



PRINTABLE LESSON

The Gloomy Deer

A lesson in telling what happened from what you fear will happen



One complete lesson from The Sing Me a Fable Lesson Book

Ages 4 to 8 . Printable . 26 lessons in the full book

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The Gloomy Deer

Fable P from Sing Me a Fable — a lesson in telling what happened from what you fear will happen

AGE	LENGTH	SUBJECT	GROUP
4–7 (Pre-K to Year 2)	30–40 minutes	PSHE · SEL · Speaking	Whole class, then pairs

Note before you start. This lesson does not teach children to pretend to be happy, or that feeling worried is wrong. It teaches the difference between what actually happened and what you're afraid might happen — those are two different things, and mixing them up is what makes gloominess so heavy to carry.

Learning objective

Children can separate what actually happened from what they expect to happen next, and notice how often the second one turns out wrong.

You will need

The fable, read aloud

Two cards: WHAT HAPPENED / WHAT I FEAR

Poster P to colour

The song (optional)

Before the story

4 minutes

Ask: “Has something ever seemed like it was going to go badly, and then it didn't? What was that like, waiting for the bad thing that never came?”

Take two or three answers, and don't correct anyone who says the bad thing did happen — that's real too.

Read the fable

5 minutes

Read fable P aloud. The deer expects every day to go wrong before it's even started, and it colours everything he does. Read him gently — he isn't being dramatic on purpose, this is genuinely how the day feels to him.

Talk about it

10 minutes

1. How many of the bad things the deer expected actually happened?
2. Did expecting the worst make him more ready for it, or did it just make the good parts of the day harder to notice?
3. Is it possible to notice a real danger without deciding, in advance, that everything will go wrong?

Question 3 is the careful one. The fable isn't arguing that caution is bad — it's arguing that deciding the outcome before it happens closes you off from noticing when it doesn't.

Main activity: What happened, or what I fear?

12 minutes

1. Read out a short situation from the sheet on the back.
2. The class sorts it: is this something that **actually happened**, or something the deer is **afraid will happen**?
3. Hold up the matching card.
4. For each WHAT I FEAR one, ask: has this happened yet? What would we actually know, if we waited and watched?

Ask, at the end: “Which pile was bigger — things that happened, or things the deer was scared might happen?”

The fear pile is almost always bigger. That's the pattern worth naming, gently, without turning it into a lecture.

Plenary

4 minutes

“Next time you're sure something's going to go wrong, what's one way you could check whether that's true yet?”



Play it together

Put the game on the board. At every choice, stop, let the class vote, then press the card they chose.



Scan to play

OPEN IT

singmeafable.com/arcade/the-gloomy-deer

UNLOCK WORDS

WAITING FOR

CHOICES

6, about 2 minutes of play

Level 1 · The sunny meadow



The Golden Morning

A "Bowling balls?! Screams RUN TO THE CAVE!"

B "Pool time! Put on the floaties!" ✓



The Afternoon Breeze

A "Hide! The wind is an evil waffle-stealing monster!"

B "Freezing into popsicles? Nah, let's eat waffles!" ✓

Level 2 · The summer party



The River Splash

A "Chocolate hooves?! Wrap me in bubble wrap!"

B "Let's do cannonballs, I am telling you — don't be such a pessimist!" ✓



The Dance Party

A "No dancing! Fireflies will bite my tail!"

B "Spaghetti legs? Perfect for the noodle dance! Let's wiggle!" ✓



The last level, and what to ask

The tick marks the choice that earns the stars. Keep this page to yourself while the class votes.

Level 3 · The leaf disaster



The Flying Leaf Attack

A "AGHH! Run inside the cave and lock the door with 100 padlocks!"

B "It's just one leaf! Throw them all in the air and JUMP!" ✓



The Autumn Apple Feast

A "Snow monster toes! I'm staying in this cave until I'm 100!"

B "Snow monsters like apples too, but I'm eating it FIRST!" ✓

Ask at every choice

Before pressing: "Which card would you press, and why?"

After it plays out: "What changed because of that choice? What would the other card have done?"

How it joins the lesson

The main activity, **What happened, or what I fear?**, takes the same lesson off the screen and into the room. Play the game first, so the class has already watched both kinds of choice play out before they make one themselves.

Every choice plays out and nothing is timed, so a wrong vote is something to talk about, not a failure. Stars at the end of each level show how many right choices the class made.



Happened, or feared?

Six lines. Sort what's real from what's still just a worry.

WHAT THE DEER SAYS	SORT IT
"It's cloudy. It's going to rain all day and ruin everything."	WHAT I FEAR
"I tripped on that root. My leg hurts."	WHAT HAPPENED
"Nobody's going to want to play with me today."	WHAT I FEAR
"My friend didn't wave back. She must be angry at me forever."	WHAT I FEAR
"I got the answer wrong."	WHAT HAPPENED
"I got one answer wrong, so I'm going to fail at everything today."	WHAT I FEAR

Rows five and six are the same starting fact with two very different endings. That pairing is worth reading slowly – it shows the jump from fact to fear happening in real time.

Why this matters, said plainly

A worry that hasn't happened yet still feels completely real. The skill isn't switching it off – it's noticing which pile a thought belongs in, so it doesn't quietly become a fact.

Never tell a child their worry is silly. Ask instead whether it's happened yet, and what they'd actually see if it did.

Watch for this

Don't push a child toward false cheerfulness. A sad or worried feeling that's actually about something real deserves to be heard, not sorted into a card and dismissed.

This activity works on future fears, not on present feelings. Keep that distinction clear if a child brings something real and current into the room.

Adapting for your class

Age 4 · Pre-K. Do two or three lines only, and let you hold both cards while the class points. Skip the discussion questions – the sorting itself is the whole lesson at this age.

Ages 5–7 · K to Year 2. Run it as written. Rows five and six together are worth extra time; most children only notice the pattern once you slow down there.

Ages 7–8 · Year 3. Ask them to write their own pair, like rows five and six – one fact, then a feared version of where it leads. Reading a few aloud does more than any explanation.

Mixed ages: an older child sorts silently while a younger one asks "has it happened yet?" after each card. The question matters more than who says it.

What children take away

- **A fear is not a fact until it happens.** The two can look identical from the inside.
- **Expecting the worst doesn't prepare you for it.** It just makes the good parts harder to see.
- **Noticing real danger is different from deciding everything will go wrong.** One protects you; the other just weighs on you.

If you have more time

- **Colour the poster.** Ask what the deer might be worried about in the picture, and whether it's actually happening.
- **Sing it.** The fable's song with on-screen words runs about 90 seconds.
- **Play it.** The browser game lets the child choose how the deer answers each invitation, the gloomy way or the bright way, and each answer plays out.