

A Lesson to Compare and Contrast the Algerian folk tale “How the Animals Kept the Lions Away” by Inea Bushnaq and “The Bremer Stadt Musicians” (The Bremen City Musicians) from Grimm’s Fairy Tales (German).

Resources: maps of Algeria, Germany

Before Reading the Texts

Building Background:

“How the Animals Kept the Lions Away” is an Algerian folk tale. Algeria is a country in North Africa. Most of Algeria’s land is covered by the Saharan Desert, one of the largest deserts in the world. Little agriculture can take place due to the lack of precipitation. Many of Algeria’s people live as nomads, wandering from place to place to find food for their cattle. The Bedouins are one of these nomadic groups who have wandered the Saharan Desert for thousands of years.

Most Bedouins are Muslims and speak Arabic. Storytelling always has been an important part of Arabic culture, and the Arabs have preserved and spread numerous stories that have become a treasured part of world literature.

Predict the Outcome

The animals in this folk tale include a rooster, a donkey, a ram, and a dog that all live in the desert. How do you predict the animals in this story will solve the problem of keeping the lions away? Predict with a partner how you believe the animals will accomplish this feat.

“How the Animals Kept the Lions Away”

Animal	Appearance	Personality	Role in the folk tale
Rooster			
Donkey			
Ram			
Dog			

“The Bremen City Musicians”

Donkey			
Dog			

Cat			
Rooster			

After reading both tales, **compare and contrast** these characters with the characters from Grimm’s Fairy Tales called “The Bremen City Musicians.”

“How the Animals Kept the Lions Away”
By Inea Bushnaq

Once when a tribe of Bedouins moved their camp to a new site, they left behind them a lame rooster, a broken-backed donkey, a sick ram, and a desert greyhound suffering from **mange**. The animals swore brotherhood and determined to live together. They wandered until they came to an unfrequented oasis, where they decided to settle.

One day when the rooster was flying to the top of a tree, he noticed something important: the opening to a grain silo full of barley. The food was wholesome, and he began to visit the place daily. Soon his feathers became glossy as polished silk, and his comb began to glow like the fire inside a ruby. The donkey, observing the improvements, asked his friend, “How is it that your cap has grown so bright?” The rooster **feigned** surprise and tried to change the subject. But with the perseverance of his race, the donkey continued to pester the fowl until at last he said, “Very well, I shall show you the reason why my cap has grown so right, but it must remain a secret between us.” The donkey promised to be discreet and the rooster led him to the grain silo.

At the sight of the barley the donkey flung himself into the grain and fed until he could eat no more. Brimming with well-being, he danced back to the others and said, “I feel the urge to sing come upon me. With your permission I shall bray awhile!” The animals objected. “What if a lion should hear you?” they said. “He will surely come and devour us all!” But despite his friends, the donkey could not contain his high spirits. He cantered off by himself and began to bray long and noisily.

Now, the lion did hear the sound and came streaking across the wilderness on his silent feet until he was within one spring of the donkey. “Sire,” he said. “I see that my fate has been written, but I beg you to do me the favor not to devour me without my friends. It would be more honorable, considering that the animals of this oasis have sworn an oath of brotherhood to live together and die together, if you made an end of us all without exception.” The lion **conceded** the merit of this plea and allowed the donkey to guide him to his friends.

When the other animals saw the donkey leading a lion toward them, they put their heads together and said, “How can we defend ourselves against a lion!” And they made their plans. When the lion came near they all said with one voice, “Greetings and welcome, uncle lion!” Then the ram butted him in his side and knocked the breath out of

his lungs, the rooster flew up and pecked at his eyes, and the dog buried his teeth in the lion's throat. The lion died, of course. His flesh was given to the dog to eat, but the animals kept his skin and tanned it.

After that the four friends were able to live in peace for a time. However, soon the donkey was announcing, "I sense that I must bray again!" "Be still, O ill-omened animal!" said the others. But the donkey could not **suppress** his feelings, and his unmelodious cal rang repeatedly in the air.

A second lion prowling that quarter of the desert was attracted to the braying. With water running in his mouth, he hurried to the oasis. Again the donkey invited the lion to kill all the animals of the oasis together, and the lion gladly **complied**. This time too the rooster, the ram, and the donkey put their heads together when they saw the lion approaching and made a plan.

But what they said to the visitor was, "Welcome, may you be a thousand times welcome!" Then the rooster hinted to the ram, "Our guest should be made comfortable and have a carpet to sit on!" The ram trotted into their dwelling and brought out the tanned lion skin. "Be ashamed, O ram!" **chided** the rooster when he saw him. "Our guest is of a noble tribe. Do you want to disgrace us by offering him that old, worn-out mat?" Meekly the ram carried the lion skin back into the house and brought it out a second time. This time the dog expressed impatience. "Surely we have a softer carper than that, O ram! Besides, this one is quite faded." Obediently the ram took the lion skin inside and returned with it a third time. Now the donkey chimed in, "For one of such eminence as the lion, nothing but the finest can serve the occasion! Choose more carefully from among our store!" The ram withdrew into the house, but the lion did not linger further. He jumped to his feet and without bidding his hosts a formal farewell, ran away as fast as he was able.

Although the donkey continued to bray from time to time, no lion was seen near the animals' oasis again.

The Bremen City Musicians from Grimm's Fairy Tales

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm027.html>

Vocabulary

1. mange – n. a skin disease of animals.
2. feign – v. pretend; put on a false appearance.
3. concede – v. admit as true; acknowledge
4. suppress – v. keep in; hold back.
5. quarter – n. region; section.
6. comply – v. act in agreement with a request.
7. chide – v. scold

After Reading

Make Connections to the Stories:

1. Do you think it was fair for the donkey to put his friends in danger by bringing the lion to their oasis? Why or why not?
2. Compare the two solutions the animals had for keeping the lions away and your own prediction. Which one did you think was the best solution and why?
3. If the characters were people, what kind of person would each character be? Refer to the charter you made as you read the story to help you analyze the character types.
4. What message did you get from this story? Is the message or theme relevant to your life or not? Explain in a complete sentence.

The Algerian folk tale “How the Animals Kept the Lions Away” originated in India. Look at the culture chart below. Notice that the cultures of both India and Algeria are represented in the Algerian folk tale. How would you change each item listed in the chart to make the folk tale represent **your own culture**? Add your ideas to the chart. In the German version of the folk tale “The Bremen City Musicians” what stands out as part of the German culture?

Indian Culture	Algerian Culture	German Culture	My Culture
grain silo for farming	Bedouins	forest setting	perhaps Native Americans, or urban desert dwellers
ruby, a gem commonly found in India	oasis	fachwerk farmhouse	
	desert greyhound		
	lack of food for the animals		
	carpets		

Student Synthesis / Products

Write your own version of a folk tale. Include the same characters (appropriate for the area you live in), but focus on how the ram and the dog get the rooster and the donkey to share the grain. Refer to the chart you made as you read the story to see their roles.

Fable in the Funnies. Make up a comic-strip version of “How the Animals Kept the Lions Away.”