Learning Life Lessons through Fables

Created by: Kathy Lawrence  
Title/Role: Librarian  
Organization/School Name: Hiawatha Elementary School  
Location: Vermont

Grade Level: 2  
Type of Lesson: Lesson in a unit  
Type of Schedule: Combination  
Collaboration Continuum: Moderate  
Content Area: Language Arts  
Content Topic: This lesson is part of a larger study of fables as a reading genre.

Standards for the 21st-Century Learner

Skills Indicator(s):
2.1.5 Collaborate with others to exchange ideas, develop new understandings, make decisions, and solve problems.  
4.1.1 Read, view, and listen for pleasure and personal growth.

Dispositions Indicator(s):
4.2.4 Show an appreciation for literature by electing to read for pleasure and expressing an interest in various literary genres.

Responsibilities Indicator(s):
2.3.1 Connect understanding to the real world.

Scenario: The Common Core State Standards require students in grades 2 and 3 to be able to recount fables and identify their central message or moral based upon key ideas and details in the text. This lesson provides the introduction to fables as a reading genre. The SL meets regularly with the teacher about curriculum. Fables are new at this grade level, so the SL launches the genre study in the library and the classroom teacher continues the study for a period of weeks in the classroom during Reader's Workshop. The SL explains the unique features of fables and provides the classroom teacher with a collection of books and text sets for fables that can be used in Reader's Workshop. The teacher uses this lesson as the basis for others in the classroom using different fables. A chart or Google Document begun in the library will be added to in the classroom and during subsequent visits to the library during the course of the unit. This first lesson uses multiple versions of two fables. We begin with The Lion and the Mouse, which may already be familiar to students.

Overview: This lesson will address the following essential questions: How are fables different from other kinds of stories? What can we learn from fables? Why should we read fables? Students will come to realize that fables can become a part of their reading life, and that they are available in several sections of the library.

Final Product: Students will complete an exercise where they match a fable with its moral. They will also write a short opinion piece about which fable they think is most important, why they think so, and what
Library Lesson: Students will learn that fables are intended to give us life lessons, and that they are generally short and have animal characters that behave like people. They will also learn that different illustrators and re-tellers may change some details of the fable while keeping the moral the same. The SL, teacher, or student will: 1. Read multiple versions of the same fable. 2. Compare and contrast them. 3. Determine the moral or central message and state it in student-friendly language. 4. Encourage reflection upon the significance of the story for our daily lives. Each lesson in the unit makes use of a different fable, but will follow this basic pattern.

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Assessment

Product: A paper and pencil matching exercise can be used for summative assessment at the end of the unit. In addition, a written argument/opinion piece can be assigned in which students introduce the fable they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section. The prompt might look like: In your opinion, which fable teaches the most important lesson? Be sure to summarize the fable and include key ideas and details from the text to make your points. Remember at the end to write about how this fable can help us in everyday life.

Process: Turn and talk, share-out; participation in discussion and recording on chart Exit slips may be used for formative assessment during the course of the unit.

Student self-questioning: Do I recognize a fable when I read one? Can I figure out the lesson or moral? Can I relate the fable or lesson to my own life? What have I learned from the fables I read that will help me?

Instructional Plan

Resources students will use:
- Event (i.e. exhibition, webcast, conference, workshop, performance)
- Still image (i.e. paintings, drawings, plans, and maps)
- Moving Image (i.e. animations, movies, tv program, video)
- Interactive Resource (i.e. webpages, multimedia learning objects, chat services)
- Text (books, letters, poems, newspapers, etc.)

Interactive Resource URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAma4fFC0gI

Resources instructor will use:
- Projector
- Laptop
- White board
- Other

Other instructor resources: Chart paper or white board or notebook file if using Smartboard

Instruction/Activities

Direct instruction: The librarian explains that the students will begin a unit of study about fables.
Fables are very short stories that teach a lesson. The lesson is called the moral of the story and it is often listed at the end of the tale. Fables usually have animal characters that behave like people. Because the stories are so short, it is possible in one lesson to read several versions of the same fable and to compare and contrast them. Chart paper or a Google document on an interactive white board can be used to record the students' thinking about the different versions of a tale, what the moral says, and what it means. In the first lesson, using The Lion and the Mouse, the SL reads the texts and shares the moral. If time allows, an online video shadow play of the fable is shared as well. The class takes note of the different ways to express the moral or lesson.

Modeling and guided practice: Using a different fable, the SL "hides" the moral given at the end of the story. Several possibilities in student-friendly language are presented as choices. Students use the Turn and Talk strategy to reason out the moral with a partner. Group discussion follows, consensus is reached, and then the SL reveals the moral that is printed at the end of the tale.

Independent practice: After this pattern is followed with multiple versions of a number of fables (depending upon the length of the unit) students will read fables independently during Reader's Workshop and will share their thoughts in a reading log, on post-it notes, or during share time at the end of the workshop period. Note the emphasis on providing evidence of their thinking using key ideas and details in this sample prompt: The fable I read was ______. The moral is __________. The lesson or moral means ______. I think this because ______.

Sharing and reflecting: At the end of the unit, after having heard and read a variety of fables (including some that do not feature animal characters--like A Bundle of Sticks or The Maid and her Pail of Milk, and some that are not fables by Aesop--like those in Arnold Lobel's Caldecott Award-winning book--students will reflect upon what they have learned. The SL or classroom teacher will review the fables that were read as a whole group by referring to the chart or Google Doc that was created, and students will review their notes/log from their independent reading of fables. Options for sharing and reflection could include: 1. A short opinion piece of writing using this prompt: 2. Exit slips such as "One thing I learned from reading fables is..." or "I think we should read fables because ____" 3. Students with ipads can use the ShowMe app or something similar to illustrate and narrate their thinking about a particular fable.

Have you taught this lesson before: Yes

Strategies for differentiation: Students who struggle in their independent reading can listen to audio versions of the tale, and can be provided with multiple choices in order to recognize the message or moral in the story. Advanced students can be challenged to write a fable to illustrate a particular lesson or moral provided by the teacher or of their own choosing. They will have to demonstrate that they can write a tale that is short, uses animal characters that behave like people, and teaches a lesson.

AASL/Common Core State Standards Crosswalk

English Language Arts:

CC.2.W.8 » English Language Arts » Research to Build and Present Knowledge » 8. Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (2)

CC.2.SL.1 » English Language Arts » Comprehension and Collaboration » 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and
larger groups. (2)

**CC.2.SL.1.a** » English Language Arts » Comprehension and Collaboration » a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). (2)

**CC.2.SL.1.b** » English Language Arts » Comprehension and Collaboration » b. Build on others’ talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others. (2)

**CC.2.SL.1.c** » English Language Arts » Comprehension and Collaboration » c. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion. (2)

**CC.2.W.5** » English Language Arts » Production and Distribution of Writing » 5. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing. (2)

**CC.2.W.7** » English Language Arts » Research to Build and Present Knowledge » 7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations). (2)

**CC.2.R.L.10** » English Language Arts » Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity » 10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. (2)
Write the number of the moral on the left that matches each fable on the right. (Some fables have more than one moral listed.)

1. We can all help each other, no matter our size. 3 The Grasshopper and the Ants
2. Slow and steady wins the race. 12 The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse
3. First we work, then we play. 1 or 6 The Lion and the Mouse
4. Alone we are weak; together we are strong. 10 Belling the Cat
5. If you lie, no one will believe you when you tell the truth. 8 The Blind Men and the Elephant
6. A kindness is never wasted. 4 A Bundle of Sticks
7. It's easy to think badly about what we cannot have. 2 or 9 The Tortoise and the Hare
8. It is a good idea to consider all sides of a question or a problem, so you can see the big picture. 1 or 6 The Lion and the Mouse
9. Take your time, and you will do a better job. 11 The Maid and her Pail of Milk
10. Some plans are easy to think of, but hard to carry out. 5 The Boy who Cried Wolf
11. Don't plan on something you hope for to happen. 7 The Fox and the Grapes
12. Having a little in safety is better than having more 2 or 9 The Tortoise and the Hare in danger.
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Learning Life Lessons Through Fables
Exit Slips

Today's fable was called __________________________________________________________.

I think the moral means __________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________.

I think this because in the story, _______________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________.

Today I read/listened to this fable:  ________________________________________________.

This story teaches us _____________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________.

I know this because _____________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________.

Today I read more than one version of ______________________________________________.

The stories were a little different, but the lesson they taught was _________________________
___________________________________________________________________________.

This helps me in my life because ___________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________. 
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