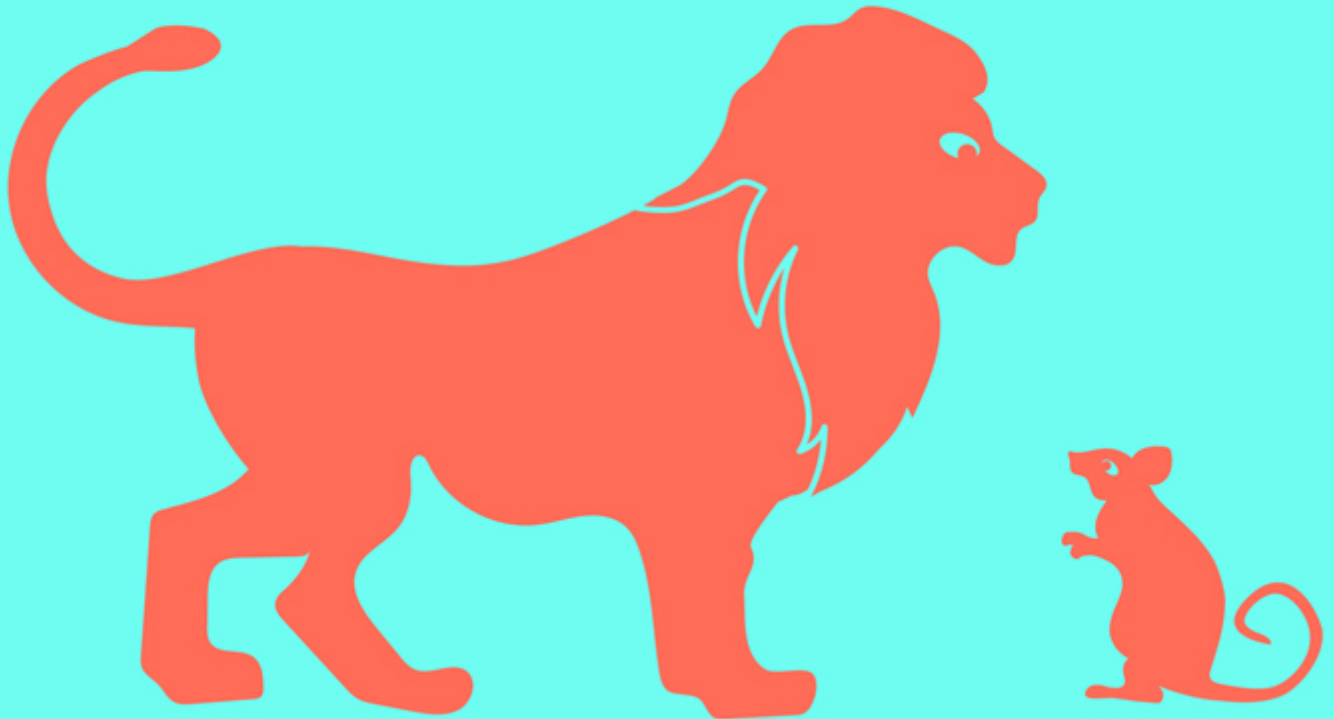




The Ark

Shy Mouse & Show Off Lion

Play, drama and story time activities to enjoy at home
inspired by Aesop's Fables



By Joanna Parkes

Recommended for **ages 2-4** with their grown-ups

as part of

The Beautiful Beasts @ Home

online at ark.ie

To get started, let's use Aesop's Fable of '*The Mouse and the Lion*' to explore the idea of being big or small, and how we matter and can be helpful regardless of our big or small we are.

Aesop is believed to have been a writer and storyteller from Ancient Greece who was thought to have lived about 600 BC. His stories usually have a moral or lesson for us to learn and often include animals as character in the stories. Some of his most well-known stories are '*The Boy who cried wolf*', '*The Hare and the tortoise*' and '*City Mouse and Country Mouse*'.

Shy Mouse and Show-off Lion Storytime:

If you don't know the story, a grown up can read the story below to you or you can listen to a version of the story at the BBC School Radio website (read by Richard Briers) [here](#).

The Lion and the Mouse Official Version by Aesop

A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and someday I will surely repay you." The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous and finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the toils of a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free. "You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

Moral: *A kindness is never wasted.*

Being Helpful

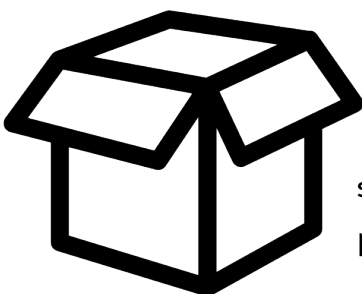
- In the story, the mouse wants to show the lion that even if you are really small you can still be really helpful.
- In the original Aesop's Fable, the lion is caught in a net by hunters and the little mouse nibbles at the net and releases the lion.
- In another version, the lion gets a thorn in his foot and can't walk as his foot is so sore and swollen but the little mouse can take the thorn out of the lion's foot and make it feel better.
- Children who took part in workshops with The Ark thought of many other things the mouse could do to help the lion, like itching his back or untangling the knots in his mane.
- Can you think of other things the mouse could do to help the lion?

What can you do?

- Are there things that you could do to help that a grown-up couldn't do because they are too big? Can you think of some ideas?
- What if there was a little ball stuck under a big chair – could you get it?
- Or if there was a little box under a big bed?
- Or... what else? You can think up some crazy ideas as well!



Games exploring the idea of big and small



What will go in the box?

With the help of a grown-up, can you find a medium size box? A box around the size of a shoe box would be perfect.

- Now, can you find 10 things that **easily fit** inside the box? For example, when you put them in the box, there's plenty of room around them. Examples are things like a toy car, or a little ball.

- Can you find 10 things **that only just fit** in the box? For example, when you put them in the box, you have to squash or squeeze them in a bit. What about a teddy bear, or a football? What else can you think of?
- Can you name 10 things **that will not fit in the box** even if you squash them in? You might not be able to move them to put them in the box so you can just name them instead. What about the sofa or a table?
- If you like you might enjoy reading a story called '*A Squash and Squeeze*' by Julia Donaldson – it is a fun story about not having enough room!

What size are you?

About your Size:

- With the help of a grown-up, look around the room. Can you find 5 things that you can reach that are about your size – like a chair perhaps?
- Is there anywhere in the room you can go because you're small but a grown-up can't fit? Perhaps under a little table or behind the sofa?
- Maybe there's somewhere you can go to make a little den that an adult can't fit into.
- Try hiding behind something that is really big or something that's quite small.

Not yet tall enough?

- Look around the room and see if you can find 5 things that you can't touch as you're not yet tall enough, such as a shelf or light switch.
- Can you jump up and touch any of them?

The size of a mouse:

- Now look at the room imagining that you are a tiny mouse (about the size of your hand)
- Imagine seeing the room as if you were that mouse.
- What would the mouse be able to touch? Maybe the carpet or the legs of a chair?
- What would the mouse not be able to touch? Perhaps the top of the table, or the cushions of the sofa?



Big and small step race:

- With a grown-up, work out what size a big step, small step and medium step might be for you:
Big step = the biggest step you can make
Small step = half your normal step
Medium step = your normal step
- How many steps does it take to cross the room with big steps, small steps or medium steps?
- Maybe your grown-up could call out 'big', 'small', 'medium' and you could have a big step, small step race across the room?
- Then it could be your turn to call out 'big', 'small', 'medium' and see who wins the race!

Which spoon is best for serving ice cream?

- Find as many different size spoons as you can e.g. tea spoon, desert spoon, serving spoon, ladle.
- Can you put them in order of size from smallest to biggest?
- Which one would you use to serve your favourite ice cream?



Exploring Another Aesop's Fable

The Sun and the Wind

We're going to tell a story together. The grown-up is going to narrate the story and the child or children can act it out. The only props you need is one coat per child.

Narration – *Once upon the time the North Wind and the Sun had an argument about which of them was the stronger. They kept arguing day and night until one day they saw a child walking along wearing a coat.*

Action – The child can put on their coat and walk around the room.

Narration – *The North Wind and Sun decided to make a bet. The North Wind said I bet I can blow that coat off that child's back so the Sun said "Ok, whichever of us get the coat off the child's back is the winner. The North Wind went first and blew cold, harsh wind at the child – trying to blow off the coat. The wind was so strong that the child could hardly walk.*

Action – The grown-up makes wind sound effects and the child in the coat pretends that they are trying to battle their way through the strong wind. The wind becomes so strong that they can hardly walk.

Narration – *No matter how hard the wind blew they couldn't blow the coat off the child. The child wrapped the coat around them and kept battling with the wind.*

Action – The grown-up continues to make the wind sound effects and the child holds on tight to the coat and doesn't let go.

Narration – *Eventually the wind gives up and the Sun comes out. The sun shines down strongly on the child. The child looks surprised at the change of weather. They keep on walking but it's getting hot, really hot.*

Action – the child responds to the above narration.

Narration – *The sun continues to shine and the child gets hotter and hotter until eventually... the child takes off their coat and the Sun wins the bet!*

Action – the child responds to the above narration. Then together you can talk about what the moral or lesson of the story might be.

Official Moral of the story – Grown-ups can narrate the final lines of the story after discussing with your child what the moral might be.

The wind was very angry and said “How did you do that?”

“It was easy,” said the Sun. “Through gentleness I got my way.”

This story teaches us that gentle persuasion is mightier than the strongest force.

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We’d love to hear how you get on pretending and playing around ideas of being big and small at home. If you’d like to tell us about what you thought or share photos of your fun with us, grown-ups can email us at thearkdublin@gmail.com.

For even more fun with **Shy Mouse & Show Off Lion**, check out our video workshop with Joanna Parkes at ark.ie.

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The Beautiful Beasts @ Home is part of The Ark’s 25th birthday season, sponsored by BDO.



An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills



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