LESSON 1

Understanding Allegory

Pre-lesson Planning:
- Make sure you have a copy of ‘The Tortoise and The Hare’, and ‘The Fox and the Crow’ (they have both been included).
- Print and photocopy all accompanying worksheets for students.

Lesson Plan:

READ the fable, The Tortoise and The Hare to students.

DISCUSS the meaning of this fable.

Use the following questions as a guide:
- Who/what does the hare represent? And the tortoise?
- Is this just a story for children?
- What is the ‘moral’ of the story?
- Why tell a story like this? Why not just explain the ‘moral’ to people?
- Why use animals?

EXPLAIN that the story is an ALLEGORY.

EXPLAIN that many allegories use animals to represent human characters, vices, types of people or qualities of human nature.

HAND OUT the worksheet The Allegorical Meaning of Animals and instruct students to work through it in pairs, filling it in as comprehensively as possible.

FEEDBACK and discuss what the students have decided for the animals. Some might have slightly different answers – this doesn’t matter, as long as they all identify that there are human qualities often ascribed to animals (dog – loyalty, lion – bravery, owl – wisdom etc.).

READ the fable, The Fox and the Crow to students BUT don’t read the final line – get the students to see if they can guess what the piece of advice was! Then discuss: If it is an Allegory, what is the literal meaning, and what is the symbolic meaning?

HAND OUT the worksheet Unpacking Fables, and instruct students to work on this individually – this should help cement their understanding of the double meanings in allegorical stories.

Allegory is a form of extended metaphor, in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, are equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas, such as charity, greed, or envy. Thus an allegory is a story with two meanings; a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning.

Allegory is a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one: Pilgrim’s Progress is an allegory of the spiritual journey.

• a symbol.

allegory |ˈaləɡərē|
noun (pl. allegories) A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one: Pilgrim’s Progress is an allegory of the spiritual journey.

Learners should copy this definition into their books.

In essence, there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers here. Students may have differing opinions on the moral of the story; that’s fine. Really, you just want to stimulate discussion and get students thinking about how fables are allegorical.
Aesop’s Fables

These stories accompany Lesson 1

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.

The Fox and The Crow

A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree.

“That's for me, as I am a Fox,” said Master Reynard, and he walked up to the foot of the tree.

“Good day, Mistress Crow,” he cried. “How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds.”

The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox.

“That will do,” said he. “That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future: (pause reading here for learners to guess the advice!) “Do not trust flatterers.”
The Allegorical Meaning of Animals

See if you can determine the commonly accepted allegorical meanings of the following animals. Fill in the table as comprehensively as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Characteristic/Quality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
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<td>Fox</td>
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<td>Bull</td>
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<td>Crow</td>
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<td>Dog</td>
<td>![Dog Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eagle</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Can you think of any others?

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Created by Stacey Lloyd
1 - The Wolf & Lamb

Once upon a time a Wolf was lapping at a spring on a hillside, when, looking up, what should he see but a Lamb just beginning to drink a little lower down.

"There’s my supper," thought he, "if only I can find some excuse to seize it." Then he called out to the Lamb, "How dare you muddle the water from which I am drinking?"

"Nay, master, nay," said Lambikin; "if the water be muddy up there, I cannot be the cause of it, for it runs down from you to me."

"Well, then," said the Wolf, "why did you call me bad names this time last year?"

"That cannot be," said the Lamb; "I am only six months old."

"I don't care," snarled the Wolf; "if it was not you it was your father;" and with that he rushed upon the poor little Lamb and ate her all up. But before she died she gasped out: "Any excuse will serve a tyrant."

What/who does the lamb represent?

Rewrite the moral in your own words.

How can this moral be helpful to society today?

2 - The Dog & His Reflection

A Dog, to whom the butcher had thrown a bone, was hurrying home with his prize as fast as he could go. As he crossed a narrow footbridge, he happened to look down and saw himself reflected in the quiet water as if in a mirror. But the greedy Dog thought he saw a real Dog carrying a bone much bigger than his own.

If he had stopped to think he would have known better. But instead of thinking, he dropped his bone and sprang at the Dog in the river, only to find himself swimming for dear life to reach the shore. At last he managed to scramble out, and as he stood sadly thinking about the good bone he had lost, he realized what a stupid Dog he had been.

What is the moral of this story?

Describe a situation in society today in which you might see the same sort of reaction as the Dog.

3 - The Fox & Grapes

A Fox one day spied a beautiful bunch of ripe grapes hanging from a vine trained along the branches of a tree. The grapes seemed ready to burst with juice and the Fox's mouth watered as he gazed longingly at them. The bunch hung from a high branch, and the Fox had to jump for it. The first time he jumped he missed it by a long way. So he walked off a short distance and took a running leap at it, only to fall short once more. Again and again he tried, but in vain.

Now he sat down and looked at the grapes in disgust.

"What a fool I am," he said. "Here I am wearing myself out to get a bunch of sour grapes that are not worth gaping for." And off he walked very, very scornfully.

What is the moral of this story?

Describe a situation in society today in which you might see the same sort of reaction as the Fox.