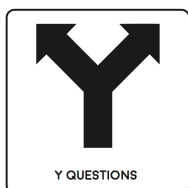


The story of the blue jackal

The Blue Jackal is a story from the Indian collection of animal folk tales, the Panchatantra. If you want to sugar it up, he can be chased from the jungle instead.



Ask pupils: if you could have your face painted in any way, what would you choose? Why? What impact would it have on the way people react to you? Ask them to imagine they have their face painted like this. Move around the room and act in any way that comes naturally. You might get tigers growling, or flamingos moving majestically.



As with any story, these three questions provide a helpful structure for extracting the concepts.

1. What surprised you about the story?
2. What was different at the end to at the beginning?
3. What do you think the story was really about?

The last question overlaps with the possible moral of the story. Because there are so many translations of the story, and because it's such a rich story in the first place, there are a variety of ideas on what the moral is. This leads to a good Y-question, as some may be more deemed more accurate than others.

- Destiny cannot be changed.
- Do not pretend to be what you are not.
- Truth will always come out.
- Do not lie to other people, especially the strong and dangerous type.
- Those who leave their folk will not live happily.

For me, the part of the story that is the most interesting is that he manages to bring peace to the jungle through fear – and yet, as soon as that fear is dispelled, he is deposed as king and the animals revert to chaotic ways. The parallels with dictators who are deposed, creating both freedom and chaos, are interesting to explore.



Of course, there often isn't one set moral. So try turning some of the morals into questions. Some can be transferred just by adding a couple of words and keeping the rest alike, such as "*Can someone's destiny be changed?*" or "*Will truth always come out?*" Others may need a little more tweaking, but with equally fruitful results: "*Should you ever abandon your own 'folk'? If so, when?*"

NEXT STEPS

Pupils could write their own stories with morals, and then turn the moral into a question to see if it stands the test of a philosophical discussion.

Once there was a jackal who was very hungry. So he left the jungle and went to the village to look for food.

Delicious cooking smells came from the houses. But just as the jackal was imagining the tastes that went with the smells, the village dogs spotted him and gave chase. He ran for his life. As they gained on him he darted into a house and...

Splash! Into a vat of blue dye. Of all the houses in the village, he had run into the weaver's house, where piles of clothes waited for their colours. In a panic, he scrabbled his way back out of the vat of dye, out of the house and...

Woof! Into the pack of dogs that were waiting outside. The jackal froze for a moment. But a moment was all it took for the dogs to take one look at him and...

Run! The jackal was amazed at his lucky escape, and even more amazed to see that from the tip of his tail to the nub of his nose, all his fur had turned blue.

He went back to the jungle where it was safer. But every animal that he met fled in terror - even the lion. Soon he realised that the animals had no idea what to make of this strange blue creature.

So he told them, "Animals of the jungle, do not be afraid. As you can see, I am blue, the colour of God. I have been sent to rule over you as your king, and to keep you safe. All will be well for you if you do as I say."

The first thing he said, and the first thing they did, was to chase the jackals out of the jungle.

And so he became king of the animals. Because they had never seen this strange blue creature before, they were terrified. Because they were terrified, they did as he said. And because they did as he said, all was peaceful.

It was especially peaceful for the blue jackal, who had no need to hunt for himself. Instead, he ordered other animals to catch his prey for him.

But one day, he heard in the distance the howl of the jackals that had been sent from the jungle. Hearing his own kind, he howled too, forgetting that he was a king and was the colour of god.

At the same moment, the heavens opened and a great rain poured down. The dye was washed from his fur. Howling before them, the animals saw, not the blue, mysterious creature they all obeyed as king, but a brown, ordinary jackal...

... they all tore to pieces. Even the lion.