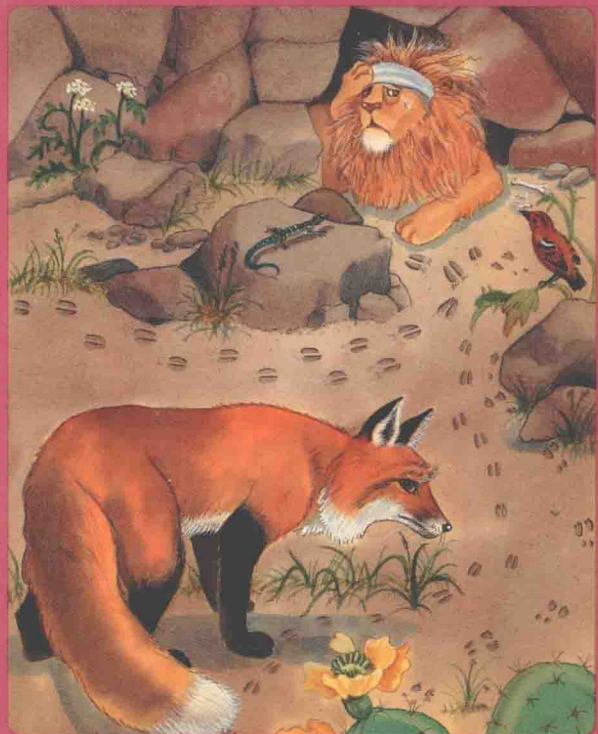
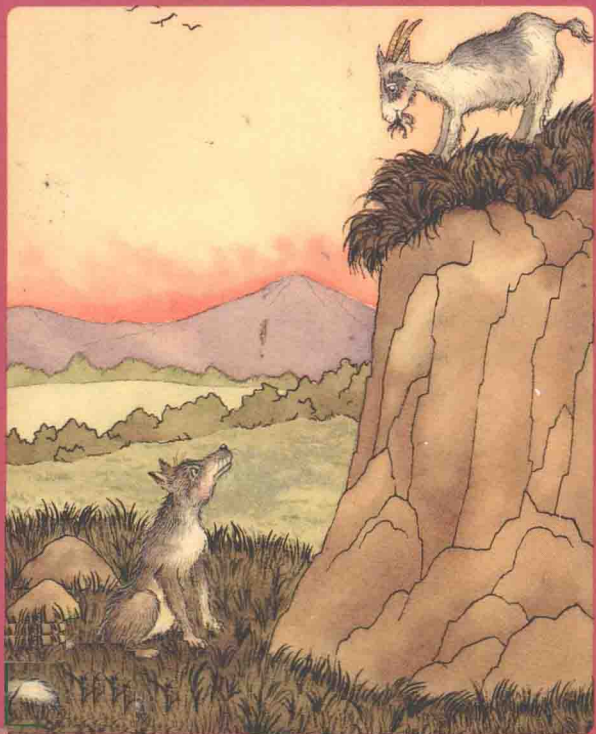
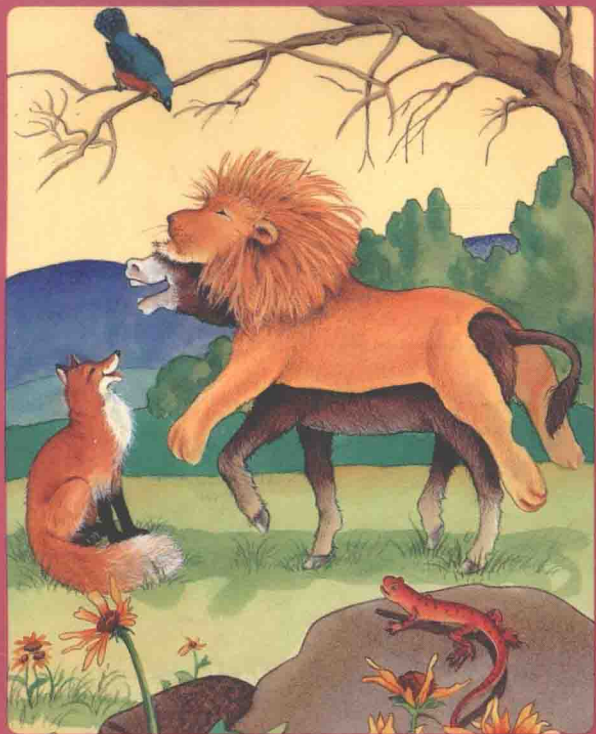


Fables



Fables



Classic fables from Aesop and La Fontaine

A fable written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel

Four fables by Mirra Ginsburg, illustrated
by Anita Lobel

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON

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ave you ever heard it said that someone was like “the boy who cried wolf”? Do you know what that means? This expression, like many others you may have heard, comes from a fable. Fables are short, funny stories usually with talking animals. All fables teach us a lesson called a *moral*. Fables have been told for hundreds of years all over the world because their morals apply to people everywhere.

Now sit back and enjoy yourself. You are about to meet some animals and people who try to outsmart each other. But don't forget! There is always a lesson to be learned.

T

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The Boy Who Cried Wolf

AESOP

There once was a Shepherd Boy who tended a flock of sheep at the edge of a great forest not far from a village. His life in the pasture was quiet, and there was not much to amuse him. He could talk to his dog and play on his pipe, but nothing more than that.

One day he decided to play a trick on the nearby villagers to amuse himself.

“Wolf! Wolf!” he cried at the top of his voice.

The villagers came rushing across the pasture as quickly as they could. They carried sticks and stones to help the poor Shepherd Boy protect his flock from the enemy.

The Shepherd Boy sat back and laughed.

“You should see yourselves! You look so foolish carrying sticks and stones, running across the pasture!” he said. “I may never stop laughing.”

The angry villagers returned to their homes. The Shepherd Boy’s joke did not amuse them at all.

Several weeks later, the Shepherd Boy played his trick again.

The villagers could not imagine that the Shepherd Boy would play the same trick again. When they heard his cry they rushed to the flock, thinking that he was in great trouble.

Again, they found the Shepherd Boy laughing at them when they arrived at the flock. He was surrounded by his sheep, quiet and safe.

The villagers were tired of the Shepherd Boy’s trick. They vowed they would never be laughed at again.

A few days later, as the sun was setting, a wolf crept out of the great forest. He ran straight to the pasture and attacked the Shepherd Boy’s flock.

“Wolf! Wolf!” cried the Shepherd Boy at the top of his voice.

But none of the villagers came to help him.

Without the help of the villagers, the Shepherd Boy could not protect his flock from the wolf. The wolf killed many of the sheep before he returned to the great forest.

If you tell lies, no one will believe you when you tell the truth.



Belling the Cat

AESOP

One day all the mice in a house called a great meeting. They met to decide how to get rid of the dreadful cat who was always chasing after them. One by one, the angry mice suggested ways of doing away with their enemy.

“Let’s move away,” suggested one mouse.

“But we like it here,” responded another. “It is our home. Besides, other houses have their *own* mice. They won’t want us barging in on them.”

“Let’s get rid of the cat then,” said several mice at the same time.

“How?” piped up one mouse.

“We’ll poison his milk!” said another.

“We’ll set his tail on fire!” said yet another.

After discussing many plans, the mice had not come up with any reasonable solutions to their problem.

Finally, the youngest mouse of all stood up to make a suggestion.

“I have a very simple plan that I am certain will work. Since the problem with the cat is that he sneaks up on us without our hearing him, all we have to do is tie a bell around his neck. Then we will always know when he is coming. He’ll never be able to catch us!” suggested the youngest mouse.

All the mice were overjoyed with the suggestion. Why had they not thought of it sooner?

But then the oldest mouse cleared his throat and prepared to speak. All of the mice grew quiet. When the oldest mouse spoke, everyone listened because he was the wisest of all.

“Very fine, very fine indeed,” he said. “But which of you will volunteer to tie the bell around the neck of the cat?”

It is one thing to make a clever plan; it is another to do it.



The Fox and the Crow

LA FONTAINE

One morning Crow sat high in a tree holding a piece of cheese in his beak. He had just stolen the cheese from a farmer's kitchen, where the window had been left open.

On the ground below, Fox searched with his sharp claws for something to eat. The hungry Fox saw Crow sitting in the tree above. That was nothing unusual, for he had seen Crows before. But this Crow had a piece of cheese in his beak. That interested Fox. He wanted Crow's cheese.

"Good day, Crow," called Fox. But Crow said nothing. He held the cheese in his beak.

"You are such a lovely bird!" the Fox said. "I had never noticed what beautiful feathers you have. They are so smooth and black. You must be the finest bird of all!"

Crow tilted his head to the side, suspicious of Fox. Yet he was quite interested in what Fox said.

"Ah, yes," Fox continued. "You are indeed a charming creature. You must certainly have a voice whose beauty equals that of your feathers."

The crow was flattered that someone would think he had a beautiful voice.

"What a shame I cannot hear your song," said Fox.

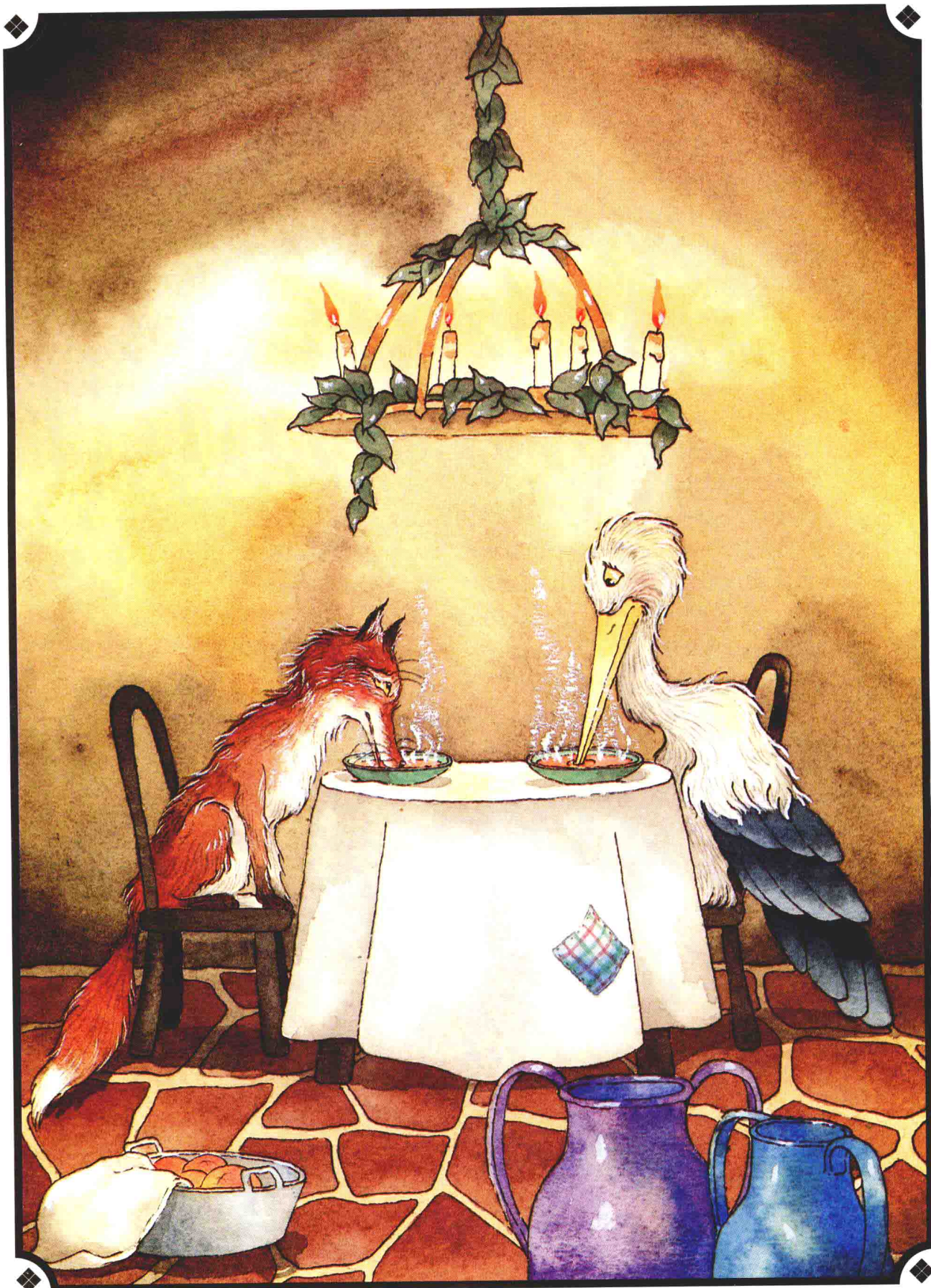
The Crow had been flattered too much! He took a deep breath and opened his beak to sing.

"Caw, caw!" came loudly from his beak.

The cheese fell straight down to the Fox and into his mouth.

"You may be beautiful," said Fox before he dashed off. "But you certainly are not wise!"

The flatterer can easily trick those who listen to his words.



The Fox and the Stork

LA FONTAINE

One day Fox met Stork by the lake.

“Good day,” said Stork to Fox.

“Good day,” returned Fox, bowing politely to Stork. “I’m so glad to see you. Perhaps you can join me for dinner tonight?”

“It would be my pleasure,” answered Stork. “I’ll meet you at dusk.”

Fox thought it would be fun to trick Stork and make a fool of him. Then he could brag to all the other animals about how clever he was. When he served the soup to Stork at dinner that night, he used two shallow dishes. Of course, Stork could not eat his soup out of a shallow dish, because his beak was too long. Poor Stork had almost no dinner at all.

“Aren’t you pleased with the soup?” asked Fox.

“I am not especially hungry,” replied Stork. “But the soup is delicious, thank you.”

Before leaving, Stork invited Fox to dinner the following evening.

“Of course, of course,” was Fox’s response.

When Fox arrived at Stork’s house, he smelled something wonderful. He was quite hungry and could hardly wait for dinner.

But when Stork served dinner, it was in two tall jars with very narrow necks. Fox could barely eat a thing, and went home with an empty stomach.

When he arrived home, Fox realized that now he could not brag to the other animals about tricking Stork and being clever. Stork had tricked him as well!

When you play tricks on others, you must expect them to play tricks on you.