

**Australian Progymnasmata**  
**(Fables)**  
**Student Edition**

A workbook for the development of  
excellent reading, writing & speaking

I. Fable

**Elizabeth Matheson**

© Via Classica 2023

**Contents**

<b>Lesson One – The Frogs and the Ox.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lesson Two – The Buffoon and the Countryman.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Lesson Three – The Ants and the Grasshopper.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Lesson Four – The Ant and the Dove.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Lesson Five – The Mischievous Dog.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Lesson Six – The Miser and His Gold.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Lesson Seven – The Animal in the Moon.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Lesson Eight – The Fox and the Grapes.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Lesson Nine – The Hare and the Tortoise.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Lesson Ten – The Wolf and the Lamb.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Lesson Eleven – The Bee and Jupiter.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Lesson Twelve – Your own fable.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Fables Assessment Rubric.....</b>	<b>62</b>

Via Classica Sample Pages

# Lesson Two – The Buffoon and the Countryman

## Time to prepare

Key Terms	
fair	an exhibition usually with accompanying entertainment and amusements
buffoon	a ridiculous but amusing person; a clown
imitating	to follow as a pattern, model, or example
concealed	kept out of sight or hidden from view
hideously	offensive to the senses

### Creating fable amplifications

In our first lesson, you completed simple exercises using synonyms (words that have a similar meaning to another word). You wrote a varied sentence using different synonyms, and presented your version of the fable (including your varied sentence) orally. In this lesson, you will write an amplification of the whole fable. An amplification is when you add information to the fable. In this lesson, you will use synonyms and add dialogue as part of the amplification.

Dialogue is when direct speech is used between two or more characters. When writing dialogue for characters in a fable, it is important that it is in keeping with the character as well as the setting. This means an elephant wouldn't ask for a piece of cheese, but a mouse might. Below is an example of a fable with dialogue. When dialogue is used, it appears between quotation marks. There are only two things that go in between the quotation marks – what a character says out loud (direct speech) and the dialogue punctuation (e.g. comma, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark).

Outside of the quotation, the speaker of the dialogue must be identified. The words we use to identify which character is speaking often helps the reader understand the tone of the character's dialogue. In 'The Crab and its Mother' (below), we have two examples of dialogue. It is good to note the variety used in the verb indicating the speech, 'said' and 'replied' - you should also try to make appropriate use of synonyms for the word said. When writing dialogue, punctuation of the dialogue goes inside the quotation marks and punctuation for the identification of the speaker goes outside the quotation marks.

### The Crab and its Mother

A Crab said to her son, "Why do you walk so one-sided, my child? It is far more becoming to go straight forward."

The young Crab replied: "Quite true, dear Mother; and if you will show me the straight way, I will promise to walk in it."

The Mother tried in vain, and submitted without complaint to the reproof of her child.

### Memorising poetry

Memorising poetry is a lost art in many schools – particularly poetry that speaks universal truths. Australian students should be able to recite classic Australian poetry – which forms the backbone of our cultural inheritance. Memorising poetry also teaches children to articulate English words, and heightens their feel for the intricacies and complexities of the English language.

Use the following steps to memorise poetry:

1. Read through the poem carefully, slowly, and out loud. Look for unfamiliar words and check the definition in the dictionary.

2. Copy the poem in your own handwriting – writing on every other line. Try to keep the lines and stanzas on your paper the same as in the original poem.
3. Read the poem out loud again.
4. Using an index card or a piece of paper, cover up all of the poem except the first line. Say that line over to yourself three times. Now, gaze off into space for a moment and try to say the line from memory.
5. Repeat this with the rest of the lines in the stanza, saying the lines you have already worked on too.
6. Once you have the stanza memorisation, go to the next one, again working line by line.
7. Put those two stanzas together, and then move on. Repeat this until you reach the end of the poem.

A stanza is an arrangement of a certain number of lines, usually four or more, sometimes having a fixed length, meter, or rhyme scheme, forming a division of a poem.

The first poem that you will memorise is ‘Said Hanrahan’ by Australian poet John O’Brien. John O’Brien was the pen name for writer and poet Fr. Patrick Joseph Hartigan. His first collection, ‘*Around the Boree Log and Other Verses*’, appeared in 1921 and combined the earthy humour of the Australian Bush with the piety of his ordained faith. This poem will be learnt and recited over several lessons.

1. **Start memorising ‘Said Hanrahan’ by John O’Brien (it is printed in the ‘Time to present’ section of this lesson). Take time at the end of each section of the lesson to memorise another stanza, as you should have memorised stanzas 1-7 by the end of this lesson.**

### Time to revise

2. **What is dialogue?**

---

3. **What is a synonym?**

---

4. **Identify five synonyms for the word ‘said’.**

---

5. **How do we identify dialogue in a piece of writing?**

---

6. **What two elements go inside the quotation marks?**

---

### Time to read

7. **Read the following fable, ‘The Buffoon and the Countryman’:**

At a country fair, there was a Buffoon who made all the people laugh by imitating the cries of various animals. He finished off by squeaking so like a pig that the spectators thought that he had a porker concealed about him.

But a Countryman who stood by said: “Call that a pig’s squeak! Nothing like it. You give me till tomorrow and I will show you what it’s like.”

The audience laughed, but next day, sure enough, the Countryman appeared on the stage, and putting his head down squealed so hideously that the spectators hissed and threw stones at him to make him stop.

“You fools!” he cried, “see what you have been hissing,” and held up a little pig whose ear he had been pinching to make him utter the squeals.

## Time to analyse

8. Circle any words or phrases that you do not understand.
9. Use a question mark for any questions you have about the story. Be sure to note your question down in the margin.
10. Use an exclamation mark for key changes in the story or for things that took you by surprise. Be sure to note in the margin the key change or why it is surprising.
11. Draw an arrow when you make a connection to something inside the text, or to an idea outside the text.

<p><b>The Buffoon and the Countryman</b></p> <p>At a country fair, there was a Buffoon who made all the people laugh by imitating the cries of various animals. He finished off by squeaking so like a pig that the spectators thought that he had a porker concealed about him.</p> <p>But a Countryman who stood by said: "Call that a pig's squeak! Nothing like it. You give me till tomorrow and I will show you what it's like."</p> <p>The audience laughed, but next day, sure enough, the Countryman appeared on the stage, and putting his head down squealed so hideously that the spectators hissed and threw stones at him to make him stop.</p> <p>"You fools!" he cried, "see what you have been hissing," and held up a little pig whose ear he had been pinching to make him utter the squeals.</p>	
--	--

## Time to discuss

Having analysed the fable, you are now ready to discuss it through the following questions:

12. **What is a buffoon? Does the Buffoon display this in the fable?**

---

13. **Why would the spectators support the Buffoon rather than the Countryman?**

---

---

14. **When on stage, did the Buffoon or the Countryman have a sound closer to that of a pig?**

---

---

15. **What is the moral of 'The Buffoon and the Countryman'?**

---

## Time to compose

16. Copy the following text on the lines below.

**Moral: Men often applaud an imitation and hiss the real thing.**

---

17. Write an outline of 'The Buffoon and the Countryman' on the lines below.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
i. \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
i. \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
i. \_\_\_\_\_

18. Identify three synonyms for the following words from 'The Buffoon and the Countryman'.

Word	Synonyms
fair	
laugh	
hiss	
fools	
squeak	

When writing a variation of a sentence, you must keep the meaning of the original sentence. However, you can change the order of events and the words used (as in the example below).

Original Sentence: At a country fair, there was a Buffoon who made all the people laugh by imitating the cries of various animals.

Varied Sentence: There was a clown, who made the audience chortle by imitating the cries of various animals, at a country fair.

19. Write a variation of a sentence from 'The Buffoon and the Countryman' that uses at least two different synonyms and changes the order of the original sentence.

Original sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Varied sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

---

When adding dialogue in a fable, you must make sure that it does not change the moral of the story. In 'The Buffoon and the Countryman', there are two pieces of dialogue – however, some fables have no dialogue.



### Said Hanrahan by John O'Brien

"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
In accents most forlorn,  
Outside the church, ere Mass began,  
One frosty Sunday morn.

The congregation stood about,  
Coat-collars to the ears,  
And talked of stock, and crops, and drought,  
As it had done for years.

"It's looking crook," said Daniel Croke;  
"Bedad, it's cruke, me lad,  
For never since the banks went broke  
Has seasons been so bad."

"It's dry, all right," said young O'Neil,  
With which astute remark  
He squatted down upon his heel  
And chewed a piece of bark.

And so around the chorus ran  
"It's keepin' dry, no doubt."  
"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
"Before the year is out."

"The crops are done; ye'll have your work  
To save one bag of grain;  
From here way out to Back-o'-Bourke  
They're singin' out for rain.

"They're singin' out for rain," he said,  
"And all the tanks are dry."  
The congregation scratched its head,  
And gazed around the sky.

"There won't be grass, in any case,  
Enough to feed an ass;  
There's not a blade on Casey's place  
As I came down to Mass."

If rain don't come this month," said Dan,  
And cleared his throat to speak -  
"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
"If rain don't come this week."

A heavy silence seemed to steal  
On all at this remark;  
And each man squatted on his heel,  
And chewed a piece of bark.

"We want an inch of rain, we do,"  
O'Neil observed at last;



But Croke "maintained" we wanted two  
To put the danger past.

"If we don't get three inches, man,  
Or four to break this drought,  
We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
"Before the year is out."

In God's good time down came the rain;  
And all the afternoon  
On iron roof and window-pane  
It drummed a homely tune.

And through the night it pattered still,  
And lightsome, gladsome elves  
On dripping spout and window-sill  
Kept talking to themselves.

It pelted, pelted all day long,  
A-singing at its work,  
Till every heart took up the song  
Way out to Back-o'-Bourke.

And every creek a banker ran,  
And dams filled overtop;  
"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
"If this rain doesn't stop."

And stop it did, in God's good time;  
And spring came in to fold  
A mantle o'er the hills sublime  
Of green and pink and gold.

And days went by on dancing feet,  
With harvest-hopes immense,  
And laughing eyes beheld the wheat  
Nid-nodding o'er the fence.

And, oh, the smiles on every face,  
As happy lad and lass  
Through grass knee-deep on Casey's place  
Went riding down to Mass.

While round the church in clothes genteel  
Discoursed the men of mark,  
And each man squatted on his heel,  
And chewed his piece of bark.

"There'll be bush-fires for sure, me man,  
There will, without a doubt;  
We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan,  
"Before the year is out."