The Lion and the Mouse
Can drastically different creatures become the best of friends?

- **Preview**: This delightful adaptation of Aesop’s fable about an unexpected friendship goes perfectly with a real-life story of a hippo-tortoise pair of pals.

- **Learning Objective**: Students will identify the moral of a fable and analyze how it connects to a nonfiction text.

- **Content-Area Connections**: Character education; Science: animals

- **Other Key Skills**: vocabulary, fluency, close reading, character, drawing conclusions, inference, character’s motivation, text features, summarizing, author’s point of view, connecting texts, explanatory writing

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan
Close Reading, Critical Thinking, and Skill Building

1. **Preparing to Read**
   Preview Vocabulary
   (10 minutes, activity sheet online)
   - Give students a minute to look over the play and its pairing. Prompt them to try to find the eight words in bold as they do.
   - Distribute our vocabulary activity sheet to preview the words and their meanings.
   - Highlighted words: *forage, relent, laden, famished, glint, capable, snared, sanctuary*

   **Set a Purpose for Reading** (3 minutes)
   - Ask a volunteer to read aloud the Up Close box on page 23. Ask students if they can remember other fables they have read and the morals of these stories.

2. **Reading the Play**

   - Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class. After reading, ask students to answer the close-reading questions in groups.

   **Close-Reading Questions**
   (activity sheet online)
   - In Scene 1, Tiny begs to go out into the night, even though she is small. What does this tell you about her? (character) *This tells you that she is confident and fearless. Being small doesn’t make her...*
feel less capable than her older, bigger family members.

- In Scenes 2 and 3, what dangers does Tiny run into? How does she escape them? What can you conclude about Tiny? (drawing conclusions) She is hunted by an owl, crocodiles, and a cobra. Each time, she escapes because she is small and quick. You can conclude that she uses her size, which others see as a problem, to help her.

- In Scene 4, what is Lion suggesting when he says, “I eat only meat, no matter how miniature the morsel”? (inference) He is suggesting that he is going to eat Tiny.

- Why does Lion laugh when Tiny says, “If you spare my life, someday I will return the favor”? Does Tiny really mean it? (character’s motivation) Lion laughs because it seems ridiculous that a small animal could help a powerful animal like himself. Tiny is being sincere; she doesn’t believe that her size makes her weaker.

- Why does Tiny go to help Lion when she hears him howling? (character’s motivation) She wants to return Lion’s favor of not eating her. Also, she wants to help someone in need.

- In the end, Lion says, “Never could I imagine being saved by such a small creature.” What has he learned? (moral) He has learned not to judge someone by their size. He has also learned that someone you might not expect to be your friend can be a good friend after all.

3. Reading the Informational Text

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to read “An Unlikely Friendship” and answer the close-reading questions. They should stay in their groups to discuss the critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions

(activity sheet online)

- How does the photo of Owen and Mzee on page 27 help you understand the article? (text features) The photo shows the two animals side by side. They both look calm and happy. The photo helps you understand that these very different animals care about each other.

- How did Owen and Mzee become friends? (summarizing) Owen was moved to Haller Park after losing his whole family in a tsunami. He followed Mzee around until the tortoise accepted him as a friend.

- How does the author explain their friendship? (author’s point of view) The author suggests that Mzee understood that Owen was alone and “needed comfort and companionship to survive.”

Critical-Thinking Questions

(activity sheet online)

- What is the moral of The Lion and the Mouse? (moral) Students might suggest a few morals: Friendships can come from unexpected places; your judgments of others could be wrong; sometimes the weak can help the strong.

- Why does Tiny repeat throughout the play, “You’d be surprised at what I can do”? (character) Other characters keep underestimating what Tiny can do. She has to convince them that she’s skillful even though she’s small.

- Why does Tiny go to help Lion when she hears him howling? (character’s motivation) She wants to return Lion’s favor of not eating her. Also, she wants to help someone in need.

- In the end, Lion says, “Never could I imagine being saved by such a small creature.” What has he learned? (moral) He has learned not to judge someone by their size. He has also learned that someone you might not expect to be your friend can be a good friend after all.

4. Skill Building

Featured Skill: Moral of a Fable

- Distribute the moral of a fable activity. Start it as a class, then direct students to complete it in small groups. It will prepare them to respond to the writing prompt on page 26.
For Struggling Readers

Invite students to imagine themselves as Lion, Mouse, Owen, or Mzee. Ask them to write a letter to their partner, saying why he or she is a good friend.

For Advanced Readers

Have students read other fables to find one with a moral they like. Ask them to make an illustrated poster to present the fable they chose. On it, they should state the moral in their own words and explain why they like the fable.

Online Resources

Activities to print or project:
• Vocabulary
• Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*—Now on two levels!
• Moral of a Fable
• Comprehension Quiz*

*Available on two levels

storyworks.scholastic.com

Complexity Factors

See how this story will challenge your students.

Levels of Meaning: Based on one of Aesop’s fables, this play delivers powerful messages; for example, even the very small may have valuable talents. The accompanying essay describes a real-life friendship between two animals.

Structure: The play is chronological. Some complete sentences are broken into multiple narrator lines. The essay includes compare-and-contrast structures.

Language: The texts include some higher-level academic vocabulary, such as forage, relent, famished, and sanctuary, as well as alliteration, rhetorical questions, and archaic constructions.

Knowledge Demands: Prior experience with the genre of fables will be helpful.

Guided Reading Level: P  DRA Level: 38

Common Core State Standards

This article and lesson support the following College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards:
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.6, R.9, W.2, W.7, SL.1, L.4, L.6

Go online to find specific grade-level correlations for grades 3 through 6.