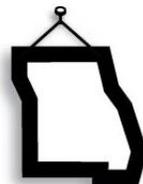
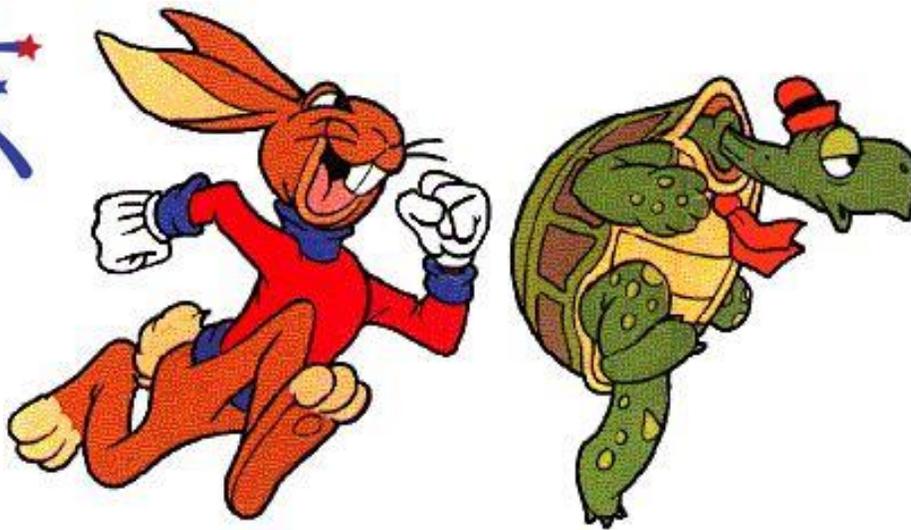


**theatre
for young
america**

STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Sheryl Bryant, Director of Education
An educational supplement to the live theatre experience of

The Great 4th of July Race of The Hare and the Tortoise



WHAT IS A FABLE?

A **fable** is a short tale with animal characters used to teach a moral or a lesson to people.

ORIGINAL FABLE OF THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

Aesop, an African slave who lived in Greece, is credited with writing this and many other fables at least 2500 years ago. It reached the Aesop's Fables books that we now read through many different countries and languages—both written and spoken. He is thought to have lived between 620 and 564 B.C. Since he was a slave, it was not easy to speak directly what was on his mind. Therefore, he invented sly, witty, and indirect but meaningful fables that give good advice to the readers or listeners. Many of the stories contain wise morals that teach us a lesson about life and human behavior even though the characters are animals.

Here is the original fable about the Hare and the Tortoise:



There was once a hare who was forever bragging of his great speed at running. Stretching his long legs proudly, he would declare, "No one has ever beat me. When I race at full speed, there is no who can pass me."

One day the tortoise replied, "I will race you."

"That is a good joke," laughed the hare.

"Save your breath until you have won. I am willing to race you." said the tortoise. The other forest animals were glad to hear someone speak up, though they secretly wished it had been an animal with a greater chance of winning. Nevertheless, they helped draw up a race course and cheered the tortoise on. Then they lined up on each side and the fox started the race.

The hare was out of sight in a flash, as his white cottontail disappeared through the bushes. The tortoise kept his eyes straight ahead and never varied his pace. Presently, the hare returned and danced around him, laughing at his slow progress. Then the hare laid down under a tree. He yawned, curled up, and took an afternoon nap. The tortoise plodded on. After a while, the hare awoke from his sleep. He opened his eyes just in time to see the tortoise crawl past the finish line. As fast as he could make his legs go, he could not get there in time to win the race. The tortoise, slow as he was, had crawled steadily forward. He won the race.

"I have learned a lesson today," said the hare. "It's hard steady work, and not speed, that wins the race."

THE GREAT FOURTH OF JULY RACE BETWEEN THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE PLAY

In Theatre for Young America's version of the play, Gene Mackey took the short tale and enlarged it into a musical play set in 1907 in America. It is the Fourth of July and some animals are celebrating Independence Day—their own independence day from their owners. The characters are Hurry U.P. Hare, a race-happy rabbit; Ponderous Lee Plod, the very methodical turtle; Rinky T. Raccoon, a piano player; Beatific B. Yond, a butterfly whose head is in the clouds, and Priscilla P,U., a flirty skunk. These

animals join together to celebrate Independence Day with a picnic, speeches, and a foot race, which has always been won by Hurry U.P. Hare. It has reached the point that none of them want to even enter the race—and Hurry has become a real braggart. Finally, Ponderous Lee Plod accepts the challenge and the race is on between the hare and the tortoise. The skunk, butterfly, and raccoon try various means to slow down the hare. Finally, they get the hare to fall asleep. He wakes up just in time for a photo finish with the tortoise. Ponderous wins the medal! Slow, and steady wins the race. The original music is composed by Cheryl Bengé with lyrics added by Gene Mackey. Some of the music are tunes from the early 1900's to which original lyrics have been added.

ACTIVITY TO COMPARE THE FABLE TO THE PLAY

Read the fable before you see the show. After the show, re-read the fable and answer these questions.

1. How are the play and the fable similar?
2. How are the play and the fable different?
3. Why do you think the playwright chose to make these adaptations to the original fable?

A BIOLOGY LESSON...WHAT IS A TORTOISE AND WHAT IS A HARE?

A TORTOISE

- A tortoise is a land turtle.
- They have hard rounded back shells and club-like hind legs.
- Tortoises have life-spans as long as a human. Some even longer—up to 150 years!
- Tortoises are herbivores. They eat grass, plants, flowers, and some insects.
- Tortoises like to be solitary and are very shy.



A HARE

- A hare is similar to a rabbit, with longer ears and legs.
- Hares weigh more than rabbits—around six pounds.
- Hares are sometimes called “Jackrabbits.”
- Hares are very fast. Some can run up to 45 miles per hour.
- During the spring, hares compete by “boxing” each other.
- Hares like to be solitary.



A SAMPLING OF THE MORALS OF THE STORY AND PLAY

Much discussion has been held about what is the true moral of the play and fable. Here are a few of them.

Most people agree with “Slow, but steady, wins the race.” Others write, “Slow and steady wins the race.”

Jacob Davenport writes that the correct moral for the fable is “success depends on using your talents, not just having them.”

Here is another: “When you are faced with an opponent who most certainly defeat you, the only hope you have is that he will defeat himself.”

Jeffreys Taylor wrote in his poem of the fable:

“Thus plain plodding people, we often shall find/
Will leave hasty confident people behind.”

What moral do you like for the fable and play?

DRAMA and WRITING LESSON

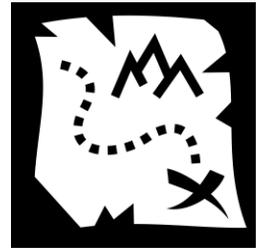
As a class, read aloud and act out another Aesop fable. If there is time, create a fable of your own. Remember fables always have a moral to the story. Have the students begin by first brain-storming the lesson they want to teach. Then choose what types of animals might have the qualities which would best help to make the point. Now use imagination to write your original story.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS ACTING EXERCISE

Explore “a walk of the critters.” Everyone walk in a large circle single file in whatever space you have. First, ask everyone to walk as the slow tortoise in his heavy shell, then walk as the prissy skunk spraying her odor cans, then as the butterfly with her wings, now as the piano-playing raccoon, and finally end with a slow-motion circle as the tortoise with his short legs and heavy shell on his back.

ART ACTIVITY

In the play the race follows a set path. Envision and then draw a map of the race course. Use your imagination as to what landmarks and turns the path would pass—a pond, a river, a bridge, a rock formation, a tree, and so on. Be sure to draw the start and finish lines.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR WRITING PROMPTS



In the play, the critters have a tradition they follow on Animal Independence Day. What does your family usually do on Independence Day—the Fourth of July? Have a picnic, swim, or go to a fireworks show? What would be fun for your family to do as a tradition?

Did the actors act like the animals and insects they were portraying? What costumes helped you think of the actors as the animals?

Can you compare anything in the story to your real life?

Have you ever been in a race? What happened? Was it exciting for you?

