

Name:

Teacher:

Class:

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AESOP



Aesop was an ancient Greek storyteller. He lived 2500 years ago, around 550 BCE. Any records on this fabulist are based on legends and myths.

It is said that the fabulist was known to be quite ugly; some compared him to a turnip, others to a pot or a jar for food or a goose egg. He was born with several physical deformities, one of which prevented speech. When we first meet him in world literature he is a slave; a very hard-working and religious slave; yet his cleverness, which was beyond compare, made him ill-suited to have as a servant.

One day his religiousness compelled him to do a good deed for a priestess of Isis, who afterwards was so grateful that she prayed for speech to be granted to poor Aesop. Thenceforth there was no stopping him.

Some say he was a slave who so delighted his master with his stories that Aesop was given his freedom. The Greeks were like that. They rewarded talent.

Although eventually he gained his freedom, he was for quite a long time the slave of a philosopher named Xanthus. Aesop outwitted this master at every turn and in diverse situations, vexing him and winning the admiration of all the philosopher's students and ultimately of the philosopher himself.

A master of wit and comparative analysis, often Aesop made his clever points through the use of fables; he was always laying stories on people. However there were many fables in circulation amongst the Greeks of his time, and our man Aesop no doubt made free use of these allegorical stories in scoring his points. Cleverness may lie not in invention, but in exploitation.

By and by, the free man Aesop travelled about giving eloquent speeches and telling his stories and securing a name for himself. There are no records to prove that Aesop ever wrote anything down. Fortunately, many years after his death, people started to write down the fables Aesop collected, so they could be more easily shared.

Over the centuries, Aesop's fables have been rewritten and published and illustrated and translated into almost every language in the world.

Toward the end of his life, Aesop made one fatal error when he offended a whole people — the Delphinians. King Croesus, who was amazed by Aesop's smart wit, sent him to Delphi on a mission. Aesop is said to have been killed by the local priestess for blasphemy, and subsequently, thrown from a cliff for it.