

## Grade 3 Playlist: Determine the Central Message

*Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2:*

- Determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

### Welcome

Stories can do more than just entertain. Some stories teach readers lessons about life. Many stories that teach lessons were told aloud for centuries before they were written down. These stories were passed down from parents to children. Many of these stories are still told today.

### Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- determine the central message, lesson, or moral in a text.
- explain how the message or moral is told through key details in the text.

### Review

#### Key Terms

- A **fable** is a short story that teaches a lesson, or moral. It may have magical elements or animals with human traits.
- A **folktale** is a story usually passed by word of mouth. Folktales come from a certain culture or country.
- A **myth** is a traditional story that describes the early history of a culture. Myths often use magic to explain laws of nature that people once did not understand.
- A **moral** is a lesson to show right from wrong.
- The **central message** is the main information the author wants the reader to learn from a story.
- **Key details** are the most important details that help tell a story.

### Exploring the Standard

Some of the best stories have a moral, or message. They teach readers something about how they should act or about how the world works. In many cultures, the stories warn people to be good. The moral explains what happens when people are greedy or unfair. These tales often are told to children to teach them right from wrong. The ancient Greek culture even had myths in which gods and kings learned important lessons.



## Example 1

In the Greek myth about King Midas, a greedy king is granted a wish in which everything he touches turns to gold. With this power, he accidentally turns his daughter into gold. The king learns that what he thought he wanted so badly was actually a curse. The moral of the story is that love for a family member is more important than gold.

### Watch!

Watch the video of the Greek myth, “Midas’ Touch.” Read the text as it appears on the screen.

- <https://www.opened.com/video/midas-touch-greek-myth-story-for-children/70192>

## A Closer Look: The Central Message and Key Details

The key details of story help to show the reader what the central message is. When listening to a fable, folktale, or myth, pay attention to the details the author gives about what the characters say and do. Does a character act greedy? Is the character selfish or mean to others? Characters often learn lessons by making mistakes or having bad things happen to them. When the character learns his or her lesson, the reader often does, too.

## Example 2

This Aesop’s fable, “The Crow and the Pitcher,” has a clear moral. In fact, Aesop directly tells the reader the moral in the last line of the story.

<sup>1</sup>A thirsty Crow found a Pitcher with some water in it, but so little was there that, try as she might, she could not reach it with her beak, and it seemed as though she would die of thirst within sight of the remedy. At last she hit upon a clever plan. She began dropping pebbles into the Pitcher, and with each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it reached the brim, and the knowing bird was enabled to quench her thirst.

—Necessity is the mother of invention.

The last line of the fable states that “necessity is the mother of invention.” This means that people are forced to be clever when they have a serious need. But even if the text did not state the moral directly, the reader still could look at the key details in the text to tell what the lesson is. The narrator says, “it seemed as though she would die of thirst within sight of the remedy.” This sentence shows how serious the crow’s problem was. The crow would die if she did not think of a plan to get the water from the pitcher. Then the narrator explains that dropping pebbles into the water was the crow’s plan. The narrator states, “with each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it reached the brim.” These details help support the idea that the crow *had* to think of something clever to save her own life. The key details gave the reader a clue about the author’s message.

### Listen!

Listen to “The Crow and the Pitcher” read aloud, beginning at 0:27. This version is slightly different from the version above.

- [http://ia802700.us.archive.org/4/items/inthenursery\\_1210\\_librivox/inthenursery\\_047\\_miller.mp3](http://ia802700.us.archive.org/4/items/inthenursery_1210_librivox/inthenursery_047_miller.mp3)



## Teaching Notes: Determine the Central Message

The goal of RL.3.2 is for students to recognize the central message, moral, or lesson in a fable, myth, or folktale, and to identify key details that support that message.

### Activities

1. Discuss the folktale “Thunder and Anansi” with students. Have students identify the lesson of the story and explain why Anansi is considered a trickster. Ask students to mention key details that support their ideas. For example, the fact that Anansi hides the magical pot instead of sharing it shows that he is dishonest, which matches his role as a trickster. The phrases “The stick began to beat him” and “his many bruises” tell readers that Anansi suffers for his greed. The narrator also tells readers that Anansi wishes “he had acted more wisely from the beginning.” Together, these details show that Anansi learns a lesson: do not be greedy.
2. To give students practice recognizing the message or moral of different stories, gather several fables and list the moral or message of each fable separately on the board. Then have students take turns reading each fable aloud. After each fable, have the class vote on which message applies to that story. Ask students to identify key details that support their answer.

### Differentiation Ideas

1. If students have trouble identifying textual evidence to support their identification of a book’s moral or lesson, provide them with a list of questions to guide them through the process. For example, the list can include questions such as, “Which character has a problem?”, “How did the character change?”, and “What lesson did the character learn?”
2. Invite students to write their own folktale, myth, or fable. Remind them that their tale should have a moral or lesson for the reader to identify. Then have students share their story with a partner and challenge the partner to identify the central message. Students should provide textual evidence to support their answer.

### Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RL.3.2:

- This site has a list of fables with clear morals. Each fable is followed by a short analysis.  
<http://www.best-childrens-books.com/stories-with-morals.html>
- In this lesson, students use graphic organizers and sentence frames to determine the moral of a fable.  
<http://www.cpalms.org/Public/PreviewResource/Preview/54947>
- In this lesson, students identify the morals of a variety of stories, including Aesop’s fables and a Dr. Seuss book.  
<http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit49/lesson1.html>

