

Classical Christian Speech Meet
Second-Third Grade Dramatic Interpretation

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The Baboon's Umbrella

Arnold Lobel

Advice from others can be like the weather. Some is good; some bad.

The Baboon was taking his daily walk in the jungle. He met his friend, the Gibbon, on the path. "My good friend," said the Gibbon, "how strange to find you holding an open umbrella over your head on such a sunshiny day as this."

"Yes," said the Baboon. "I am most annoyed. I cannot close this disagreeable umbrella. It is stuck. I would not think of walking without my umbrella in case it should rain. But, as you can see, I am not able to enjoy the sunshine underneath this dark shadow. It is a sad predicament."

"There is a simple solution," said the Gibbon. "You need only to cut out some holes in your umbrella. Then the sun will shine on you."

"What a good idea!" cried the Baboon. "I do thank you."

The Baboon ran home. With his scissors, he cut large holes in the top of his umbrella. When the Baboon returned to his walk, the warm sunshine came down through the holes.

"How delightful!" said the Baboon.

However, the sun disappeared behind some clouds. There were a few drops of rain. Then it began to pour. The rain fell through all of the holes in the umbrella. In just a short time, the unhappy Baboon was soaked to the skin.

Belling the Cat

Aesop

Improving your lot is hard work indeed.

Some little mice, who lived in the walls of a house, met together one night to talk of the wicked cat, and to consider what could be done to get rid of her. The head mice were Brown-back, Grey-ear, and White-Whisker.

"There is no comfort in the house," said Brown-back. "If I but step into the pantry to pick up a few crumbs, down she comes, and I hardly have time to run to my nest again."

"What can we do?" asked Grey-ear. "Shall we all run at her at once and bite her and frighten her away?"

"No," said White-whisker. "She is so bold we could not frighten her. I have thought of something better than that. Let us hang a bell around her neck. Then, if she moves, the bell will ring, and we shall hear it and have time to run away."

"O yes! Yes!" cried all the mice. "That is a wonderful idea. We will bell the cat! Hurrah! Hurrah! No more fear of the cat!" And they danced in glee.

When they were quiet again, Brown-back asked, "But who will hang the bell around her neck?"

No one answered. "Will you?" he asked White-whisker.

"I don't think I can," replied White-whisker. "I am lame, you know. It needs someone who can move quickly."

"Will you, Grey-ear?" said Brown-back.

"Excuse me," answered Grey-ear. "I have not been well since that time when I was almost caught in the trap."

"Who will bell the cat, then?" said Brown-back. "If it is to be done, someone must do it."

Not a sound was heard, and one by one the little mice stole away to their holes, no better off than they were before.

The Crows Are in the Corn

A Georgia folktale explaining an old saying

Retold by S.E. Schlosser

It happened in Georgia not long ago, that a farmer and his wife decided to sleep late, like the rich folk do. It was a beautiful Saturday morning, the kind that brings all God's creatures out to play. But not these farm folk. No, they just slept and slept and slept. The crows were gathered in a large oak tree, having a big morning meeting. They noticed that there was nobody stirring around the house, and the corn was ripe in the field. So they adjourned their meeting mighty quick and flew over to the field to eat some corn.

"Caw-n, caw-n," they cackled excitedly.

The old rooster woke up to their activities and started to crow excitedly to the sleeping family. "Wake up, wake up, wake up!" The farmer and his wife just kept sleeping, and the crows kept eating the corn.

"Caw-n, caw-n," they called.

"The crows are in the corn! The crows are in the corn!" The rooster cock-a-doodle-dooed with all his might. The farmer kept snoring, and his wife just rolled over and pulled the pillow over her head. The rooster was frantic. He tried once more: "The crows are in the corn. They're pulling up the corn!"

The farmer and his wife kept right on sleeping. And the crows kept right on eating. The rooster quit crowing in disgust. Nothing would wake the farmer and his wife.

The old turkey came strolling into the yard and watched the proceedings. Finally, he said to the rooster: "The corns all et up, all et up, all et up."

When the farmer and his wife finally rolled out of bed, they found that the corn was all gone. That is why in Georgia they say "the crows are in the corn" when it is time to GET UP!

The Ducks and the Fox

Arnold Lobel

A change of routine can be most healthful.

Two Duck sisters were waddling down the road to the pond for their morning swim. "This is a good road," said the first sister, "but I think, just for a change, we should find another route. There are many other roads that lead to the pond."

"No," said the second sister, "I do not agree. I really do not want to try a new way. This road makes me feel comfortable. I am accustomed to it."

Another morning the Ducks met a Fox sitting on a fence along the road. "Good morning, ladies," said the Fox. "On your way to the pond, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said the sisters, "we come along here every day."

"Interesting," said the Fox with a toothy smile.

When the sun came up the next morning, the first sister said, "We are sure to meet that Fox again if we go our usual way. I did not like his looks. Today is the day that we must find another road!"

"You are being just plain silly," said the second sister. "That Fox smiled at us. He seemed most gentlemanly."

The two Ducks waddled down the same road to the pond. There was the Fox, sitting on the fence. This time he carried a sack.

"Lovely ladies," said the Fox. "I was expecting you. I am glad that you have not disappointed me." Opening his sack, he jumped upon them. The sisters quacked and screamed. They flapped and flopped their wings. They flew home and bolted their door.

The next morning, the two Ducks did not go out. They rested at home to quiet their nerves. On the following day they carefully searched for a new and different road. They found one, and it took them safely to the pond.

The Fox and the Crow

Aesop

Vanity is largely a matter of self-control...or lack of it. Others may try to feed our ego, but it is up to us to control it.

A coal-black crow once stole a piece of meat. She flew to a tree and held the meat in her beak.

A fox, who saw her, wanted the meat for himself, so he looked up into the tree and said, "How beautiful you are, my friend! Your feathers are fairer than the dove's."

"Is your voice as sweet as your form is beautiful? If so, you must be the queen of birds."

The crow was so happy in his praise that she opened her mouth to show how she could sing. Down fell the piece of meat.

The fox seized upon it and ran away.

The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs

Aesop

This classic fable is about plenty not being enough and learning how to be content with what you have.

A man and his wife had the good fortune to possess a goose that laid a golden egg every day. Lucky though they were, they soon began to think they were not getting rich fast enough. They imagined the bird must be made of gold inside, so they decided to kill it in order to secure the whole store of precious metal at once. But when they cut it open, they found it was just like any other goose. Thus, they neither got rich all at once, as they had hoped, nor continued to enjoy the daily addition to their wealth.

Much wants more and loses all.

The Hen and the Apple Tree

Arnold Lobel

It is always difficult to pose as something that one is not.

One October day, a Hen looked out her window. She saw an apple tree growing in her backyard.

"Now that is odd," said the Hen. "I am certain that there was no tree standing in that spot yesterday."

The tree said, "There are some of us that grow fast."

The Hen looked at the bottom of the tree.

"I have never seen a tree," she said, "that has ten furry toes."

"There are some of us that do," said the tree. "Hen, come outside and enjoy the cool shade of my leafy branches."

The Hen looked at the top of the tree.

"I have never seen a tree," she said, "that has two long, pointed ears."

"There are some of us that have," said the tree. "Hen, come outside and eat one of my delicious apples."

"Come to think of it," said the Hen, "I have never heard a tree speak from a mouth that is full of sharp teeth."

"There are some of us that can," said the tree. "Hen, come outside and rest your back against the bark of my trunk."

"I have heard," said the Hen, "that some of you lose all of your leaves at this time of the year."

"Oh, yes," said the tree, "there are some of us that will." The tree began to quiver and shake. All of its leaves quickly dropped off.

The Hen was not surprised to see a large Wolf in the place where an apple tree had been standing just a moment before. She locked her shutters and slammed her window closed.

The Wolf knew that he had been outsmarted, and he stormed away in a hungry rage.

The Hippopotamus at Dinner

Arnold Lobel

Too much of anything often leaves one with a feeling of regret.

The Hippopotamus went into a restaurant and sat at his favorite table.

“Waiter!” called the Hippopotamus. “I will have the bean soup, the Brussels sprouts, and the mashed potatoes. Please hurry. I am enormously hungry tonight!”

In a short while, the waiter returned with the order. The Hippopotamus glared down at his plate.

“Waiter,” he said, “do you call this a meal? These portions are much too small. They would not satisfy a bird. I want a *bathtub* of bean soup, a *bucket* of Brussels sprouts, and a *mountain* of mashed potatoes. I tell you, I have an APPETITE!

The waiter went back into the kitchen. He returned carrying enough bean soup to fill a bathtub, enough Brussels sprouts to fill a bucket, and a mountain of mashed potatoes. In no time, the Hippopotamus had eaten every last morsel.

“Delicious!” said the Hippopotamus, as he dabbed his mouth with a napkin and prepared to leave. To his surprise, he could not move. His stomach, which had grown considerably larger, was caught between the table and the chair. He pulled and tugged, but it was no use. He could not budge. The hour grew late. The other customers in the restaurant finished their dinners and left. The cooks took off their aprons and put away their pots. The waiters cleared the dishes and turned out the lights. They all went home.

The Hippopotamus remained there, sitting forlornly at the table.

“Perhaps I should not have eaten quite so many Brussels sprouts,” he said, as he gazed into the gloom of the darkened restaurant. Occasionally, he burped.

How the Deer Got His Antlers

A Cherokee legend

There is no honor in trickery.

Long ago, the deer had no horns. His head was smooth and sleek and he was able to run swiftly through the fields on the Cherokee land.

The rabbit was a great jumper. He could hop through the fields so quickly you sometimes had trouble following him with your eyes.

The animals began to wonder which of the two was the faster. A race was arranged and the prize was to be an elegant pair of antlers.

The sneaky rabbit was found to be cheating before the race had even begun. He was caught trying to clear away bushes and grass in the thicket so that he would have a straight, uncluttered path to the finish line.

The other animals were so disgusted with him they awarded the antlers to the deer without holding the race at all. The deer has worn the antlers proudly ever since.

The rabbit was then told that from that day on he would have to cut down the bushes for a living. And to this day, he does.

The Lion and the Mouse

Aesop

Here is one of the best-loved stories of kindness paid and repaid. From it we learn that the power of compassion has been found within both the mighty and the meek. Kindness is not a feeble virtue.

One day a great lion lay asleep in the sunshine. A little mouse ran across his paw and wakened him. The great lion was just going to eat him up when the little mouse cried, "Oh, please, let me go, sir. Someday I may help you."

The lion laughed at the thought that the little mouse could be of any use to him. But he was a good-natured lion, and he set the mouse free.

Not long after, the lion was caught in a net. He tugged and pulled with all his might, but the ropes were too strong. Then he roared loudly. The little mouse heard him and ran to the spot.

"Be still, dear Lion, and I will set you free. I will gnaw the ropes."

With his sharp little teeth, the mouse cut the ropes, and the lion came out of the net.

"You laughed at me once," said the mouse. "You thought I was too little to do you a good turn. But see, you owe your life to a poor little mouse."

The Little Plant

Author Unknown

The power of kindness cannot be diminished.

Away on the edge of the forest stood a little plant, only a few inches tall.

But the ground around it was so cold and hard that the plant could not grow; instead it had feebly stood there for several years and had grown weaker.

“Grow, and be beautiful!” said the forest sternly; but the plant did not grow.

“Don’t you want to grow?” said the magpie; and then he began to tell the little thing how lazy and useless it was; but the words went in one ear and out the other.

Still the plant did not grow.

“I will teach you to obey!” roared the wind, and he lashed the poor twig with its cold wings, so it came close to dying instead of springing up.

“You will surely grow, poor little thing,” said the sun kindly, and he poured warm spring rain from the sky and warmed up the earth around the plant.

And *then* the little twig shot up and became a beautiful tree, with a leafy crown and fragrant blossoms.

Little Sunshine

Retold by Etta Austin Blaisdell and Mary Frances Blaisdell

Bestowing compassion is like offering most other gifts: often it's the thought that counts.

Once there was a little girl named Elsa. She has a very old grandmother, with white hair, and wrinkles all over her face. Elsa's father had a large house that stood on a hill. Each day the sun peeped in the south windows. It made everything look bright and beautiful. The grandmother lived on the north side of the house. The sun never came to her room.

One day Elsa said to her father, "Why doesn't the sun peep into Grandma's room? I know she would like to have him."

"The sun cannot look in at the north windows," said her father.

"Then let us turn the house around, Papa."

"It is much too large for that," laughed her father.

"Will Grandma never have any sunshine in her room?" asked Elsa.

"Of course not, my child, unless you can carry some to her." After that Elsa tried and tried to think how she could carry the sunshine to her grandmother.

When she played in the fields, she saw the grass and flowers nodding their heads. The birds sang sweetly as they flew from tree to tree. Everything seemed to say, "We love the sun. We love the bright, warm sun."

"Grandma would love it, too," thought the child. "I must take some to her."

When she was in the garden one morning she felt the sun's warm rays in her golden hair. Then she sat down and she saw them in her lap. "I will take them in my dress," she thought, "and carry them to Grandma's room." so she jumped up and ran into the house.

"Look, Grandma, look! I have some sunshine for you," she cried. And she opened her dress, but there was not a ray to be seen.

"It peeps out of your eyes, my child," said her grandmother, "and it shines in your sunny, golden hair. I do not need the sun when I have you with me."

Elsa did not understand how the sun could peep out of her eyes. But she was glad to make her dear grandmother happy. Every morning she played in the garden. Then she ran to her grandmother's room to carry the sunshine in her eyes and hair.

Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress

Arnold Lobel

Flattery is hard to resist.

Madame Rhinoceros saw a dress in a shop window. It was covered with polka dots and flowers. It was adorned with ribbons and lace. She admired it for a moment and then entered the shop.

"That dress in the window," said Madame Rhinoceros to a salesperson, "I would like to try it on." Madame Rhinoceros put on the dress. She looked at herself in the mirror. "I do not think this dress is at all attractive on me," she said.

"But Madame," said the salesperson, "you are completely wrong. This dress makes you look glamorous and alluring."

"If only I were sure," said Madame Rhinoceros.

"Ah, Madame," said the salesperson, "everyone who sees you wearing this dress will be filled with admiration and envy."

"Do you really think so?" asked Madame Rhinoceros, "I will buy the dress, and I will wear it now." Madame Rhinoceros left the shop. As she walked up the avenue, she saw that people were smiling and laughing at her.

"Admiration," thought Madame Rhinoceros.

She saw some people who were shaking their heads and frowning.

"Envy," thought Madame Rhinoceros.

She continued up the avenue. Everyone who saw her stopped and stared. Madame Rhinoceros felt more glamorous and alluring with every step.

The Milkmaid

Author Unknown

Don't count your chickens until they have hatched.

Once upon a time a girl was walking along with a pail of milk. She sang a happy song, for she was thinking of the money she would get when she sold her milk. Then she said to herself--

"I have two gallons of milk, which I shall sell. With the money I shall buy fifty eggs. I shall put these under some of my hens. My hens will keep them warm until little chickens are hatched."

"I shall give these chickens plenty of good food and clean water. They will grow fat, and by Christmas they will be large enough to sell. I can get enough money for them to buy a fine new dress."

She was thinking so much about her new dress that she forgot to be careful. Her foot struck a stone. As she tried to keep from falling, the pail flew out of her hands, and, Oh, the milk was spilled.

The Old Hound

Author Unknown

It is good to remember the righteous.

Once there was a beautiful hound. He had long, silky ears and a smooth, bright coat. He was not only beautiful, but strong and swift, and a faithful servant. Wherever his master went hunting, the hound went with him and chased the deer. After many years, the hound grew old and feeble, but still he followed his master with the other dogs.

One day a stag had been chased till it was almost tired out, and the old hound caught up with it and seized it. His teeth were so old and broken that he could not hold on tightly. The stag gave a sudden bound and got away. Just then the master rode up, and seeing what had happened, was very angry. He took his whip to strike his old faithful hound.

“O, dear Master,” said the hound. “Do not strike me. I meant to do well. It is not my fault that I am old. If you do not like me as I am now, remember what I have been.”

Someone Sees You

Traditional Folktale

This folktale reminds us that an act of dishonesty is never truly hidden.

Once upon a time a man decided to sneak into his neighbor's fields and steal some wheat. "If I take just a little from each field, no one will notice," he told himself, "but it will all add up to a nice pile of wheat for me." So he waited for the darkest night, when thick clouds lay over the moon, and he crept out of his house. He took his youngest daughter with him.

"Daughter," he whispered, "you must stand guard and call out if anyone sees me."

The man stole into the field to begin reaping, and before long the child called out, "Father, someone sees you!"

The man looked all around, but he saw no one, so he gathered his stolen wheat and moved to a second field.

"Father, someone sees you!" the child cried again.

The man stopped and looked all around, but once again he saw no one. He gathered more wheat and moved to a third field.

A little while passed, and the daughter cried out, "Father, someone sees you!" Once more the man stopped his work and looked in every direction, but he saw no one at all, so he bundled his wheat and crept into the last field.

"Father, someone sees you!" the child cried again.

"Why in the world do you keep saying someone sees me?" he angrily asked his daughter. "I've looked everywhere, and I don't see anyone."

"Father," murmured the child. "Someone sees you from above."

The Young Rooster

Arnold Lobel

Failure can pave the way for later success.

A young Rooster was summoned to his Father's bedside.

"Son, my time has come to an end," said the aged bird. "Now it is your turn to crow up the morning sun each day." The young Rooster watched sadly as his Father's life slipped away.

Early the next morning, the young Rooster flew up to the roof of the barn. He stood there, facing the east.

"I have never done this before," said the Rooster. "I must try my best." When he lifted his head to crow, a weak and scratchy croak was the only sound he was able to make. The sun did not come up. Clouds covered the sky, and a damp drizzle fell all day. All of the animals of the farm came to the Rooster.

"This is a disaster!" cried a Pig.

"We need our sunshine!" shouted a Sheep.

"Rooster, you must crow much louder," said a Bull. "The sun is ninety-three million miles away. How do you expect it to hear you?"

Very early the next morning, the young Rooster flew up to the roof of the barn again. He took a deep breath, he threw back his head and CROWED. It was the loudest crow that was ever crowed since the beginning of roosters.

The animals on the farm were awakened from their sleep with a start.

"What a noise!" cried the Pig.

"My ears hurt!" shouted the Sheep.

"My head is splitting!" said the Bull.

"I am sorry," said the Rooster, "but I was only doing my job."

He said this with a great deal of pride, for he saw, far to the east, the tip of the morning sun coming up over the trees.