

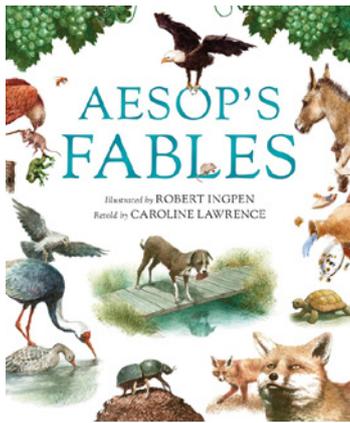
Book Review

Aesop's Fables

Lawrence (C.). Pp. 192, Cambridge: Welbeck Editions, 2022. £20.00. ISBN: 978-1913519902.

Sarah Hindocha

Tonbridge Grammar School, Tonbridge, Kent, UK
hindocha.sarah@gmail.com



One might be tempted to think that in the 21st century we aren't urgently in need of a new edition of Aesop's famous fables, but I for one am very glad we have this one. The illustrator Robert Ingpen (surely some nominative determinism here – inKpen!) is first on the list of contributors demonstrating that this version of the stories is just as much about the visualisation of the characters as the tales themselves. Many readers of this review will be

very familiar with Caroline Lawrence's work and it's a delight to see her characteristic writing style put to great use here. Her gift for

story telling in its concise yet meaningful tone makes her ideally suited to retelling these small yet perfectly formed allegorical narratives.

All the old favourites feature here – such as The Boy who Cried Wolf – as well as many that were new (at least to me), for example The Swallow and the Gambler. This catalogue has revealed a whole range of stories many of which feature Aesop himself and philosophers like Socrates and Diogenes. Caroline Lawrence uses her experience as a Classicist to enhance the storytelling with a few Greek words preserved including *oimoi*, plenty of references to the gods including Zeus and Hermes and the mention of *ostraka* – shards of pottery with writing on. The glossary of terms at the back provides answers to any student wanting to decipher these more technical aspects of the language.

Ingpen's photographic style of illustration really enhances the descriptions of the characters, largely from the animal kingdom, of course. Each animal is brought to life, with absolute realism and yet also a sense of personification in each creature's expression, which is often necessary for us to absorb the moral message of each story.

I am particularly pleased to own this edition as it is great for reading with my toddler. There are hundreds of stories yet each one is a page or less, with many just a single paragraph. His short attention span, and my desire to seek moments of mindful connection make these so appealing. It would make a great gift as it's just such a lovely volume to have in your hand. Hardback, thick luxurious paper but not too weighty, an illustrated jacket and a ribbon for keeping your favourite tale to hand.

Universal truths of human relationships, told through simple allegory, are suitable for adults and children alike. A timeless classic that you'll be glad to have in your collection of the great works of western literature.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631024000564