YEAR 7
ENGLISH
READING TEXTS
LESSON 7: MYTHS AND FABLES
# 1. OUTCOMES FOR THIS LESSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EN 4-1A</strong> responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure</td>
<td>This outcome requires an understanding that texts serve many different purposes, and that we can read them in a variety of ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EN 4-2A</strong> effectively uses a widening range of processes, skills, strategies and knowledge for responding to and composing texts in different media and technologies</td>
<td>This outcome requires that you understand the difference between different media. The way you discuss a film will be different to the way you discuss a news article. Additionally, you will be required to write in a variety of forms, from articles to essays to creative pieces.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EN 4-5C</strong> thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information, ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts</td>
<td>This outcome requires you to use the correct language when writing. This is dependent on what you’re being asked to write. For example, you should not use informal or colloquial language in an essay format.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EN 4-6C</strong> identifies and explains connections between and among texts</td>
<td>This outcome requires you to read the information you are given in a variety of ways. For example, you might be required to respond to an image by writing a story using it as a basis. Alternatively you might be asked to study the specific elements of the picture.</td>
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</table>
2. **GRAMMAR: ACTIVE AND PASSIVE**

Before we begin with fables, it is necessary to review an important technique to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of your writing. Many students find it difficult to express their ideas clearly because they use sentence structures which are unnecessarily complex or use the wrong words to convey their meaning. One of the best ways of addressing this problem is to be aware of the difference between *active* and *passive* sentence constructions.

**Active and Passive: Grammar Terms**

Let's first review some important grammatical terminology.

1. Match the grammatical terms on the left with their definitions on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Noun, Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A word which describes an action.</td>
<td>A person, place, idea or thing.</td>
<td>The person, place idea or thing being acted on</td>
<td>A word which describes a person, place, idea or thing</td>
<td>The action in the sentence</td>
<td>The person, place, idea or thing doing the action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that some terms can apply to the same word. For example,

Fred moved away quickly from the angry bull.
Examine these three sentences and identify which terms describe the appropriate part of the sentence.

a) The tortoise accepted the challenge.

b) The hare yawned sleepily as the meek tortoise trudged slowly off.

c) The hare decided to have a quick nap.

In the first example above, “The tortoise accepted the challenge” we noted that the tortoise is the AGENT of the sentence because it is the tortoise that is doing the action (i.e. accepting the challenge). Now look at this sentence and apply the correct grammatical terms to it:

The challenge was accepted.

The object is now at the head of the sentence and the agent has disappeared! We do not know who is accepting the challenge; the reader must now guess on the basis of the context. So, in sum:

It is possible to add the AGENT back into the PASSIVE sentence using ‘by’. So, we could say ‘The challenge was accepted by the tortoise’ which means the same as ‘The tortoise accepted the challenge’. Which sentence uses fewer words? Which is clearer? Here’s the point:

USE THE ACTIVE VOICE IN YOUR SENTENCES WHENEVER POSSIBLE!
If you are not sure how to start a sentence, remember that a normal sentence in the active voice follows this pattern:

Agent → Verb → Object

The tortoise accepted the challenge

Ask yourself: who or what is doing the action in my sentence? Then choose an appropriate verb to follow.

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

With your partner, change the following sentences taken from today’s extracts from the **PASSIVE** to the **ACTIVE VOICE**.

1. The boy was ordered to get off the donkey

2. The relative strength of men and lions in general was being discussed by a man and a lion.

3. It was contended by the man that he and his fellows were stronger.
3. STORYTELLING, MYTH AND FABLES

Storytelling is a central aspect of the human experience. Predating the written word itself, in ancient times stories were orally passed down from generation to generation. As time has passed, the ways in which we tell stories have become increasingly complex – written language allowed societies to preserve stories and make greater use of form and structure. Printing presses, plays and music performances again have increased the possibilities for storytelling. Modern technology gives us access to any story, in any form (such as films, television shows, songs, books, comics etc.), that we could possibly want. However, all stories share some base similarities that go back to the oral tradition.

Myths and Fables

Myths and fables are a universal aspect of human societies. Every society in the world has forms of creation myth and fable that reinforce the values of that society. Ancient Greece’s myth system revolved around a pantheon of Gods that constantly meddled in human affairs. The stories told of ‘Gods’ and ‘Heroes’ not only entertained the people, but also served as life lessons and morals to live by. One of the most enduring storytellers of the Greek period is Aesop, who lived in the 6th Century BC. Aesop’s specialty was a particular type of story known as the fable.

The Characteristics of Fables

- Conciseness - A fable needs to be concise. As a simple moral tale, its short length helps it get its points across.

- ANTHROPOMORPHISM - Animals or inanimate objects in the story are given human thoughts and actions.

- Mythological creatures or characters

- Teaches a moral lesson, or a maxim - A MAXIM is short statement of something which is supposed to be universally true, and is used as a guide to making choices in life.
Consider the following fables by Aesop and answer the questions that follow each extract.

**Aesop, The Tortoise and the Hare**

Once upon a time there was a hare who, boasting how he could run faster than anyone else, was forever teasing tortoise for its slowness. Then one day, the irate tortoise answered back: “Who do you think you are? There’s no denying you’re swift, but even you can be beaten!” The hare squealed with laughter.

“Beaten in a race? By whom? Not you, surely! I bet there’s nobody in the world that can win against me, I’m so speedy. Now, why don’t you try?”

Annoyed by such bragging, the tortoise accepted the challenge. A course was planned, and the next day at dawn they stood at the starting line. The hare yawned sleepily as the meek tortoise trudged slowly off. When the hare saw how painfully slow his rival was, he decided, half asleep on his feet, to have a quick nap. “Take your time!” he said. “I’ll have forty winks and catch up with you in a minute.”

The hare woke with a start from a fitful sleep and gazed round, looking for the tortoise. But the creature was only a short distance away, having barely covered a third of the course. Breathing a sigh of relief, the hare decided he might as well have breakfast too, and off he went to munch some cabbages he had noticed in a nearby field. But the heavy meal and the hot sun made his eyelids droop. With a careless glance at the tortoise, now halfway along the course, he decided to have another snooze before flashing past the winning post. And smiling at the thought of the look on the tortoise’s face when it saw the hare speed by, he fell fast asleep and was soon snoring happily. The sun started to sink below the horizon, and the tortoise, who had been plodding towards the winning post since morning, was scarcely a yard from the finish. At that very point, the hare woke with a jolt. He could see the tortoise a speck in the distance and away he dashed. He leapt and bounded at a great rate, his tongue lolling, and gasping for breath. Just a little more and he’d be first at the finish. But the hare’s last leap was just too late, for the tortoise had beaten him to the winning post. Poor hare! Tired and in disgrace, he slumped down beside the tortoise who was silently smiling at him.

“Slowly does it every time!” he said.
Consider the following moral lessons to be drawn from the fable:

- Don’t underestimate others who may appear to be less capable
- Complacency is the enemy of progress
- Talent amounts to nothing without hard work

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

1. How does Aesop illustrate these morals? Provide examples from the text.
A Man and a Lion were discussing the relative strength of men and lions in general. The Man contended that he and his fellows were stronger than lions by reason of their greater intelligence. “Come now with me,” he cried, “and I will soon prove that I am right.” So he took him into the public gardens and showed him a statue of Hercules overcoming the Lion and tearing his mouth in two. “That is all very well,” said the Lion, “but proves nothing, for it was a man who made the statue”.

2. What do you think the **MAXIM** of the story is?

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3. How is this idea represented in the story?

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Aesop, The Man, The Boy and the Donkey

A man and his son were once going with their Donkey to market. As they were walking along by its side a countryman passed them and said: “You fools, what is a Donkey for but to ride upon? So the Man put the Boy on the Donkey and they went on their way. But soon they passed a group of men, one of whom said: “See that lazy youngster, he lets his father walk while he rides.” So the Man ordered his Boy to get off, and got on himself. But they hadn’t gone far when they passed two women, one of whom said to the other: “Shame on that lazy lout to let his poor little son trudge along.” Well, the Man didn’t know what to do, but at last he took his Boy up before him on the Donkey. By this time they had come to the town, and the passers-by began to jeer and point at them. The Man stopped and asked what they were scoffing at. The men said: “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself for overloading that poor Donkey of yours—you and your hulking son?” The Man and Boy got off and tried to think what to do. They thought and they thought, till at last they cut down a pole, tied the Donkey’s feet to it, and raised the pole and the Donkey to their shoulders. They went along amid the laughter of all who met them till they came to Market Bridge, when the Donkey, getting one of his feet loose, kicked out and caused the Boy to drop his end of the pole. In the struggle the Donkey fell over the bridge, and his fore-feet being tied together he was drowned. “That will teach you,” said an old man who had followed them.

4. What do you think the MAXIM of the story is?
5. How is this idea represented in the story?

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Aesop, The Ant and the Grasshopper

In a field one summer’s day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart’s content. An Ant passed by, bearing along with great toil an ear of corn he was taking to the nest. “Why not come and chat with me,” said the Grasshopper, “instead of toiling and moiling in that way?” “I am helping to lay up food for the winter,” said the Ant, “and recommend you to do the same.” “Why bother about winter?” said the Grasshopper; “we have got plenty of food at present.” But the Ant went on its way and continued its toil. When the winter came the Grasshopper had no food, and found itself dying of hunger, while it saw the ants distributing every day corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew.
6. What do the characters in the fables you have read have in common?

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GROUP WORK

Brainstorm ideas for a fable relevant to your own context in the space below – remember the characteristics of fables when you’re writing down ideas! Your ideas must be short, simple and carry a moral.
## 4. LESSON SEVEN HOMEWORK

### YEAR 7 CRITICAL WRITING RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Band 5-6 13-15 marks</th>
<th>Band 4-5 10-12 marks</th>
<th>Band 3-4 6-9 marks</th>
<th>Band 1-2 1-5 marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answering the question</strong></td>
<td>5 Has weaved the question into the essay, consistently referring back to it.</td>
<td>4 Has clearly considered the question but tended to lose focus at times.</td>
<td>3 Has attempted to answer the question. May have provided a summary of everything they know on the subject.</td>
<td>1 Paid no attention to the question or to related topics. Discussion is irrelevant to the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Originality</strong></td>
<td>4 Interesting and original ideas which are well articulated.</td>
<td>3 Original thinking is there but the explanation of the ideas may not be clear.</td>
<td>2 Attempt at original thinking but ideas may be underdeveloped or rely heavily on classwork.</td>
<td>1 No evidence of original thinking and has lifted phrases from classroom discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of language</strong></td>
<td>3 Consistently good sentence structure, word choices, with only minor grammatical or spelling errors.</td>
<td>2 Sentences are mostly well-formed, with occasional grammatical slips, spelling mistakes and poor word choices.</td>
<td>1 Some sentences were well-formed and show a developing grasp on grammar, spelling and appropriate word choice.</td>
<td>0 Poor grammar, sentence structure, spelling and word choices throughout the response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>3 A strong structure which is maintained throughout the response. Shows understanding of paragraph structure.</td>
<td>2 A good attempt to structure with an introduction, body and conclusion, there may be tangents in any of these.</td>
<td>1 Some attempt to structure.</td>
<td>0 No structure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING PASSIVES CORRECTLY

When is it appropriate to use the passive voice? There are three possible situations:

1. When you do not know who or what the agent is in the sentence. For example, if you walked out of the building and saw a person lying dead on the ground with nobody else around you might say: ‘A man has been killed’!

2. When it is obvious who the agent is. For example, imagine police enter the classroom and put hand cuffs on your teacher. You might say ‘Our teacher has been arrested’! Only the police can arrest someone so it is not necessary to say ‘The police have arrested our teacher!’

3. When the object is much more important than the agent in the sentence. For example, in the fable of ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’, we read that ‘a course was planned’ for the two animals to race. It is not important in the story who came up with the race.

In every other situation, it is almost always better to use the ACTIVE VOICE. While some students think that relying on passives increases the sophistication of their writing style, it is usually the reverse case. Your ideas should be complex; your sentences should be clear!

PRACTICE

In the following exercise there are nine passive sentences which are underlined. Consider which ones use the passive voice appropriately and which do not. If a sentence does not use the passive voice correctly, change it to the ACTIVE VOICE. You are free to add any agent you feel is appropriate to the sentence. For example:

The fridge is being repaired. You can’t use it.

Answer: this passive sentence is perfectly fine because the important piece of information is that the fridge is not functioning, not that a particular repairman is fixing the fridge.
The lotto was won by Helen. Hooray!

Answer: this sentence needs to be changed into the active voice, because the important information in the sentence is that Helen is the particular person who won the lotto. So you would write: ‘Helen won the lotto’.

It has been thought that Greek myths have had an important influence on Western literature.

Answer: this passive sentence is awkward and it is unclear who is doing the thinking. A better alternative would be: ‘Scholars believe/think that Greek myths have had an important influence on Western literature’.

EXERCISES:

1. It is believed by the critic David Stratton that the Hercules series constitutes high quality entertainment.

   _____________________________________________

2. Hercules is an impressive character. A series of dangerous tasks are accomplished by him.

   _____________________________________________

3. A metaphor of a lion consuming its prey is used to emphasise Hercules’ superhuman strength.

   _____________________________________________
4. The tales of Hercules’ legendary feats have been told many times over.

5. Many insights into Hercules and Xena are gained in this scene.

6. When a Greek slave is found brutally murdered, Hercules immediately takes up the case.

7. When Hercules arrived at the Palace of the Gods on Mount Olympus, he was disarmed and led into Zeus’ presence.

8. It has been argued by scholars that Hercules was the most significant of the Greek heroes.

9. From this example, it can be seen that Hercules had a troubled relationship with his wife, Deianera.