



Exploring moral and ethical concepts in traditional stories



This sequence is intended as a framework to be modified and adapted by teachers to suit the needs of a class group.

Resources needed

- The Ant and the Grasshopper
- The Goose that laid the Golden Egg
- The Dog in the Manger
- Moon Man – Short film
- Greed and sharing – Quotes visualiser
- Fables and storytelling – Focus questions visualiser
- The Ant and the Grasshopper – Deconstruction visualiser
- Structure of a narrative – Graphic organiser
- Year 7 narrative writing task
- Post-it notes
- Talking cards (optional – one set per group of students)

Suggested activity sequence

Part A: Exploring morals

Solo and pair thinking

- 1** Display the greed versus sharing slide on the *Quotes visualiser* and invite students to think about what they mean.
- 2** Students share their thinking with a partner and decide on a real-life example, or an example from literature that exemplifies the meaning of each quote. Students write their example on a post-it note to display on the classroom wall.
- 3** Students read the examples of other students.

Think-pair-share

- What is a moral?
- How are morals reinforced in society?
- Does everyone share the same morals? Why?
- Consider the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. What is the moral in this story?
- Does this moral have relevance today?

Through student sharing of their response, the meaning of a moral should become clear: Morals are statements of how we should behave or how we should do things. They are life lessons.



Part B: Deconstructing fables and creation myths

Introducing fables

- 1 Explain to students what a fable is:

A fable is a short piece of fiction that features animals in the role of the main character and usually includes or illustrates a moral. A fable can also have other inanimate objects, mythical creatures, or forces of nature as main characters. The distinguishing feature of a fable is the projection of human characteristics and qualities to animals or deities and the inclusion of a moral lesson. At times, this moral lesson is summed up at the end of the fable in a short maxim.

- 2 Ask: Why do you think fables use animals and deities (gods) as main characters?
- 3 Explain that many films made for children are modern interpretations of the fable genre. An example is *Toy Story*.
- 2 Students brainstorm films that are modern fables, such as:
 - *Bambi*
 - *Ratatouille*
 - *Cars*
 - *WALL-E*
 - *Finding Nemo*
 - *Shrek*
 - *Madagascar*
 - *Kung Fu Panda*.

Discussing ethical concepts

- 1 Read the fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper* aloud to students.

- 2 Use the *Focus questions visualiser* to prompt discussion about the fable. As a class discuss each question in turn.

Disco Walking

- 1 Ask students to think about answers to the questions below:
 - What might be the benefits of planning for your future?
 - Are you most like the Grasshopper or the Ant? Explain.
 - Can the moral of this story be applied to the management of money? How?
- 2 Play music.
- 3 Students walk around the room and when the music stops, talk to the person closest to them about their responses to the first question.
- 4 Repeat the process until answers to all 3 questions have been shared.
- 5 Discuss all the responses as a class.

Use *Concentric circles* or other *discussion strategy* as an alternative strategy.

Introducing an Aboriginal Dreamtime story

- 1 Explain to students what Dreamtime stories are:

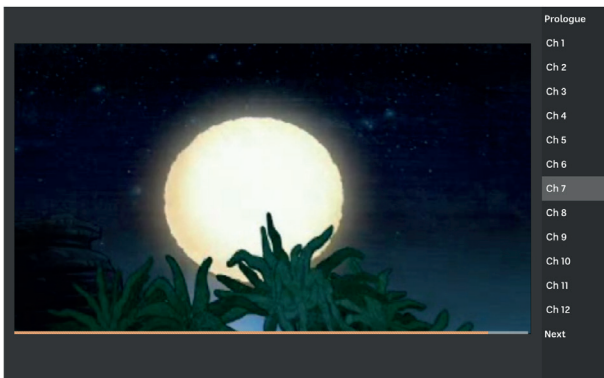
Dreamtime or creation stories often explain how the country, animals and people came to be as they are. They tell us when things were made, why they were made and how they were made. Creation stories are children's stories with moral tones that reinforce correct behaviour.



- 2 Explain to students that they will be viewing one film in a series called *Dust Echoes*.
- 3 Display the slide on Dust Echoes on the *Quotes visualiser*. Discuss with students why it is important that Aboriginal Dreamtime stories are shared.
- 4 Play: This short film depicts a creation myth that tells us about the origin of the moon and its monthly cycle.

Moon Man

Go to education.abc.net.au and search for 'moon man'. This creation story is chapter 7 of the Dust Echoes series.



- 5 Use the focus questions visualiser to display the questions for this story. As a class discuss each question in turn.

Disco Walking

- 1 Ask students to think about answers to the questions below.
 - Do you think the story has any relevance to your life today? How?
 - Think of a story about revenge and violence you learned as a child. Is this story appropriate for children?

- Can the moral of this story be applied to your responsibilities as a member of society?

- 2 Play music.
- 3 Students walk around the room and when the music stops, talk to the person closest to them about their responses to the first question.
- 4 Repeat the process until answers to all 3 questions have been shared.
- 5 Discuss all the responses as a class.

Use *Concentric circles* or other discussion strategy as an alternative strategy.

Modelling deconstruction

- 1 Re-read the fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper* using the *Deconstruction visualiser*. As you read the story, give students time to answer the questions on each page and share their answers.
- 2 Discuss the moral and how it relates to modern day real-life contexts such as:
 - spending now or saving for later
 - financial planning
 - limited resources
 - environmental sustainability.

Deconstructing a story in pairs

Creation myth

- 1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into pairs.
- 2 Pairs of students use the *Graphic organiser* to deconstruct Moon Man. If necessary, replay the short film.
- 3 Discuss student responses.



- 4 Discuss the moral and how it relates to modern day real-life contexts such as:
 - the consequences of being selfish and inconsiderate
 - responsibilities as family members and citizens
 - why we should listen and respect the wishes of others.

Fable

- 1 Divide the class into 2.
- 2 Allocate one-half of the class *The Goose that laid the Golden Egg* and the other half *The Dog in the Manger*.
- 3 Ask students to pair with a student who has been allocated the same story.
- 4 Pairs use the *graphic organiser* to identify the structural elements of the story they have been given to read.
- 5 For their chosen story, students consider:
 - the moral dilemma
 - ethical concepts
 - character traits
 - values.
- 6 Pairs of students connect with another pair who chose a different fable to explain its structure and discuss the morals, ethical concepts, values and character traits advanced in each fable.

- 7 Conduct a class discussion using the final 2 slides on the *focus questions visualiser* as a prompt.

Part C: Independent writing

Brainstorming in groups

- 1 Use a *grouping strategy* to organise students into groups of 4.
- 2 Students brainstorm examples from their own experiences or those of others in their age group that illustrate the consequences of the following for both the individual and society:
 - being selfish and inconsiderate
 - not sharing what you have and do not need
 - greed.

To encourage collaborative and purposeful talk, distribute a set of *Talking cards* to each group.

Writing a narrative

Students complete the *Narrative writing task*. They should be given at least 2 lessons to write their stories and one lesson to publish their stories using Information and communications technology (ICT).