Why Parrots Mimic Humans
A Tale from Thailand

One day the lori bird saw a new bird in the forest. "Who are you, and what can you do?" he asked.

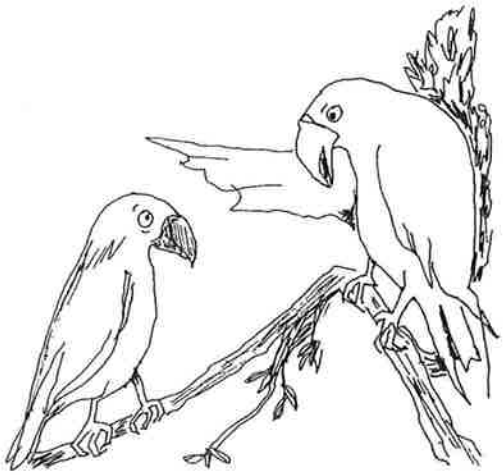
The new bird replied, "I'm a parrot. I've just moved here to be near humans because I can understand and speak their languages."

The lori bird nodded knowingly and said, "Welcome. You're a stranger here so let me give you some advice. You and I are rare among birds and animals because we can understand and speak human languages. It is wonderful, but it is also very dangerous."

"What do you mean?" asked the parrot, confused.

"For many years, I lived with humans," said the lori bird. "They took care of me because I could speak. But sometimes I spoke what I really thought about things. This often made them angry and finally they drove me away. This is my warning. Humans love language. They love to speak. When they learn what you can do, they will make a fuss over you. But say nothing except what they teach you. Just repeat their exact words and nothing more. For humans love to hear only their own words and thoughts repeated over and over again. They aren't interested in truth or in what other creatures might think." The parrot listened and thanked the lori bird.

What the lori bird predicted did, in fact, happen. People learned about the parrot. They brought him home, took care of him, and made a fuss about how well he could speak. But he always remembered the warning. He was always afraid of saying what he saw or thought. So he only echoes the words he hears humans speak.



Advice to a Teacher
by Fanny Jackson Coppin

1. Never let the word *dumb* be used in your class.
2. Many children called "dull" or "dumb" would learn quickly under a patient, wise, and skillful teacher.
3. Teachers should try to improve themselves just as much as they try to improve the student.
4. Remember that when you are teaching, you are dealing with a human being, whose needs are like your own.
5. To get the benefit of education, the students must educate themselves. The teacher can only direct that effort.



The Velveteen Rabbit
by Margery Williams

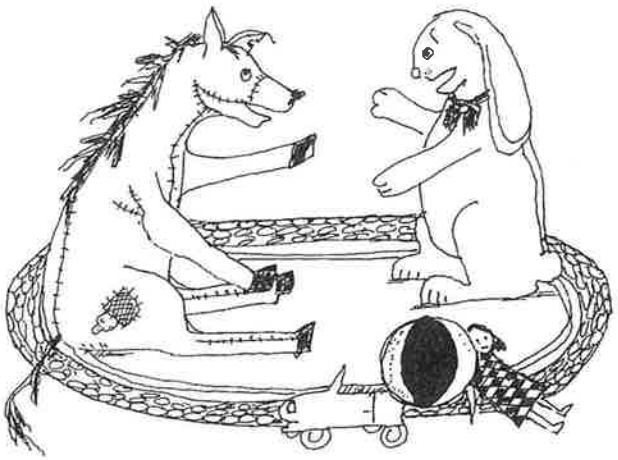
"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."



Catching Fish in the Forest

A Tale from Russia

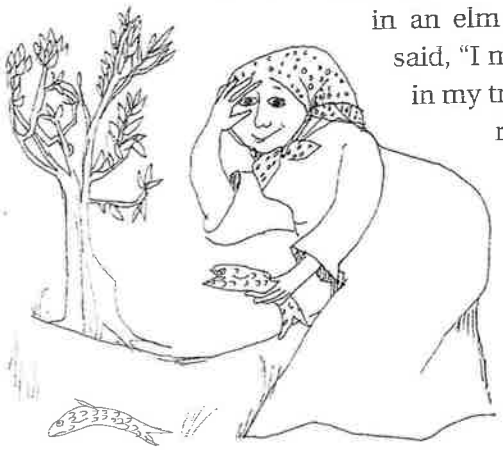
One day, a farm worker was digging in a field and found a large box of treasure. He took it home and said to his wife, "Look what I found. Where can we hide it?" They decided to bury it in the dirt floor. But then the man thought to himself, "My wife can't keep secrets. Soon the whole village will know about the treasure box." So he dug it up and buried it again behind the chicken coop. Then he went out and bought some oatmeal cookies and some fish, and he caught and killed a rabbit.

Very early the next morning, he quietly went out of their hut and left the fish on different paths in the forest. He threw the cookies up into the trees, and he tied the dead rabbit to a line that he dropped into the river. Later that morning, he said to his wife, "Please come with me into the forest and help me catch fish on the footpath for our dinner tonight."

She was amazed and cried out, "Fish in the forest?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm told there are several biting there today." So they went into the forest.

Very soon, she found a codfish on the footpath, then other small fish nearby. She couldn't believe her eyes, but she picked up the fish and put them in her basket. She looked up, and there on an oak tree's branches she saw some cookies, and over there some more cookies in a maple tree, and yet more in an elm tree. She showed her husband, and he said, "I must look to see whether I caught a rabbit in my trap." So he pulled the fishing line from the river, and there was the dead rabbit. "This is unbelievable!" she cried. But she added the rabbit to the fish and cookies in her basket, and when they returned home, she cooked a fine meal.



A week later, the man was told to come to the duke's palace. He knew the secret of his buried treasure had been told to people by his wife and that the duke had heard about it. Sure enough, the duke asked him, "Did you find some treasure and bury it in your house?" "No," replied the man. The duke said, "But your wife has been telling everyone that you did." "Oh, she's crazy," said the man. "She sees things that are not there. Just a few days ago she told me she had caught fish in the forest and a rabbit in the river and found cookies in the trees."

So the duke called for the farmer's wife and asked her whether her story about the treasure was true and when it had happened. "Of course it's true," she said. "It happened the day before I caught fish in the forest; in fact, the night before that, it had rained cookies. My husband caught a rabbit in the river with a fishing line the same day, too."

Now the duke knew the woman was crazy, and the man kept the treasure he had found.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X
by Malcolm X

Mr. Gohannas was close cronies with some other men who, some Saturdays, would take me and Big Boy with them hunting rabbits. I had my father's .22 caliber rifle; my mother said it was all right for me to take it with me. The old men had a set rabbit-hunting strategy that they had always used. Usually when a dog jumps a rabbit and the rabbit gets away, that rabbit will somehow instinctively run in a circle and return sooner or later past the very spot where he originally was jumped. Well, the old men would just sit and wait in hiding for the rabbit to come back, then get their shots at him. I got to thinking about it, and finally I thought of a plan. I would separate from them and Big Boy, and I would go to a point where I figured that the rabbit, returning, would have to pass me first.

The plan worked like magic. I began to get three and four rabbits before they got one. The astonishing thing was that none of the old men ever figured out why. They outdid themselves exclaiming what a sure shot I was. I was about twelve then. All I had done was to improve on their strategy, and it was the beginning of a very important lesson in life—that anytime you find someone more successful than you are, especially when you're both engaged in the same business, you know they're doing something that you aren't.



On the Nature of Things

Lucretius

Today we will talk about the universe. We all know what that is, don't we? It's everything: the trees, the oceans, and land here on the earth, the planets and the sun, the stars that we see at night, and all the empty space. Empty space is part of the universe too. We also ask how big is it. Does it just go on and on or does it end? I say that it goes on and on in every direction. It is not bounded anywhere. If the universe were bounded, then it would have an edge. But if there is an edge then there is something beyond it that makes it possible for us to see the edge. But the universe is everything, so this thing that we imagined beyond the edge must also be part of the universe. It doesn't matter where you stand in the universe or where you are, it goes on and on without any limit or edge or end in every direction. But this sounds hard to accept, so let us try to imagine the opposite. Let us try to imagine an edge or boundary to the universe, an end to all space. And let us now suppose that a person goes there with a spear and hurls it with all the force possible. What happens to the spear? It either goes on in the direction it was thrown or something stands in its way, stops it and sends it back in some other direction. But either of these possibilities forces you to confess that the universe goes on without end. If the spear continues, then it wasn't at the edge. If something stops it then what stops it was at the edge, so the spear wasn't thrown from the edge. Wherever you place the limit, you can ask what happens with the spear. When you do, you realize the universe can't have an end.

The Knight's Tale
by Geoffrey Chaucer

Prince Arcite and Prince Palamon, both from Thebes, were the closest of friends. They were captured in war and locked up together in a prison tower in Athens. One day Palamon looked into a courtyard and saw Emily, a beautiful princess. He immediately fell in love with her. His friend Arcite, hearing Palamon speaking about her aloud, came to the window. He too immediately fell in love with the same woman. The men quarreled. They became jealous of one another, and their friendship was destroyed. Sometime later Arcite was freed from prison on the condition that if he were ever found in or near Athens, he would be killed.

When Arcite heard about his freedom, he felt sick. He cried and cursed the day of his birth. "My freedom is worse than my prison. Here in this tower, I would have been happy forever. Palamon, you are lucky. You, at least, can look out of the window and see Emily every day. And fortune can change. Though you are in prison, you are near her. You may be released and have the woman you desire. But I must leave and live at home in Thebes, an exile from where I wish to be. We never know what we want and pray for. We always look for happiness in the wrong place. I was convinced that if I could only get out of prison, my happiness would be a certainty. Now I am free, but since I cannot see Emily, I am like a corpse. In searching for happiness, we are like a drunk who knows well enough that he has a home but doesn't know where it is.

Palamon, when he learned the news, screamed in anger. "Arcite, you've won. You can walk freely in Thebes, your home. You can raise an army and go to war with Athens. Perhaps through some bold attack or a treaty, you will gain Emily for your wife. Your position is so much better than mine. You are a prince again and free. I must remain here dying in a cage. Fate, which rules the world, is cruel. It treats men no differently from animals. But an animal may, at least, do what it pleases. Men, however, are often jailed for no reason at all and others who do harm go free. There is great misery in the world."

So the summer passed and its long nights increased the torments of the princes. I don't know which of them had it worse. Palamon is condemned to perpetual imprisonment until he dies. Arcite, exiled from Athens on pain of death, can never see his beloved again. Let me put the question to you, lovers and readers. Who had the worst of it? One of them can see Emily every day from his window, but stays in prison forever. The other, free to go where he pleases, may never see Emily again.