

Anta and Abla

by Amber Hsu, told by Islam Boukkaz

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Further information about the story is available at www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/abla-and-antarah

Synopsis

Antar is a slave who dreams of being a warrior. One day, he confronts a prince's servant for being nasty to an old woman. For this, he is taken to see the King, who rewards his bravery and gives him a job at the palace.

As Antar grows up, he falls in love with a princess, Abla, and creates poetry for her. She falls in love with him too. Her father, Prince Malik, is enraged and sends his men for him. They run away at the sight of a lion, hoping it will kill Antar; Antar, however, takes a spear that had been dropped by one of the men and kills the lion. The next day he presents the lion skin to the King; but Prince Malik recognises the spear, accuses Antar of theft and Antar is forbidden from raising a weapon again.

Some time later, Abla is taken away by a man from another tribe. Prince Malik begs Antar to help. In return, Antar asks for his freedom and for Abla's hand in marriage. Prince Malik agrees, and Antar rides away on a black stallion, kills every one of Abla's captors and carries Abla home in triumph.

Prince Malik remains cold, and tells Antar he must find 1000 red camels as a bride gift, the type only found in Persia. Antar duly rides to Persia, where he convinces the King there that he can kill an angry lioness who is threatening the kingdom. When he reaches the site of the lion, he finds only a Queen who has a terrible roar. He recites poetry to her, and she calms down. In return, the relieved King gives him 1000 red camels.

He returns to his homeland to marry Abla and they live in happiness for the rest of their days.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the clip of Islam Boukkaz telling the story of Anta and Abla www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptgjY23qCqo

Read the story, retold for the Story Museum by Amber Hsu.

Read more about the background to the story here: www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/abla-and-antarah

Part 2: Discuss the Story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story.

KS1 questions	KS2 questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were your favourite parts of this story? Why?• How did this story make you feel? Did you feel different emotions at different times? What emotions were these? Can you add to the vocabulary below? I felt...<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Happy- Excited- Scared- Nervous- Relieved- Angry• What words could you use to describe Antar?• This is a story of bravery. At what points in the story was Antar brave and courageous?• The Queen is mistaken as a Lionness because of her terrible roar. If the other characters were animals, what do you think they would be and why?:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Antar- Abla- The Prince's servant- The poor old woman in the street- The King of Antar's kingdom- Prince Malik- The tribesman who stole Abla away- The King of the other kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were your favourite parts of this story?• This is a very dramatic story. What are the moments of drama?• Does the class prefer the moments of drama, or the quieter moments between? Why do you think this is?• Discuss the following abstract nouns. Where, if at all, do they appear in the story?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fear- Relief- Love- Hate- Courage- Anger- Happiness- Jealousy- Generosity• What words can you use to describe Antar?• Antar is both a warrior and a poet. This is unusual in traditional stories. Usually the characters are one-dimensional; they only do one thing. For example, they are either good or evil; they either fight or stand back. But Antar is two-dimensional. Being both a warrior and a poet can help him at different times in different situations. Why is it better to be two-dimensional than one-dimensional?• If Abla was two-dimensional, what could her extra talent be?• If Prince Malik was two-dimensional, what could his extra talent be? Would it make him a better, more rounded person?

Part 3: Play the Story

KS1 activities	KS2 activities
<p>Story Walk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students stand in their own space around the room. They have each become Antar in their own story worlds. • Read out Resource A line by line. It is the section of the story in which Antar kills the lion. As you read, the students use the space to mime the story. 	<p>Story Freeze Frame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In groups, students choose a moment from the story. They make a freeze frame. Present the freeze frames to the rest of the class, who guess which part of the story is being represented. • Discuss afterwards: what were the popular moments from the story to depict? Did everyone choose a particular moment from the story, or a variety of moments? Were these the moments of Antar the warrior, or of Antar the poet?
<p>Story Freeze Frame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In groups, students make a series of freeze frames showing different moments in the story. The sentences below can give some structure. Students in each group swap being 'Antar' each time so that everyone has a chance to be the hero! - Antar the slave confronting the prince's servant who has just knocked an old woman over. - Antar reciting poetry to courtiers in the Palace. - Antar killing a lion; the king's men running away with fear. - Antar on his black stallion, defeating the army of the enemy kingdom. - The Queen smashing plates; the King of Persia and his courtiers overhearing and looking terrified at the sound of the Lionness' roar. - Antar reciting poetry to the Queen - Antar and Abba leading 1000 red camels back to his kingdom. 	<p>Hotseating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a character from the story. This could be Antar, Abba, Prince Malik, the King, the King of the other kingdom, the Queen with the terrible roar. One volunteer comes to sit in the hotseat as the character. The rest of the class ask the character questions. Using these sentence starters can be helpful: - Why did you.... - How did you get the idea to... - How did you feel when.... - What were you thinking when.... - If you could go back to the past, what would you do differently? - What other options did you have when....? - How do you feel about (X other character)?

Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS1 activities

Another Chapter

- Antar returns home with the 1000 red camels. But Prince Malik is still not pleased, and sets Antar yet another task!
- In groups, plan, create and present another episode to the story.
- Use the following structure and modelled example:

Story Structure	Modelled Example
Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.	<i>Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.</i>
Prince Malik is not happy and sets Antar a very difficult task. What is the task?	<i>Prince Malik is not happy and tells Antar to get 10 drops of blood from a dragon.</i>
Antar uses his skills to complete the task.	<i>Antar finds a dragon sleeping in a cave. He carefully uses his spear to prick the dragon's tail and extract 10 drops of blood. This wakes the dragon who chases him down the mountainside, but Antar is so quick he reaches the palace unharmed.</i>
Antar goes back to Prince Malik to show him what he has done.	<i>Antar presents the 10 drops of blood to Prince Malik. Prince Malik doesn't believe it is dragon blood and sets him another task.</i>

Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS2 activities

Epics

- This story is an epic. Epics are not simple stories; they are more like soap operas, with episodes that go on and on and on and never seem to have an ending! Usually this is because enemies don't give up, or they keep taking revenge; no one lets up and forgives.
- In groups, plan, create and present another episode in the epic story. Antar comes back with 1000 red camels. Prince Malik is not pleased. What new (impossible) challenge does he set Antar? How does Antar achieve it? He must use both his skills as a warrior and his skills as a poet.
- Use the following structure and modelled example:

Story Structure	Modelled Example
Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.	<i>Antar returns to the Kingdom and shows Prince Malik the 1000 red camels.</i>
Prince Malik is still not satisfied and sets Antar a very difficult task. What is the task?	<i>Prince Malik tells Antar to get 10 drops of blood from a dragon.</i>
Antar uses his poetic skills to complete the task.	<i>Antar finds a dragon and recites such calming poetry to him that the dragon falls asleep.</i>
Antar also uses his warrior skills to complete the task.	<i>While the dragon is asleep, Antar uses his spear to prick the dragon in the tail and extract the blood. When the dragon seems to stir from the pain, Antar quickly recites more poetry to make the dragon fall asleep again.</i>
Antar goes back to Prince Malik to show him what he has done.	<i>Antar goes back to Prince Malik to give him the drops of dragon blood. Prince Malik doesn't believe it is dragon blood and sets him another task.</i>

The Calm of Poetry

- You are Antar, and you need to create a poem to calm down the Queen with her terrible roar.
- First discuss what you do when you want to calm down. Take deep breaths? Watch a film? Have a drink of water? Go for a walk? Message a friend?
- The poem will have 6 stanzas.
- First, decide on 2 lines as a class. These lines will be repeated throughout the poem. For example, 'Calm down, Queen, calm down' or 'Perhaps it's time to rest', or 'No need to roar again.'
- These lines we will call the 'Repeated Phrase.' – Repeated Phrase 1 and Repeated Phrase 2.
- Students take **Resource B**. They start by writing Repeated Phrase 1 in the lines shaded orange, and writing Repeated Phrase 2 in the lines shaded blue. If in doubt, refer to the modelled example.
- The students then use the prompts line by line to write the other lines, describing the different ways in which the Queen could calm down.
- Congratulate students on writing a villanelle!

Part 5: Taking it further

Similar stories to Anta and Abba:

Stories about finding your fortune and moving from rags to riches:

The Brave Weaver

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-brave-weaver

Dick Whittington

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/dick-whittington

Sinbad the Sailor

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/sinbad-the-sailor

Stories about star-crossed lovers:

Rama and Sita

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-story-of-rama-and-sita

Layla and Majnun

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/layla-and-majnun

Clean Water, Dirty Water

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/clean-water-dirty-water

Stories about being set great challenges

The Forging of the Sampo

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-forging-of-the-sampo

The Twelve Labours of Hercules

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/hercules

The Firebird

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-firebird

The Boyhood of Cù Chulainn

www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-boyhood-of-cu-chulainn

Antar and Abla

Resource A

Story Walk Prompts

- You are Antar, a slave. Every day you have to work hard in the house!
- Scrub the floor, polish the knives and forks and spoons, wash the clothes, feed the horses, groom the horses!
- Oh, these horses have done something nasty on the floor of the stable! Eugh – clean it up and throw it away!
- Now you have to go to market. Open the door and shut it. You are now in a busy, noisy street. Walk down the dusty road.
- Hey – can you believe it? A servant of the Prince has just knocked over a poor old woman! Go and confront him!
- Oh dear – he is angry and has knocked you down, too! And now the King is here! Quick – bow to the King!
- Oh – it seems the King is impressed with your bravery! He has given you a job! Bow and show how grateful you are!
- Your duty is to carry some pails of milk and carry it to a tent.
- Open the tent flap. Put the milk inside.
- Now close the tent flap and start to walk home.
- Hang on! Who was in that tent? She looked very nice!
- Go and open the tent again and recite some poetry to Abla!
- Oh no! Abla's father is angry! He is sending his men for you! Run!
- Wait – Stop – there's a lion in your path! Freeze!
- OK...it looks as though the lion hasn't seen you. Very slowly, move to a tree.
- Be as silent as you can! Don't move! Keep as tight as you can behind the tree!
- Now it's been a little while....very slowly.....carefully....peer behind the tree –
- Aha – all the men have run away, scared!
- Can you see a spear? One of the men has dropped it. It is very close to the lion, though. Careful....tiptoe... tiptoe...gently.....
- Slo-wly...pick up the spear.....
- The lion has turned to look at you! Now's your chance! Kill the lion! JAB! JAB again!
- Yes, he is dead!
- Now's the hard bit. Very, very carefully, pick up the lion and put him on your back. Oh, he is heavy!
- Drag him back to the King. Oh, it's so hot this afternoon, and this is hard work.
- Now bow to the King. Present him with the lion skin!
- Oh, he is so pleased! Bow again!

Antar and Abla

Resource B: Writing a Villanelle

	Line by line structure	Your poem draft	Modelled example
Stanza 1	Repeating phrase 1		<i>Calm down, Queen, calm down.</i>
	Describe how the Queen is when she's angry		<i>You are always being so loud.</i>
	Repeating Phrase 2		<i>No need to roar again.</i>
Stanza 2	You ask the Queen to stop doing something.		<i>Stop smashing the plates.</i>
	Why?		<i>They were very expensive.</i>
	Repeating phrase 1		<i>Calm down, Queen, calm down.</i>
Stanza 3	Advise a way in which she could calm down.		<i>Why don't you take some deep breaths?</i>
	How will it make her feel?		<i>It will help you think more clearly.</i>
	Repeating Phrase 2		<i>No need to roar again.</i>
Stanza 4	Give another piece of advice.		<i>I think you need ice cream.</i>
	How will it make her feel?		<i>Ice cream will make you smile.</i>
	Repeating phrase 1		<i>Calm down, Queen, calm down.</i>
Stanza 5	Give a third piece of advice.		<i>Or why don't you phone a friend?</i>
	How will it make her feel?		<i>They might make you laugh.</i>
	Repeating Phrase 2		<i>No need to roar again.</i>
Stanza 6	Say how Antar feels writing this poem.		<i>I enjoyed writing this poem for you.</i>
	Give a compliment to the Queen.		<i>You look much happier now.</i>
	Repeating phrase 1		<i>Calm down, Queen, calm down.</i>
	Repeating Phrase 2		<i>No need to roar again.</i>