

Abla and Antarah

An ancient Arabic story

Recommended Key Stage: KS2

Synopsis: Antar is a slave who dreams of being a warrior. One day, he confronts a prince's servant for being nasty to an old woman. The King rewards his bravery and gives him a job at the palace. As Antar grows up, he falls in love with a princess, Abla, and creates poetry for her. She falls in love with him too. Her father is enraged and sends his men for him. They run away at the sight of a lion, hoping it will kill Antar but Antar takes a spear that had been dropped by one of the men and kills the lion. The next day he presents the lion skin to the King. The King recognises the spear, accuses Antar of theft and Antar is forbidden from raising a weapon again.

Some time later, Abla is taken away by a man from another tribe. The King begs Antar to help. In return, Antar asks for his freedom and for Abla's hand in marriage. The King agrees, and Antar rides away on a black stallion, kills every one of Abla's captors and carries Abla home in triumph.

The King tells Antar he must find 1000 red camels as a bride gift, the type only found in Persia. Antar rides to Persia, where he convinces the King there that he can kill an angry lioness who is threatening the kingdom. When he reaches the lion, he finds only a Queen who has a terrible roar. He recites poetry to her, and she calms down. In return, the relieved King gives him 1000 red camels. He returns to his homeland to marry Abla and they live in happiness for the rest of their days.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the video **Stories from the Woodshed: Anta and Abla**

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Questions

- What were your favourite parts of this story?
- This is a very dramatic story. What are the moments of drama? Does the class prefer the moments of drama, or the quieter moments between? Why do you think this is?
- Discuss the following abstract nouns. Where, if at all, do they appear in the story?
- Fear - Relief - Love - Hate - Courage - Anger - Happiness - Jealousy - Generosity
- What words can you use to describe Antar?
- Antar is both a warrior and a poet. This is unusual in traditional stories. Usually the characters are one-dimensional; they only do one thing. For example, they are either good or evil; they either fight or stand back. But Antar is two-dimensional. Being both a warrior and a poet can help him at different times in different situations. Why is it better to be two-dimensional than one-dimensional?
- If Abla was two-dimensional, what could her extra talent be?
- If Prince Malik was two-dimensional, what could his extra talent be? Would it make him a better, more rounded person?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Story Freeze Frame • In groups, students choose a moment from the story. They make a freeze frame. Present the freeze frames to the rest of the class, who guess which part of the story is being represented. • Discuss afterwards: what were the popular moments from the story to depict? Did everyone choose a particular moment from the story, or a variety of moments? Were these the moments of Antar the warrior, or of Antar the poet?	Hotseating • Choose a character from the story. This could be Antar, Abla, Prince Malik, the King, the King of the other kingdom, the Queen with the terrible roar. One volunteer comes to sit in the hotseat as the character. The rest of the class ask the character questions. Using these sentence starters can be helpful: - Why did you.... - How did you get the idea to... - How did you feel when.... - What were you thinking when.... - If you could go back to the past, what would you do differently? - What other options did you have when....? - How do you feel about (X other character)?
Build a Courage Collage Draw round a student and label the outline as one of the key characters in the story. Create a group or class collage using pictures and words which symbolise courage – could include story characters, quotes, real people. Discuss the elements they have included and display for other students to share.	I am brave Give students a piece of paper and ask them to draw themselves in the centre. Then split the page in half. On the left side ask them to write or draw things they do confidently or things people have complimented them on. On the right-hand-side they write or draw things they find a challenge. Look at the right-hand side and pick one or two things that they find challenging and ask how they could overcome these? Would any of their skills from the left-hand side help? Develop these into targets to work on and to try to achieve piecemeal through the year. e.g. if a student identifies being nervous about speaking out in the class, help them to build up to this by providing a speaking buddy with whom they can practice what they want to say, standing with a friend who is speaking, speaking to a small group.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities
Epics • This story is an epic. Epics are not simple stories; they are more like soap operas, with episodes that go on and on and on and never seem to have an ending! Usually this is because enemies don't give up, or they keep taking revenge; no one lets up and forgives. • In groups, plan, create and present another episode in the epic story. Antar comes back with 1000 red camels. Prince Malik is not pleased. What new (impossible) challenge does he set Antar? How does Antar achieve it? He must use both his skills as a warrior and his skills as a poet. • Use the structure and modelled example in Resource A.
The Calm of Poetry • You are Antar, and you need to create a poem to calm down the Queen with her terrible roar. • First discuss what you do when you want to calm down. Take deep breaths? Watch a film? Have a drink of water? Go for a walk? Message a friend? • The poem will have 6 stanzas. • First, decide on 2 lines as a class. These lines will be repeated throughout the poem. For example, 'Calm down, Queen, calm down' or 'Perhaps it's time to rest', or 'No need to roar again.' • These lines we will call the 'Repeated Phrase.' – Repeated Phrase 1 and Repeated Phrase 2. • Students take Resource B. They start by writing Repeated Phrase 1 and writing Repeated Phrase 2 in the appropriate boxes. If in doubt, refer to the modelled example. • The students then use the prompts line by line to write the other lines, describing the different ways in which the Queen could calm down. • Congratulate students on writing a villanelle

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Stories about finding your fortune and moving from rags to riches:

The Brave Weaver (India)

The Pedlar of Swaffham (England)

Stories about being set great challenges:

The Forging of the Sampo (Finland)

The Firebird (Russia)

The Boyhood of Cù Chulainn (Ireland)

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHE

Kindness and Respect: about what is kind and unkind behaviour, and how this can affect others

about how to treat themselves and others with respect; how to be polite and courteous

Freedom: to recognise that there are human rights that are there to protect everyone

Resource A

Epic Story Structure

Story Structure	Modelled Example
Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.	Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.
Prince Malik is still not satisfied and sets Antar a very difficult task. What is the task?	Prince Malik tells Antar to get 10 drops of blood from a dragon.
Antar uses his poetic skills to complete the task.	Antar finds a dragon and recites such calming poetry to him that the dragon falls asleep.
Antar also uses his warrior skills to complete the task.	While the dragon is asleep, Antar uses his spear to prick the dragon in the tail and extract the blood. When the dragon seems to stir from the pain, Antar quickly recites more poetry to make the dragon fall asleep again.
Antar goes back to Prince Malik to show him what he has done.	Antar goes back to Prince Malik to give him the drops of dragon blood. Prince Malik doesn't believe it is dragon blood and sets him another task.

Resource B

Writing a Villanelle

	Line by Line Structure	Your poem draft	Modelled example
Stanza 1	Repeating phrase 1		Calm down, Queen, calm down
	Describe how the Queen is when she's angry		You are always being so loud
	Repeating phrase 2		No need to roar again
Stanza 2	You ask the Queen to stop doing something		Stop smashing the plates
	Why?		They were very expensive
	Repeating phrase 1		Calm down, Queen, calm down
Stanza 3	Advise a way in which she could calm down		Why don't you take some deep breaths
	How will it make her feel?		It will help you think more clearly
	Repeating phrase 2		No need to roar again
Stanza 4	Give another piece of advice		I think you need ice cream
	How will it make you feel		Ice cream will make you smile
	Repeating phrase 1		Calm down, Queen, calm down
Stanza 5	Give a third piece of advice		Or why don't you feel a friend
	How will it make her feel		They might make you laugh
	Repeating phrase 2		No need to roar again
Stanza 6	Say how Anta feels writing this poem		I enjoyed writing this poem for you
	Give a compliment to the Queen		You look much happier now
	Repeating phrase 1		Calm down, Queen, calm down
	Repeating phrase 2		No need to roar again