

Activity Title:

True Friendship: A Lesson through Fables

Activity Overview:

In this activity, students will explore a medieval fable from the Islamic world, “The Ring Dove,” to analyze character development, important cultural values and morals of the story.

Students will analyze the story of true friendship and create their own fable to teach an important value of their own.

Estimated Time: 60-80 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will identify and explain character choices and explain how they demonstrate important values such as loyalty, leadership and friendship
- Students will identify the moral of the story and connect it to cultural values shared in the medieval Islamic world
- Students will write their own fable featuring carefully selected characters that supports the overall moral of their story

Included Materials:

[Lesson Slides](#), [Ring Dove Text \(adapted\) and Questions](#) handout including Extension Activity Instructions

LESSON**Warm-Up:**

- Students will complete a See, Think, Wonder for the image on the first slide.
- Students will share with class.

Provide Background:

- Teacher will share BRIEF introduction to Kalīlah and Dimnah: Fables of Virtue and Vice
- And topic of FABLES

Main Activity:

- Pass out text and question handout
- Reading Options:
 - Have students read independently, in partners, groups or as a class
- Direct Students HIGHLIGHT examples of moments when characters were “good” friends
- Read text as a class and answer the questions at the end of each passage.

Friendship & Moral Graphic Organizer

Students will use evidence from the text to identify important characteristics and support the MORAL of the story through character relationships. Students will identify the moral of the story in their own words.

Closing: Discuss Final Question

Students will share our answers to the final question.

Pose other questions to students to extend conversation with a connection to today.

Are fables still valuable today? In what other ways are children taught lessons today about values?

Extension Activity: (optional)

Task: Students select ONE value or a “good behavior” from their lives today and write a brief fable of their own

Step 1: Identify the Moral of the Story

Moral of your story:

Step 2: Select at least 2 animal characters for your story

Tip: Think about the characteristics of the animals. Do you want your characters to be sneaky, strong, silly, or smart? Which animals portray those characteristics? Why did you choose these specific animals/traits to demonstrate the moral of your story?

Character #1-(type of animal) (characteristics it will have)

Give it a name:

Character #2-(type of animal) (characteristics it will have)

Give it a name:

Step 3: Develop your story. The story must have a beginning, middle and end.

Beginning: Introduce your characters. What are they doing?

Middle: Your characters experience a problem, issue or conflict. How will they resolve this problem?

End: Explain how the problem is fixed. What are the consequences?

Ring Dove (Adapted)¹

This story is adapted from Kalila wa Dimna, a famous collection of fables widely read during the Medieval Islamic Golden Age to teach rulers and citizens about virtue, leadership, and community

Vocabulary

Virtue: a good habit or positive character trait that helps you do the right thing

Predicament: a tricky, confusing, or unpleasant situation that is hard to get out of

Noble: being good and honest

Innate: something is natural, inborn, or present from birth rather than learned or acquired

Adversity: a difficult situation, hard times, or a stroke of bad luck

1. The Hunter and the Net

In a place called the Deccan, there was a large tree where a crow lived. One day, the crow saw a hunter approaching. The hunter looked mean and carried a net and a stick. The crow decided to stay hidden and watch what the man would do.

The hunter set up his net on the ground, scattered grain over it, and hid. Soon, a flock of doves led by the Ring Dove flew by. They saw the grain but did not see the net. When they landed to eat, the net trapped them. The hunter ran toward them, happy with his catch. Each dove tried to fly away on its own, but they were stuck. The Ring Dove shouted, "Stay together! Do not think only of yourself. If we work as one, we can lift this net!"

The doves flapped their wings together. They lifted the net into the air and flew away with it. The hunter followed them on foot, hoping they would get tired and fall.

2. The Rat Frees the Doves

The Ring Dove saw the hunter following them. She told the flock to fly toward the orchards where the hunter would lose their trail. "I have a friend nearby named Zirak the Rat," she said. "If we reach his den, he can gnaw through the net."

They landed at the rat's home. The Ring Dove called for Zirak. When the rat saw his friend in such a **predicament**, he asked how it happened. The Ring Dove explained that it was their destiny to be blinded by the grain and caught in the net.

Zirak began to bite the knots around the Ring Dove first. But she stopped him. "Please, start with my companions," she urged. Zirak asked why she didn't care for her own life first. She replied, "I am their leader. They did their duty by following me. If you free them first, I know you

¹ Adapted from Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalilah and Dimnah: Fables of Virtue and Vice*, trans. Michael Fishbein and James E. Montgomery (New York: NYU Press, 2022).

will never leave me trapped, even if you get tired. But if you free me first, you might grow weary and leave them behind."

Zirak was moved by her **noble** heart. He chewed through all the ropes, and the doves flew away to safety.

3. The Crow and the Rat become Friends

The crow had watched everything. He was so impressed by the rat's loyalty that he wanted to be Zirak's friend too. He approached the den and called out. At first, the rat was suspicious. "How can we be friends?" Zirak asked. "I am food, and you are a hunter. It is **innate** for us to be enemies."

The crow argued that eating one small rat would not benefit him as much as having a wise friend would. He promised to stay by the rat's door without eating or drinking until Zirak accepted him. The rat eventually agreed, realizing the crow was sincere. "I have never turned away someone in need," Zirak said. They shook hands (and claws) and became close companions, sharing their thoughts and feelings from the heart.

4. The Journey to the Turtle

After some time, the crow told the rat that their current home was too close to human roads. "I know a secluded pond where a turtle lives," the crow said. "We will be safe there." The rat agreed to go. The crow picked up the rat by his tail and flew him to the pond.

When they arrived, the turtle was frightened and dove into the water. But when she recognized the crow's voice, she came up to greet them. The crow told her the whole story of the hunter, the doves, and the rat's bravery. The turtle welcomed the rat warmly. The rat then began to tell his own life story, explaining why he had left his old home in the house of a religious man. The three animals lived together in safety, proving that friends from different backgrounds can protect each other from **adversity**.

Name:

Period:

Ring Dove Worksheet

1. How did the doves manage to escape the hunter even though they were caught in the net?
2. Why did the crow decide to follow the doves instead of staying in his tree?
3. Which value (leadership, loyalty, or friendship) does the Ring Dove demonstrate when she asks Zirak to free her companions first? Explain how her choice demonstrates this value.
4. Why was the rat afraid to become friends with the crow at first?
- 5 . According to the rat, what is the difference between a friend of the "heart" and a friend of "material goods"?
6. How did the crow transport the rat to the new pond?
7. What is the main lesson of this parable regarding friendship?

Friendship & Moral Graphic Organizer

The philosopher tells the king that "sincere brethren" (true friends) are the most valuable thing a person can have. They help us achieve good things and console us during **adversity**.

Fill in the graphic organizer with evidence from the text. Use the chart to state the overall moral in your own words and answer the FINAL question.

Character Pair	How their friendship began	The benefit of their friendship
Ring Dove & Zirak the Rat		
Crow & Zirak the Rat		
Crow & The Turtle		
Overall Moral Taught In your own words, what is the main lesson this fable teaches about friendship?		

Final Question: In Medieval Islamic culture, leadership and virtue were deeply valued and taught to children early on in life. How does the Ring Dove's choice to put her flock first reflect these specific cultural values?

Extension Activity: Write your own FABLE

Students select ONE moral or a “good behavior” from their lives today and write a brief parable of their own

Step 1: Identify the Moral of the Story. What good behavior do you want to teach or share with someone reading your story?

Moral of your story:

Step 2: Select at least 2 animal characters for your story

*Tip: Think about the characteristics of the animals. Do you want your characters to be sneaky, strong, silly, or smart? Which animals portray those characteristics? How will these traits help show your moral?

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Give it a name:

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Give it a name:

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