

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Thief and His Mother

By Aesop
620-560 B.C.

Aesop was a slave and story-teller who was believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 B.C.E. This story is part of his collection of tales known as "Aesop's Fables," which have been featured in children's literature for centuries. As you read, consider how the thief came to be a thief, and how anyone becomes what they grow up to be.

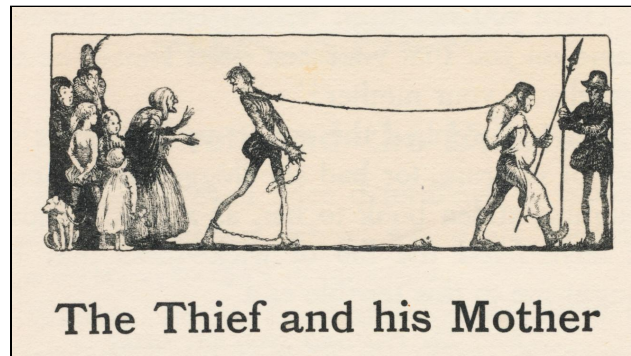
- [1] A boy stole a lesson-book from one of his schoolfellows and took it home to his Mother. She not only abstained¹ from beating him,² but encouraged him.

He next time stole a cloak and brought it to her, and she again commended³ him.

The Youth, advanced to adulthood, proceeded to steal things of still greater value. At last he was caught in the very act, and having his hands bound behind him, was led away to the place of public execution.

His Mother followed in the crowd and violently beat her breast in sorrow, whereupon the young man said, "I wish to say something to my Mother in her ear."

- [5] She came close to him, and he quickly seized her ear with his teeth and bit it off. The Mother upbraided⁴ him as an unnatural child, whereon he replied, "Ah! If you had beaten me when I first stole and brought to you that lesson-book, I should not have come to this, nor have been thus led to a disgraceful death."



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1. **Abstain (verb):** to refrain or hold back from doing something
2. Physical reprimands of children were common in Aesop's time, as a way to shape their behavior.
3. **Commend (verb):** to praise
4. **Upbraid (verb):** to reprimand, scold, or criticize in a harsh way

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the story in no more than two complete sentences. [RL.2]

2. How does the mother respond to her son's thieving? [RL.3]
 - A. She responds positively and encourages him to do more.
 - B. She demands he return the stolen item.
 - C. She reprimands him physically for this crime.
 - D. She asks him to steal more.
3. What does the word "commended" most likely mean as it is used in paragraph 2? [RL.4]
 - A. praised
 - B. scolded
 - C. beat
 - D. supported
4. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes a central idea in the text? [RL.2]
 - A. Stealing is wrong.
 - B. Parents should always be held accountable for their children.
 - C. People should be more aware of how their words and actions shape others.
 - D. Punishment should be absolute, regardless of situation.
5. PART B: Which of the following quotations best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "She not only abstained from beating him, but encouraged him."
 - B. "At last he was caught in the very act, and having his hands bound behind him, was led away to the place of public execution."
 - C. "His Mother followed in the crowd and violently beat her breast in sorrow..."
 - D. "Ah! If you had beaten me when I first stole and brought to you that lesson-book, I should not have come to this..."

