

# What Is a Fable?

A fable is a tale, mostly short, that teaches a lesson. Often, fables conclude with a moral that summarizes the lesson in plain language. Fables have been around for thousands of years; Aesop, the ancient Greek, is the most famous example. Because they are found in different cultures around the world, fables are a good way to learn about what virtues are important to a given culture. Children's film and television borrows heavily from this form; Bambi and Finding Nemo are essentially fables.

## How Do You Identify Fables in Writing?

Fables are much like parables, with one difference. Fables use animals to make their point, using the animal's instinctive behavior to represent human character traits. For instance, in "The Ant and the Grasshopper," the ant becomes a conscientious worker, while the grasshopper is careless and idle. Any story where animals play the leading role in illustrating a life lesson can be considered a fable.

## Examples of Fable

1. George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* is a fable written for adults that demonstrates how absolute political power corrupts.
2. "The Tortoise and the Hare," perhaps Aesop's most famous fable, illustrates the lesson, "slow and steady wins the race."
3. The Chinese Zodiac fable explains how the 12-year animal zodiac cycle came about and cautions against being too trusting and taking things for granted.
4. Hans Christian Andersen's fable, "The Ugly Duckling," conveys the important lessons about premature judgment and the possibility of overcoming initial obstacles.
5. "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," another Aesop fable, illustrates the idea that looks can be deceiving.