

Fables Unit Plan



The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

'If you read the fables... you will know something about the person who writes them, and I like that. Secondly, they will not be about individuals; they will be about community. Thirdly, they're all about moralising. Fourthly, the way they express themselves takes its tone from the oral tradition.'

– Jim Crace

Why write a fable?

We often tell each other cautionary tales of mishaps, near misses and comeuppances where we have had to learn a lesson the hard way. Perhaps, like me, you learnt that you really should not play with scissors after you accidentally almost cut your friend's finger off! We might also remember our grandparents, parents, teachers and people in authority telling us stern warning stories. Children can't escape fables!

Historically though, fables have been the main way of socialising children into the norms of society. Some of those stories are new and original, while others have been told and loved by people across the ages. Many tales are still told and retold today because of their universal messages and because they are short, snappy and easy to remember.

Writing fables with children gives them the opportunity to communicate a message or moral in an entertaining way, building narratives from their own experience of being told what to do (and what not to do) and how to behave with and around others. They can then share these fables with their friends, younger children or even foolish parents! Furthermore, children get to express a little bit of themselves in their stories. Writing fables, alongside our [Fairytales](#) writing project, gives children in year three a strong basis for future story writing.

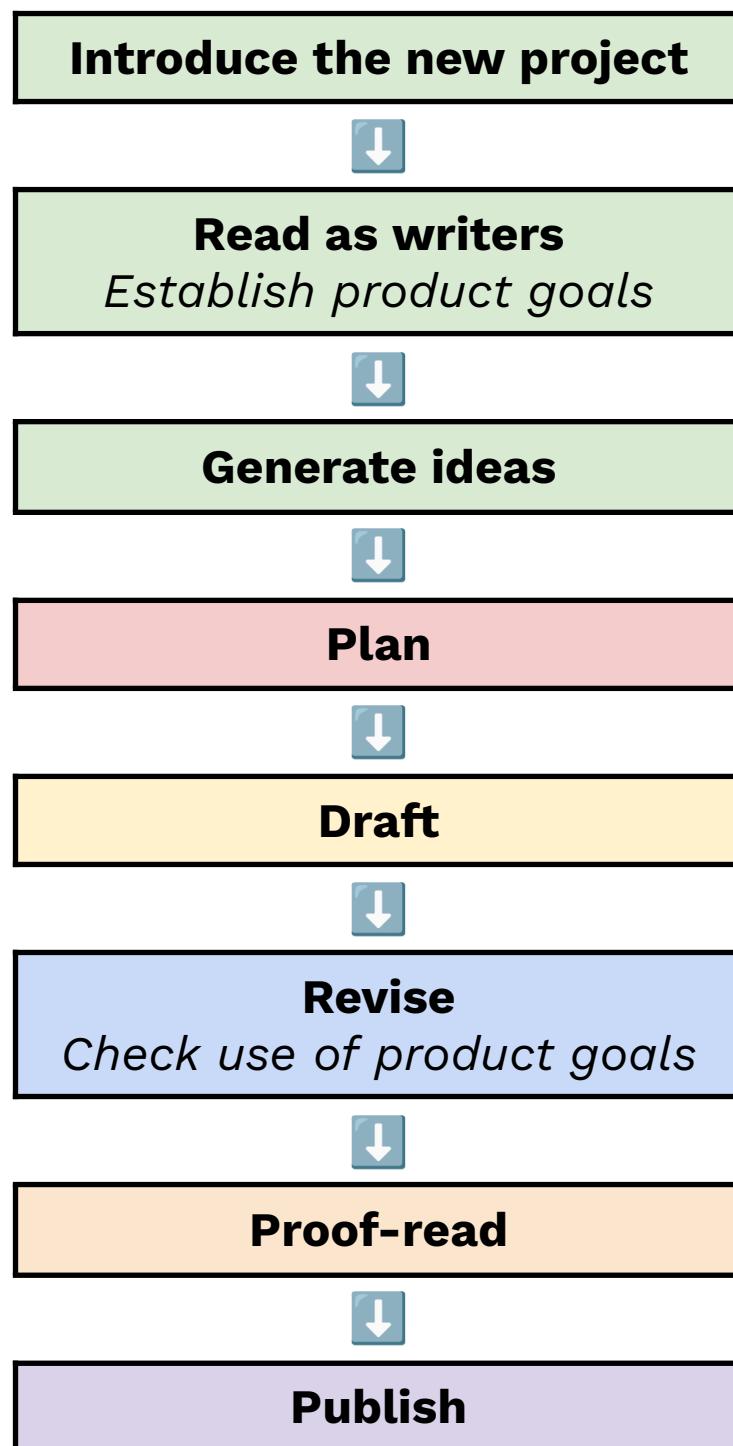
You might want your class to look at how fables are part of their lives. When do they hear fables, and from whom – their grandparents, parents, teachers or friends? Do they tell cautionary tales to the people they know? Allow children to identify the elements that make fables so popular and discuss where they can be found within our lives today.

Things to bear in mind

- Encourage children to tell each other lessons they have learnt from their own lives or from others.
- Fables are often short and snappy, so children will need to focus closely on their chosen message, plot and main characters.
- Animals are perhaps traditionally used by fable writers to avoid causing offence to the person the fable is aimed at. Certain animals are often associated with certain human traits, so encourage children to think carefully about which animal will be right for their fable.
- Children should also understand that not all fables are old stories with animal characters.
- Encourage children to consider the moral they are trying to teach through their fable.

- Remind children to think about modern-day settings and perhaps draw on their own experiences of lessons learnt. Be sensitive to the possibility that some children may have had difficult life experiences and do not press them to write from their own lives if they are reluctant to do so. Focus on familiar mottos that can serve as the moral of a story, and encourage children to work back from there, thinking of real or hypothetical experiences that will illustrate them.
- You may find that children at this stage in their development are still used to ‘telling’ you what happens in their fable. Their early drafts may read more like a recount than an entertaining retelling. Encourage children to try techniques like ‘show don’t tell’ and to consider other features of narrative writing.
- More experienced writers will certainly begin to play with narrative throughout this project. They will showcase signs of setting description, character development and useful dialogue and perhaps play with pace.

The journey of a class writing project



Example project plan

Day 1	Introduce the new project - establish/share publishing goal - share what their texts are going to look like
Day 2	Begin reading as writers, studying mentor texts, and establishing product goals
Day 3	Continue to read as writers and set product goals
Day 4	Finalise the product goals for the project
Day 5	Generate ideas by having an <i>Ideas Party</i>
Day 6	Take the <i>Writing Register</i>
Day 7	Mini-lesson on using a planning technique - children plan using the technique
Day 8	Continue planning if required
Day 9	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children write their openings
Day 10	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children write a small 'chunk'/paragraph
Day 11	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children write a small 'chunk'/paragraph
Day 12	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children write a small 'chunk'/paragraph
Day 13	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children write their endings
Day 14	<i>Revision</i> mini-lesson - children 'try it out'/revise the mini-lesson into their piece
Day 15	<i>Revision</i> mini-lesson - children 'try it out'/revise the mini-lesson into their piece
Day 16	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 17	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 18	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 19	Capitalisation - 'proof-reading for capitalisation' mini-lesson
Day 20	Capitalisation - 'proof-reading for capitalisation' mini-lesson
Day 21	Use of vocab 'proof-reading for tense use' mini-lesson
Day 22	Use of vocab 'proof-reading for tense use' mini-lesson
Day 23	Use of vocab (synonyms) - 'cracking open boring words' mini-lesson
Day 24	Punctuation - proof-reading mini-lesson
Day 25	Punctuation - proof-reading mini-lesson
Day 26	Spelling (common words) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 27	Spelling (class' tricky words) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 28	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 29	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 30	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 31	Publishing - write out just a few sections - mini-lesson & pupil-conferencing focuses on handwriting instruction
Day 32	Publishing - write out just a few sections - mini-lesson & pupil-conferencing focuses on handwriting instruction
Day 33	Publishing Party!

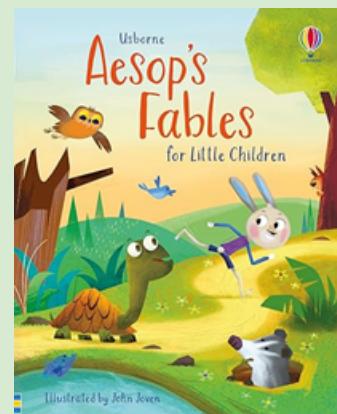
Important! Please read!

- This is just an *example plan*. Therefore, you should use your own professional judgement to plan your own class writing projects. For example, you should either add or remove sessions based on your own class' needs and the amount of time you want to spend on the project. For more information, download our eBook *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)). To create your own unit plan, you can download a blank version of the proforma used on the previous page [here](#).
- Remember, you should plan your mini-lessons based on the product goals your class comes up with when you're *reading as writers*. For more information on how to do this, download our eBook *How To Teach Writing or Reading In The Writing Classroom* ([LINK](#)).
- If you feel you need to, we can recommend devoting at least two sessions to planning. After the first session, you can see which plans you think are suitably ready for when children come to draft their pieces. For children who you feel need a bit more time and further instruction, you can meet with them as a group(s) while the rest of the class work on their personal writing projects. For more information on setting up personal writing projects, download [our eBook](#). We also provide far more information on teaching planning techniques in our eBook: *No More: My Class Doesn't Know What To Write Next* ([LINK](#)).
- Whenever children have completed the process goal set for that day's writing time, they should work on their personal writing project for the rest of the lesson. For more details, see [this article](#).
- We can recommend devoting a number of lessons to having 'revision checklist sessions'. This allows you to meet with your class in small groups and give them quality verbal feedback on their compositions. The rest of your class work on their personal writing projects.
- Make sure you break your proof-reading lessons down into small manageable chunks over a number of days. This allows children to achieve a high level of accuracy. These sessions don't take children very long. Once they've completed their proof-reading for the day, they can work on their personal writing projects. We provide far more information and lessons on proof-reading in our eBook: *No More: 'My Pupils Can't Edit!' A Whole-School Approach To Developing Proof-Readers* ([LINK](#)).
- The more time spent on a project, the better the final outcomes will be. If you rush a project, you get rushed outcomes.
- It's important to remember that this is not the only writing children should produce. Children should also have their personal writing project writing, their writing in the wider curriculum subjects, and the writing they produce in their reading lessons.

Publishing goal lesson

A great publishing goal for this project is to show your class a fables anthology and explain that the class is going to make their very own for the younger children in the school to read (top tip: keep a copy of this so you can show your new class the following year!). Share this goal with your class at the beginning of the project. We can definitely recommend getting in touch with your local library too and asking them if they will stock a copy of your fables anthology too.

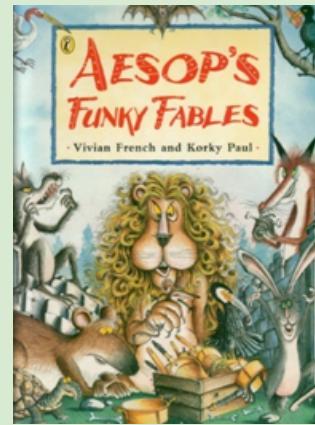
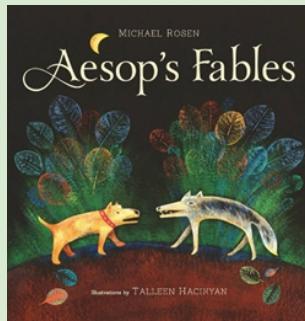
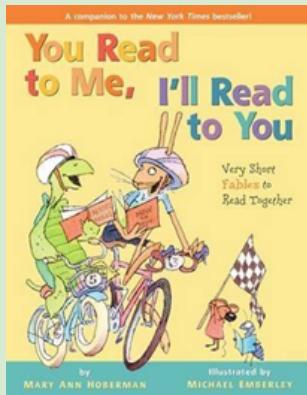
Alternatively, the children can come up with their own publishing goal for the project. For more information on how to do this, download our book *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).



Reading as writers and establishing your product goals lessons

When undertaking *reading as writers* sessions, we can recommend having a collection of fables for the children to read. Make sure children get to read some short fables you and your colleagues have written and make sure you have a collection of mentor texts (texts which realistically match what you expect the children to produce). For advice on how to write your own fable, and to download our mentor texts, consider downloading the paid version of this planning: [KS1](#) and [KS2](#).

Finally, it's important that children get to see examples of high-quality texts too. We can certainly recommend these:



These are great because they really show children the variety of fables that are available and the creative things you can do with the genre.

While undertaking your *reading as writers* sessions, you are going to want to establish your product goals (success criteria) for the project. For more information on how to do this effectively, download our book *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).

Have an Ideas Party

This is one of my favourite sessions. As a whole class, in small groups, on flipchart paper, come up with as many ideas as you can. The children can work in teams at their desks and you can spend time with each group and take part too! At the end of the session, individual children can circle their favourite idea. Children like to go home and will often continue to think of ideas for the project. Let them. As long as they know what their final writing idea is going to be by time you take the *Writing Register*.

Taking a *Writing Register* lesson

This is a nice session. While the children are working on their personal writing projects, go round the class and ask them who they are going to write their information text about and for a working title. Write this down on your *Writing Register*. At the end of the writing lesson, you can share this register with the children and have a chat about which pieces people are most looking forward to reading.

Teaching a planning technique lesson

It's important to teach children a planning technique. It's even more important that you show children the planning technique you used when you wrote your fable. Teach them the technique and show them your plan before inviting them to use the technique for themselves that day.

If you need more help with this, download our eBook: *No More: My Class Don't Know What To Write Next...* ([LINK](#)). It has loads of great planning techniques in it.

Teaching your drafting lessons

At this point in the project, you are going to want to teach and model one *craft move* from your product goal list before inviting the children to use the move for themselves that day. Of course, these craft moves can be grammar or sentence-level moves. To see examples of what these lessons can look like, consider downloading the paid version for this planning [KS1](#) and [KS2](#).

Teaching your revision lessons

Now the children have drafted their writing, you can teach them more sophisticated *craft moves*. They can try the craft move out on their 'trying things out page' and if they like what they've crafted, they can add it into their drafted text. These sessions are really interesting because the children feel free to take risks and enjoy playing around with these more advanced techniques. Remember, model one craft move before inviting the children to use the technique for themselves that day. For examples of what these lessons can look like, consider downloading the paid version for this planning: [KS1](#) and [KS2](#).

Revision checklist sessions

These are lovely sessions. Meet with your children in small groups. Make sure everyone has a copy of the product goals you established at the beginning of the project. With the group, check whether people have used and/or considered the *craft moves* for the project. Any children that haven't, can be invited to show how they might use the craft move on their 'trying things out page'. If they like what they have crafted, they can include it in their final piece. If they don't want to - that's fine. You still have evidence in their books. This also shows that the children are being discerning - one sign of a greater-depth writer.

When undertaking these sessions, the rest of the class can be working on their personal writing projects. For more information, download our eBook: *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).

Proof-reading sessions

We can highly recommend breaking proof-reading down into small manageable chunks. Over a number of days, you can proofread for CUPS. This stands for *Capitalisation, Use Of Vocabulary, Punctuation and Spelling*. For more information on how to conduct these sessions, download our eBook: *No More: My Class Can't Edit!* ([LINK](#)).

These sessions don't take the children long. Once finished, they can work on their personal writing projects.

Publishing party

The project is now coming to an end. It's time for the children to write up their final published version ready for their readers. This is a great opportunity to teach handwriting in context and give children live verbal feedback and additional individualised handwriting instruction. We can recommend doing this over a couple of days.

You can download a more detailed version of this planning which includes individual lessons plans, resources and mentor texts here: [KS1](#) and [KS2](#).

Remember, all our planning is free to our members. To become a member, sign up [here](#).

