

The Importance of Allegories, Parables and Fables

Assignment Option 1*: Carefully read the following three document excerpts. You may need to read them several times. Then, in a well-developed essay (300-500 words), explain how the use of allegories, parables and fables can be used as a powerful tool of argument or persuasion. Support your response with examples from the above three sources as well as examples from your own knowledge or experience. Please use the given in-text citations when referring to the sources below.

*For a possible 85% to 100%, with appropriate effort.

Assignment Option 2*: Carefully read the following three document excerpts. You may need to read them several times. Answer the following questions:

1. In one to two well-written sentences, explain the main point of Jennifer Terry's piece.
2. Explain why each of the following stories was persuasive in the context of how it was being used.
 1. Stesichorus' fable about the horse
 2. Aesop's fable about the fox
 3. Nathan's parable about the ewe lamb
3. Do you think allegories, parables and fables are important (to humanity, to persuasion, to _____)? Explain your answer in a well-developed paragraph.

*For a possible 65% to 84%, with appropriate effort.

Terry, Jennifer. "Allegory." Jennifer Terry. 28 Feb. 2007
<<http://home.earthlink.net/~jenniferterry/courses/201material/allegory.html>>.

In-text citation: (Terry)

[T]he symbolic allegory ... which can range from a simple fable to a complex, multilayered narrative, has often been used to represent political and historical situations and has long been popular as a vehicle for satire. In the verse satire *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), for example, John Dryden relates in heroic couplets a scriptural story that is a thinly veiled portrait of the politicians involved in an attempt to alter the succession to the English throne. A modern example of political allegory is George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* (1945), which, under the guise of a fable about domestic animals, expresses the author's disillusionment with the outcome of the Bolshevik Revolution and shows how one tyrannical system of government in Russia was merely replaced by another.

Aristotle. Rhetoric. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. Aristotle's Rhetoric. Ed. Lee Honeycutt. 10 Jan. 2007. Iowa State University. 28 Feb 2007.
<<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/>>.

In-text citation: (Aristotle)

from Rhetoric – Aristotle
Book II, Chapter 20

Instances of the fable [used in argument] are that of Stesichorus about Phalaris, and that of Aesop in defense of the popular leader. When the people of Himera had made Phalaris military dictator, and were going to give him a bodyguard, Stesichorus wound up a long talk by telling them the fable of the horse who had a field all to himself. Presently there came a stag and began to spoil his pasturage. The horse, wishing to revenge himself on the stag, asked a man if he could help him to do so. The man said, "Yes, if you will let me bridle you and get on to your back with javelins in my hand." The horse agreed, and the man mounted; but instead of getting his revenge on the stag, the horse found himself the slave of the man. "You too," said Stesichorus, "take care lest your desire for revenge on your enemies, you meet the same fate as the horse. By making Phalaris military dictator, you have already let yourselves be bridled. If you let him get on to your backs by giving him a bodyguard, from that moment you will be his slaves."

Aesop, defending before the assembly at Samos a popular leader who was being tried for his life, told this story: A fox, in crossing a river, was swept into a hole in the rocks; and, not being able to get out, suffered miseries for a long time through the swarms of fleas that fastened on her. A hedgehog, while roaming around, noticed the fox; and feeling sorry for her asked if he might remove the fleas. But the fox declined the offer; and when the hedgehog asked why, she replied, "These fleas are by this time full of me and not sucking much blood; if you take them away, others will come with fresh appetites and drink up all the blood I have left." "So, men of Samos," said Aesop, "my client will do you no further harm; he is wealthy already. But if you put him to death, others will come along who are not rich, and their peculations will empty your treasury completely."

Boucher, Madeline I. The Parables. Delaware: Michael Glazer, Inc. 1980. "Jesus' Many Faces." Frontline. PBS Online. 28 Feb. 2007
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/parables.html>>.

In-text citation: (Boucher)

The Parable in the Ancient World

When Jesus preached so strikingly in parables, he did not create a new literary genre. Rather, he made brilliant use of a genre which was already of long tradition and which was familiar to all throughout the Mediterranean world. In Greece and Rome, parables were employed by rhetoricians, politicians and philosophers. Perhaps the most illustrious among those who made use of them were Socrates and Aristotle. . .In Israel, parables were uttered by prophets and wise women and men. They appear even in the oldest books of the Old Testament. Parables were often used by Jewish rabbis who were contemporaries of Jesus.

A famous and quite ancient Old Testament example is the parable of the Ewe Lamb which the prophet Nathan addressed to David. After the king had arranged the death of Bathsheba's husband on the battlefield so that he might himself marry Bathsheba, Nathan told him this story:

12 There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

(2 Sam 12:1-4)

When David condemned the man who had done this as deserving to die, Nathan revealed that the story was a parable, saying, "You are the man" (v. 7).