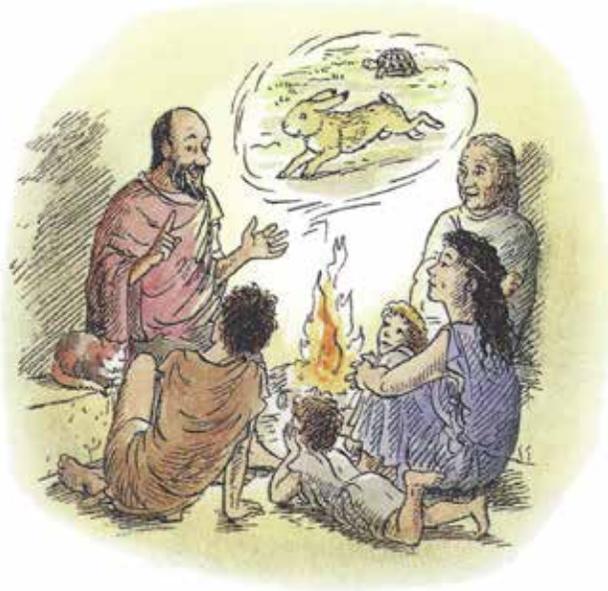


# Who was Aesop?

**A**esop is a legendary figure. Maybe he was a real person who created the fable for western literature, and maybe he created and told many of the fables in this collection. Maybe Aesop was created as a mythical storyteller who specialized in fables.



There are some legends about Aesop. If he lived, he probably lived about 2,500 years ago, in the 6th century B.C. He may have been born in Thrace (northern Greece). One legend says that he was a slave and lived on the island of Samos in the Aegean Sea.

There is no evidence that a person named Aesop actually wrote anything. What is true is

that, like Homer, he is credited as the inventor of stories that have been known everywhere in the world since ancient times.

That historians cannot agree on the details of his life or even if he really existed is not unusual for influential figures of the ancient world. They have the same problem with other profoundly important people: Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Confucius, the Yellow Emperor of China, Zoroaster, and Homer. Some scholars even doubt whether Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare just 400 years ago. Aesop may have been simply a well-known storyteller who never bothered to or was unable to write anything. It may be that his fables were passed down orally from generation to generation in true folk tradition.

It is known, however, that a collection of stories ascribed to Aesop was published in the 4th century B.C. This collection has been lost, but it may have been the basis for a later collection written in Latin in the 1st century A.D. by a Roman writer named Phaedrus. Another later collection was written in Greek by Babrius in the 2nd Century A.D. These two works were influential in establishing the fable as a story form. They were probably the inspiration for the French fabulist La Fontaine, who popularized the fable for the Western world in the 17th century.