The Educational Theatre Department of the City College of New York Presents a Readings On The Road Production: Fable Talk A Curriculum Guide for Elementary School
Most of us have heard of The Tortoise and the Hare - the story of an overly confident rabbit who loses to a slow-and-steady tortoise. But what happened after that? How did the Hare deal with his surprise loss? Exactly what made the tortoise so slow and so steady? And how did the all the animals in the kingdom react?

In *Fable Talk* you’ll meet all the characters, including Hare Hoppings, international track star, and Shel Tortoistein, professor of Meditation at Aesop University. You’ll see slow-motion playback from the race and attend a live talk show hosted by Polly Panda. Written and directed by Mollie Lief (with help from kids in New York City’s public schools) *Fable Talk* is a hilarious send-up of a two-thousand year-old story for children and grownups alike!

In this curriculum guide, you’ll find activities that will help students expand on the many ideas explored in *Fable Talk*. They range from ELA activities to homework assignments to discussion starters. You’ll also find art work from a few of the many versions of this tale told through the ages. Enjoy!
Meet the Characters

Mr. Fox is the star sports reporter with Fox Sports News. He'll have the exclusive scoop on the race between Hoppings and Tortoistein.

Hare Hoppings is a crazy-famous international sports star. He's won so many races, he's not worried at all about racing some slow old turtle!

Polly Panda is the host of the super popular talk show, Fable Talk! She sings, dances, and always gets the dirtiest details from the biggest stars in the animal kingdom.

Shel Tortoistein has never run in a race like this before, but he thinks he might as well give it a shot. He spends most of his time meditating and munching vegetables with his wife, Shelly.

Dr. Von Moral is the most respected psychiatrist in the animal kingdom. He is famous for his groundbreaking work in diagnosing S.L.S. (Sore Loser Syndrome)

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So, what is a fable, anyway?

The story of *The Tortoise and the Hare* comes from a collection of stories commonly known as *Aesop’s Fables*.

Aesop was a storyteller who lived thousands of years ago in Ancient Greece (born circa 620 BCE). Aesop traveled around his country telling stories to crowds of people. He made up most of his own stories, but if he heard a story that he liked, Aesop would tell that one too. He kept adding more and more stories to his act until he had over *seven hundred* of them. By that point, Aesop was the most famous storyteller in the world. He became so famous that his stories are still popular, over two thousand years later.

But Aesop wasn’t always such a big-shot. The stories say that Aesop was born a slave. That means he had to work all day without ever getting paid. Even worse, Aesop had a physical deformity – he was a hunchback – and that made his slave-work much harder. He was slower and weaker than the other slaves, but he worked harder than anyone else (remind you of any of the characters in Fable Talk?)

All his hard work got the attention of his master. When his master asked him why he was working so hard, Aesop made up a story to explain. It was such a good story, that the master asked to hear another one. After three great stories, the master freed Aesop and hired him as his personal storyteller. Aesop became world-famous world for his stories. And we still tell them to this day.

Some handy definitions
(in age appropriate language)

**Fable**
A fable is a short story - usually about animals - that teaches a lesson. These lessons are called morals.

**Moral**
A moral is lesson from a story, that’s true almost all the time for almost everyone.
Create your own fable

Students can write their own Aesop’s fables, with just a little help

Choose a moral:

Never judge a book by its cover
Honesty is the best policy
Bigger isn’t always better
The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence
There’s always someone worse off than yourself
Don’t put off till tomorrow what you can do today
Look before you leap
Treat others the way you want to be treated

Choose a cast of characters:

A busy ant
A lonely worm
A careless penguin
A hungry cow
A sneaky weasel
A ferocious tiger
A classy moje
A picky leopard
A clever owl
A lazy grasshopper
A caterpillar who turns into a butterfly
An uppity parrot
An ambitious elephant
A daredevil eagle
An uptight penguin

A Wall of Morals

We’re used to seeing word walls in classrooms, but what about moral walls? After defining “moral,” and providing a few examples, build a list of the morals that students already know. As the year progresses, new morals can be added each time someone encounters them. Stars or stickers can be added next to a moral each time it is heard or used. By the end of the year, your class will have its own moral wall, representing the values of the students, their teacher, and their families.
In *Fable Talk*, Dr. Von Lion comes all the way from Dusseldorf, Germany to diagnose Hare Hoppings with *Sore Loser Syndrome*. But how can we help students diagnose that behavior in themselves? The following activities are intended to help students reflect on their own experiences with *Sore Loser Syndrome*. After all, raising awareness is always the first step to finding a cure.

**How do you know when you’re suffering from SLS?**

I never really get upset when I lose at:

That’s because:

It makes me feel like:

**How can we lose, without losing it?**

Build a list of what you can do when you start suffering from *Sore Loser Syndrome*. Here are some starting suggestions:

- Remember that even LeBron James misses his shot, half the time!
- Take a deep breath
- Think of something funny - laughter is the best medicine!
- Remember that everyone wins and everyone loses
- Take some time alone

It always makes me so mad when I lose at:

That’s because:

It makes me feel like:
Good Sportsmanship Awards

The feeling we get from winning is a great reward in and of itself. How then, can we reward the good sportsmanship of those who don’t win, but do so gracefully?

A supply of Good Sportsmanship Awards can be as small as a roll of stickers or a handful of dollar-store goodies. What makes them so special is that winners almost never win them. These are rewards specifically for children who didn’t win.

After you’ve modeled giving out the awards for a period of time, why not open up the nominating process? Each time a student witnesses a fellow student being a good sport, they can nominate them to win a Good Sportsmanship Award. This way, students can learn to recognize and value good sportsmanship independently.

What about grown-ups?

Kids aren’t the only ones who suffer from SLS. What examples can the class find of grown-ups being good/sore losers?

Sports are the obvious place to start, but how about political elections and reality game shows? What about those people who just miss the subway doors closing? What examples do children see at home?
Community

A community is a group of people who spend time together. Each one of us is a member of many communities. Your classroom is a community. So is your family, and your neighborhood, and your school. And every person in a community plays a role. Your role could be student, or daughter, the funny guy, or the quiet one, the oldest, or the youngest - it’s whoever you think you are in that community.

In Fable Talk, Hare Hoppings’ role is sports star. But he has other roles too, like son, brother, and center of attention. What are your roles in your classroom community? How about in your family community?

When he wins the race, Shel Tortoisestein earns a new role in his community. He becomes a sports star too, just like Hare Hoppings. Have you ever earned a new role in your community? Or has your role ever changed?

For example, have you ever gone from being a younger sibling to an older sibling? Have you ever joined a new community like a sports team, or played a different role with a new circle of friends?

In Fable Talk, the characters have different roles in their communities because of what animals they are. The rabbit is fast so he’s an athlete, the panda is loveable so she’s a talk-show host. Look around your classroom. Think about what role you play in your classroom community. If everyone in your class was an animal, what animal would you be? Why?
Confidence

Confidence is like hot sauce. A little can be really good, but too much can get you into big trouble.

When Shel Tortoistein agreed to race Hare Hoppings - that really took some confidence. He was just a tortoise and Hare is one of the fastest animals in the whole kingdom! If he hadn’t been confident, he might have been too scared to even enter the race.

But Hare Hoppings was so confident that he decided to take a nap in the middle of the race - that was too much confidence. It got him into trouble.

I feel really confident about:

But I don’t have a lot of confidence about:

Have students draw a picture of themselves doing the activity they are confident about. Then have them draw a picture doing what they are not confident about. Examine the differences between the two pictures. How big are you in each picture? What do you look like? Remind them that both pictures are of the same person. Confidence is catchy - once you learn where you are confident in your life, it is much easier to bring that confidence to other areas. If there is time, have students draw themselves completing the intimidating activity, but full of confidence!
Eating Healthy Foods

In Fable Talk, Hare Hoppings recommends drinking lots of Carrot-ade and Shel Tortoistein recommends the Shel Tortoistein diet, but what kinds of food should we humans eat to keep us healthy?

As a homework assignment, students can write down a list of everything they ate after school. The following day, the class can create two big lists: one for all the healthy foods consumed and one for all the unhealthy foods.

Using the lists as references, students can go over their homework and find three unhealthy foods they ate. They can then replace these with three healthy foods from the list. The healthy food replacements should be foods they truly enjoy eating.

If the class lists are running a little short, suggestions of other healthy foods from the class are always helpful.

Homework for the following night can be actually replacing one unhealthy food with one healthy food, and writing about it.