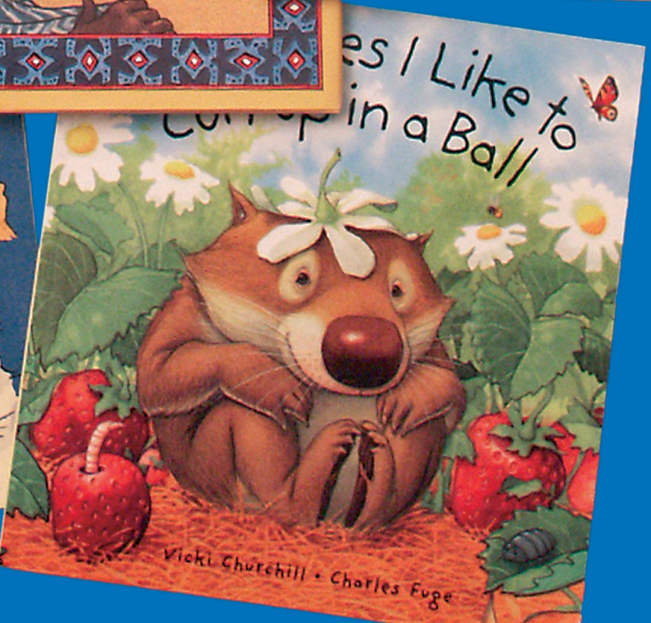
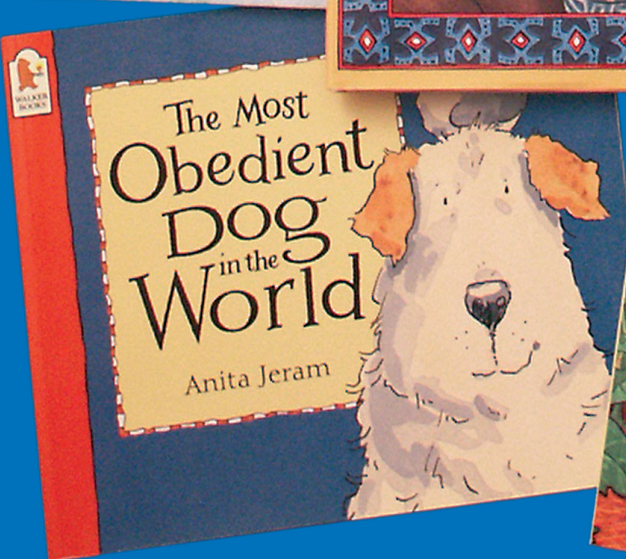
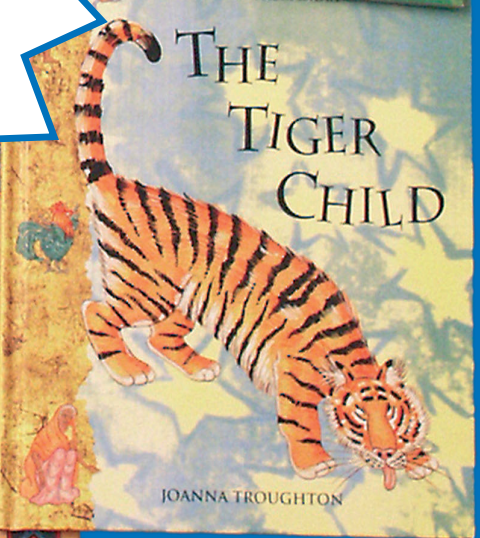
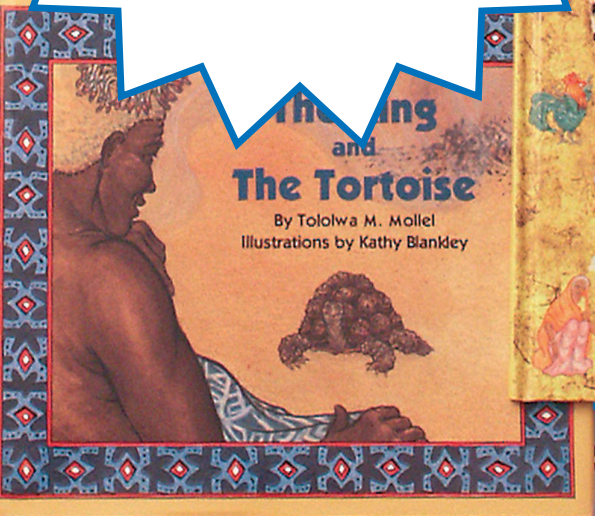
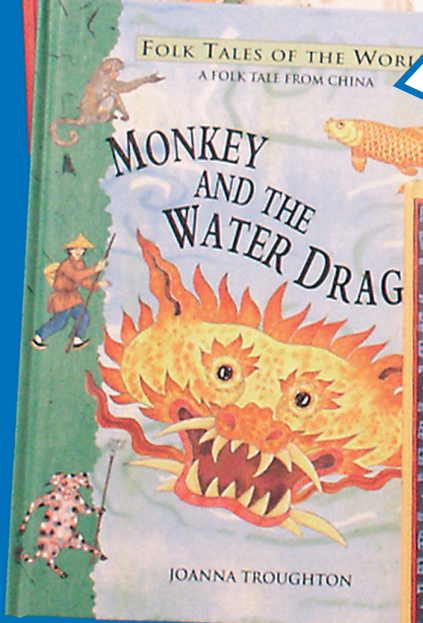
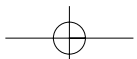
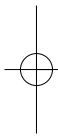
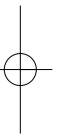
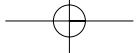


Animal Stories





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A Flea in the Ear

by Stephen Wylie and Ken Brown

One moonlit night, as the spotted dog was lifting the flaps on the side of the chicken coop to make sure the hens were all tucked up in bed, he heard a twig snap in the woods nearby.

"I know you're out there, fox," he barked. "Stay away from my hens."



"Good evening," said the wily fox politely, sauntering into the farmyard.

"Back off," said the dog, "or I'll bite."

"You can't imagine for one moment that I would dream of taking one of your scrawny hens," lied the fox. "I much prefer a nice, fat, juicy duck."

"Well, that's all right then," said the dog, scratching his fleas. "Just remember what I said."

"I will," said the fox, edging closer. "I see you have a spot of flea trouble."

"Don't talk about it," said the dog. "At this time of year it's agony."

"I never have any trouble myself," said the fox. "But then I know the secret that keeps them away."

"What? You do?" asked the dog eagerly. "Please tell me."

"I couldn't possibly," the fox replied. "It's a family secret."



"Oh, please tell," pleaded the dog. "I'll give anything to get rid of my fleas."

"Anything?" asked the fox slyly.

"Well, almost anything."

"I suppose I might be persuaded, in exchange for five or six of your stringy birds."

"Definitely not," said the dog indignantly. "I'd lose my job."

"Oh well," said the fox, "suit yourself. Bye bye."

The following afternoon the fox came back.

"Good afternoon," he said.

"Hello," growled the dog suspiciously.

"I've been thinking things over," said the fox, "and have decided to tell you the secret for nothing. I couldn't allow a fellow creature to suffer so much pain."



"That's wonderful," said the dog. "What do I have to do?"

"It's quite simple really. You just trot over the hill, down the other side, through the gate and along the lane until you come to a pond. Walk into the water and, as it gets deeper, the fleas will climb up your legs. Eventually, only your head will be dry and all the fleas will be on it. Take a deep breath and dunk your head under the water and all your fleas will drown."

"Brilliant," said the dog. "I'm surprised I never thought of it myself."

"Off you go then," said the fox. "I'll watch the chickens while you're away. Just think of it, flea free for the first time in your life."

"I can hardly wait," said the dog, and galloped off up the hill, through the gate, and down to the pond to drown his fleas.

As he lowered himself into the water, he was astonished to hear a voice in his ear.

"I know you are about to drown us," said a flea, "but if you go back to the bank, we will all jump off and promise never to bite you again."



The dog paused for a moment.

"Oh, very well. So long as you keep your word."

He walked back to the bank and all the fleas leapt off. The happy dog went back home. When he got back, he found that the fox had vanished and when he lifted the flaps he discovered that his hens had too.

"Oh no," howled the dog. "I'll lose my job, I'll be homeless."

He lay down in despair. When he felt a little better, he noticed a trail of feathers leading into the wood. He got up and followed it until he came at last to the fox's den.

He knocked on the door. The fox opened it.

"Hello," he said, pretending to be surprised. "What brings you here?"

"I just dropped by," said the dog, pretending to scratch, "to tell you that I went for your flea cure, but I couldn't get into the pond. It was full to the brim with fat, juicy ducks."

"It was?" asked the fox, licking his lips.



"Overflowing," lied the dog. "I'll try again later when they have gone. Bye bye."

"Goodbye," said the fox, and closed the door.

The dog hid behind a tree. He hadn't waited long before the fox came out of his den with an empty sack slung over his shoulder. After a quick look round, he slunk off towards the pond...

...only to find when he got there, that there wasn't a trace of the fat, juicy ducks the dog had said he'd seen. While he sat there in disbelief, all the fleas who had so nearly drowned leapt joyfully, but unnoticed, on to his neck.



Meanwhile, the dog had broken down the fox's door and there, sure enough, he found a squawking bagful of his chickens. He gathered them up and took them back to their coop, determined never to let them out of his sight again.

Animals in Stories

Many stories have animal characters.

Some traditional stories have animals as the main characters instead of people. We usually know what to expect of each animal - good or bad, fast or slow, strong or weak, trustworthy or cunning. In many stories the biggest, strongest animal is taught a lesson by the smaller, weaker animal.

Animal characters are found in stories from all over the world.



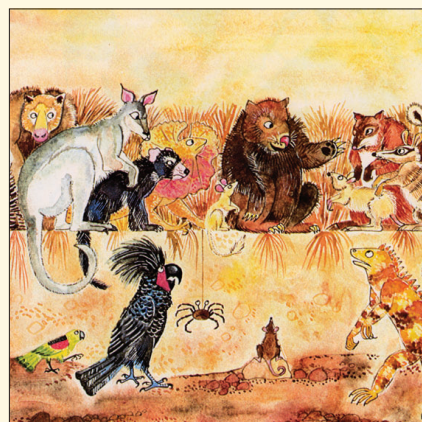
A tiger in a story from India.



Fish in a story from China.



A duck in a story from England.



Bush characters in a story from Australia.

Each of these animals in fiction has its own character, but each one has links with facts about the animal in real life.

Animal Facts

- Dogs like being with people. People keep dogs as pets or to do work.
- Dogs can be trained to look after people. Guide dogs help people who cannot see.
- Dogs have a very good sense of smell. Police dogs can find things and people by their smell.
- Dogs are sometimes called 'man's best friend'.

Dogs in Real Life



- Foxes will live almost anywhere there is shelter and food.
- Foxes will eat all sorts of different things. They sometimes steal chickens but more often hunt rabbits and other wild animals. In towns, foxes take food from bins.
- Fox cubs 'play-fight' with each other. They learn how to pin each other down and how to use their teeth. This trains them for hunting.

Foxes in Real Life



Animals in Fiction

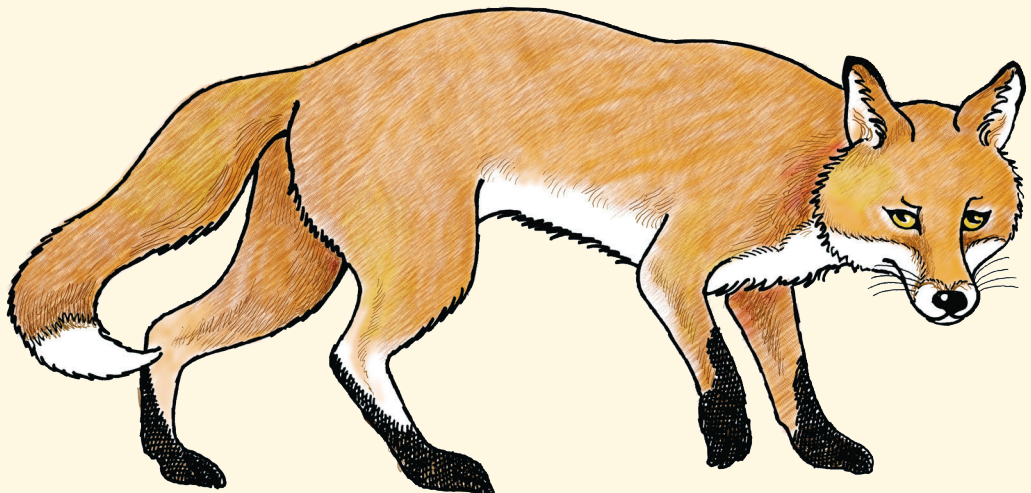
Dogs in Stories

Dogs in stories are usually good characters and often help people.



Foxes in Stories

Foxes in stories are clever and cunning.



Animal Facts

Hares in Real Life

- Hares can run at over 60 kilometres per hour.
- Hares live in the countryside, feeding on crops from the fields.
- Hares have giant ears and large eyes. They can see all around without moving their heads.



Tortoises in Real Life

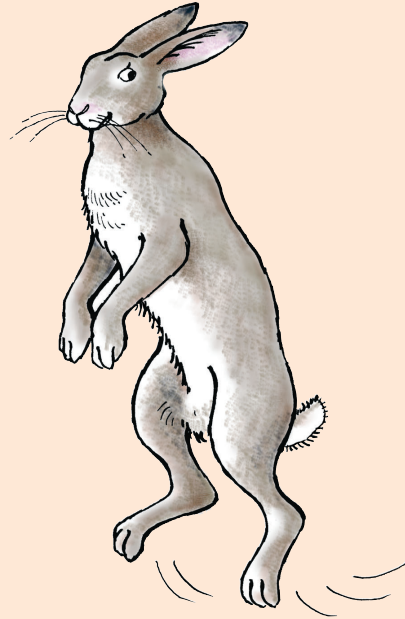
- Tortoises live for many years.
- Tortoises move slowly.
- A tortoise can pull its head, legs and tail into its shell when it wants to hide.



Animals in Fiction

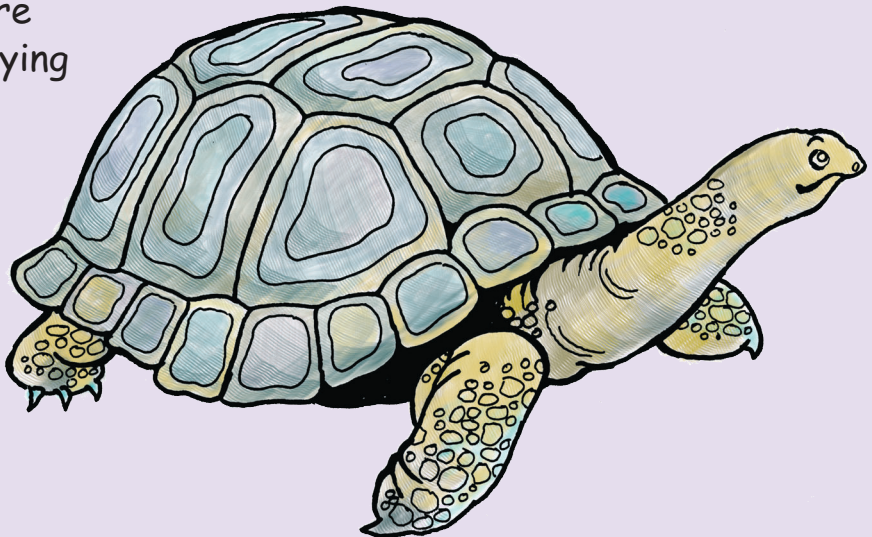
Hares in Stories

Hares in stories boast about their speed and rush into action before thinking.



Tortoises in Stories

Tortoises in stories are steady and keep on trying until they succeed.



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