE WOODCUTTER [AESOP 148]

A woodcutter accidentally dropped his ax in a river.

As he sat there weeping, Hermes appeared, offering him a golden ax.

"That's not mine," said the woodcutter.

Hermes offered him a silver ax.

"Not mine either."

Then Hermes held out the man's own ax.

"Yes, that's mine!" he said happily, and Hermes rewarded his honesty by giving him all three axes.

The woodcutter's friend was jealous, so he threw his own ax into the water. Hermes appeared, offering him a golden ax. When he reached for the ax, Hermes disappeared, and the man ended up with no ax at all.

Imagine that Hermes later runs into a goddess or god (pick your favorite) and tell this story as a back-and-forth dialogue between them.

66. THE JUSTICE OF THE GODS [AESOP 149]

There was once a ship that sank into the ocean.

A man watching from the shore shouted, "The gods know no justice! Perhaps there was a criminal sailing on that ship, but they have killed everyone who was on board!"

As the man was speaking, an ant happened to bite him. Enraged, the man began stamping all the ants he could see.

The god Hermes then appeared and struck the man with his wand. "You are but as an ant in the eyes of the gods," he said, "and just as you have judged the ants, so we judge humankind."

What would the story be like if the ants had a speaking role, talking with each other and/or with the man and/or with the god Hermes?

67. DEATH'S WARNINGS [AESOP 150]

Death came to take an old man's soul, but the man protested. "That's not fair! You should have given me a warning first. I need time to set my affairs in order."

"I gave you plenty of warnings," Death replied.

"But I've never laid eyes on you before."

"You saw me when I came for others," said Death. "And more than that: I gave you signs. Gray hair, bad eyes, stooped back, poor hearing. Those were all my messengers. If you ignored them, that is no fault of mine."

Memento mori: the time to prepare yourself is now, not later.

The phrase "memento mori" means: remember (you are going) to die. Do some research about the history of the phrase "memento mori" and use what you learn to expand on the story.

68. DEATH AND THE OLD MAN [AESOP 151]

There was an old man trudging along the road, carrying a heavy bundle of wood on his back.

Finally, he put down his bundle and collapsed by the side of the road.

"I can't go on," he thought to himself, so he decided to call on Death.

"I summon you now, O Death!" he cried.

To the man's surprise, Death appeared before him.

"Why have you summoned me?" Death asked.

The old man replied in a shaky voice, "Perhaps you could help put this bundle of wood back on my shoulders...?"

Death laughed, and he did as the man asked.

Expand on this story with your own detailed description of Death: how does Death look? smell? sound? Help us to perceive Death just as vividly as the old man does.

69. DEATH AND CUPID [AESOP 152]

Death and Cupid got their quivers mixed up, which meant Death was shooting love's arrows into old people, while Cupid was shooting death's arrows into young people, causing them to die before their time.

Cupid realized what was happening, so he went to Death in order to correct the error.

"We need to fix this!" Cupid said to Death.

They did their best to sort the arrows properly, although some of Death's arrows remained in Cupid's quiver and vice versa.

As a result, you sometimes see old people fall victim to Cupid, while some young people fall victim to Death.

Cupid (Eros in Greek) is the son of Venus (Aphrodite in Greek), the goddess of love. Write your own version of this story to include Venus as a character.

70. THE FATHER AND HIS QUARRELSOME SONS [AESOP 154]

A farmer's sons were always quarreling, so the father decided to teach them a lesson.

"Bring me a bundle of sticks," he said.

He then told each son to break the bundle.

Try as they might, none of the sons, not even the strongest, could break the bundle of sticks.

Then the father untied the bundle and gave each son a stick.

"Break that," he said.

Each son broke the stick easily.

"So too with you," explained the father. "United, you are strong. But divided and each on his own, you are weak, and your enemies will easily destroy you."

Write a ballad where you tell the story in three or four verses, with a good chorus between the verses to reinforce the story's message.

71. THE MAN'S LOYAL DOG [AESOP 155]

A man had a very loyal dog.

One day when he returned home, he found the dog's mouth all covered with blood and the cradle overturned, while his baby boy was nowhere to be seen.

"What have you done?!" he shouted as he drew his sword and slew the dog.

But then as he picked up the fallen cradle, he found the baby safe beneath, along with the corpse of a deadly snake whom the dog had killed.

"What have I done?!" he groaned, lamenting how cruelly he had rewarded the dog who had saved the life of his son.

Can you think of a way to twist the plot so that this story has a happy ending instead of a sad one?

72. THE GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGGS [AESOP 156]

A woman possessed a miraculous goose that laid golden eggs.

But this was not enough for the greedy woman.

“If the goose can lay eggs of gold,” she thought, “then surely I will find a goldmine in its guts. I don’t want the eggs; I want the goldmine inside!”

So the woman killed the goose and cut it open, but inside there were only goose guts. There was no gold in there at all.

“Woe is me!” the woman cried. “I should have been grateful, but instead I was greedy and killed my goose, so now I’m left with nothing.”

The “goose that laid the golden eggs” is a phrase people still use today. Think of a real-world human situation where greedy characters make a mistake similar to the mistake made by the woman in the fable.

73. THE MILKMAID'S BUCKET OF MILK [AESOP 159]

A woman was carrying a bucket of milk to market, balancing the bucket on her head.

"I'll sell the milk," she thought, "and buy some eggs to hatch. I'll raise the chicks, who will lay more eggs, which I'll sell to buy a piglet. I'll raise the pig till he's big and fat; then I'll sell him and buy a colt. I'll raise the colt, and when he grows up, I won't walk anymore. I'll go riding instead: giddy-up, giddy-up!"

But when she began to gallop like a horse, she spilled the milk and ended up with nothing at all.

This type of folktale is called an "air castle" story. Write your own "air castle" story where someone daydreams about their future plans, only to have everything come crashing down in the end.

74. THE FOOLISH FARMERS AND THE RABBIT [AESOP 163]

Some foolish farmers owed rent to the landlord. They had the money, but they didn't know how to deliver the money in time.

"What can we do?" the foolish farmers wailed. "How will we get the money to our landlord in time?"

"I know!" one of them said. "Rabbits are fast. Let's tie the money-purse onto a rabbit and tell him to deliver the money."

So they caught a rabbit, tied the purse around his neck and said, "Take this to our landlord!"

The rabbit ran off and was never seen again, and so the fools lost all their money.

What do you think happened to the rabbit and the farmers' money?

75. THE FARMER'S REVENGE [AESOP 164]

There was a wicked farmer who was jealous of his neighbor's crops.

"He has all the good luck, and I have nothing but bad luck," the farmer thought to himself. "But I'll find a way to get my revenge!"

The farmer then captured a fox and tied a burning torch to the fox's tail. Then he let the fox loose in his neighbor's field.

The fox, however, ran right back into the farmer's own field, setting it on fire and burning his crops to the ground.

As a result, the farmer ended up even worse off than he was before.

Give the fox a talking role in this fable. What do you think the fox might want to say about all this?

76. THE FARMER AND THE FROZEN SNAKE [AESOP 165]

A kind-hearted farmer found a snake in the snow, half-frozen. "You poor thing!" he said, and he picked up the snake and put it inside his cloak to keep it warm.

Then, when he got home, he placed the snake beside the fire.

As the snake warmed up, it returned to life and began to hiss at everyone in the house, spraying venom.

The farmer grabbed an ax to fend off the snake as he denounced the snake's behavior with angry words. "What kind of gratitude is this?" he exclaimed. "I saved your life, yet you're trying to kill me!"

The story ends at a very dramatic moment, a kind of cliffhanger. What do you think happens next?

77. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS CLOAK [AESOP 167]

The shepherd led his flock of sheep to a great oak tree. He then spread his cloak out under the tree and climbed up in the tree to shake down the acorns.

"Come on, sheep!" he said. "I'm going to get you something good to eat!"

The sheep eagerly crowded around and ate the acorns, but they also ate the shepherd's cloak.

When the shepherd climbed down and saw what had happened, he yelled at the sheep. "You ungrateful creatures! You supply the wool for other people's clothes, but you have eaten the clothes of the man who feeds you."

What would the story be like if there were dialogue among the sheep and/or dialogue between the sheep and the shepherd?

78. THE SHEPHERD AND THE LION [AESOP 173]

A lion had a thorn in his paw, so he went to a shepherd.

"Help me!" the lion said, slowly extending his paw.

The shepherd was terrified, but then he saw the thorn. He removed the thorn, and the grateful lion went back into the woods.

Years later, the shepherd was wrongly accused of a crime and thrown to the beasts in the arena. The lion was one of those beasts, and he recognized the shepherd. The lion embraced the shepherd and defended him from the other beasts.

Amazed, the king absolved the good shepherd and freed the lion also.

Write this story as a play. That means the main way we learn about what is happening is through the words spoken by the different characters.

79. THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF [AESOP 174]

There was a shepherd boy who used to tell lies just for fun.

One day when he was tending the sheep, he started shouting. "Help! Help! There's a wolf!"

The farmers came running, and the boy just laughed at them.

He tricked the farmers again a few weeks later.

The next time, there really was a wolf.

"Help! Help! There's a wolf!" he cried. "It's the truth!"

But the farmers said, "We won't let that boy fool us a third time."

So the wolf attacked the flock and killed the sheep.

The boy thus learned his lesson the hard way.

The phrase "to cry wolf" comes from this famous Aesop's fable. Invent your own fable that demonstrates why it's important to tell the truth.

80. THE THREE TRAVELERS [AESOP 176]

There were three travelers whose food was almost gone, so they decided the one who had the best dream would eat the remaining food for breakfast.

When they awoke, the first man said, "Zeus's eagle carried me up to Mount Olympus!"

The second said, "I dreamed I plunged through the ground down into Hades."

The third traveler then said, "I dreamed I saw you being taken up to heaven" – he nodded to the first – "and I saw you plunge into the underworld" – he nodded to the second. "Since you had both vanished forever, I decided to eat the food myself."

Do some research about Mount Olympus and about Hades, and then use what you learn to add lots of vivid detail to the two dreams.

81. THE THREE WISE MEN [AESOP 177]

Three wise men wandering through the jungle found the bones of a dead tiger.

The first man boasted, "I have the power to reassemble these bones." He chanted a spell, and behold: the tiger-skeleton was made whole.

The second man said, "I have greater powers; I can put flesh on those bones." He chanted his spell, and behold: a dead tiger was lying on the ground.

The third boasted he was the most powerful of all. "I can revive the dead!" He chanted a spell, and the tiger came to life.

The tiger then attacked and killed all three men.

Imagine that a fourth wise man comes along. What could happen next?

82. THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE PUMPKIN [AESOP 186]

A philosopher strolled through a garden and remarked, "Look at that enormous pumpkin growing on that scrawny vine! God should have honored the pumpkins with a lofty position, growing in trees instead of on the ground. I would arrange things differently if I were in charge!"

Then, to escape the heat of the day, the philosopher went and rested beneath a shady tree. As he sat there dozing, an acorn fell down on his head.

"Dear Lord!" he exclaimed. "If that had been a pumpkin, it might have killed me. God really does know best how everything should be arranged!"

The philosopher learned a good lesson about pumpkins and acorns. What other lessons could he learn there in the garden by paying attention to the natural world?

83. THE STAR-GAZING ASTROLOGER [AESOP 199]

There was an astrologer who was in the habit of going out at night and strolling around, gazing up at the stars.

One night, as the astrologer was staring intently at a particular constellation, he walked right into a ditch.

As he lay there moaning and groaning, his neighbor walked by.

"Help!" shouted the astrologer.

When his neighbor looked down into the ditch, he recognized the astrologer and realized what must have happened. Laughing, the neighbor told him, "Instead of looking up at the heavens, you ought to look down here at the ground that's right in front of you."

Flip the story so that someone gets into trouble by looking down at the ground and ignoring what's in the sky.

84. THE MAN IN THE TREE [AESOP 200]

Fleeing a deadly unicorn, a man climbed a tree beside a lake.

Four snakes were slithering around the lake, and a dragon rose up from the watery depths, its mouth gaping open.

Then the man saw two mice, one white and one black, gnawing at the tree's roots.

How could he escape all these evils?

Then he looked up and saw honey dripping down from higher in the tree. As the honey fell into his mouth, he forgot all about the dangers.

The tree toppled and he fell into the dragon's jaws, but his only thought was of the honey.

This is an allegorical story where everything has a symbolic meaning. You can make that symbolism explicit for your readers, e.g. "a man climbed the Tree of Life beside the Lake of Time..." Retell this story making the symbolism explicit based on your interpretation of the details.

85. THE LION AND THE RABBIT [INDIA 1]

Every day, the lion demanded that the animals send him a victim to eat.

One day, it was the rabbit's turn. The rabbit took his time on the way, thinking of a plan to escape the lion.

"Why are you late?" the lion roared.

"My apologies," said the rabbit. "I saw an even bigger lion, and I was frightened."

"Show me!" the lion commanded.

The rabbit took the lion to a well. "The lion's in there," said the rabbit.

The lion looked in and saw the other lion. Infuriated, he jumped in the well and drowned, attacking his own reflection.

Write the story in the rabbit's own words when he comes back after defeating the lion. How will he tell the story, and how will the other animals react?

86. THE LION-KING AND THE CAMEL [INDIA 2]

The lion-king was starving.

"You must eat the royal camel," the crow advised.

"But he's my devoted courtier!" the lion protested.

"Don't worry," said the jackal.

"He'll agree!" said the leopard.

So the lion-king summoned his courtiers. "I'm starving!" he roared.

"Eat me!" said the crow.

"You're just skin and feathers," the jackal scoffed. "Eat me!"

"You're too scrawny," observed the leopard. "Eat me!"

This show of loyalty inspired the camel, who assumed that another courtier would speak up to save his life also. "The leopard's meat is tough," the camel exclaimed. "Eat me!"

So the lion ate the camel.

Write this story as the script for a play. There are two scenes already, and you could add more scenes to develop the story in more detail.

87. THE LION IN THE JACKAL'S CAVE [INDIA 6]

A hungry lion hid inside a cave. "I'll eat whoever comes in," he thought to himself.

The lion waited there all day.

The jackal who lived in that cave finally came home and said, "Hello, Cave!"

The lion said nothing.

"Cave, you know you're supposed to answer!" said the jackal.

The lion was uncertain what to do. "Hello to you!" the lion roared, and the cave made his roar sound even louder.

The jackal laughed as he ran away. "You foolish lion!" he shouted. "That's how I know whether the cave is safe or not. Next time, remember: keep quiet."

Imagine the jackal running into some other animal in the jungle. How would the jackal narrate this story about the lion in his own words?

88. THE BLUE JACKAL [INDIA 7]

There was once a jackal who fell into a vat of blue indigo dye. The other animals were amazed when they saw the blue jackal!

"The gods have sent me to be your ruler," the blue jackal explained. He made the lion his prime minister, the tiger was the royal treasurer, and the elephant was his doorkeeper.

One day, though, the blue jackal heard other jackals howling in the distance. He could not resist; he began howling too.

"He's just an ordinary jackal!" shouted the other animals.

So the lion and the tiger attacked their former king and killed him.

Do some research about indigo (for example, the word "indigo" is actually related to the word "India"), and then use what you learned to add some new details to this story.

89. THE LION AND THE RAM [INDIA 10]

A ram once strayed from its flock and wandered into the forest.

In the forest there lived a lion who had never seen a ram before.

So when the lion first saw this ram, he stared in amazement. "Look at those horns! That creature might be even more powerful than me!" he thought, and he carefully avoided the ram.

A few days later, though, he saw the ram again. It was eating grass.

"This creature is a grass-eater!" said the lion to himself. "It is surely no match for me."

The lion then sprang on the ram and killed it.

Flip the story to go the opposite way so that the lion sees a creature who doesn't look dangerous at first but who turns out to be very dangerous after all.

90. THE JACKAL AND THE CROW [INDIA 13]

A crow perched high in a tree, eating some delicious fruit.

A jackal decided to flatter the crow, hoping she would drop the fruit so that he could catch it.

“Fair lady, you look like a peacock up there!” he said to the crow. “Your feathers are dazzling. I’ve never seen anyone as beautiful and as graceful as you!”

The crow then flattered the jackal in return. “Kind sir, you look like a handsome young tiger!” she said, and as she spoke, all the fruit fell out of her mouth.

The jackal then grabbed the fruit and ran away, laughing.

Do some research to learn about fruits that grow in India and pick a specific fruit to use in this story. (Just as one example, mango is an Indian fruit, and even the word “mango” comes from a southern Indian language.)

91. THE JACKAL AND THE OTTERS [INDIA 15]

There were once two otters who caught a fish, and then they quarreled about how to divide it.

"The middle is mine," one otter said. "You can have the head and the tail."

"No!" said the other otter. "I want the middle! I'll give you the head and the tail."

A greedy jackal came by. "I'll be glad to judge between you," he said.

The otters explained what had happened.

"Oh, that's easy!" the jackal exclaimed. "You take the head... and you take the tail..." and then the jackal ran away with the middle part of the fish for himself.

Imagine another adventure involving this pair of otters. You could do some research about the types of otters who live in India to get ideas for your story.

92. THE JACKAL AND THE RAMS [INDIA 16]

There was once a greedy jackal who was prowling around, looking for food.

He saw two angry rams fighting, running at each other and butting heads. The jackal noticed that each time the rams butted heads, blood dripped down on the ground.

"I bet that blood would be tasty!" thought the jackal.

So the jackal ran up and licked the blood off the ground.

"That is delicious," he thought. "I want to get every drop."

Foolish jackal! While he was licking the blood, the rams butted their heads together again, and the jackal was crushed to death between their horns.

Write a version of the story that focuses more on the rams. Why are they fighting? What do they think of the jackal? You can include their spoken words and their thoughts too.

93. THE JACKALS AND THE ELEPHANT [INDIA 18]

The jackals were stalking an especially large elephant, thinking that they could feast on him for days.

Finally the most cunning of the jackals went to the elephant and said, "O Great One, the animals met and elected you to be their king. I am to escort you to the coronation."

"I'm honored!" said the elephant happily.

The jackal then led the elephant into a swamp.

"Help!" shouted the elephant as he sank into the mud.

"Your courtiers are all coming to help you, Your Highness!" promised the jackal.

But the jackals did not help; instead, they devoured the elephant.

Imagine another trick that these jackals play on some other animal. Will the jackals succeed again? Or will their next victim outwit them?

94. THE ELEPHANT AND THE SPARROW [INDIA 19]

A raging elephant knocked down a sparrow's nest, killing her chicks.

The mother vowed revenge.

"Help me, Woodpecker!" she said.

"Agreed," said Woodpecker. "Help us, Gnat!"

"Agreed," said Gnat. "Help us, Frog!"

"Agreed," said Frog.

Then Frog told them all what to do.

Gnat buzzed in the elephant's ear; the music made him shut his eyes.

Then Woodpecker stabbed the elephant's eyes so he wanted to jump in the water for relief.

Meanwhile, Frog croaked at the edge of a pit; the elephant ran towards the sound, thinking it was a pond, and he fell in the pit and died.

Expand on this story with more detail and more dialogue. You could also add some more characters to the sparrow's team of helpers.

95. THE ELEPHANT-KING AND THE MICE [INDIA 20]

The elephant-king was a wise ruler who had a kind heart.

When he led his elephants through the fields, they crushed many mice under their big feet.

“Have mercy!” cried the mice, so the elephant-king ordered all the elephants to spare the mice by taking a different path.

Later, elephant-hunters came and caught some of the elephants in snares.

“Help us!” the elephants shouted, and the mice all came to their rescue, using their tiny teeth to chew through the ropes and free the elephants from the snares.

Thus the elephants learned that even small friends can be great friends.

You could turn this story into a ballad, narrating the events in a series of three or four verses, with a repeating chorus in between.

96. THE ELEPHANTS AND THE RABBITS [INDIA 21]

There was a drought.

The elephant-herd searched for water and found a beautiful lake. When the elephants rushed to drink, they crushed many rabbits underfoot.

A brave rabbit spoke to the elephant-king as he drank. "I am the Moon's envoy!" proclaimed the rabbit. "The Moon says: you trampled my beloved rabbits."

"I'll ask forgiveness!" said the elephant-king, and he kneeled in the water.

The moon's reflection in the water shook violently.

"The Moon is even more angry!" said the rabbit. "Go away and never come back!"

The elephant-king, fearing the Moon's heavenly powers, departed, and the elephant-herd departed with him.

Imagine the brave rabbit telling the story in rap style to the other rabbits, boasting about how she outsmarted the elephants.

97. THE ELEPHANT AND THE MONKEY [INDIA 22]

An elephant and a monkey were boasting.

"I'm mighty!" said the elephant.

"I'm nimble!" said the monkey.

"But which of us is better?" asked the elephant.

"Let the owl judge!" said the monkey.

"I propose a test," said the owl. "Bring me mangos from across the river."

So they ran to the river, but the monkey couldn't cross.

"I'll carry you!" said the elephant.

They got to the mango tree, but the elephant couldn't reach the mangos.

"I'll fetch them!" said the monkey.

They brought the mangos to the owl who said, "Now you see: you two are better together!"

Now that the elephant and the monkey have learned how to cooperate, imagine another adventure that they could have together.

98. THE MONKEY AND THE FIREFLY [INDIA 26]

A monkey found a firefly.

The evening was cool, so the monkey said, "I'll warm myself by the light of this fire!"

At just that moment, a bird flew by, and she decided to enlighten the monkey. "That's not fire," the bird explained. "That's just a firefly."

The monkey ignored the bird, so she chirped more loudly. "That won't work: a firefly isn't the same as a fire!"

On and on she chattered, making the monkey more and more angry.

Finally, the monkey grabbed the bird and squashed her.

Moral of the story: Be careful when correcting someone else's errors.

Try to imagine the bird finding a way to get through to the monkey so that the monkey learns something instead of just getting angry.

99. THE CROCODILE AND THE MONKEY [INDIA 28]

Craving Monkey's heart for supper, Crocodile swam to the riverbank where Monkey lived.

"Let's go to Banana Island, Monkey!"

"But you know I can't swim."

"Don't worry! I'll carry you."

Greedy for bananas, Monkey jumped on.

Crocodile plunged deep under the water.

"What are you doing?" Monkey shrieked.

"I'm going to eat your heart for supper."

"But I left my heart in the tree!"

Monkey pointed to the fig tree on the riverbank.

"Well, go get it!" shouted Crocodile.

Crocodile swam back to shore, and Monkey leaped into the tree.

"You might fool me once," he cackled. "But only once!"

Write your own version of the story with lots of detail: description of the characters, the action, the setting, etc.

100. THE PARTRIDGE AND THE RABBIT [INDIA 32]

A partridge had a lovely home, but he left that home, temporarily, in search of food.

When he came back, he found a rabbit was living there.

"Get out of my home!" shouted the partridge.

"This is my home now!" the rabbit shouted back.

They went to a pious cat who lived by the Ganges to ask him to judge their case.

"My dear creatures," the cat said, "I am old and deaf. You must come closer... I still cannot hear you... Closer... That's better, just a little closer."

And then the cat ate the partridge and the rabbit too.

Tell a version of the story where somehow the partridge and/or the rabbit manage to escape from the cat.

101. THE VULTURE AND THE CAT [INDIA 33]

A vulture, old and nearly blind, lived in a tree hollow.

The other birds pitied the vulture and fed him, and he looked after their chicks.

A cat approached the tree, but the vulture squawked, "No food for you here, cat!"

"I follow the spiritual path," replied the cat. "I no longer eat meat. I seek only to learn from elders like yourself."

Flattered, the vulture began preaching.

Meanwhile, the cat ate the chicks, carefully depositing their bones in the vulture's hollow.

The cat then left, and when the birds found the bones, they attacked the vulture and killed him.

Add an animal detective to story who can identify the real criminal based on the available clues.

102. THE HAWKS AND THE CROWS [INDIA 34]

The hawks and the crows agreed to go hunting together.

One day, they found a fox nearly dead of starvation.

"We'll eat the upper half of the fox," said the crows.

"And we'll eat the lower half," said the hawks.

The fox laughed. "I always thought hawks superior to crows. Surely the hawks, not the crows, deserve the upper half."

"Yes, we do!" shouted the hawks.

"No, you don't!" shouted the crows.

A great fight broke out, and the fox recovered her strength by feasting on the fallen birds.

Thus the weak can profit when the powerful quarrel amongst themselves.

Add another character into the story who is able to put a stop to the quarrel of the hawks and the crows, thwarting the fox's plan.

103. THE BHARUNDA BIRD [INDIA 36]

Have you heard of the bharunda bird? This strange creature has two heads attached to a single body.

One day, a bharunda bird found a flower filled with nectar. The first head drank the nectar eagerly, and the nectar went into their shared stomach. "Delicious!" it said.

"Give me some!" shouted the other head.

"No!" shouted the first head. "I found it; I drink it!"

The second head was so angry that it found a poisonous fruit and ate it.

"Ha!" shouted the head. "That's my revenge."

The poisonous fruit went into their shared stomach, and the bharunda bird died.

Invent your own story about a supernatural animal with some bizarre anatomical feature that is central to the story's plot.

104. THE HAWK AND THE FISH [INDIA 37]

A hawk had caught a fish.

Holding the fish in his talons, he rose up from the water, ready to fly home and enjoy his meal.

But crows suddenly swarmed all around him, a hundred or more, each one trying to snatch the fish.

The hawk flew up and he flew down... still the crows pursued him.

Left and right... the crows kept on chasing him.

Finally, the hawk let go of the fish.

The crows all flew off, chasing after the fish and leaving the hawk alone.

He settled on a branch and sighed thankfully, "At last, I'm free."

Imagine the hawk sharing his new life-philosophy with other birds and animals. Maybe he could have his own TV talk-show.

105. THE CROW AND THE SUNRISE [INDIA 38]

A foolish crow was convinced that his shrill caw-caw-caw caused the sun to rise each morning. Each day, he cawed in the darkness before dawn, knowing that the whole world depended on him to bring the sun.

One morning, however, the crow slept late.

He awoke to see the sun already high in the sky.

"Thank goodness another member of the crow family was awake this morning!" he thought to himself. "Otherwise, the earth might have spent the whole day in darkness."

This foolish crow shows us that the way you see yourself is a matter of opinion, not fact.

Add another animal into the story who explains to the crow what really happens, scientifically speaking, when the sun rises each morning.

106. THE ANIMALS BOASTING [INDIA 39]

"My great valor makes me king of the jungle," roared the lion.

"But I am the most cunning of all," countered the fox.

"Just look at my feathers!" shrieked the peacock.

"Feathers are nothing compared to tusks!" trumpeted the elephant.

Meanwhile, a little toad croaked her own opinion:

"Lion, as king of the animals, you're a coveted trophy for hunters! Your fur, Fox, will be made into a coat. Humans will kill you for your feathers, Peacock, and they will kill you for your tusks, Elephant!"

"So I say," the toad concluded, "it's better to be small rather than mighty."

Write your own version of this story with different animals boasting and a different animal delivering the lesson at the end.

107. THE CRABS AND THE FOX [INDIA 41]

The crabs found a fox weeping on the beach.

"What's wrong?" they asked.

"The other foxes were planning to devour you," he replied, "but I said we should not harm such pretty creatures."

The crabs were glad to meet a friendly fox.

Then the fox said to the crabs, "Let's go dancing in the moonlight!"

The fox danced happily together with the crabs.

"Come dance, my friends, come, come!"

The fox and the crabs danced up the sand and into the grass-covered dunes... where all the other foxes were waiting.

And so the foxes devoured the crabs, every last one.

Maybe a crab survives and seeks revenge on the foxes, or maybe some other creature can seek revenge on behalf of the crabs.

108. THE CRANE AND THE FISH [INDIA 42]

The lake was drying up.

"Don't worry, fish-friends!" said a crane. "I'll carry you to my home, a big lake nearby."

"Thank you!" said the fish, and she carried them off one by one.

But the crane wasn't relocating the fish; she was devouring them.

Finally only a crab remained.

"Come on!" said the crane.

Then, as they were landing, the crab looked down and saw fishbones, so he grabbed the crane's neck with his pincers.

"Let go!" the crane said, but the crab squeezed.

SNAP!

The crane died, and the crab lived happily ever after in the big lake.

Imagine the crab rapping to his new friends in the big lake about how he defeated the crane.

109. BIG-WIT, HALF-WIT, AND WITLESS [INDIA 43]

There were three fish living in a pond: Big-Wit, Half-Wit, and Witless.

Fishermen came to their pond, looking for fish to catch.

Big-Wit realized the danger at once and went swimming through the pond's outlet before the fishermen blocked it up. Thus he made his escape.

Half-Wit was unsure what to do, but finally he pretended to be dead, floating on top of the water, and the fishermen had no interest in a rotten fish carcass.

As for Witless, terror made him splash in the water, so the fishermen seized him and he became fish stew for the fishermen's dinner.

Make up a new story about three animals who face some kind of danger and respond in their own individual ways.

110. THE FROG IN THE WELL [INDIA 45]

A frog was born in a well and lived there all her life.

Another frog was born and lived in a lake.

The lake-frog went exploring, and when she hopped up on the edge of the well, she fell in.

She tried to tell the well-frog what the lake was like. "It's big!" she said.

"As big as this?" asked the well-frog, hopping from one side of the well to the other.

"Bigger!" said the lake-frog.

"But there's nothing bigger than the well. You've lost your mind!" shouted the well-frog. "That 'lake' is something you dreamed; it can't be real."

Tell a story about these two frogs leaving the well together and going to see the lake.

111. DEER, TIGER, AND CROCODILE [INDIA 50]

A deer had gone to drink, and a tiger lay in wait in the bushes nearby.

“That deer will make a delicious meal,” the tiger thought.

Meanwhile, there was a crocodile in the water who also had his eyes on the deer.

As the deer finished drinking, the tiger leaped, but he missed and fell.

Then, as he tumbled with a splash into the water, the crocodile seized him.

They fought, and both died of their wounds.

The deer, watching the unexpected drama, exclaimed, “It’s a good day for the deer when the tiger and the crocodile destroy one another.”

Imagine that the deer runs into some friends and tells those friends the story of the tiger and the crocodile.

112. THE RABBIT AND THE COCONUT [INDIA 51]

Rabbit slept under a coconut-tree, and a coconut fell on his head.

"The sky's falling!" Rabbit shouted. He jumped and ran.

"What's wrong?" Deer asked.

"End of the world! The sky's falling!" shrieked Rabbit, and Deer ran with him.

They met Fox. "What's wrong?" she asked.

Rabbit panted, "Sky falling! End of world!"

Now Rabbit, Deer, and Fox were running.

Monkey, Leopard, Elephant... all running!

Lion stopped them. "Who says it's the end of the world?"

They pointed at Rabbit, and Rabbit took Lion to the tree.

"A coconut fell down!" Lion roared. "It's not the end of the world."

*You might know an English version of this story called "Henny-Penny."
Invent your own "sky is falling" story using your own favorite animals.*

113. THE TIGER AND THE GOLDEN BANGLE [INDIA 55]

An old tiger lived beside a pond.

When a traveler passed nearby, the tiger shouted, "Here! Take this golden bangle!"

The traveler was surprised by the tiger's words. "Show me the bangle!" he said.

The tiger showed him.

"But can I trust you?" asked the traveler.

"I'm old," said the tiger, "with no teeth and no claws. Before I die, I'm giving away my wealth. Come! Cross the pond and take the bangle."

When the man waded into the pond, he got stuck in the mud.

"I'll help you!" said the tiger.

So saying, the tiger pounced and devoured him.

Tell your own story about a different animal who lures other animals and/or humans into a trap.

114. THE KING AND HIS MONKEY [INDIA 58]

A king appointed a pet monkey to be his royal sword-bearer and bodyguard.

One day, the king went into the royal gardens. The day was hot, so the king decided to nap in the shade of a tree.

“Let no one disturb me!” he commanded the monkey.

After a while, a bumblebee flew by and landed on the king’s nose. The monkey raised his sword and brought it down upon the offending insect, lest it disturb the king.

He killed the bee, but he also killed the king.

Thus a foolish friend is more dangerous than the most dangerous enemy.

Can you find a way to change the ending so that things turn out better for the king and his monkey?

115. THE MONKEYS AND THE GARDENER [INDIA 59]

The royal gardener wanted a vacation.

There were some monkeys living in the garden, so the gardener decided to put the monkeys in charge while he was gone.

"Make sure you water all the plants!" he told the monkeys.

"We should inspect the roots first," commanded the chief of the monkeys. "The deep roots need lots of water; the shallow roots not so much."

So the monkeys inspected the roots carefully, pulling them up out of the ground to look at them.

The gardener came back from vacation to find all the plants were dead, uprooted by the foolish monkeys.

Write a sequel where the gardener gives the monkeys some gardening lessons, or maybe they learn about gardening from a wise animal who lives there.

116. THE KING OF THE DOVES [INDIA 63]

A hunter spread a net on the ground, covering it with grain.

When doves rushed to eat the grain, their feet were caught. The more they thrashed, the more tightly they were trapped.

“Be calm!” said the dove-king. “Use your wings instead.”

Together, the doves flapped their wings and rose up, carrying the net, while the hunter shouted at them angrily.

The doves then flew to the home of their friend: a mouse.

“Help us, mouse!” said the dove-king, and the mouse chewed through the knots and freed all the doves from the net.

The moral: Cooperate, and be kind.

Write a prequel about how the doves and the mice became friends.

117. THE GADFLY AND THE LION [INDIA 64]

A gadfly found a lion sleeping in his den. She bit the lion's lip and drank his blood.

The lion awoke and grabbed the gadfly.

"Mercy!" begged the gadfly. "Let me go and I'll do you a favor someday."

The lion scoffed at the idea of a gadfly doing him a favor, but he let the creature go.

Some days later, the gadfly saw hunters creeping towards the lion's den. She once again bit the lion, waking him. "You must go," shouted the gadfly, "or else the hunters will trap you here!"

The lion thus escaped, thanks to a gadfly.

Write your own story about a big animal and a little animal doing each other favors.

118. TURTLE, DEER, MOUSE, AND CROW [INDIA 65]

A turtle, deer, mouse, and crow were all friends.

One day a hunter caught the turtle and carried her away in a sack.

The mouse advised the deer to lie down in the hunter's path, pretending to be dead, while the crow pretended to peck at her dead body.

When the hunter saw the deer, he put down the sack, got out his knife and advanced towards the deer.

The mouse quickly gnawed a hole in the sack so the turtle escaped, while the crow flapped in the hunter's face till the deer got away.

The moral: Friendship is powerful.

Imagine that something goes wrong and these four friends start quarreling with each other. What might they fight about, and what might happen as a result?

119. THE GOOSE AND THE CROW [INDIA 68]

A goose and a crow lived together in a tree.

One hot day, a hunter decided to rest beneath that tree.

As he slept, the sun moved, exposing his face, so the kindly goose shaded the man's face from the sun with her wings.

Meanwhile, the wicked crow pooped down on the man's face and then flew away, cackling with delight.

When the man awoke, he wiped away the poop and, looking up, he saw the goose.

"You cursed bird!" he shouted.

He then grabbed his gun and shot the goose dead.

The moral: Be careful what company you keep.

The goose and the crow have very different personalities. How do you think they started living together in that tree?

120. THE MONKEY AND THE GOAT [INDIA 69]

A wily monkey once stole a workman's rice and lentils.

After gobbling almost all the food, the monkey then set about laying the blame on someone else.

"The goat would make a likely culprit," the monkey thought to himself.

So the monkey fed the rest of the rice and lentils to the goat, making sure to smear food all over the goat's mouth and in his beard.

"Thank you, monkey!" said the gullible goat.

When the workman returned, he blamed the goat.

"You cursed beast!" he shouted as he beat the poor goat, while the monkey just laughed and laughed.

Can you imagine a character who might be able to outsmart this monkey when he tries to play another trick?

121. THE TURTLE AND THE PEACOCK [INDIA 71]

A turtle saw a peacock dancing beside a pond.

"I want to dance with you," said the turtle.

The peacock looked at him doubtfully. "You're too slow, and you have no feathers to compare with mine."

"I'll surprise you," said the turtle, "for my shell is truly colorful and, though slow, I am graceful."

So the turtle danced with the peacock, and the peacock had to admire his lovely shell and steady pace.

A hunter, however, discovered them there.

The peacock flew to safety in a tree, but the hunter caught and killed the turtle before he reached the pond.

Can you imagine a happy ending where the turtle is able to escape from the hunter?

122. THE TURTLE IN THE LAKE [INDIA 72]

The princes shouted, "Father, we saw a terrible lake-monster!"

The king's guards went and caught the monster.

It was only a turtle, but the princes had never seen a turtle before and it frightened them.

"How shall we kill it?" the king asked.

"Crush it!" said the first prince.

"Burn it!" said the second.

"Drown it!" said the third.

Then the turtle shrieked, "Don't drown me! Crush me, burn me, but please don't drown me!"

"Drown the turtle!" the king commanded.

The guards threw the turtle into the lake.

The turtle shouted "Home at last!" as he happily swam away.

You might know a similar story about Brer Rabbit who says "please don't throw me in that briar patch" in order to get safely home. Write your own story about an animal who uses this trick to escape from their captor.

123. THE TURTLE AND THE TWO BIRDS [INDIA 73]

A turtle once befriended two birds, and the three friends lived together at a lake.

The lake was drying up, so the birds offered to carry the turtle away.

"You bite the middle of this stick, and we'll carry the ends in our beaks," they said. "But you must keep your mouth closed. Don't open your mouth, okay?"

"Okay!" the turtle said.

They soared into the sky: the plan worked!

But then people on the ground started laughing.

"That turtle looks ridiculous up there!" they said.

The turtle opened his mouth to rebuke them and thus plunged to his death.

Can you twist the plot in some way so that things turn out okay for the turtle after all?

124. THE DONKEY AND THE JACKAL [INDIA 74]

A farmer allowed his donkey to wander freely at night.

One night the donkey met a jackal and they became friends.

Together, they broke into a cucumber field and ate all the cucumbers they wanted.

Then the donkey decided to sing.

“Don’t do that!” hissed the jackal.

But the donkey insisted on singing. “I have a lovely singing voice,” he said. “You’re just jealous!”

The jackal hid in the bushes and watched. The donkey sang very loudly, and finally the villagers came and cudged him to death.

“Music is all well and good,” thought the jackal, “but silence is safer.”

This donkey got into trouble by singing. Write a sequel to the story where the jackal does something that gets her into trouble too.

125. THE DONKEY AND THE WATCHDOG [INDIA 76]

A thief came to rob a house.

The donkey said to the watchdog, "You should bark!"

"Our master treats us badly," said the dog. "Why should I bark?"

Since the dog wouldn't bark, the donkey brayed.

This scared the thief, but the master didn't know anything about that. Instead, he was furious that the donkey woke him up. In his rage, he beat the donkey so badly that the donkey died.

The dog shook his head sadly. "The donkey should have listened to me and kept his mouth shut."

The thief returned the next night.

The dog did not bark.

Things did not turn out well for the donkey. What do you think is going to happen to the dog now?

126. THE BRAVE MONGOOSE [INDIA 77]

A brahmin and his wife had a pet mongoose.

One day the woman went out.

“Watch the baby!” she told her husband.

Then the man went out.

“Watch the baby!” he told the mongoose.

Then... a snake came!

The brave mongoose killed the snake, overturning the baby's cradle in their struggle.

When the woman returned, she saw the overturned cradle and the mongoose covered in blood. Thinking it had killed her baby, she killed the mongoose.

Then she heard her baby crying and found the remains of the snake, and so she wept for the terrible mistake she had made.

Can you think of a twist in the plot so that things turn out happily in the end instead of this very sad ending?

127. THE BANDIT'S GHOST [INDIA 79]

A bandit stole the village bell and fled to the hills where a tiger killed him. Whenever people heard the bell ringing, they whispered in fear, "It's the bandit's ghost!"

But it was only a monkey ringing the bell.

The village-chief offered a reward for anyone brave enough to defeat the ghost and retrieve the bell.

A wise woman guessed the truth.

"I can defeat the ghost!" she proclaimed.

She took no weapons, just fruit. She fed the fruit to the monkey, and thus she snatched the bell.

She returned to the village ringing the bell and claimed her reward.

Write a ballad that the people of the village sing to honor the wise woman who defeated the ghost.

128. THE FISH AND THE CRANE [INDIA 87]

The Buddha was once born as a fish, and through his good actions he became the king of the fish.

There was a crane who wanted to eat the fish, so he pretended to be asleep. The other fish were fooled, but the Buddha realized that the crane was their deadly enemy.

“My fellow fish,” the Buddha said, “we must drive this wicked creature away, and it will take all of us working together. One, two, three... SPLASH.”

At the Buddha’s command, the fish all started splashing at the crane until he finally flew away to look for food elsewhere.

Write your own story where some other little birds or other animals find a way to cooperate and defeat their common enemy.

129. THE PARROT AND THE MANGOS [INDIA 88]

The Buddha was born as a parrot. He had a son. When he grew up, the son cared for his elderly father, bringing him food.

One day the son flew to an island full of mango trees. He brought back a mango.

"Beware, my son," said the parrot's father. "That is too far; do not go to the mango island."

But the son did not listen. He flew again to the mango island, and then he grew so tired flying home that he fell into the ocean, and a fish ate him.

The Buddha waited, but his son never returned.

Twist the plot for a happy ending so that the parrot manages to come back home to his father, lesson learned.

130. THE WOODPECKER AND THE LION [INDIA 89]

The Buddha was once born as a woodpecker.

One day this woodpecker saw a lion, groaning in pain.

"Help me, woodpecker!" shouted the lion. "Extract the bone stuck in my throat, and I'll give you a reward!"

The woodpecker agreed, but he was cautious.

First, he propped the lion's mouth open with a stick, and only then did he extract the bone.

After emerging from the lion's mouth, he knocked away the stick.

"What's my reward?" the woodpecker asked.

"Escaping my teeth is reward enough!" the lion snarled.

Thus the Buddha knew he was wise not to trust the lion.

Write another story about this wise woodpecker where he manages to use his creative intelligence to escape from danger once again.

131. THE QUAIL CHICK [INDIA 90]

The Buddha was born as a tiny quail chick.

The chick lived in a nest, fed by his mother and father, and he could not fly yet.

Then one day, a huge fire swept through the forest, and the mother and father quail flew away in fear.

Because the quail chick could not fly, he summoned the power of his past Buddha lives and spoke forth. "In the name of Truth," shouted the little bird, "I defy you, Fire! Turn back now!"

And so the flames of the forest fire were extinguished by the miraculous power of the Buddha's words.

Do some research about Agni, the Fire-God, and use what you learn in order to make the fire an actual character in the story.

132. THE QUAIL AND THE HUNTER [INDIA 91]

The Buddha was born as a quail.

A hunter caught the Buddha and his flock, and he put them in cages, feeding them well and fattening them to sell.

"If we don't eat, we'll grow thin," the Buddha thought, "and that might save us."

So he told the others, "Don't eat!"

But they ate the food and grew fat, and then the hunter sold them.

Meanwhile, the Buddha grew thin and lay motionless in the cage.

"Is it dead?" the hunter wondered.

He took the bird out to see what was wrong, and the Buddha jumped up and flew away.

Write a song for the quail to sing as he flies away after escaping from the hunter's cage.

133. THE BIRDS BY THE LAKE [INDIA 92]

The Buddha was born as a bird, and he lived with other birds in a tree that stretched over a lake.

Some of the birds peed and pooped in the lake, and this made the great Naga-snake who lived in the lake angry.

The Naga made the waters of the lake boil, and he shot flames from his mouth into the branches of the tree.

"We must fly away!" said the Buddha, and the wise birds followed him to safety.

The foolish birds, however, stayed in the tree, peeing and pooping in the water, until they died in the flames.

Do some research about the mythological creatures called Nagas (yes, that's where J.K. Rowling got the name "Nagini" in the Harry Potter books) and then use what you learn to expand on this story.

134. THE BIRDS IN THE TREE [INDIA 93]

The Buddha was born as a bird and he lived together with a flock of birds in a mighty tree; the Buddha was the king of these birds.

The branches of the tree where the birds lived began to grind one against the other, producing sparks and smoke.

The king realized that this was the beginning of a fire, so he warned all the other birds. "We must fly away now!" he told them.

The wise birds listened, but the foolish birds ignored the Buddha's words.

The whole tree caught on fire, and the foolish birds perished in the flames.

Expand on the story to include more of what the Buddha says to the birds. Is there a way he can persuade all of the birds, even the foolish ones?

135. THE SWAN WITH THE GOLDEN FEATHERS [INDIA 96]

The Buddha was born as a man who had a wife and children.

When the man died, he was reborn as a swan with golden feathers.

The swan flew home and gave his wife a feather. "I'll return soon and give you more," he promised.

But when he returned, his wife plucked all his feathers.

"Wicked woman, what have you done?" he cried, and the feathers in her hands became ordinary white swan feathers.

The wife threw the plucked swan into the garbage.

Then, when the Buddha's feathers grew back – white now, not golden – he flew away and never returned.

In some versions of this story, the daughters of the man and his wife play an important role. Write your own version of this story that includes the daughters.

136. THE MONK AND HIS SNAKE [INDIA 98]

There was once a Buddhist monk who had adopted a poisonous snake, keeping the snake in a cage like a pet.

The Buddha warned this monk that the snake couldn't be trusted, but the monk did not listen.

"I can't live without my snake friend," he said.

One day the monk went to feed his snake. "Come here, my dear snake," he said as he opened the cage. "I have food for you!"

Hunger had made the snake impatient, and it bit the monk on the hand.

Thus the foolish monk died, and the snake slithered away into the forest.

Make the snake into a talking snake. That way you can include dialogue between the monk and the snake and/or between the snake and the Buddha.

137. THE BUDDHA AND THE MANTRA [INDIA 99]

The Buddha had taught one of his young disciples a mantra for bringing the dead to life.

“Use it carefully,” the Buddha warned him.

Later on, the young man, together with some other disciples, went into the jungle. There they found a dead tiger.

“I will bring this dead tiger to life!” the disciple shouted, and then he spoke the mantra.

A living tiger sprang up, killed the young disciple, and ran off.

The other disciples returned to the Buddha and told him what had happened.

“Before people do favors for villains,” the Buddha said, “they should consider the outcome.”

Write a version of this story where the foolish disciple manages to survive somehow, lesson learned.

138. THE PILGRIM AND THE SNAKE [INDIA 102]

A pilgrim converted a cobra to the holy life.

“Do no harm,” he told the cobra, “and don’t bite!”

The snake nodded, and the pilgrim departed.

The village boys, however, grew bold and pelted the snake with rocks.

Its bones broken, the snake could barely slither in and out of its hole.

When the pilgrim returned, he was shocked by the snake’s condition.

“The boys attack me,” it said. “But I keep my vow!”

“I told you no biting, but I didn’t forbid hissing!” the pilgrim exclaimed. “Do no harm, but you must hiss if someone threatens to harm you.”

What do you think will happen now that the pilgrim has shared this advice with the cobra?

139. THE FISH AND THE FLOWERS [INDIA 106]

A fishmonger ran into her cousin, a flower-seller, in the marketplace.

"You've sold all your fish, and I've sold all my flowers," said the flower-seller. "Come have dinner with me! You can stay the night."

The fishmonger gladly accepted.

She left her fishbasket at the door of her cousin's house.

They ate dinner, and then they went to bed.

During the night, the fishmonger tossed and turned. The smell of flowers was suffocating!

She finally went and got her fishbasket, putting it in the bed beside her. Smelling the familiar smell of fish, she was able to sleep at last.

Write a flipped version of this story so that the flower-seller goes to visit the fishmonger, or use a completely different pair of mismatched professions.

140. THE TRAVELER AND THE TREE [INDIA 118]

A traveler lay down to rest by a tree, not suspecting it was Kalpavriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree.

Because the man was tired, he thought how nice it would be to have a bed. A bed appeared!

Then he thought how nice it would be to have food. Done!

A woman to rub his feet. Done!

"This is wonderful!" he thought. "How silly of me to have worried about this journey. I almost didn't come because the tigers scared me."

Just as soon as he thought of the tigers, a tiger appeared, and it attacked the traveler and killed him.

Write your own story about a mind-reading wish-fulfilling tree. You could do research about the Kalpavriksha tree (also called Kalpataru) to get ideas.

141. THE WISEST OF THE BRAHMINS [INDIA 119]

There were once four brahmins who went traveling. Along the road, they found the bones of a lion.

The first brahmin said a mantra to assemble the bones into a skeleton.

The second brahmin said a mantra to add flesh and skin to the skeleton.

"I will now give it life!" said the third brahmin.

"Wait a minute!" said the fourth brahmin, and he hurriedly climbed a tree.

The third brahmin then pronounced his mantra.

The lion woke up hungry and ate the three brahmins before running off into the jungle.

The fourth brahmin alone lived to tell the tale.

Imagine that this lion runs into another lion and tells him this story from his point of view, describing what it was like for him to experience a resurrection.

142. THE BRAHMIN AND HIS MOUSE-DAUGHTER [INDIA 120]

A brahmin rescued a mouse from a hawk and turned her into a girl.

She grew up and needed a husband.

"I want the most powerful husband!" she said.

The brahmin thought Sun was the most powerful.

"Sun, marry my daughter," he said.

"Cloud is more powerful," said Sun. "He covers me."

Cloud said, "Wind is more powerful; he pushes me."

Wind said, "Mountain is more powerful; he blocks me."

Mountain said, "The mouse is the most powerful; he gnaws my foundations."

"Make me a mouse again!" said the girl, and thus she married the most powerful husband: a mouse.

Turn this story into a script for a play. There are seven different speaking parts, which gives you lots of opportunity to expand the story by adding more dialogue.

143. THE BRAHMIN AND HIS SNAKE-SON [INDIA 121]

A brahmin dreamed he would have a strong, handsome son, but his wife gave birth to a snake. They loved him nonetheless.

Time passed.

"He must marry!" said the mother, so the brahmin visited a distant relative.

"Marry your daughter to my strong and handsome son!" the brahmin proposed.

When the bride learned the groom was a snake, she said only, "Let fate bring what it may."

On their wedding night, the snake turned into a handsome man, shedding his skin as she watched. The bride's father threw the snakeskin in the fire, and the couple lived happily ever after.

Tell your own version of this story by focusing in on your favorite character, including more of their thoughts, feelings, actions, words, etc.

144. THE SNAKE AND THE BRAHMIN'S WIFE [INDIA 122]

A wandering brahmin and his wife encountered a serpent.

The serpent ate the brahmin!

The wife wept. "How will I live now?"

The serpent spat out a golden cup. "Beg alms with this. If anyone refuses you, his head will explode."

"Then I beg you: return my husband, or your head will explode!"

The snake spit her husband out, and then turned into a gandharva, a heavenly being.

"I was cursed to be a serpent until a woman outwitted me," said the gandharva, and as he flew upwards, jewels rained down.

The brahmin and his wife were beggars no more.

Imagine the wife and husband talking afterwards, with the wife explaining about the golden cup and the husband telling her what it was like in the serpent's stomach.

145. THE FARMER AND THE SNAKE [INDIA 123]

A snake lived in a farmer's field, and the farmer made milk offerings to that snake.

The snake would drink the milk and leave a gold coin in exchange.

The farmer kept all this secret, but eventually he told his son. "You are old enough now; you go make the offering!"

When the boy saw the snake emerge from its hole with the gold coin, he concluded that the snake's den must be full of treasure. He struck the snake, intending to kill it, but instead the snake bit him.

The boy died, and the snake was never seen again.

You could write a prequel to this story about how the snake acquired the gold coins, or write a sequel explaining what the snake does with the gold next.

146. RIDING SHIVA'S BULL [INDIA 129]

One night a man saw Shiva's bull descend from heaven. He grabbed the tail and rode up Mount Kailash where Shiva served him heavenly cakes cooked by Parvati herself.

He then rode the bull down and told his friend.

"Take me there!" his friend said.

So the next night he grabbed the tail, his friend grabbed onto his feet, and up they went.

The friend shouted, "How big were those cakes?"

"This big!" the man replied, letting go of the bull's tail to show him, and so the fools both fell down to earth.

They never saw Shiva's bull again.

Do some research about Shiva's bull Nandi, and then imagine Nandi telling the story to Shiva and Parvati.

147. AGNI AND VARUNA [INDIA 138]

The God of Fire, Agni, and the God of Rain, Varuna, were arguing about who was greater.

"Fire is greater than water!" said Agni.

"No!" said Varuna. "Water is greater than fire!"

They decided to have a contest to see who was right.

The God of Fire burned trees, crops and villages, but Varuna poured down rain and put out the fire. The God of Fire then fled into the mountain rocks, while rain kept pouring down.

Even now, Agni is hiding in the rocks; that's why when you strike rock with steel, sparks fly and you can make fire.

Imagine your own story of a contest between two opposing natural elements.

148. THE POOR MAN'S POT OF HONEY [INDIA 145]

A poor man had gathered some honey. He suspended the honey-pot from a rafter and sat beneath it, daydreaming.

"When I sell this honey, I'll buy some chicks. They'll grow into chickens, lay eggs, more chicks, more chickens. With that money, I can buy land. Then I'll get a fine wife. We'll have a fine son. But if he ever disobeys me, that bad boy, I'll strike him with my cane..."

And as he lifted his cane to thrash the boy, he broke the honey-pot, spilling the honey all over himself.

Thus the man ended up more poor than before.

This type of folktale is called an "air castle" story. Write your own "air castle" story where someone daydreams about their future plans, only to have everything come crashing down in the end.

149. THE HERMIT IN THE FOREST [INDIA 146]

A hermit had retired to the forest, setting aside all the cares of the world, and a simple loincloth was his only possession.

But rats came and nibbled holes in the loincloth, so the hermit got a cat.

The cat needed milk, so the hermit acquired a cow.

To care for the cow, he employed a cowherd.

The cowherd wanted a house, so he built a house.

To clean the house, he needed a maid.

The maid was lonely living in the forest, so they built more houses.

The result was a village, and all the cares of the world.

This type of story is sometimes called a "chain tale," where one thing leads to another and to another, etc. Try writing your own chain-tale story.

150. THE COUPLE WHO COOPERATED [INDIA 151]

In a village there lived a woman who could not walk because she had lost the use of her legs. In that same village, there lived a man who could not see because he had lost the use of his eyes.

Floodwaters came, and all the villagers ran, abandoning these two to their fate in the rushing waters.

"Help me!" shouted the lame woman, and the blind man lifted her up on his shoulders.

"Help me!" shouted the blind man, and the lame woman told him which way to go.

Thus they escaped the floodwaters, working for each other's safety.

Tell your own story of cooperation about two characters (or more) who help each other.

151. TENALIRAMA AND THE CHESSBOARD [INDIA 177]

Tenalirama's latest poem delighted King Krishnadevaraya.

"Name your reward!" the king proclaimed.

Tenalirama pointed to the king's chessboard. "Just put one sesame seed here," he said, "and then two seeds on this square; four seeds here; then eight, and so on. That will satisfy me!"

The king laughed. "That's too small a reward for such a great poem!"

"Not at all!" Tenalirama replied, smiling.

The king quickly discovered that Tenalirama was correct: it would bankrupt the whole treasury to cover the chessboard with sesame seeds that way. The whole world did not contain enough sesame!

Again, Tenalirama had delighted the king.

Do some research about "Powers of Two" and write your own story based on the incredible dimensions of this exponential number sequence.

152. TENALIRAMA AND THE PAINTER [INDIA 178]

"This is the best portrait I've ever seen!" King Krishnadevaraya said to the royal painter. "I must reward you. I'll make you prime minister."

The result was a complete disaster. The royal painter knew nothing of statecraft.

"Help me, Tenalirama!" he said.

Tenalirama organized a feast. The king started to eat, but spat the food out. "This is disgusting!" he shouted. "Summon the cook!"

The cook came in.

"But you're the royal carpenter!" said the king.

Tenalirama laughed. "And making a carpenter cook is about as bad as making a painter prime minister!"

The king laughed.

Tenalirama was right, again.

Write a story about someone doing-the-wrong-job using characters from a fandom (Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, Star Wars: any fandom you like).

153. TENALIRAMA AND THE CHINESE VASES [INDIA 179]

The Chinese ambassador sent King Krishnadevaraya four beautiful vases.

"Death to anyone who breaks a vase!" proclaimed the king.

A servant accidentally broke a vase and was sentenced to death.

Tenalirama visited him in prison.

At the execution, the servant begged, "Please, Your Highness, let me see the three remaining vases."

The king agreed.

When he saw the vases, the servant burst free and smashed them all.

"They would get broken eventually," he said. "I didn't want anyone else to have to die for it."

The king understood: people matter more than vases.

"Free the prisoner!" he said.

Tenalirama smiled.

Expand on this story by including the scene where Tenalirama visits the servant in prison and they come up with a plan to break the vases.

154. TENALIRAMA AND HIS FRIEND [INDIA 190]

"My house is too small!" complained Tenalirama's friend.

"I can help you," Tenalirama promised. "But you must do exactly what I tell you."

"Agreed!" said his friend.

Tenalirama then told him to bring the cow, the pig, the goat, and all the chickens into the house, and to come back in a week.

A week later, his friend returned. "That made things worse, not better!" he moaned.

"Of course it did," said Tenalirama. "Now, put all the animals back out where they belong."

The friend came back smiling.

"Thank you, Tenalirama!" he said. "My house is so much bigger now!"

Write your own story using this same type of logic where one character helps another to solve a problem by making things (temporarily) worse.

155. TENALIRAMA'S MAGICAL WATER [INDIA 191]

A friend of Tenalirama's wife came to him for help.

"I keep quarreling with my mother-in-law!" she said. "The things she says make me so angry."

Tenalirama smiled. "I will give you some magical water," he said, handing her a small bottle. "Before you reply to your mother-in-law, take a mouthful, close your eyes, count to three, then swallow. The magical water will help you!"

The woman returned a week later. "It's wonderful!" she said. "But I need more magical water."

Tenalirama laughed. "It's just regular water," he said. "The magic is in stopping yourself before you reply in anger."

Write your own story where someone gives "magic water" (or something like it) to help another character learn the lesson of patience.

156. BIRBAL'S MAGICAL STICKS [INDIA 196]

Someone was robbing the imperial kitchen, but the steward didn't know who. "Help me, Birbal!" he pleaded.

Birbal gathered some sticks and then addressed the kitchen staff. "These are my magical detecting sticks; each is the same length." He gave each person a stick. "Put this under your pillow tonight. The thief's greedy thoughts will make his stick grow longer."

The next morning, the staff presented their sticks.

One stick was much shorter than the rest!

"Behold the thief, who cut his stick to make it shorter," proclaimed Birbal. "By trying to prove his innocence, he has revealed his guilt."

Write your own detective story with "magical detecting sticks" (or something similar) set in a fandom: Black Panther, Star Trek, Pokemon, whatever fandom you like.

157. BIRBAL SEES BOTH GOOD AND BAD [INDIA 199]

A fellow courtier complained, "My prize Arabian mare ran away!"

"That could be good," said Birbal, angering the courtier.

Then the mare returned, followed by a wild stallion.

"What wonderful good luck!" exclaimed the courtier.

"Though it could be bad," said Birbal, angering the courtier again.

The stallion then threw the courtier's son, breaking his leg.

"My poor boy!" sobbed the courtier.

"That could be very good," said Birbal.

"You're heartless!" the courtier replied, angrier than ever.

The next day, soldiers came to recruit able-bodied young men for the war; they did not take the courtier's son.

Birbal just smiled.

Write your own could-be-good/could-be-bad story with human characters, or with animals.

158. NASRUDDIN'S DONKEY IS MISSING [NASRUDDIN 3]

Nasruddin's donkey was lost, but Nasruddin appeared to be happy, not sad. Instead of looking for his donkey, he sat drinking coffee in the coffeehouse.

Everyone was puzzled about this, knowing how much Nasruddin loved his donkey, and his donkey had now been missing for several days.

"I don't understand why you look so happy," someone finally said to him. "How can you smile like that when your donkey is lost?"

"I'm smiling because I'm not on the donkey," explained Nasruddin, taking another sip of his coffee. "Just imagine: if I were on the donkey, I would be lost too!"

Nasruddin often looks on the bright side of things in an unexpected way. Make up your own story about looking on the bright side of things as Nasruddin does here.

159. NASRUDDIN, HIS SON, AND THE DONKEY [NASRUDDIN 5]

Nasruddin was going to town with his son. Nasruddin walked while his son rode their donkey.

Someone saw them and scoffed. "Lazy boy! Why must your father walk?"

So the son got off, and Nasruddin got on.

Farther down the road, someone else saw them and said, "Cruel father, making your son walk!"

So they both rode the donkey.

"Poor donkey, carrying two riders!" said the next person they met.

So then they both got off.

"Idiots!" laughed the next person. "At least one of you should ride the donkey!"

"Take note, my son," Nasruddin said. "There's no pleasing everyone."

Write your own story where someone gets contradictory advice from different people and discovers that there's no way to please everyone.

160. NASRUDDIN'S FLYING DONKEY [NASRUDDIN 9]

Nasruddin decided to teach his donkey how to fly.

"Look at the bird! Just do that!" Nasruddin would say. "It's going to be harder because you don't have wings, but I know you can do it."

Finally, the day had arrived. Nasruddin took his donkey up to a high cliff. "Fly, donkey, fly!" he said as he pushed his donkey off the cliff.

The donkey sailed through the air, but only briefly. He hit the ground and died.

Nasruddin blamed himself. "I got so excited about teaching him how to fly that I forgot to teach him how to land."

Imagine that the ghost of Nasruddin's donkey appears to him in a dream. What kind of conversation would they have?

161. NASRUDDIN COUNTS THE DONKEYS [NASRUDDIN 10]

Nasruddin was taking the village's donkeys, laden with grain, to the mill. There was Nasruddin's donkey, plus nine more.

Halfway there, Nasruddin counted. Only nine!

Worried, he got down and went looking for the lost donkey.

When he came back, he counted again: ten donkeys.

"Praise God!" he said. "The missing donkey returned."

Nasruddin got back on his donkey and continued the journey.

Later, he counted again. Only nine!

He dismounted, went looking, came back, and counted. Ten donkeys!

"Well, I better walk. When I'm riding, that wayward donkey escapes."

Nasruddin was just forgetting to count the donkey underneath him!

The folktale motif of "forgetting to count yourself" is found all over the world. Make up your own story based on this mathematical mistake.

162. NASRUDDIN TAKES SIDES [NASRUDDIN 23]

Two men who were quarreling came to Nasruddin.

"Please help us, Nasruddin!" said the first man.

"We need you to judge between us!" said the second man.

The first man presented his case, and when he was done, Nasruddin exclaimed, "You're right!"

The second man shouted, "You haven't even listened to my side of the story!"

That man then presented his case and when he was done, Nasruddin exclaimed again, "You're right!"

Nasruddin's wife, who had listened to the whole thing, remarked, "They can't both be right."

Nasruddin looked at his wife and exclaimed with a smile, "You're right too!"

Write your own story about someone who sees the world as Nasruddin does in this story, agreeing with everyone's individual point of view.

163. GOOD GOOSE, BAD GOOSE [NASRUDDIN 24]

Nasruddin had a bad-tempered goose that was always hissing and trying to bite him, so he took the goose to the market to sell.

As he handed the goose to the goose-broker, Nasruddin warned him, "This is a badly-behaved goose. Be careful!"

"Don't worry," the broker said. "I'll get you a good price."

The broker then began yelling, "Buy the best goose here! A fine goose! Good-natured goose! Buy the best goose here!"

Nasruddin snatched his goose back from the broker.

"I'm not selling this goose at any price!" he exclaimed. "I never knew what a good goose I had."

What kind of conversation do you think Nasruddin will have with his goose on the way back home?

164. NASRUDDIN'S EGGPLANT NECKLACE [NASRUDDIN 27]

Nasruddin was traveling with a large caravan full of strangers. To make it easy for everyone to recognize him, he wore a string of eggplants around his neck. Everyone started calling him "Mr. Eggplant," but at least they all knew at a glance who he was.

One night the person sleeping on the ground next to Nasruddin decided to play a joke. He took Nasruddin's eggplant necklace and put it around his own neck.

When Nasruddin woke up, he saw the eggplant necklace around the other man's neck.

"If that is me," he thought to himself, "then who am I?"

This story ends with Nasruddin having an identity crisis. What more thoughts go through his mind? How will he figure out who he is?

165. NASRUDDIN VISITS A TOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME [NASRUDDIN 28]

Nasruddin was visiting a new town for the first time. He didn't know anybody in the town, and he wasn't sure what to do or where to go; it made him feel uneasy.

He decided to enter the first door he found open: a carpenter's shop.

"Hello!" said the carpenter.

"Hello!" replied Nasruddin. "Did you see me just now walk into your shop?"

"Yes," replied the carpenter, not sure what Nasruddin was getting at.

"And have you ever seen me before?" asked Nasruddin.

"No, I've never seen you before," admitted the carpenter.

"Then how did you know it was me?"

This conversation has gotten off to a strange start in typically weird Nasruddin-style. How do you think the dialogue might continue?

166. NASRUDDIN RESCUES THE MOON [NASRUDDIN 30]

Nasruddin was walking home late one night when he stopped at a well to drink some water.

As he stared down into the well, he saw the moon.

“Hang on, Moon!” he shouted. “I’ll rescue you!”

He lowered the bucket into the well but, as he tried to maneuver the bucket into just the right spot so the moon could climb in, he stumbled on the hem of his robe and fell over backwards.

He then saw the moon up in the sky.

“I did it!” he exclaimed happily. “You need to be careful you don’t fall down again, Moon!”

Imagine what the Moon thinks about all this, watching from up there in the sky.

167. THE WISDOM OF CAMELS [NASRUDDIN 33]

Nasruddin was in the coffeehouse with his friends, and the subject of camels came up. Specifically, they started arguing about whether camels were intelligent or not.

“Camels are very intelligent!” exclaimed Nasruddin. “In fact, I would say that camels are more intelligent than people are.”

“What makes you say so?” asked one of Nasruddin’s friends.

“A camel carries heavy loads, but he never asks for another load in addition to what he carries,” replied Nasruddin. “Most people, on the other hand, no matter how heavily burdened they might be already, are always eager to take on new obligations and responsibilities.”

Adapt this story to be about a wisdom lesson from a different animal. For example, what might Nasruddin say about the wisdom of donkeys? cats? chickens? mice? Any animal could work!

168. NASRUDDIN THE OPTIMIST [NASRUDDIN 42]

Nasruddin's neighbor saw him kneeling by the side of the lake, spooning something into the water. He was used to Nasruddin behaving strangely, but this was unusual even for Nasruddin. He decided to go investigate and see what Nasruddin was doing.

As the neighbor got closer, he saw that Nasruddin was spooning yogurt into the lake.

"Why are you spooning yogurt into the lake?" asked the neighbor.

"It's starter!" Nasruddin explained. "I am hoping to turn the whole lake into yogurt."

"But that's impossible!" said his neighbor.

"Yes, it's impossible," admitted Nasruddin. "But just imagine how wonderful it would be!"

Tell your own story about how Nasruddin's optimism inspires him to try some other impossible scheme.

169. NASRUDDIN'S SENSE OF ECONOMY [NASRUDDIN 46]

Nasruddin was acting even more strangely than usual. He had put a patch over one eye and stuffed cotton in one nostril and in one ear. He had also tied one arm behind his back and was hopping on just one leg.

"Nasruddin!" shouted his wife. "Are you alright? What's happened to you?"

"I'm fine!" replied Nasruddin. "I was just thinking that since I have two eyes and two ears and two nostrils, plus two arms and two legs, I should save one of each for future use. That way, I won't use them both up at the same time."

Is there any way that Nasruddin's wife can persuade him to give up his strange plan? Or do you think he might convince her to adopt this plan herself?

170. NASRUDDIN'S WIFE AND THE STEW [NASRUDDIN 51]

"Here are four kilos of meat," Nasruddin told his wife. "Please make a nice stew! I'm going out now to invite all my friends."

Nasruddin's wife made the stew but it smelled so good that she invited her friends over, and they ate all the stew.

When Nasruddin got home, his wife shouted, "That cat gobbled the meat before I could cook it!"

Nasruddin looked at her suspiciously. He grabbed the cat and put it on the scales.

"Four kilos!" he said. "So, if this is the cat, where's the meat? And if this is the meat, where's the cat?"

What might the cat say about all this? The cat could talk to some other animal in the household, or you could imagine the cat speaking with Nasruddin and his wife.

171. THE BURGLAR IN THE WELL [NASRUDDIN 60]

Nasruddin awoke to the sound of a burglar outside. He crept into the yard but saw nobody, and then he looked in the well. Sure enough, he saw a man's face in the water.

"Don't you even think about trying to escape!" he shouted down at the burglar.

He then rushed inside to get dressed. "I'll fetch the police!" he said. "You go keep an eye on the burglar in the well!"

His wife hurried outside and peered down into the well.

"Oh, I see another one!" she shouted. "He must have brought his wife with him as an accomplice."

Carry on with the story: what will happen when Nasruddin comes back and tries to show the policeman the burglar the well?

172. THE BREAD IN THE POND [NASRUDDIN 61]

Nasruddin's son was walking by the pond eating some bread. When he leaned over to look in the water, the bread fell out of his hand.

Then he saw that another boy in the pond had taken his bread, so he ran home crying and told his father what had happened. "Someone in the pond stole my bread!" he sobbed.

Nasruddin went to the pond and looked in the water. He saw a bearded man, about his own age.

"Hey there, old man!" he shouted. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, stealing bread from a little boy like that."

Stories about fools-and-their-reflections are found in folktales all over the world. Make up your own story about a person or an animal being fooled by their reflection.

173. THE THIEF WITH A WAGON [NASRUDDIN 66]

Nasruddin and his wife had been visiting relatives and arrived back home just as a thief was loading the last of their furniture into a wagon.

"Let's follow him!" Nasruddin whispered to his wife.

When the thief arrived at his own house, he began unloading Nasruddin's furniture.

"I'll give you a hand!" Nasruddin said. "Wife, go see if there's something to eat in the kitchen."

"Hey!" said the thief. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Isn't this our new house?" asked Nasruddin. "I saw all our furniture on your wagon and thought you were moving us to a new house."

Things are definitely not turning out as the thief planned. What do you think will happen next?

174. NASRUDDIN AND THE THIEF'S SHOES [NASRUDDIN 68]

Nasruddin awoke when he heard a thief in his house. He crept downstairs and saw the thief had politely left his shoes by the door. Nasruddin grabbed the shoes, and then shouted, "Thief! Thief!"

The thief ran to the door and, when he saw his shoes were gone, he dashed barefoot into the street.

Nasruddin chased him, shouting, "Thief! Thief!"

People rushed out of their houses and easily caught the criminal.

"This is not fair!" the thief protested. "This is not right!"

Then he pointed at Nasruddin accusingly. "I took nothing from that man's house, but he stole my shoes!"

The story ends with the thief's accusation. What will Nasruddin say in response? And what do you think the people will do?

175. NASRUDDIN AND THE WIND [NASRUDDIN 70]

Nasruddin was raiding a garden when the garden's owner caught him in the act.

"What are you doing?" shouted the owner.

"Well, you see," said Nasruddin, trying to think of an explanation, "I was blown here by the wind."

"What about all those vegetables lying here that someone has pulled up out of the ground?"

"I grabbed hold of those vegetables to stop my flight," Nasruddin replied.

"And what about that big bag full of vegetables you are holding in your hand?"

"This is ballast," said Nasruddin, "in case the wind starts blowing and tries to carry me off again!"

Can you think of some other explanation Nasruddin might give for being in the garden, vegetables uprooted, and holding that bag in his hand?

176. NASRUDDIN'S LADDER [NASRUDDIN 72]

Nasruddin was fond of fruit, and he was also fond of raiding his neighbor's orchards.

One night he had just lowered a ladder into someone's orchard in order to raid it, but the orchard's owner caught him in the act.

"What are you doing with that ladder?" the man shouted at him.

"Are you talking about this ladder?" asked Nasruddin. "Well, to tell the truth, I'm just trying to sell this ladder."

"You can't sell a ladder here!" the man replied.

"I beg to differ," said Nasruddin indignantly. "A ladder can be sold anywhere! Do you want to buy it?"

Can you think of some other way Nasruddin could try to explain what he was doing with that ladder?

177. NASRUDDIN AND THE TAILOR [NASRUDDIN 73]

Nasruddin went into a tailor's shop. "I'd like to try on a pair of trousers."

The tailor gave him the trousers, and Nasruddin tried them on.

"They're not quite right," he said, giving them back to the tailor. "I'd like to try a jacket now, please."

Nasruddin liked the jacket very much. "I'll take it!" he said, and then he began to walk out the door.

"But wait!" shouted the tailor. "You haven't paid!"

"I exchanged the trousers for the jacket," Nasruddin explained.

"But you didn't pay for the trousers!"

"Of course not!" said Nasruddin. "I didn't want the trousers!"

Can you imagine how the tailor might manage to take control and maybe even get Nasruddin to pay more than he owes?

178. THE CABBAGE AND THE COOKING-POT [NASRUDDIN 77]

Nasruddin and his friends were sitting in the coffeehouse, boasting.

"I once grew a cucumber as long as my arm," one man said.

"That's nothing!" said another. "I once grew a watermelon as big as a sheep."

"Ha!" said another. "I've got you both beat: I once grew a head of cabbage that was as large as an elephant."

Then Nasruddin said, "Just yesterday I bought a cooking-pot as big as a polo field."

"That's ridiculous!" the men shouted at Nasruddin. "Why would anyone want a pot that big?"

"In order to cook that head of cabbage!" replied Nasruddin, smiling.

This kind of tall tale boasting is found all over the world. Write your own boasting story, using Nasruddin and his friends, or human characters, or animals.

179. NASRUDDIN EATING EGGS [NASRUDDIN 83]

Nasruddin was sitting in a chair outside, eating eggs for dinner. He didn't usually eat dinner outside, and eggs were not his usual dinner, but so it was: Nasruddin was sitting in a chair outside, eating eggs for dinner.

One of Nasruddin's neighbors happened to walk by, and he just couldn't keep quiet. "Hey there, Nasruddin," he said, "why are you sitting in your chair eating eggs like that?"

Nasruddin looked up and replied, "Would it be better if I sat in the eggs and ate the chair?"

The best way to answer a foolish question is with another question.

Write your own story about answering one foolish question with another. It could be a Nasruddin story, or a story with different human characters, or an animal story.

180. BIG POT, LITTLE POT [NASRUDDIN 97]

Nasruddin borrowed a big cooking pot from his neighbor. When he returned it, he placed a little pot inside the big pot.

"What's this?" asked his neighbor.

"Your big pot gave birth to a little baby pot," Nasruddin explained.

The neighbor laughed, and he kept the little pot.

Nasruddin borrowed the big pot again later, but he didn't return it.

When his neighbor asked for it back, Nasruddin said, "I'm sorry, but your pot died."

"What do you mean it died?" exclaimed the neighbor. "Pots can't die!"

"If pots can give birth, of course they can die," replied Nasruddin, smiling.

Imagine this neighbor getting revenge on Nasruddin, playing some trick on him in return.

181. NASRUDDIN AND THE BEARS

[NASRUDDIN 105]

A rich man had invited Nasruddin to go with him on a bear hunt. Reluctantly, Nasruddin accepted the invitation.

A few days later, he returned from the hunt beaming with happiness.

"How did it go?" his neighbor asked him.

"It was wonderful!" Nasruddin replied with a smile.

"How many bears did you kill?"

"None!"

"How many bears did you chase?"

"None!"

"How many bears did you see?"

"None!" said Nasruddin happily.

His neighbor stared at him in confusion.

"That is why it was wonderful!" Nasruddin explained. "I don't mind hunting bears if there are not any bears to be found."

This is a story about bears-who-were-not-there. Write your own story based on something-that-was-not-there.

182. NASRUDDIN THE ARCHITECT [NASRUDDIN 106]

"Our house is so crowded," Nasruddin's neighbor complained. "We can't stand it anymore."

"I can help," Nasruddin said. "Will you obey my advice exactly?"

His neighbor nodded.

"Bring your goats, chickens, and donkey into the house."

A week later, the neighbor told Nasruddin, "That just made things worse!"

"I know," said Nasruddin. "But now, send the donkey outside."

"That's better," said the neighbor a week later.

"Now send the chickens back out."

"That's much better," the neighbor said next time.

"Now the goats."

Nasruddin's neighbor came back smiling. "Thank you, Nasruddin!" he said. "Our house is so much bigger now!"

Write your own story using this same type of logic where one character helps another solve a problem by making things (temporarily) worse.

183. NASRUDDIN AND THE BAKER [NASRUDDIN 112]

Nasruddin owed the baker money, so when the baker saw Nasruddin on the street, he said, "Come with me!" and he led Nasruddin into the bakery.

"Look!" the baker said, pointing at the account book. "You owe me three silver coins."

Nasruddin nodded, looking at the account book. "I see my brother-in-law owes you five," he remarked. "I was on my way to see him just now; I'll get him to pay also!"

"Excellent!" replied the baker.

"He owes you five, and I owe three," Nasruddin said. "So you can give me two coins now, and that will square things."

*Has Nasruddin managed to convince the baker to give him two coins?
Or do you think the baker is going to outmaneuver Nasruddin?*

184. THE ANGEL WITH THE GOLDEN COINS [NASRUDDIN 113]

Nasruddin had a dream. In his dream, an angel was counting golden coins into Nasruddin's hand, one at a time. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight... finally the angel had counted out nine coins.

"If you could give me ten coins," Nasruddin said to the angel, "I would be able to pay all my debts."

The angel then looked at him angrily and disappeared.

Nasruddin awoke from his dream. He looked, and saw there were no golden coins in his hand.

"Come back, angel!" shouted Nasruddin. "Please come back! I've thought it over, and I'll take the nine!"

Write your own story about a dream that Nasruddin or some other character has where they wake up from the dream and then want to go back into the dream again.

185. NASRUDDIN'S DONKEY FOR SALE [NASRUDDIN 120]

"That wretched donkey of mine ran away again," said Nasruddin. "If he ever comes back, I'll sell him for a single copper coin!"

The donkey came back, and Nasruddin regretted his reckless oath.

So, he took the cat, who was the donkey's playmate, and put the cat in the donkey's saddlebag. Then he went to the market.

"Buy this fine donkey for just one copper coin!" Nasruddin shouted. "But you must buy the cat too; the donkey would be heartbroken without him."

"How much for the cat?" someone asked.

"The cat will cost you one hundred silver coins," Nasruddin replied.

Write your own version of the story where the cat and the donkey are able to talk to each other so that we can hear the story from their point of view.

186. NASRUDDIN AT THE BATHHOUSE [NASRUDDIN 121]

Nasruddin went to the bathhouse.

When the attendant saw Nasruddin's shabby clothes, he treated him poorly, giving him a threadbare towel and only a tiny piece of soap. Nevertheless, after Nasruddin finished his bath, he tipped the attendant very generously.

On his next visit, the attendant greeted Nasruddin with great respect, remembering the generous tip. He gave Nasruddin several luxurious towels and a new bar of soap. But when he left, Nasruddin gave the attendant no tip at all.

"That's for last time," Nasruddin explained, "and the tip I gave you last time was for this time. Now we're even!"

What do you think is going to happen when Nasruddin goes back to the bathhouse the next time?

187. NASRUDDIN AND THE RECIPE [NASRUDDIN 129]

Nasruddin's wife had written out the recipe for Nasruddin's favorite liver-and onion dish and then she sent him to the market.

"Buy all the ingredients," she said, "and make sure the liver is fresh."

Walking home, Nasruddin was daydreaming about the fine dinner he would enjoy when out of nowhere a crow swooped down and attacked him. As Nasruddin defended himself, the crow snatched the liver and flew away with it.

"You accursed creature!" Nasruddin shouted as the crow flew away. "But the joke's on you: you forgot the recipe. You don't have any idea how to prepare the dish!"

Imagine what Nasruddin tells his wife when he gets home. What do you think the wife will say?

188. WHERE'S THE HALVAH? [NASRUDDIN 134]

Nasruddin went to the grocer.

"I want some halvah, please," he said.

"My apologies," said the grocer. "I don't have any halvah."

"That's impossible!" exclaimed Nasruddin. "How can a grocer not have halvah? I simply don't understand. Tell me: do you have any flour?"

"Yes," said the grocer.

"And what about sugar? Do you have any sugar?"

"Yes," said the grocer.

"And do you have butter? Surely you have butter!"

"Yes," said the grocer.

"So, isn't it obvious? Everything you need is here!" Nasruddin concluded. "If you have flour and sugar and butter, why don't you go make some halvah?"

Pick a recipe for one of your favorite foods and use that recipe to tell your own version of this story.

189. NASRUDDIN'S LUNCH [NASRUDDIN 137]

Nasruddin was working as a laborer, and each day he ate lunch in the company of his fellow workers.

"Nothing but bread and cheese," Nasruddin would say each day as he looked longingly at the food the other men had for their lunch. He saw dolmas, kebabs, tabbouleh, yogurt, pilaf, all kinds of food.

"You complain like this every day," one of the men said to Nasruddin. "You should tell your wife to make you something different for lunch."

"I'm not married," said Nasruddin.

"Who makes your lunch then?"

"I do," Nasruddin admitted, staring sadly at his bread and cheese.

Tell your own story about someone stuck in a rut: what does it take for them to realize that they are stuck, and how do they get un-stuck?

190. WALNUTS AND WATERMELONS [NASRUDDIN 139]

One afternoon, Nasruddin was resting in the shade of a walnut tree next to a watermelon patch.

“What a strange world this is!” he exclaimed. “Tiny walnuts are growing on this enormous tree, while the watermelons are lying there in the dirt, growing on those scrawny vines. If I were in charge, I’d arrange things in a much more logical way.”

Then a walnut happened to fall on Nasruddin’s head.

“Praise God, now I understand!” he exclaimed. “It is because of Divine Providence that I was hit on the head by this tiny walnut and not by an enormous watermelon.”

Can you think of another example from the world of nature that will impress Nasruddin as an example of Divine Providence?

191. NASRUDDIN NEEDS NEW CLOTHES [NASRUDDIN 142]

The whole town had put on their best clothes for the mayor's birthday parade.

Ashamed of his threadbare garments, Nasruddin was hiding in an alley as the parade went by. "O God," he prayed, "please give me some new clothes!"

At that moment, a man who had bought new clothes for the celebration threw his old clothes down into the alley. Joyfully, Nasruddin grabbed the bundle, only to discover these clothes were even more shabby than his own.

"God," said Nasruddin, "you're going to have to do better than this!" and he threw the bundle back up in the air.

What do you think will happen next? Is Nasruddin going to be able to join in the mayor's birthday parade after all?

192. BIG MOSQUE, LITTLE MOSQUE [NASRUDDIN 145]

Nasruddin had gone to the city to settle some business, but things were not turning out well.

“You should go pray in the big mosque,” Nasruddin’s business partner told him. “Maybe God will help us.”

Nasruddin prayed in the big mosque, but his business still went badly.

He then went and prayed in a small mosque, and the next day he was able to settle his business matters favorably.

Nasruddin then returned to the big mosque and said, “Shame on you, big mosque! You look powerful and important, but it was the little mosque who finally helped me, not you.”

Write your own story to illustrate the idea that something or someone small (not famous, not powerful) turns out to be the most helpful.

193. NASRUDDIN'S LULLABY [NASRUDDIN 161]

Nasruddin's wife had just given birth, but the baby was restless. She rocked the baby, sang to him, doing everything she could to lull the infant to sleep, but nothing seemed to work.

"I'll take care of it," said Nasruddin.

"You don't know anything about babies!" his wife replied.

"But I know how to put people to sleep," said Nasruddin. "My pupils often fall asleep during my lectures. I'll try lecturing first, and if that doesn't work, I'll give him this boring book to read." Nasruddin took a book down off the shelf. "It puts me to sleep every time!"

Write your own story about Nasruddin and his baby. Do you think he will be able to get the baby to go to sleep?

194. THE TURBAN OF A SCHOLAR [NASRUDDIN 162]

People who could not read would sometimes bring letters to Nasruddin so that he could read the letters to them.

One man had brought Nasruddin a letter to read, but the handwriting was terrible.

"This is the worst handwriting I have ever seen," said Nasruddin. "I can't read this letter."

The man was indignant. "You wear the turban of a scholar, but you can't even read a simple letter from my brother."

Nasruddin pulled the turban off his head and threw it at the man. "Go ahead! Take the turban," he said, "and see if you can do any better!"

Do some research about turbans, and then use some details from your research to expand on this story.

195. THE EAGLE JALIZ [NASRUDDIN 163]

A scholar was boasting about his knowledge of Islamic traditions. What color was Mohammad's horse? The scholar knew. What is the favorite food of the angels? He knew that too.

Eager to display his knowledge, Nasruddin shouted out, "Jaliz!"

The scholar stared at him coldly. "Is that some kind of name?"

"It's the name of the eagle who swooped down and carried Moses away," replied Nasruddin.

"But there is no record of an eagle swooping down and carrying Moses away."

"Well," retorted Nasruddin, "then Jaliz is the name of the eagle who did not swoop down and carry Moses away."

There are many legends about Moses in addition to what we know from the Koran and from the Hebrew Bible. Do some research about Moses, and then write a story about an eagle who really does carry Moses away.

196. WHAT IS BREAD? [NASRUDDIN 164]

Some renowned wise men challenged Nasruddin to a contest. Nasruddin agreed, provided he could ask the first question.

This was his question: What is bread?

The wise men wrote their answers on pieces of paper. Nasruddin then read their answers aloud:

Bread is made with flour and water.

Bread is my favorite food.

Bread is a gift of God.

Bread is delicious.

Bread is baked in an oven.

Bread is the staff of life.

Nasruddin sighed. "These supposed wise men cannot even agree what bread is! Why then should we listen to what they say about matters of real difficulty?"

Make up your own story like this about a different everyday object that people might define in various ways.

197. NASRUDDIN AND THE BUTTERFLY [NASRUDDIN 165]

Nasruddin was obsessed with butterflies. Whenever he saw a butterfly, he would stop whatever he was doing and watch the butterfly. He would get up and follow the butterfly, going wherever the butterfly would go until finally it would flutter away.

"I must learn what a butterfly truly is!" Nasruddin declared, so he got a net and caught a butterfly.

Then he took the butterfly and carefully removed its wings.

Next he removed the two antennae, and then the legs, and also the head.

"I can see all the butterfly's parts now," said Nasruddin. "But where did the butterfly go?"

Write your own story where someone realizes that the whole is not the same as its separated parts.

198. NASRUDDIN'S GRAMMAR [NASRUDDIN 167]

Nasruddin was traveling by ship, and a famous scholar was also on board.

Every time Nasruddin spoke, the scholar mocked him. "I've never heard such atrocious language. Didn't you study grammar in school?"

Nasruddin shook his head.

"Well," said the scholar, "I'd say you've wasted your life."

The ship was then caught in a storm.

"Abandon ship!" shouted the captain.

Nasruddin then turned to the scholar and asked, "Didn't you study swimming in school?"

The terrified scholar shook his head.

"Well," said Nasruddin, "I'd say you've wasted your life."

Nasruddin then jumped into the water and swam safely to shore.

Write your own story about the difference between book learning and practical learning.

199. NASRUDDIN AND THE ROAST PHEASANT [NASRUDDIN 177]

"Ah, roast pheasant! My favorite!" said Emperor Tamerlane. "Nasruddin, you will carve and serve."

"I offer you the head, O Head of the World," he said to Tamerlane.

"The wings are for you," he said to the Treasurer, "so you can fly off as soon as your embezzlement is discovered."

"Here are the legs," he said to the General, "for running from battle."

"Take the neck," he said to the Prime Minister, "for you're sure to be hanged sooner or later."

"The rest of the pheasant is mine," Nasruddin concluded, "because I have done such an excellent job of carving."

Write a flipped version of this story where Nasruddin uses symbolism to flatter his rivals at the dinner table. Or you could write this story about your own family engaged in flattery and/or mockery using food symbolism.

200. NASRUDDIN'S DEATH [NASRUDDIN 197]

Chopping wood in the forest, Nasruddin felt very cold. He'd never felt so cold! "I must be dead," he thought, so he lay down, stretched out like a corpse.

Then he realized his body had to be carried to the cemetery, so he went home to tell his wife. "I died in the forest. Tell my friends to come get my body."

Nasruddin returned to lie back down in the forest while his wife ran to the coffeehouse. "Nasruddin is lying dead in the forest," she sobbed.

"How do you know?" they asked.

"He came and told me," she replied.

When this tiny story ends, Nasruddin is still out there in the forest. What do you think happens next?

Story Title Index

The stories are numbered in order in this book, and I've also included the original numbering in brackets so that you can find the story in the Tiny Tales book that it comes from.

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India.LauraGibbs.net

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