

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: “The Cat and the Fox” by the Grimm Brothers

Ideas, Values: Animal, Judgement, Nature, Story, Wisdom

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Ask participants each to identify a favorite animal (bird, mouse, cat, etc.) and then make a list of those animals, as well as what each animal is especially good at. Discuss how different animals have different “gifts.”

1st Read:

Read the story aloud while family and/or friends listen. Check for any words that are unknown, to talk about them after you finish reading the story.

Vocabulary:

Discuss the unfamiliar words in the story. Explain what they mean, figure them out from the sentence, or look them up in a dictionary. Be sure to include the following words in your discussion: *bobbing and bowing, troublous, haughtily, whisker-wiper, parti-colored fool, pitiable starveling, mockingly, wiles, nimbly.*

2nd Read:

Have someone else read the story aloud while other participants (cat, fox, dogs, hunter) act out the story as it is being read. Discuss what the participants learned by playing their roles in the action.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
* Based on the story, who would make a better friend: the cat or the fox? Have younger kids share first if they feel comfortable, and go around by age. (Don’t share why until everyone has had a chance to answer.)
* What in the story made you choose that character? (anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
* What’s one word you would use to describe the fox at the beginning of the story?
* What’s one word you would use to describe the cat at the beginning of the story?
* Why does the fox pity the cat when they first meet? Why does the cat pity the fox at the end of the story?
* Are the cat and the fox more alike or more different? Why?
* Is it better to know one thing well (like the cat) or a hundred things (like the fox)? Why?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
  + Are you more like the fox or the cat? Describe a time when you did something that shows this.

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Look back at the lists you made in the “Big Ideas Chat.” Add yourself to the list as well as your other family members and friends.

* Writing Prompt:

Create a Bestiary that has in it a page for yourself, at least five animals, and at least four other people (from your Family Seminar Group). Draw a picture of each and list the things each animal or person is especially good at.

* Brainstorm, Getting ready to write:

Together, look back at the list of animals and their gifts from the “Big Ideas Chat.” Add to the list of animals and also make a list of the special gifts for each of the friends and family members in the group.

* Writing:

Plan your Bestiary to include as many animals and friends as you’d like to draw and describe. Create your books.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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Organization: National Paideia Center

\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

**“The Cat and the Fox”**

Brothers Grimm

A cat met a fox as she walked in the woods, and because she had heard that he was a clever and important gentleman, she spoke to him in a friendly way.

“Good day, dear Sir Fox,” said she, bobbing and bowing all the while. “How are you? How are things going, and how do you manage in these troublous times?”

The fox, who had a very high opinion of himself, looked haughtily at the cat from head to foot. For a long time he could not decide whether he should bother to answer her at all, but at last he said, “Oh, you poor whisker-wiper, you parti-colored fool, you pitiable starveling and miserable mouse-chaser—what’s come over you? *You* dare to ask *me* how I am getting on? What have you learned during your worthless nine lives? How many tricks and arts do you know?”

“Only one,” said the cat meekly.

“And pray, what may that be?” asked the fox.

“This only,” answered the cat. “When the dogs are after me, I can climb up into a tree and save myself.”

The fox laughed mockingly.

“Is that all?” he cried. “As for me, I am master of a hundred arts and wiles, and besides that, I have a whole bagful of tricks to help me through the dangers I encounter. And you, poor fool, have only one. How I pity you!”

Just then came a hunter with four dogs. The cat sprang nimbly up a tree, seated herself among the top-most branches where the foliage hid her well, and from there she shouted down, “Now open up your bag of tricks, Sir Fox! Open up your bag of tricks!”

But the dogs had already caught the fox and had a tight hold on him.

“Ei, ei, Sir Fox!” cried the cat. “You are welcome to your hundred arts and wiles; I am satisfied with my one. Had you been able to climb like me, you would now be as safe as I am!”

This translation from the original German is by artist, writer, and translator Wanda Gȧg and can be found in her *More Tales From Grimm* (1947).