

The Wolf and the House Dog

by Aesop *from The Aesop for Children*

There was once a Wolf who got very little to eat because the Dogs of the village were so wide awake and watchful. He was really nothing but skin and bones, and it made him very downhearted to think of it.

One night this Wolf happened to fall in with a fine fat House Dog who had wandered a little too far from home. The Wolf would gladly have eaten him then and there, but the House Dog looked strong enough to leave his marks should he try it. So the Wolf spoke very humbly to the Dog, complimenting him on his fine appearance.

"You can be as well-fed as I am if you want to," replied the Dog. "Leave the woods; there you live miserably. Why, you have to fight hard for every bite you get. Follow my example and you will get along beautifully."

"What must I do?" asked the Wolf.

"Hardly anything," answered the House Dog. "Chase people who carry canes, bark at beggars, and fawn on the people of the house. In return you will get tidbits of every kind, chicken bones, choice bits of meat, sugar, cake, and much more beside, not to speak of kind words and caresses."

The Wolf had such a beautiful vision of his coming happiness that he almost wept. But just then he noticed that the hair on the Dog's neck was worn and the skin was chafed.

"What is that on your neck?"

"Nothing at all," replied the Dog.

"What! nothing!"

"Oh, just a trifle!"

"But please tell me."

"Perhaps you see the mark of the collar to which my chain is fastened."

"What! A chain!" cried the Wolf. "Don't you go wherever you please?"

"Not always! But what's the difference?" replied the Dog.

"All the difference in the world! I don't care a rap for your feasts and I wouldn't take all the tender young

lambs in the world at that price." And away ran the Wolf to the woods.

There is nothing worth so much as liberty.

Questions

1. What does liberty mean?
2. What does "trifle" mean when the Dog says the mark from his collar is "just a trifle"?
3. What was one thing the Dog told the Wolf he must do if he was to live among people?
4. Why do you think the idea of a chain upsets the Wolf?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. humbly
2. fawn
3. caresses
4. chafed
5. trifle

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "So the Wolf spoke very **humbly** to the Dog, complimenting him on his fine appearance"

a. crossly; crabbily b. happily; joyfully c. meekly or respectfully d. softly or quietly

2. "'bark at beggars, and **fawn** on the people of the house'"

a. baby deer b. spy or watch c. cry or howl d. obey or pay attention

3. "'and much more beside, not to speak of kind words and **caresses**.'"

a. pats or petting b. treats or goodies c. blankets or beds d. toys or games

4. "the hair on the Dog's neck was worn and the skin was **chafed**"

a. dark or black b. smooth; silky c. irritated; scratched d. spotted or freckled

5. "'Oh, just a **trifle!**'"

a. insect or spider b. tiny bit; little thing c. wart or bump d. sweet dessert