



Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan



Text:

“Town Mouse and Country Mouse” by Aesop

Grade/Subject

Early ES / Social Studies



Ideas, Values:

Animal, Change, Culture, Dialectic, Opposition



Pre-Seminar Content



Launch Activity:

Set up a space on one side of the room to represent the “country,” with pictures and other artifacts to represent life inside a barn. Set up a space on the other side of the room to represent the “town,” with pictures and artifacts to represent life inside a fine house, in particular the dining room of such a house. Have children spend time in both spaces in the week(s) leading up to the seminar. Discuss how life would be different if you lived in the two places.



Inspectional Read:

Pass out the text with paragraph 8 left blank after “Yes, he replied.”, and have students number the paragraphs (1-8) on their copies of the text.¹ Discuss with them the definition of a fable and ask them what they would expect to learn from a story whose main characters are two mice. Read the text aloud slowly while students raise their hands when you come to a word or phrase they don’t understand.

¹ Note that the goal here is to have students interact with this text during the Pre-Seminar Content work WITHOUT reading the moral of the story as stated by the Country Mouse in paragraph 8.

Background Information:

Share as appropriate: Aesop (620-564 BC?) was an Ancient Greek storyteller credited with a number of fables now collectively known as Aesop's Fables. Although his existence remains uncertain, numerous tales credited to him were gathered across the centuries and in many languages in a storytelling tradition that continues to this day. Many of the tales are characterized by animals and objects that speak, solve problems, and generally have human characteristics.

Vocabulary:

Discuss any unfamiliar words (be sure to include *heartily*, *residence*, *refreshment*, *mastiffs*, and *scamper*) paragraph by paragraph. Also share a definition for *fable* as a short, fictional story, that features animals, mythical creatures, plants, objects, or forces of nature that are given human qualities, such as the ability to talk, and that illustrates or leads to an interpretation of a lesson or a "moral."

Analytical Read:

Divide the class up into three groups: town mice, country mice, and huge "mastiffs." Read the story again slowly and discuss with the students how they would act it out in the classroom by playing their roles—using the two places in the classroom (see *Launch Activity*) that have been designated as the "country" and the "town." For example, have the country mice start out in the barn and the city mice come from the city to visit them. Have the mastiffs hiding in the town house, waiting to charge into the dining room, and so on...

Read the story aloud while each of the three groups practice saying their lines from paragraphs 2-8 of the text. (Note that the text still ends with "Yes, he replied." in paragraph 8.)

And then read the story aloud again while the children act out their roles in the story—and practice saying their lines.



Pre-Seminar Process

 Define and state purpose for Paideia Seminar.

✧ Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.

✧ Have participants set a Personal Goal.

✧ Agree on a Group Goal.

Seminar Questions

Opening (Identify main ideas from the text.):

- ❖ What do you think is the moral or lesson of this story? (round-robin response)
- ❖ What in the story makes you think that is the lesson? (spontaneous discussion)

Core (Analyze textual details.):

- ❖ Why do you think the town mouse turns “up his long nose at [the] country fare”?
- ❖ What do you think the town mouse values most?
- ❖ Does the country mouse like the “fine feast” in the “grand dining room”? Why or why not?
- ❖ When the country mouse says that he doesn’t “like that music at my dinner,” what does he mean?
- ❖ Share the last sentence of the story (“Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear.”) What do you think the country mouse means by this? Is this the moral of the story?

Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas.):

- ❖ Which are you more like: the town mouse or the country mouse? When have you acted like one or the other?

Post-Seminar Process

- ★ Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal participation goal.
- ★ Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of seminar.
- ★ Note reminders for next seminar.



Post-Seminar Content

- ★ *Transition to Writing:*

Revisit the closing question: Which are you more like--the town mouse or the country mouse? Have students talk in pairs about which life is more attractive to them.

- ★ *Writing Task:*

After reading (or listening to) and discussing the "Town Mouse and the Country Mouse," write several sentences in which you say which of the two mice you would rather be and why. Support your opinion with evidence from the text. (Opinion/Compare-Contrast)

(LDC Task#: 4)

- ★ *Brainstorm:*

Have the two groups (Town Mice and Country Mice) sit together and list all the reasons why they like one life more than the other. If need be, list the primary reasons on the (interactive) white board to help scaffold student writing.

Structure the Writing:

Distribute a template with appropriate sentence starters and (if necessary) point out the connection between the sentence starters and the words and phrases on the board (from the *Brainstorm* phase).

First Draft:

Have students use the template to fill in the reasons why they would rather be one type of mouse over the other type.

Collaborative Revision:

Have students take turns reading their template sentences to each other (with adult assistance as necessary). When students come up with other ideas related to their preference, help them add those ideas to their writing.

Edit:

After an adult edits the student papers, have the students copy them over with corrections to produce a final draft that is ready for “publication.”

Publish:

Invite student families to a special dramatic presentation in which the students act out “Town Mouse and Country Mouse” while you read it aloud as narrator. Let the students play the roles that they chose during the writing process (except for two or more “mastiffs,” played by adults or student volunteers).

Consider asking families to contribute refreshments in the form of “beans and bacon” for the country and “juice and cakes” for the town. Then invite the families to listen while their children read their writing—which is displayed in the classroom on the two sides designated “country” and “town.”

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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“Town Mouse and Country Mouse”

Aesop

Now you must know that a town mouse once upon a time went on a visit to his cousin in the country. He was rough and ready, this cousin, but he loved his town friend and made him heartily welcome. Beans and bacon, cheese and bread, were all he had to offer, but he offered them freely. The town mouse rather turned up his long nose at this country fare, and said, "I cannot understand, cousin, how you can put up with such poor food as this, but of course you cannot expect anything better in the country; come you with me and I will show you how to live. When you have been in town a week you will wonder how you could ever have stood a country life." No sooner said than done: The two mice set off for the town and arrived at the town mouse's residence late at night.

"You will want some refreshment after our long journey," said the polite town mouse, and took his friend into the grand dining room. There they found the remains of a fine feast, and soon the two mice were eating up jellies and cakes and all that was nice. Suddenly they heard growling and barking.

"What is that?" said the country mouse.

"It is only the dogs of the house," answered the other.

"Only," said the country mouse, "I do not like that music at my dinner!" Just at that moment the door flew open; in came two huge mastiffs; and the two mice had to scamper down and run off.

"Good-bye, cousin," said the country mouse.

"What! Going so soon?" said the other.

"Yes," he replied. "Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear."

(Source - Joseph Jacobs, *The Fables of Aesop* (London and New York: Macmillan and Company, 1894), no. 7, pp. 15-17.)