The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs
A dramatic retelling of a classic fable about greed

About the Article

Levels
Guided Reading Level: Q
DRA Level: 40

Learning Objectives
Students will read an adaptation of a fable by Aesop and identify its moral: that greed can lead to terrible decisions.

Content-Area Connections
Social-Emotional Learning: impulse control, analyzing situations, reflecting

Key Skills
Moral of a story, vocabulary, fluency, descriptive details, compare and contrast, plot, character, inference, text features, how characters change, point of view, author’s craft, narrative writing

Standards Correlations
This article and lesson support the following Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, W.3, SL.1, L.6

Your Teaching Support Package
Here’s your full suite of materials, all of which you’ll find at storyworks.scholastic.com:

Skill Builders to print or project:
• Vocabulary
• Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
• Core Skills Workout: Theme, Plot, Setting
• Comprehension Quiz*

Vocabulary Slideshow Great visual support!

*Available on two levels
1. Preparing to Read
Activate Prior Knowledge; Preview Vocabulary and Text Features
(15 minutes, Skill Builder sheet online)
- Tell students they will be reading a play version of one of Aesop’s fables. Ask students if they are familiar with “The Lion and the Mouse” or “The Ant and the Grasshopper,” then explain that those tales are also from the collection of stories known as Aesop’s fables, written in ancient Greece more than 2,500 years ago. Make sure they know what a fable is (a short story that typically features animal characters and provides a moral, or a lesson about the right way to behave).
- Preview challenging vocabulary by projecting or distributing our vocabulary Skill Builder. Highlighted words: horizon, rickety, eternity, generous, wardrobe, exquisite, carpenter, demolished
- Point out the Idiomizer character in the margin of page 21 and read the caption underneath. Alert students to look for her twice more in the play.
- Call on a volunteer to read aloud the Up Close box for the class.

2. Reading the Play
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class. After reading, discuss the close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions
(25 minutes, Skill Builder sheet online)
- In Scene 1, what details does the author include to show that the Boyds aren’t well-off? (descriptive details) They live in a small house and sleep on piles of straw. The family is almost out of bread. They have to bring their corn and eggs to market using a cart that’s falling apart and is pulled by an old, slow horse.
- Reread Scenes 3 and 4. Compare Granny’s response to the golden eggs with that of the other family members. (compare and contrast) Although everyone is happy to have the gold, Granny warns the family to be more cautious about spending it. When everyone else is making plans to buy new things, she suggests saving some gold for future needs. Also, Granny assumes that their good luck won’t last forever, while the others believe that the goose will never stop laying golden eggs.
- At the end of Scene 5, what is the state of the Boyds’ house and cornfield? What do they own, and what do they plan to buy? (plot) The Boyds’ house and field have been torn up to make room for a big new house and a rose garden. At the end of the scene, the Boyds own only their barn, their geese, and a new pony. They owe money for their new clothes, furniture, horseshoes, and boots.
- Why do you think everyone stares at Granny at the end of Scene 6? (inference) You can guess that everyone stares because they’re annoyed at Granny’s suggestion that things were better before. They’ve become so obsessed with the new things they want that they don’t recognize they were happier when they had less.
- Which lines in Scene 7 tell the big lesson learned by the Boyds at the end of the story? What is another way to state this lesson, or moral? (moral) Granny provides the moral of the story when she says “You wanted too much and ended up with nothing.” Pa states it again when he bemoans “. . . how foolish we were to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.” Answers will vary for the second question but should be similar to: “Don’t be greedy or you might end up losing everything.”
Critical-Thinking Questions

• What does the illustration on page 25 show you? How does it help you understand how the Boyd family changed from the beginning of the play to the end? (text features) In the picture, the Boyds are surrounded by the wreckage of their farm. They look upset and perhaps uncertain about what to do next. Granny appears to be crying. It shows that at the end of the play, they have lost everything and they are miserable. By contrast, even though they were poor at the beginning of the play, they had a home and a small farm that gave them food to eat and a way to make a living. They were a happy family.

• Based on Scene 5, how might Joe describe the changes the Boyd family goes through in the play? (point of view) Joe would probably say that the Boyds started out as kind, generous people—willing to share despite having little—but became selfish and greedy after they started getting rich. For example, in Scene 1, Ma gives Joe extra eggs because there is a new baby in his family. She thoughtfully offers help even though Joe hasn’t requested any. After the Boyds become wealthy, Joe asks for their help in Scene 5. Ma claims they have “nothing to spare” even though they are much wealthier at that time.

• A rooster appears at the beginning of several scenes. Why might the author have included this character? (author’s craft) The rooster adds humor and shows how money affects the family. The different reactions to the rooster’s crowing indicate how the family members change from being cheery early risers and hard workers into grumpy people who sleep in—or, in Scene 6, anxious people focused only on their gold.

3. Skill Building

Featured Skill: Moral of a Story

• Distribute the theme Skill Builder and have students complete it in class or for homework.

• As a class, read the Write Now! box on page 25. Put students in pairs to complete the activity. They can use what they wrote in the Skill Builder to help them.

For Struggling Readers

Gather students in a small group and read the play aloud to them one time to model fluent reading and expression. Then read the play again, assigning some or all of the parts to students.

For ELL Students

Idioms can be especially challenging for ELLs. Work closely with your students to make sure they understand the two idioms identified by the Idiomizer in the margins of the play. Afterward, ask them to share idioms they know in English or another language.

For Advanced Readers

Direct students to The Aesop for Children, a collection of fables at the Library of Congress website (www.read.gov/aesop). Have students work in small groups to select a fable and turn it into a very short play. Remind them to include the moral. Invite groups to read their plays aloud to the class.

Story Connection

Pair this story with another dramatic adaptation of a fable from Aesop. The Lion and the Mouse, from our September 2015 issue, can be found at storyworks.scholastic.com.