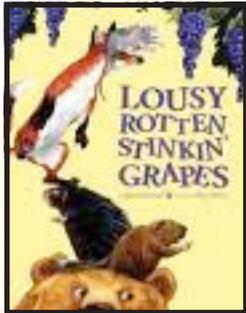




Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.

(H. Diana Cruchley©2010, dianacruchley.com)



LOUSY ROTTEN STINKIN' GRAPES

Margie Palatini, Simon and suster,
©2009, ISBN 978-0-689-80246-1

In this twist on Aesop, the fox progressively involves a series of animals in an elaborate plan to help him get the grapes. He refuses to listen to their advice, and when his plan fails, he leaves saying the grapes are probably not ripe. After he leaves, the other animals get the grapes.

CONSTRUCTING A CHART

Ask students to construct a chart with a list of each of the animals in the story in one column, and their method of solving the grape problem in the second column.

Discuss the times when making a chart like this might be valuable: when you need to see a problem clearly, when you are outlining a story you are going to write, when you are observing in science, etc.

CREATE YOUR OWN TAKE ON AESOP

Students will enjoy using this as a model to create their own version of an Aesop fable. They can add more characters, dialogue, a twist, additional descriptions, and a setting. This story is about 1,000 words, but students can write a terrific Aesop fable in about 500 words if you wish.



AUTHOR: MARGIE PALATINI

Margie Palatini has written many popular picture books including: *The Three Silly Billies*, *Earthquack* (like *The Sky is Falling* the farm animals think they are having an earthquake), *Bad Boys* (a series about bad wolves), and the delightful *Gone With the Wand* (about a fairy godmother (probably Cinderella's) whose lost her skill with the wand and is looking for other work.

REPETITION

This book presents an opportunity for students to understand the power of a repeated line - in this case "After all, I'm the fox. Sly. Clever. Smart." Also repeated are: "Voila! Grapes!" and "If you say so."

As a listening skill, ask each 1/3 of the class to listen for their particular phrase and note the total number of times it occurs, as well as when each of them happens.

Ask them to write a story, or re-write an existing one, to add humorous repeated phrases.

INSULTS

Because the fox believes he is so clever, he insults the other animals he recruits to help him:

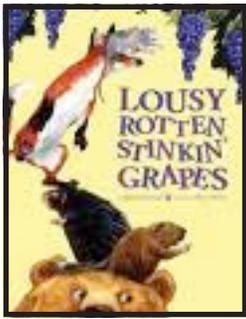
Bear - "your job is brawn. Not brain."

Beaver - "my dentally challenged chum"

Porcupine - "let us not get all prickly"

Possum - "don't worry those few little hairs on your extremely unattractive head."

These are very kind friends. They don't even seem to have hurt feelings. Ask students what the insults are after they have listened to the story. It might be interesting to write a staged story where characters are insulted by the main character as they go along - but the insults must be clever.



Lousy Rotten Stinkin' Grapes, page 2

THE ORIGINAL AESOP STORY

Give students a copy of an original version of this fable. Ask students to compare the two in a Venn diagram. They could write a comparison if that would be an appropriate assignment. To write a quick comparison students should follow the steps below:

STEP 1: Write an introductory question your comparison will answer. *“How is Lousy rotten Stinkin’ Grapes” really a clever version of an Aesop fable?*

STEP 2: Write 2-3 sentences explaining how they are similar

STEP 3: Write 2-3 sentences explaining how they are different

STEP 4: Write a conclusion as to whether they are more similar or more different

STEP 5: Rewrite the opening and concluding sentences to be more clever and interesting.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

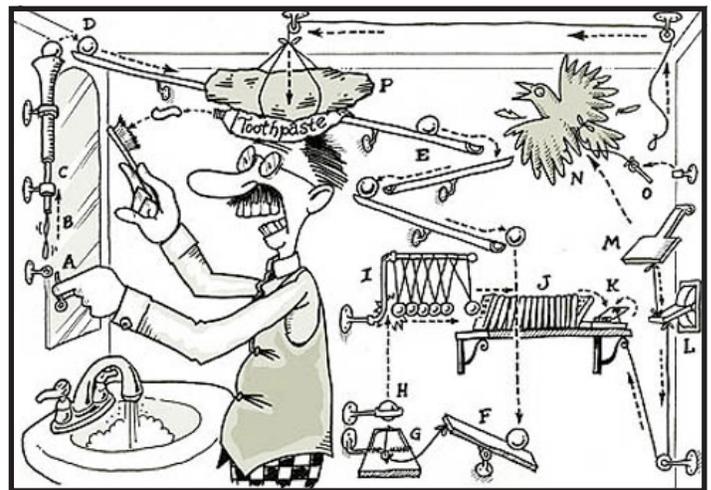
Fables always have a moral. The original moral of this story is something like “People who can’t do something, make up reasons why they didn’t want it in the first place.” The expression “sour grapes” is used for someone behaving that way. This fable has that moral but has several other potential ones as well:

- Don’t underestimate the help others can provide.
- Don’t overestimate your own intelligence.
- A simple plan is often better than an elaborate plan.

A RUBE GOLDBERG PLAN

Our fox makes somewhat of a “Rube Goldberg” plan, each part of which is more elaborate than next, and requiring ever more complicated diagrams. The original model of a plan that is too elaborate is named after Rube Goldberg. The illustration below is of a machine to brush your teeth. Ask students to create a “Rube Goldberg” plan to do something simple like wash a car, or sharpen a pencil.

Ruben Goldberg was a cartoonist who was most famous for creating cartoons to solve simple problems in an elaborate way. The boardgame *Mouse Trap* is based on a Rube Goldberg machine. Today there are Rube Goldberg contests for inventors to create overly elaborate solutions to problems.



JOURNAL

Possible journal topics include:

- A time I wanted something really badly.
- A time I made a plan to accomplish something that either worked, or didn’t work.
- A time that my friends and I built something together such as a fort, a snow man, a movie, a neighbourhood show.