

PANCHATANTRA

The Panchatantra is an ancient collection of Indian animal fables. It is believed that it was first written around 200 B.C. to educate and entertain the children of the royal family. Each tale uses imagery to explain a moral or idea.

In literature, the theme is the main idea or moral of a story. Typically, the theme of a story conveys a message or lesson about life. The theme is generally not stated outright, but rather represented by the story's characters and their actions, as well as symbols and motifs throughout.

On a separate sheet of paper describe the theme of the story and how it relates to today.

The Foolish Friend



A king, while visiting his wives' apartments, took a monkey from a neighboring stable for a pet. He kept him constantly close at hand for his amusement, for as it is said, parrots, partridges, dove rams, monkeys, and such creatures are a king's natural companions.

It goes without saying that the monkey, fed on the various dishes that the king gave him, grew large and was given respect by all who surrounded the king. Indeed, the king, due to his love and exceeding trust of the monkey, even gave him a sword to carry.

In the vicinity of the palace the king had a grove artfully planted with many trees of various sorts. Early in the springtime the king noticed how beautiful the grove was. Its blossoms exuded a magnificent fragrance, while swarms of bees sang praise to the god of love. Thus overcome with love, he entered the grove with his favorite wife. He ordered all his servants to wait for him at the entrance.

After pleasantly strolling through and observing the grove, he grew tired and said to his monkey, "I want to sleep a little while in this arbor of flowers. Take care that nothing disturbs me!" Having said this, the king fell asleep.

Presently a bee, pursuing the aroma of the flowers, betel, and musk, flew up and landed on his head. Seeing this, the monkey thought angrily, "What is this? Am I to allow this common creature to bite the king before my very eyes?"

With that he proceeded to drive it away. However, in spite of the monkey's deference, the bee approached the king again and again. Finally, blinded by anger, the monkey drew his sword and struck down the bee with a single blow. However, the same blow also split the king's head.

The queen, who was sleeping next to the king jumped up in terror. Seeing the crime, she said, "Oh, oh, you foolish monkey! What have you done to the king who placed such trust in you?"

The monkey explained how it had happened, but thereafter he was shunned and scorned by everyone. Thus it is said, "Do not choose a fool for a friend, for the king was killed by a monkey."

And I say, "It is better to have a clever enemy than a foolish friend."

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(Answers may vary):

The theme of the story is friendship and trust. At the beginning of the story, the King befriends the monkey. At the end of the story, the monkey tries to defend the king. But though he means well, he ends up killing the king. As it is said at the end of the story, “It’s better to have a clever enemy than a foolish friend.”

This relates to today because even when friends mean well, they need to make sure they think about how they act. A friend should have both good intentions and positive actions.