

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Donkey, the Fox, and the Lion

By Aesop
620-560 B.C.

Aesop was a storyteller who lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BCE. This story is part of his collection of tales known as Aesop's Fables, which did not survive in writing but were passed down by people retelling them. They have deeply influenced children's literature and modern storytelling culture. As you read, identify the different promises made in this fable.

[1] The Donkey and the Fox, having entered into partnership together for their mutual protection, went out into the forest to hunt.

They had not proceeded far when they met a Lion.

The Fox, seeing imminent¹ danger, approached the Lion and promised to contrive² for him the capture of the Donkey if the Lion would pledge his word not to harm the Fox.

Then, upon assuring the Donkey that he would not be injured, the Fox led him to a deep pit and arranged that he should fall into it.



["A Keuleman's Common Fox"](#) by St. George Jackson is in the public domain.

1. **Imminent** (*adjective*) about to happen
2. **Contrive** (*verb*) to bring about or create; to plan

[5] The Lion, seeing that the Donkey was secured, immediately clutched the Fox, and attacked the Donkey at his leisure.³

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3. **Leisure** (*noun*) use of free time for enjoyment

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a major theme of the text?
 - A. Betraying a friend can have terrible consequences.
 - B. The desire to survive is strong, but it is not as strong as friendship.
 - C. Being clever can be more useful than being strong.
 - D. Friendships made between cowards never last.

2. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "The Donkey and the Fox, having entered into partnership together for their mutual protection, went out into the forest to hunt." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "The Fox, seeing imminent danger, approached the Lion and promised to contrive for him the capture of the Donkey" (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "Then, upon assuring the Donkey that he would not be injured, the Fox led him to a deep pit" (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "The Lion, seeing that the Donkey was secured, immediately clutched the Fox, and attacked the Donkey at his leisure." (Paragraph 5)

3. How does the fox react to the arrival of the lion?
- A. The fox becomes frightened, and he tries to save them both from the lion.
 - B. The fox tries to make friends with the lion in spite of the donkey's warning about the lion.
 - C. The fox tries to trick the lion into falling into a pit so that he and the donkey can escape.
 - D. The fox is quick to betray the donkey by offering to trick him for the lion.
4. How does the ending of the story contribute to its overall meaning?
- A. The fox's betrayal at the end of the story contributes to the idea that people cannot stop themselves from being what they are, like the cowardly fox.
 - B. The fox's betrayal at the end of the story contributes to the moral: do not trust other people to help you and instead help yourself, as the donkey should have done.
 - C. The deaths of the fox and the donkey contribute to the moral of the story: it is better to be united against an enemy rather than divided by our differences.
 - D. The lion's betrayal of the fox contributes to the idea that betraying a friend can have terrible consequences, just as the fox's betrayal led to his own death.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Do you think the fox was smart to try to save himself? Why or why not? What else could the fox have done to save the donkey and himself from the lion?
2. In the context of this tale, what drives someone to betray? Use evidence from this text, your own experience, and other art, literature, or history in your answer.