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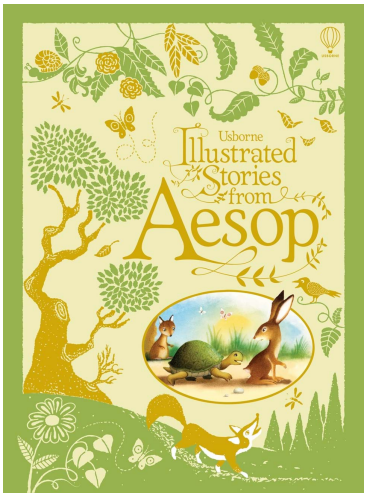
Susanna Davidson , Giuliano Ferri

Usborne Illustrated Stories from Aesop

United States (2013)

TAGS: Aesop Aesop's Fables Fable Gods Jupiter Laurel Wreath Zeus



Courtesy of Usborne Publishing Ltd.

General information	
Title of the work	Usborne Illustrated Stories from Aesop
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States; United Kingdom; other English-speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Susanna Davidson. *Usborne Illustrated Stories from Aesop.* Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2013, 272 pp.
ISBN	9781409598923
Genre	Fables, Myths, Picture books, Short stories
Target Audience	Children (c. 4–10)
Author of the Entry	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Dorota Mackenzie, University of Warsaw, dorota.mackenzie@gmail.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators

Susanna Davidson (Author)

Susanna Davidson is a British author of over fifty fiction and non-fiction books for children, written mostly for Usborne Publishing. Her publications include retellings of traditional myths and fairy tales, such as *Cinderella* (Usborne), *Rapunzel* (Usborne), *The Story of Pegasus* (Usborne), *Baba Yaga the Flying Witch*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* (Usborne). Susanna Davidson also writes children's books on religion and history, including *The Story of Hannukah* (Usborne), *The Holocaust* (Usborne), and *Elizabeth I* (Usborne), as well as other non-fiction titles such as *Snails* (Usborne), *Penguins* (Usborne), and *Under the Ground* (Usborne). Under the name "Zanna Davidson", she writes modern children's fiction, including the *Fairy Ponies* and *Fairy Unicorns* series.

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk

Giuliano Ferri (Illustrator)

Giuliano Ferri is an Italian freelance illustrator. He graduated from the Art Institute of Urbino, Italy, where he specialised in animation. Ferri is best known for his children's illustrations. He also works with young people in the community using animation, drama, and comic theatre to help those with disabilities.

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

Fables attributed to Aesop were collated in antiquity by Demetrius of Phaleron, c. 300 BCE (Diogenes Laertius, 5.80), and passed on through various retellings in antiquity and the medieval, early modern, and modern periods. This publication features retellings of many of the available Aesop's Fables, divided into categories based on themes: Pride, Trickery, Greed, Quarrels, Friendship, Cunning, and Retorts. This arrangement encourages the reader to be conscious of the messages within the stories, particularly their moral themes. Some of these classifications are a little more forced than others (*The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse* is not 'about' friendship in any meaningful sense, for example, rather than simply being a story that features friends), but they all essentially make sense. The titles included are:

Pride:

- *The Fox and the Crow*
- *The Peacock and the Crane*
- *The Hare and the Tortoise*
- *The Eagle, the Jackdaw and the Shepherd*
- *The Fox and the Grapes*
- *King of the Birds*

Trickery:

- *The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*
- *The Cat and the Hens*
- *The Lion and the Fox*
- *The Cat and the Mice*
- *The Wolf and the Heron*

Greed:

- *The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs*
- *The Fox in the Tree*
- *The Dog and the Bone*

Quarrels:

- *The Sun and the Wind*
- *The Lion and the Statue*

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- *The Fox and the Stork*
- *The Lion and the Wild Boar*

Friendship:

- *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*
- *The Ant and the Dove*
- *The Explorers and the Bear*
- *The Lion and the Mouse*

Cunning:

- *The Crow and the Jug*
- *The Fox and the Billy Goat*
- *Belling the Cat*
- *The Dog on the Roof*

Retorts:

- *The Piglet and the Sheep*
- *The Lioness and the Vixen*
- *The Fox and the Rooster*
- *The Fir Tree and the Bramble*
- *The Crab and its Mother*

Comeuppance:

- *The Tortoise and the Eagle*
- *The Ant and the Grasshopper*
- *The Boy who Cried Wolf*
- *Zeus and the Tortoise*

About the stories.

The stories all conclude with an explicitly stated moral (captioned 'Moral'); this follows the medieval tradition of applying moral epilogues to the fables.

Analysis

Each story in this collection features a title illustration and one full page illustration; most contain further small illustrations, although there are some double-pages without any illustration. The illustrations situate the stories in a variety of locations and time-periods, although

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most appear to be set in Northern Europe, as indicated by the extensive use of rich green grassy environments and traditional Northern European architecture. Atypically, in *The Lion and the Fox*, reference to antelope, warthog, buffalo, zebra, and wildebeest place the story in Africa, while *The Lion and the Wild Boar* is also situated in Africa through the depiction of an elephant, giraffe, rhino, antelope, and a savannah landscape. This is a change from the ancient tradition, which would be referring to the European lion, with the story situated in southern Europe; the change makes the story more comprehensible to a modern readership living in an age in which the European lion is largely extinct and African lions more familiar. The emphasis on Northern Europe creates the impression that these stories originated in or are drawn from Northern Europe. This diminishes the sense of a specifically Greek origin, presumably targeting a Northern European market of readers who see their own environment reflected in the stories, rather than being transported by the stories to a different country. The inclusion of the African setting adds diversity and the implication that the stories have resonance beyond Europe, although this element is limited by its rarity.

Items such as electric lamps place some of the stories in the twenty to twenty-first centuries, while others depict figures in medieval or Victorian clothing. The main indication of antiquity comes from the figure of Zeus, who appears in two of the stories, *King of the Birds* and *Zeus and the Tortoise*. In both he is referred to as 'Zeus' (rather than e.g. Jupiter). He is depicted as an older white man with white hair and beard, and with accessories that indicate antiquity: laurel wreath, gold bracelets, and his symbol, the lightning bolt (p. 46). In both images he is dressed in white robes. The other indicator of antiquity in the book is a two-page *About the stories* at the end. This section is aimed at young readers (rather than their parents). It informs the reader that these stories are from 'long, long ago'. It explains that an ancient Greek called Aesop 'may' have written them, but that it was so long ago no-one knows. It asserts that 'fables' means stories with a moral lesson at the end; although that is not entirely accurate, it is a practical introductory definition which, like the sub-sections, invites the reader to consider the message of the story. Finally, readers are invited to try and invent a fable, as students of ancient Greece did.

Aesop Aesop's Fables Fable Gods Jupiter Laurel Wreath Zeus

Classical, Mythological,

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Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Death Friendship Gaining understanding Justice Learning Life Morality Small town life

Further Reading

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Addenda

Entry based on 2nd edition, pub. London, 2015.

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