

The Fox and the Leopard

A fox and a leopard, resting lazily after a generous dinner, amused themselves by disputing about their good looks. The leopard was very proud of his glossy, spotted coat and made disdainful remarks about the fox, whose appearance he declared was quite ordinary. The fox prided himself on his fine bushy tail with its tip of white, but he was wise enough to see that he could not rival the leopard in looks. Still, he kept up a flow of sarcastic talk, just to exercise his wits and to have the fun of arguing. The leopard was about to lose his temper when the fox got up, yawning lazily. "You may have a very smart coat," he said, "but you would be a great deal better off if you had a little more smartness inside your head and less on your ribs, the way I am. That's what I call real beauty."

Moral: A fine coat is not always an indication of a brilliant mind.

The Porcupine and the Snakes

A porcupine was looking for a good home. At last, he found a little sheltered cave where lived a family of snakes. He asked them to let him share the cave with them, and the snakes kindly consented. The snakes soon wished they had not given him permission to stay. His sharp quills pierced them at every turn, and at last, they politely asked him to leave. "I am very well satisfied, thank you," said the porcupine. "I intend to stay right here." And with that, he politely escorted the snakes outside. To save their skins, the snakes had to look for another home.

Moral: An inconsiderate guest can wear out their welcome.

The Crab and Its Mother

"Why in the world do you walk sideways like that?" said a mother crab to her son. "You should always walk straight forward with your toes turned out."

"Show me how to walk, mother dear," answered the little crab obediently. "I want to learn." So the old crab tried and tried to walk straight forward. But she could only walk sideways, like her son. And when she wanted to turn her toes out, she tripped and fell on her nose.

Moral: It's not good to try to persuade someone to act in a way that's uncomfortable to them.

The Lion, the Bear, and the Fox

Just as a great bear rushed to seize a stray lamb, a lion leaped from another direction upon the same prey. The two fought furiously for the prize until they had received so many wounds that both sank down, unable to continue the battle. Just then, a fox dashed up and, seizing the lamb, made off with it as fast as he could go while the lion and the bear looked on in helpless rage. “How much better it would have been,” they said, “to have shared in a friendly spirit.”

Moral: When fierce competition gets out of control, winners become losers.

The Bull and the Goat

A bull once escaped from a lion by entering a cave that the goatherds used to house their flocks in stormy weather and at night. It happened that one of the goats had been left behind, and the bull had no sooner got inside than this goat lowered his head and made a rush at him, butting him with his horns. As the lion was still prowling outside the entrance to the cave, the bull had to submit to the insult. “Do not think,” he said, “that I submit to your cowardly treatment because I am afraid of you. When that lion leaves, I’ll teach you a lesson you won’t forget.”

Moral: It is dangerous to take advantage of another’s distress.