

**Elk Grove Unified School District**  
**Visual and Performing Arts Resources**  
**Theatre**

**Grade 6: Lesson 2**

**Title: Acting Aesop**

**Standards Addressed**

**Artistic Perception**

*Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre*

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre to describe theatrical experiences, such as *action/reaction*, *vocal projection*, *subtext*, *theme*, *mood*, *design*, *production values*, and *stage crew*.

**Creative Expression**

*Creating, Performing, and Participating in Theatre*

- 2.1 Participate in improvisational theatre activities, demonstrating an understanding of text, subtext, and context.
- 2.2 Use effective vocal expression, gesture, facial expression, and timing to create character.
- 2.3 Write and perform scenes or one-act plays that include monologue, dialogue, action, and setting together with a range of character types.

**Historical and Cultural Context**

*Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre*

- 3.1 Create scripts that reflect particular historical periods or cultures.

**Aesthetic Valuing**

*Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences*

- 4.1 Develop and apply criteria for evaluating sets, lighting, costumes, makeup, and props.

**Connections, Relationships, Applications**

*Connecting and Applying What is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers*

- 5.1 Use theatrical skills to communicate concepts or ideas from other curriculum areas, such as a demonstration in history/social science of how persuasion and propaganda are used in advertising.

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Floor Plan:** Classroom with an open area for presentations.

**Materials Needed:**

- Group sets of selected fables

**Purpose:**

The students will use creative drama techniques to develop personified characters and perform fables.

**Background:**

Aesop's Fables are a group of stories thought to have been written by Aesop (c. 620-560B.C.), a Greek storyteller who may have been a slave. The main characters in these stories are animals and each story demonstrates a moral lesson.

**Key Questions:**

What theatre skills will the students use to dramatize Aesop's Fables?

**Vocabulary:**

- \* *Antagonist*—a person, situation, or the protagonist's own inner conflict that is in opposition to the protagonist's goals.
- \* *Character*—the role played by an actor as he/she assumes another's identity (physically, mentally, and emotionally).
- \* *Dialogue*—the lines or words spoken in a play between two or more characters.
- \* *Personification*—a literary device where a non-human subject is given human characteristics.
- \* *Plot*—the “what happens” in a story. The beginning events, middle events, and the ending in which the problem is resolved.
- \* *Protagonist*—the main character of a play and the character with which the audience identifies most strongly.
- \* *Rehearsal*—to practice in preparation for a public performance.

<u>Steps of the Lesson</u>	<u>Thoughts for the Teacher</u>
<b>1 Set up purpose/goals</b> What is a fable? Who was Aesop?	<b>How are you making your purpose clear to the students?</b> By presenting historic background and clear directions.
<b>2 Engage students</b> The students will become engaged in Step 2 of the lesson.	<b>How can I effectively get the students interested in the content of the lesson?</b> Students' prior knowledge of personification in modern cartoons will draw the students into the activity.
<b>3 Learning Sequence</b> See actual learning sequence below.	<b>What are the BIG idea(s) of your presentation? How will students understand/experience the material that you present?</b> Students will understand/experience this material through hands-on activities.
<b>4 Assessment</b> Performance of a drama that tells a fable.	<b>How will you allow your students to deepen their understanding of content presented? (Reflect, revise, retell, refine, practice)</b> Students will present a short fable-based play which will be evaluated using a rubric.

## Actual Lesson Sequence

1. Ask the students if they have ever watched cartoons. Ask if they can name a character that is a personification. Define personification and offer some examples. Explain that Aesop wrote fables which used personified characters. Give a brief background on who Aesop was.
2. Divide the class into groups. Give each group a different fable to read. Allow a few minutes to read the fables.
3. **Space Walk:** Ask the students to stand up in an open area. They are not to talk with each other, make eye contact, or touch. Ask the students to begin walking about the playing area in a random fashion. *Walk slow, walk fast, walk as slow as you can go, now as low, as tall. Good.* Remind the students not to talk. Now remind them that personification is when an animal or inanimate object is given human characteristics, such as the animals in Aesop's Fables. *Now, as you walk, become a fox. Move like a fox. You are a sneaky fox, a sly fox. Good. Now just walk again. As you walk around the room, become a lion. You are a lion in great pain. Your paw really hurts. Show me how much it hurts by how you walk. Good. Keep walking. Now become a goat. You are a shy goat. You are looking for grass to eat. Let me see you look. Good. Now just walk around the room slowly, you are no longer an animal, you are a bird. An eagle. You are slowly riding the wind currents. Good, keep flying. You are watching the ground. What do you see? Remember there is no talking. Good. And freeze. Give yourselves a hand.*
4. *In your group, develop a short drama that tells your fable. Identify between five main plot events to perform. Assign characters. Decide on dialogue. If you have more people in your group than in the fable, add a part. Rehearse your drama. Remember to move like your character, face the audience, and project your voice.*
5. *Present your plays.*

### **Assessment:**

**Advanced:** Student includes, in a complete manner, all the required elements of the assignment. The presentation clearly communicates the plot sequence, moral, personified characters, and dialogue. The performance is executed with a high degree of skill in projection, articulation, and movement. The piece is very unique, expressive, and entertaining.

**Proficient:** Student includes, in a complete manner, most of the required elements of the assignment. The presentation adequately communicates plot sequence, moral, personified characters, and dialogue. Most of the presentation is executed with a competent level of skill. The piece is entertaining, but at times the performance may show a slight weakness in performance values, such as projection, articulation, and staging.

**Needs Improvement:** Student does not include the required elements in a complete manner. A few required elements may be missing altogether. Some elements of plot sequence, moral, personified characters, and dialogue are communicated but with limited clarity. The piece may be tedious to view. The students have difficulty with projection, articulation, and movement.

**Needs Major Improvement:** Many required elements are missing or are poorly executed. The piece is tedious to view. The performance lacks clarity. The students do not move with purpose. The piece demonstrates little understanding of the plot sequence, moral, personified characters, and dialogue. It may be very short. The students fail to achieve basic performance requirements of projection and articulation.

**Possible Extensions:**

- Formally write scripts.
- Have the students work in a group to create construction paper props to be used by characters in the fables and then rehearse and present plays again.
- Substitute other short stories, myths, tales, etc.

**Sources:**

McCaslin, Nellie, Creative Drama in the Classroom, Players Press, Inc., Studio City, California, 1987. ISBN #0-88734-605-7.

<http://www.aesopfables.com>

## **Androcles**

### **Characters:**

**Androcles,**

**Lion**

**Emperor**

**Court members**

A slave named Androcles once escaped from his master and fled to the forest. As he was wandering about there he came upon a Lion lying down moaning and groaning. At first he turned to flee, but finding that the Lion did not pursue him, he turned back and went up to him. As he came near, the Lion put out his paw, which was all swollen and bleeding, and Androcles found that a huge thorn had gotten into it, and was causing all the pain. He pulled out the thorn and bound up the paw of the Lion, who was soon able to rise and thank Androcles. Then the Lion took Androcles to his cave, and every day used to bring him meat from which to live. But shortly afterwards both Androcles and the Lion were captured, and the slave was sentenced to be thrown to the Lion, after the latter had been kept without food for several days. The Emperor and all his Court came to see the spectacle, and Androcles was led out into the middle of the arena. Soon the Lion was let loose from his den, and rushed bounding and roaring towards his victim. But as soon as he came near to Androcles he recognized his friend, and fawned upon him, and licked his hands like a friendly dog. The Emperor, surprised at this, summoned Androcles to him, who told him the whole story. Whereupon the slave was pardoned and freed, and the Lion let loose to his native forest.

**Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.**

## **The Eagle, the Cat, and the Wild Sow**

### **Characters:**

**Eagle**

**Cat**

**Wild Sow**

**Young ones**

An Eagle made her nest at the top of a lofty oak; a Cat, having found a convenient hole, moved into the middle of the trunk; and a Wild Sow, with her young, took shelter in a hollow at its foot. The Cat cunningly resolved to destroy this chance-made colony. To carry out her design, she climbed to the nest of the Eagle, and said, "Destruction is preparing for you, and for me too, unfortunately. The Wild Sow, whom you see daily digging up the earth, wishes to uproot the oak, so she may on its fall seize our families as food for her young." Having thus frightened the Eagle out of her senses, she crept down to the cave of the Sow, and said, "Your children are in great danger; for as soon as you go out with your litter to find food, the Eagle is prepared to pounce upon one of your little pigs." Having instilled these fears into the Sow, she went and pretended to hide herself in the hollow of the tree. When night came she went forth with silent foot and obtained food for herself and her kittens, but feigning to be afraid, she kept a lookout all through the day. Meanwhile, the Eagle, full of fear of the Sow, sat still on the branches, and the Sow, terrified by the Eagle, did not dare to go out from her cave. And thus they both, along with their families, perished from hunger, and afforded ample provision for the Cat and her kittens.

**Gossips are to be seen and not heard.**

## **The Farmer and His Sons**

### **Characters:**

**Father**

**Sons and/or daughters**

A Father, being on the point of death, wished to be sure that his sons would give the same attention to his farm as he himself had given it. He called them to his bedside and said, "My sons, there is a great treasure hidden in one of my vineyards." The sons, after his death, took their spades and mattocks and carefully dug over every portion of their land. They found no treasure, but the vines repaid their labor by an extraordinary and super abundant crop.

**Industry sometimes pays unexpected dividends.**

## **The Farmer and the Cranes**

### **Characters:**

**Farmer**

**Birds**

Some Cranes made their feeding grounds on some plow lands newly sown with wheat. For a long time the Farmer, brandishing an empty sling, chased them away by the terror he inspired; but when the birds found that the sling was only swung in the air, they ceased to take any notice of it and would not move. The Farmer, on seeing this, charged his sling with stones, and killed a great number. The remaining birds at once forsook his fields, crying to each other, "It is time for us to be off to Liliput: for this man is no longer content to scare us, but begins to show us in earnest what he can do."

**If words suffice not, blows must follow.**

## **The Father and His Two Daughters**

### **Characters:**

**Father**

**Daughters**

A man had two daughters, the one married to a gardener, and the other to a tile-maker. After a time he went to the daughter who had married the gardener, and inquired how she was and how all things went with her. She said, "All things are prospering with me, and I have only one wish, that there may be a heavy fall of rain, in order that the plants may be well watered." Not long after, he went to the daughter who had married the tile maker, and likewise inquired of her how she fared; she replied, "I want for nothing, and have only one wish, that the dry weather may continue, and the sun shine hot and bright, so that the bricks might be dried." He said to her, "If your sister wishes for rain, and you for dry weather, with which of the two am I to join my wishes?"

**You cannot please everybody.**

## **The Father and His Sons**

### **Characters:**

**Father/mother**

**Sons/daughters**

A Father and a family of sons were perpetually quarreling among themselves. When he failed to heal their disputes by his exhortations, he determined to give them a practical illustration of the evils of disunion; and for this purpose he one day told them to bring him a bundle of sticks. When they had done so, he placed the bundle of sticks into the hands of each of them in succession, and ordered them to break it in pieces. They tried with all their strength, and were not able to do it. He next opened the bundle, took the sticks separately, one by one, and again put them into his sons' hands, upon which they broke them easily. He then addressed them in these words: "My sons, if you are of one mind, and unite to assist each other, you will be as this bundle of sticks, uninjured by all the attempts of your enemies; but if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as these sticks."

**United we stand, divided we fall.**

## **The Flies and the Honey-Pot**

### **Characters:**

**Flies**

A number of Flies were attracted to a jar of honey which had been overturned in a housekeeper's room, and placing their feet in it, ate greedily. Their feet, however, became so smeared with the honey that they could not use their wings, nor release themselves, and were suffocated. Just as they were expiring, they exclaimed, "O foolish creatures that we are, for the sake of a little pleasure we have destroyed ourselves."

**Pleasure bought with pains, hurts.**

## **The Fox and the Cat**

### **Characters:**

**Fox**

**Cat**

**Dog(s)**

**hunter(s)**

A Fox was boasting to a Cat of its clever devices for escaping its enemies. "I have a whole bag of tricks," he said, "which contains a hundred ways of escaping my enemies." "I have only one," said the Cat; "but I can generally manage with that." Just at that moment they heard the cry of a pack of hounds coming towards them, and the Cat immediately scampered up a tree and hid herself in the boughs. "This is my plan," said the Cat. "What are you going to do?" The Fox thought first of one way, then of another, and while he was debating the hounds came nearer and nearer, and at last the Fox in his confusion was caught up by the hounds and soon killed by the hunters. Miss Puss, who had been looking on, said:

**Better one safe way than a hundred on which you cannot reckon.**

## **The Fox and the Crow**

### **Characters:**

**Fox**

**Crow**

A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. "That's for me, as I am a Fox," said Master Reynard, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. "Good-day, Mistress Crow," he cried. "How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds." The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox. "That will do," said he. "That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future

**Do not trust flatterers.**

## **The Fox and the Goat**

### **Characters:**

**Fox**

**Goat**

A Fox one day fell into a deep well and could find no means of escape. A Goat, overcome with thirst, came to the same well, and seeing the Fox, inquired if the water was good. Concealing his sad plight under a merry guise, the Fox indulged in a lavish praise of the water, saying it was excellent beyond measure, and encouraging him to descend. The Goat, mindful only of his thirst, thoughtlessly jumped down, but just as he drank, the Fox informed him of the difficulty they were both in and suggested a scheme for their common escape. "If," said he, "you will place your forefeet upon the wall and bend your head, I will run up your back and escape, and will help you out afterwards." The Goat readily assented and the Fox leaped upon his back. Steadying himself with the Goat's horns, he safely reached the mouth of the well and made off as fast as he could. When the Goat upbraided him for breaking his promise, he turned around and cried out, "You foolish old fellow! If you had as many brains in your heads you have hairs in your beard, you would never have gone down before you had inspected the way up, nor have exposed yourself to dangers from which you had no means of escape.

**Look before you leap.**

## **The Frogs Asking for a King**

**Characters:**

**Frogs**

**Jupiter**

**Eel**

**Heron**

The Frogs, grieved at having no established Ruler, sent ambassadors to Jupiter entreating for a King. Perceiving their simplicity, he cast down a huge log into the lake. The Frogs were terrified at the splash occasioned by its fall and hid themselves in the depths of the pool. But as soon as they realized that the huge log was motionless, they swam again to the top of the water, dismissed their fears, climbed up, and began squatting on it in contempt. After some time they began to think themselves ill-treated in the appointment of so inert a Ruler, and sent a second deputation to Jupiter to pray that he would set over them another sovereign. He then gave them an Eel to govern them. When the Frogs discovered his easy good nature, they sent yet a third time to Jupiter to beg him to choose for them still another King. Jupiter, displeased with all their complaints, sent a Heron, who preyed upon the Frogs day by day till there were none left to croak upon the lake.

**Let well enough alone.**

## **The Hare and the Tortoise**

**Character:**

**Hare**

**Tortoise**

A Hare one day ridiculed the short feet and slow pace of the Tortoise, who replied, laughing: "Though you be swift as the wind, I will beat you in a race." The Hare, believing her assertion to be simply impossible, assented to the proposal; and they agreed that the Fox should choose the course and fix the goal. On the day appointed for the race the two started together. The Tortoise never for a moment stopped, but went on with a slow but steady pace straight to the end of the course. The Hare, lying down by the wayside, fell fast asleep. At last waking up, and moving as fast as he could, he saw the Tortoise had reached the goal, and was comfortably dozing after her fatigue.

**Slow but steady wins the race.**

## **The Jay and the Peacock**

**Characters:**

**Jays**

**Peacock**

A Jay venturing into a yard where Peacocks used to walk, found there a number of feathers which had fallen from the Peacocks when they were molting. He tied them all to his tail and strutted down towards the Peacocks. When he came near them they soon discovered the cheat, and striding up to him pecked at him and plucked away his borrowed plumes. So the Jay could do no better than go back to the other Jays, who had watched his behavior from a distance; but they were equally annoyed with him, and told him:

**It is not only fine feathers that make fine birds.**