

LESSON 9. A fable

Communicative area: inferring meaning from context

1. a) Talk to your partner and answer the question.

If the main characters of the story are Mr Horsefly, Mr Beetle, Mrs Spider, Miss Mantis, Mr Grasshopper what might the story be about?



grasshopper



mantis



spider



beetle



horsefly

b) Unscramble the sentence to check your answer.

short animals, that, A fable story, in prose or verse, usually is about teaches a traditional a moral lesson.

2. Match the following expressions with their equivalents.

1. work out
2. without a doubt
3. to put her nails right
4. keep up to a standard
5. to protect
6. burst out laughing
7. for a start
8. let them open their mouths

- a) let them speak
- b) for sure
- c) find out
- d) to maintain at a high level
- e) to keep safe from harm
- f) suddenly start laughing
- g) to polish nails
- h) to begin with

3. a) Read the fable and say what Mr Horsefly was proud about.

b) Read the fable again and fill in the table.

	What Mr Horsefly thought the characters wanted to buy	What the characters really wanted to buy
Mr Beetle
Mrs Spider
Miss Mantis
Mr Grasshopper

Mr Horsefly was the new head of the forest post office. He had put a lot of time and effort into getting this highly respected position. If you asked Mr. Horsefly, he would tell you that he got the job thanks to his great deductive gifts.

On his first day at work, into the post office came Mr Beetle, Mrs Spider, Miss Mantis, and Mr Grasshopper .

Mr Horsefly wouldn't **let them open** their mouths.

"Don't tell me, don't tell me. I can **work out** what each of you came for," he said, putting a book, a plastic mat, a nail file, and some protective goggles on the counter. "The nail file will be for Mrs Spider, **without a doubt**. With all the scratching she does, she'll need **to put** her nails **right**. "The mat," he went on, without giving anyone time to react, "without even having to think about it, I give it to Mr Grasshopper, since he must have to train pretty hard **to keep** all his hopping about **up to a standard**. The safety goggles have to be for Mr Beetle, because having to spend all day with his face so close to the ground, he'll be needing something **to protect** his eyes. And finally, this big book here, has to be a Bible. I'll have to give that to Miss Praying Mantis, whom I would like to ask to include me in her supplications to The Almighty. As you will see..."

They didn't let him finish. The comment about the mantis – well known for having changed her name from Miss Praying Mantis to simply Miss Mantis – was just too



nail file



goggles

much for everyone, and they **burst out laughing**...

“Not much of a detective, are you!” said Mr Grasshopper, between chuckles. “**For a start**, Mrs Spider came for the book. She’s very quiet, and doesn’t scratch a soul. The mat is for Mr Beetle, who likes to sunbathe in his swimming pool, and do it lying on his back. Miss Mantis will, of course, want the nail file. She’s a bit of a flirt, you know. And the protective goggles are for me. I’m not as young as I was, and don’t see too well. These days when I’m hopping on the grass I get the odd black eye...”

“Uhu,” Mr Horsefly interrupted, recovering a little from his embarrassment, “then you do, in fact, hop on grass!”

4. Do you know any other fables, fairy-tales, stories which tell us about stereotypes? Compare with your partner. Share with the class.



DEBATE

- 1** Motion for your debate: There is no such thing as national character. All people are different.
- 2** Work in two groups. One will be proposing the motion. The other will be opposing the motion.
- 3** Within each group brainstorm the facts and arguments to support your idea.
- 4** Choose two speakers for each group. Speaker 1 (group 1) will name the motion and make three points, supporting each with facts.
- 5** Speaker 1 (group 2) opposes Speaker 1 (group 1) and makes three points against the motion.
- 6** Speaker 2 (group 1) provides three new arguments.
- 7** Speaker 2 (group 2) opposes them.
- 8** The class votes in favour or against the motion.