

SAMPLE

**EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY
LEVEL A: FABLES AND POURQUOI TALES**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT QUIDNAM PRESS

Quidnam Press helps homeschooling parents share the wonder of words with their children. Our literature and language programs bring the classical liberal arts into the 21st century with a thoroughly modern, inclusive, global perspective. For more information, visit quidnampress.com.

Welcome to *Exploring the World through Story!*

Exploring the World through Story introduces children to the wonder of words and the diversity of human cultures through the study of world literature. In the primary grades—K-2 or ages 4-8—students enjoy folktales from around the world, gaining both cultural literacy and an understanding of basic narrative forms. Simple geography readings, map/globe work, and memory work round out the program, helping students put the stories in context. Detailed teaching notes and schedules make it easy for parents to teach literature and geography to their children, even if they have never taught these subjects before.

The elementary and middle school levels build on the foundation laid in the primary levels, preparing students to study world literature in high school and beyond.

About Level A

Exploring the World through Story: Level A provides a gentle introduction to world literature for students ages 4-6 (Kindergarten). You'll share classic fables from Aesop and pourquoi ("how and why") tales from around the world with your child. Detailed lesson plans explain how to introduce the tales and list new vocabulary and comprehension questions for you. You'll also find suggestions for optional leveled readers and picture books that help children build the background knowledge that is so crucial to reading comprehension. Short geography readings, map/globe explorations, and foundational memory work are included. By the end of the year, students will have explored stories from more than a dozen different cultures, and they will be able to name and locate all of the continents and world oceans.

The program presents one folktale per week for the 36 weeks of the standard US school year. Because most young children have limited attention spans, lessons are kept short and to the point. You should be able to complete each lesson in 20-30 minutes. This program assumes that you are reading aloud to your child or using audiobooks, where these are available. All of the student work at this level can and should be completed orally.

Exploring the World through Story: Level A is just one component of a complete English Language Arts program for Kindergartners. You will also need to teach reading with a systematic, phonics-based program. A good handwriting curriculum is also a must. I recommend that you read aloud to your child for at least 30 minutes a day from high-quality fiction and nonfiction books in a wide range of genres and styles. I have

suggested some titles in the Connections section that will help your child build the background knowledge they need for strong reading comprehension.

About the Lesson Plans

Each lesson plan is numbered by level (A, B, or C) and week (1, 2, 3, etc.) to help you keep track of where you are in the program.

At the top of the page, you will find the title of the week's story, the book it appears in with the page number, and the country or people the story originates from. You will use some of this information to introduce each story to your child.

The Teaching Notes contain background information for you, the teacher. It is not meant to be read verbatim to your child. In the first few lessons, the Teaching Notes give scripts that show you how to introduce the tales and geography information to your child. The instructions become more streamlined as you gain experience and confidence with the program.

Next you will find a list of vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar to your child. (Some stories are simple enough that this section is blank.) Rather than giving formal dictionary definitions, which are often at least as complicated as the words they explain, I suggest simplified language you can add to clarify the readings for your child. Simply read the text and add the substitution afterward as an aside: "When we hear the bell ringing, we will know *immediately*—that means *right away*—that our enemy is coming." There is no need for children to memorize definitions at this stage.

Following the vocabulary words you will see a list of comprehension questions. Most of these are simple, factual questions to help children track the action in the stories. In a few cases, I've included some broader discussion topics that help children make personal connections with the stories. As you progress through the curriculum and your child gets used to the rhythm of lessons, you may find you don't need to rely on the comprehension questions as much. If you discover that your child is launching into observations or questions about the story, follow their lead, only returning to the questions if the conversation flags or you sense that the child isn't following the narrative.

You will find suggestions for further reading, discussion, or activities under the *Connections* subheading. These additional books and crafts are entirely optional, but they will enrich the program for your child. Feel free to pick and choose readings and activities you think your child will enjoy.

The Geography section consists of memory and map work, plus a short reading from a colorful reference book. After you have read and discussed the story, you will mark your world map according to the instructions in the Map Work and Reading section. I recommend using stars to mark countries and dots to mark US states. Next, you will explore the country's entry in the geography reference book. Read the short country description in the box aloud, and use the captions on the photos to describe them to your child. If you find the child's attention flagging, it's fine just to read the short description and let them look at the pictures. You can also take a break and come back to the book later in the day. This reference book is used for all three primary levels of *Exploring the World through Story*, so your child will have plenty of time to get familiar with its contents. Note that when a country has already been introduced, this section will be blank. You can always go back and refresh your child's memory about the location of the country and review the information in the geography text, if you like.

The Memory Work subsection lists information for memorization in question-and-answer format. To teach new memory work, read the question and answer aloud to your child, and, if applicable, provide the explanation or demonstration described in the lesson plan. Ask the child to repeat the answer back to you three times. **Memory work should be reviewed daily, not just during your weekly literature and geography lessons.** Some of the memory work requires the use of the reproducible maps at the end of this book, and this is noted in the lesson plans.

Required Materials for EWS: Level A

Core Literature Texts

- Aesop's Fables for Children* - Milo Winter
([paperback/free online](#))

This classic collection of fables has memorable illustrations and uses a richer vocabulary than many other children's versions. The paperback edition includes a link for MP3 audio downloads, but the text, including illustrations, is also available free online.

- How and Why Stories* - Martha Hamilton & Mitch Weiss
([paperback/hardcover/ebook/audiobook](#))

This collection includes stories from around the world, retold in accessible language (Lexile level 830L) by award-winning storytellers Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss.

The stories in both books are short enough for young children with limited attention spans; all can be read in under five minutes.

Geography Reference Text

- DK Countries of the World: Our World in Pictures* - Andrea Mills
([hardcover/ebook](#))

This colorful reference book gives students basic information for each country in the world. It serves as the geography text for all three of the primary-grade levels of this program.

Additional Materials

- A large, current world map you can mark, such as [Rand-McNally's Signature Edition World Wall Map](#)
- Small star and dot stickers in bright colors
- A current globe

LESSON A-1

“Belling the Cat”

Aesop’s Fables for Children, p. 15¹

Ancient Greece

Literature

Teaching Notes

Folktales are stories that originate in popular (“folk”) culture and were traditionally passed on by word of mouth. As part of an oral tradition, they do not have authors *per se*. Instead, we identify the people or country that the story originated from, if known, with the understanding that there are as many variations of the tale as there are storytellers. The core literature texts for this program list that information, and I’ve provided it in the lesson plans for each tale.

In some cases, we can identify the *collector(s)* of the tale. For example, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Joseph Jacobs, Alexander Afanasyev, Charlotte Guest, Jane Wilde, Andrew Lang, and Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe are all well-known 19th-century collectors of European folktales.

We can identify the authors of certain versions of tales that have become especially well known. Charles Perrault, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, Hans Christian Andersen, and many others adapted traditional tales for literary audiences, and some of them wrote original *literary fairy tales* as well. Today many of these stories have entered the European literary canon while persisting in the oral tradition. The version of “Cinderella” that most of us know comes from Perrault’s literary adaptation, but folklorists have collected hundreds of variants of the story worldwide. Students will explore these stories in Level C.

Yet other tales have been ascribed to authors who are more likely legendary figures. Half of the stories in this year’s curriculum, including the one you will be reading today, are attributed to the ancient Greek fabulist Aesop (EE-sop). Ancient authors described him as a Thracian slave, born around 620 BCE, but modern researchers dispute his historicity. The fables attributed to him were not written down and collected until centuries after his supposed date of death, and stories were still being added to the corpus until the late European Middle Ages. Some of the stories attributed to him are recorded in the Sanskrit *Panchatantra*, and may in fact have

¹ Page numbers refer to the paperback editions of the story books and to the hardcover edition of the geography text.

originated in India. For all these reasons, it is perhaps best to speak of Aesop as a *legendary* compiler and teller of fables rather than as their author.

You will introduce each story you read by telling your child the tale's genre, origin, and title. "Today we are reading a [genre] from [place or people group]. The title is "[title]." Getting familiar with words like "title" and with simple definitions for different types of stories represent the first steps in your child's study of literature.

Introduce this week's story using words like these: **"Today we're going to read a story from ancient Greece. The title is "Belling the Cat." This story is a fable. Fables are short stories that teach us lessons about how to behave. The lesson is called the moral, and it comes at the end of the story."**

Read the story aloud to your child, or listen to the audio. If you're reading aloud, try using gestures or varying your voice to convey meaning. For example, when the story says "they lived in such constant fear of her claws," you can mime the mice shrinking back in fear, or you can make your hand into a claw shape to show that the cat is trying to catch the mice.

Vocabulary

immediately: right away

midst: middle

Comprehension Questions

Q: Why were the mice afraid of the cat?

A: The cat was their enemy. She tried to catch and eat them.

Q: What did the young mouse suggest?

A: That they put a bell around the cat's neck so they could hear her coming and run away.

Q: Why did the old mouse ask who would bell the cat?

A: Because it would be very dangerous. The cat might catch and eat the brave mouse who tried to do it.

Q: Can you think of a time when you had an idea that didn't work out?

Connections

Pet owners still put bells on their outdoor cats to protect wildlife. Other animals, like squirrels and birds, will hear the bell and run or fly away before the cat can catch them. [National Geographic Kids: Cats](#) is all about these mighty hunters.

Geography

Map Work and Reading

Locate **Greece** on your world map and mark it with a sticker (star, dot). Since fully half of the stories in this year's program are attributed to Aesop, you will only mark Greece this one time, so feel free to use a fancy sticker!

Tell your child that the fables you'll be studying this year are ancient Greek versions of folktales known around the world.

Point out **India** on the map as well, since it's likely that the fables attributed to Aesop may have come from there. You'll mark India on the map later.

Read the short country description of Greece at the bottom of page 122-123 in [DK Countries of the World: Our World in Pictures](#) (hereafter "the geography text") to your child and use the captions to explain the pictures. You will do this for each new country.

Memory Work

Show the child the world map and the globe, pointing out the difference between them: the map is a flat drawing, while the globe shows the Earth in space.

Read memory work in the question-and-answer format, as below, and ask your child to repeat the answer three times.

Q: What is a world map?

A: A world map is a flat drawing of the Earth.

Q: What is a globe?

A: The Earth is shaped like a sphere (a ball), and the globe shows what the Earth looks like from outer space.

LESSON A-2

“Thunder and Lightning”

How and Why Stories, p. 15

Ibibio People (Nigeria)

Literature

Teaching Notes

Introduce this week’s story as follows:

Today we’re going to read a story from the Ibibio people of Nigeria, in Africa, called “Thunder and Lightning.” This is a different kind of story from the one we read last week. Do you remember what kind of story that was?

A fable.

This story is a *pourquoi* (poor-KWAH) tale. *Pourquoi* is the French word for ‘why,’ and *pourquoi* tales explain why things are the way they are. Sometimes we call these stories ‘how and why stories’ or ‘origin stories,’ because they explain where something came from.

Many of these stories come from long ago. The people who first told them observed the world around them and then used their imaginations to come up with interesting ideas about why things are the way they are and how they got that way.

Different stories are told by different groups of people, and scholars and storytellers who collect stories always try to identify the group the story came from. This story comes from the Ibibio people.

Read the story aloud to your child, or listen to the audio. If you’re reading aloud, try using gestures or varying your voice to convey meaning. For example, when the story says, “Babies cried. Dogs howled,” you can imitate the sounds (“Waaah, waaah! Bow Wow!”). See also “Tips for Telling” on pages 16 and 17 of the book. Since the authors of *How and Why Stories* include tips for every story in their book, I won’t repeat them in the lesson plans, but do check them out. They will make your readings more memorable and enjoyable.

Vocabulary

bush: a thickly wooded wild area

Comprehension Questions

Q: What does this story say that Thunder and Lightning were?

A: A sheep and a ram.

Q: What happened when Lightning got angry?

A: He would start fires.

Q: How did Thunder try to stop Lightning from starting fires?

A: She yelled at him in a loud, booming voice.

Q: What did the king do when the people complained?

A: First he sent Thunder and Lightning away into the bush, and then he sent them to live in the sky.

Q: Did the king's plan work?

A: Not really.

Q: How do the Ibibio people explain thunderstorms with this story?

A: They say that Lightning the ram gets angry and causes fires on earth and that thunder is the sound of the mother sheep yelling at her son.

Connections

Read the scientific explanation of thunder and lightning on page 16 of *How and Why Stories* and explain it to your child in terms they will understand. For example, you might say, “**Science tells us that lightning is electricity gathered in clouds. It is much, much stronger than the electricity that we use in our homes. Thunder is the sound that happens when the air around a lightning bolt expands rapidly. Because light travels faster than sound, we see lightning before we hear thunder.**” For more information, and to learn how to calculate the distance to a lightning strike by counting, visit [Understanding Lightning: Thunder](#) from the National Weather Service.

Geography

Map Work and Reading

Locate and mark **Nigeria** on your world map and read pages 58-59 in the geography text.

Memory Work

Review the following memory work items:

Q: What is a world map?

A: A world map is a flat drawing of the Earth.

Q: What is a globe?

A: The Earth is shaped like a sphere (a ball), and the globe shows what the Earth looks like from outer space.

END OF SAMPLE

To purchase your complete copy of Exploring the World through Story: Level A, visit quidnampress.com.