

Reading Comprehension:

“King Chameleon and the Animals” and “The Hare and the Tortoise”

Read the two fables and answer the questions that follow.

Passage 1: “King Chameleon and the Animals”

(adapted from William H. Barker’s *West African Folk-Tales*)

- 1 In the olden days, all the animals of the world lived together in a state of **anarchy**, disorder, and confusion. They had no established authority who could rule over them and pass judgment on their behavior; as a result, animals constantly committed many wicked deeds with **impunity**.
- 2 At last, the animals convened to discuss this unfortunate state of affairs, and after much deliberation, they decided to choose a king. The great difficulty, however, was *how* to choose their monarch.
- 3 Lion was the first animal nominated for the honor, but he was vehemently opposed by many because, they said, he was too fierce. Wolf was next proposed—but the sheep and goats adamantly refused to have him because he was their mortal foe, and they knew they would have bad treatment if he were chosen.
- 4 With so much disagreement about who should be the sovereign ruler, it seemed impossible to satisfy everyone’s wishes by popular choice. The quarreling animals were united in only one respect: As a group, they were behaving like a dog chasing its own tail. Finally, after much ado, the animals decided to choose their king in another way. They **resolved** that they would have a competition.
- 5 It so happened that two miles away was a great stool, placed under a very ancient tree that was believed to be the abode of gods. The animals agreed that they would have a great race to this sacred place. The animal who reached and sat down first on the stool would be their chosen king.
- 6 The designated day of the race arrived, and all animals, great and small, prepared to take part in it. Once the signal was given, they started off. The hare—being a very fine runner—speedily outdistanced the others. He reached the stool a full five hundred yards ahead of the next animal. You can imagine, then, his annoyance

when, just as he was about to sit down and claim his throne, a voice came from the stool saying, “Take care, Mr. Hare, take care. I am already here.”

- 7 This was the voice of the **stealthy** chameleon. He, being able to camouflage himself by changing his color to suit his surroundings, had seized Mr. Hare’s tail just as the race began. Having made his color match the hare’s, no one had noticed him. He had held on very tightly, and when the hare turned around to triumphantly take his seat, Chameleon dropped off Mr. Hare’s tail and landed on the stool—first.
- 8 The hare realized at once how his chance to become king had been **thwarted** by Chameleon. Infuriated and indignant, he prepared to sweep the chameleon from the stool. The other animals, however, arrived before he could do so, and they saw the chameleon seated on the stool. According to the agreement they had all made, Chameleon was the king because he had reached the stool first.
- 9 Still, the animals did not like the underhanded way Chameleon had become king, and they were dissatisfied with the result. So as soon as the coronation was done, they scattered in every direction and left King Chameleon quite alone, seated on his ill-gotten throne.
- 10 Chameleon eventually realized the error of his ways; he was so ashamed that he went and made his home atop a very high tree on a mountain. In the dead of night, you may yet hear him calling his imagined attendants and loyal subjects to come and keep him company. But no one pays him any heed. He lives alone, a king with no one to command.



Reading Comprehension:

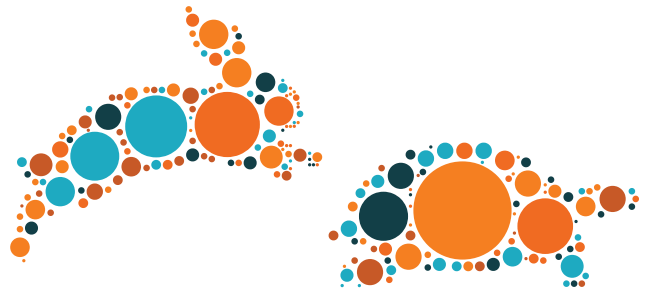
“King Chameleon and the Animals” and “The Hare and the Tortoise”

Keep reading! Then answer the questions that follow.

Passage 2: “The Hare and the Tortoise”

(adapted from *Aesop’s Fables*)

- 1 One day, the Hare was needling the Tortoise for the way he plodded along so sluggishly.
- 2 “Do you ever get anywhere?” he asked with a mocking sneer.
- 3 “Yes,” replied the Tortoise, unperturbed. “And I get there sooner than you would expect. I’ll run you a race and prove it.”
- 4 The Hare was much amused at the idea of running a race with the Tortoise, and, eager as always to put his superiority on full display, he agreed. So the Fox, who had consented to act as referee, marked the distance along a course and started the runners off.
- 5 The Hare was soon far out of sight, well on his way to easy victory; however, to make the Tortoise feel how



deeply ridiculous it was for him to challenge Hare to a race, he lay down beside the course to take a nap until the Tortoise should catch up.

- 6 The Tortoise, meanwhile, pressed on at an unhurried and even pace, and after a time, he quietly passed the place where the Hare was fast asleep. The Hare slept on quite peacefully, dreaming of his victory, and when at last he did wake up, he saw that the Tortoise was nearing the goal. The Hare then ran his swiftest, but he could not overtake the Tortoise in time. As Tortoise crossed the finish line, Fox declared slow-and-steady Tortoise the winner of the race.

Answer the questions about “King Chameleon and the Animals” and “The Hare and the Tortoise.”

1. **Part A:** In “King Chameleon and the Animals,” what is the most likely reason that the animals were not satisfied with Chameleon becoming king?
 - a. They wanted a bigger animal who could protect them.
 - b. They did not think he was worthy of their trust.
 - c. They decided they did not want a king after all.
 - d. They thought the hare was much more intelligent.

Part B: Use evidence from the text to explain your answer.

2. **Part A:** What is the theme or moral of “King Chameleon and the Animals”?
 - a. It is more important to act quickly than to spend time thinking of a plan.
 - b. Our greatest weaknesses may turn out to be our greatest strengths.
 - c. A king without the respect and allegiance of his subjects is not a true king.
 - d. An honorable ruler gains power through cleverness not brute strength.

Part B: Cite a specific part of the text that supports the theme of the fable.

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Answer the questions about “King Chameleon and the Animals” and “The Hare and the Tortoise.”

3. Using context clues from “King Chameleon and the Animals,” match the bolded words with their definitions.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ resolved | a. lack of punishment |
| _____ anarchy | b. prevented from happening |
| _____ impunity | c. absence of government |
| _____ stealthy | d. careful not to be noticed |
| _____ thwarted | e. reached a firm decision |

4. Read the excerpt from paragraph 4 in passage 1.

The quarreling animals were united in only one respect: As a group, they were behaving like a dog chasing its own tail.

What does the analogy show about the animals’ situation?

5. **Part A:** Circle the character trait that the hares in “King Chameleon and the Animals” and “The Hare and the Tortoise” share.

- humility kindness courage
haughtiness cleverness

Part B: Cite text evidence from each passage that illustrates this shared characteristic.

Passage 1: _____

Passage 2: _____

6. In what way are the structures of the passages similar?
a. They both open by setting up the central conflicts that propel the events in the story.

b. They both rely on dialogue to develop the central conflict between two main characters.

c. They both foreshadow the solution to the conflict before introducing the specific problem.

d. They both open by describing the setting and giving the backstory of the main characters.

7. **Part A:** An archetype is a story element that appears over and over again in stories throughout the world, bringing a sense of familiarity to the stories we read. Circle the character archetype that Chameleon best represents in “King Chameleon and the Animals.”

- the hero the creator the rebel
the trickster the bully

Part B: Cite text evidence that illustrates Chameleon’s character archetype.

8. Situational irony is a literary device in which the outcome of an event is very different or opposite from what the reader expects. Explain how each story uses irony to teach a lesson.

Passage 1: _____

Passage 2: _____
