

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

1. Read the story **A Family of Foxes** and answer the questions: *How did mother Fox treat her little ones? What did she do for them?*

### A Family of Foxes

(after Seton-Thompson)

That year the hens began to disappear from my uncle's farm. My duty was to find out why. After some careful observation I was sure that a fox was to blame. We knew that there was an old fox with his family living in the neighbourhood, but no one could imagine that they were so near. We called the old fox "Scarface" because of a scar reaching from his eye to the back of his ear.

We soon found that it was Scarface and his wife (we called her Vixen) that had made our woods their home. We were sure that they had come to our farm, because there was plenty of food about it.

One morning I found a nest of little foxes in a large hole at the bottom of a great old tree on a little hill. Near the top of the tree there was a small hole. I climbed up that tree and from there I could watch the interesting family that lived underneath. There were four little foxes; they looked strangely like little lambs, with their woolly coats, and long thick legs.

For many days I sat up in that tree and saw much of the training of the young ones. Vixen often brought home to them mice and birds and the little ones played with them before they ate them up.

Once I saw Vixen bring them a hen. A low call from the mother brought the little fellows out of their hole. They began a game that I thought charming.

They rushed at the hen and fought with it and with each other, while the mother, keeping a sharp eye for enemies, watched them with delight. The expression on her face was remarkable: with all the fox's wildness and cruelty there was the unmistakable look of the mother's pride and love.

The training of the little foxes continued. Some things they learned by instinct — how, it is difficult to say. Then as they grew up they were often taught by example. With time the lessons became more and more difficult. This was the beginning of their education. Afterwards as they grew stronger the foxes were taken farther away to begin the higher branches of their training. For each kind of animals they were taught a way to hunt, for every animal has some great strength, or it could not live, and some great weakness, or the other animals could not live! From their parents they learned the laws and rules of the fox world. How, it is not easy to say.

Meanwhile the hens continued to disappear. I had not betrayed to my uncle where the little foxes lived. Indeed, I thought much more of the little devils than I did of the hens, but my uncle was terribly angry and one day he started into the woods himself. He managed to trace old Scarface, and he shot him in the back.

But still the hens continued to disappear. My uncle's anger was so great that he sowed the woods with poison hoping that our own dogs would not touch it. He went out in the evenings with a gun and the two dogs to see what he could destroy.

Vixen knew well what poison was and paid no attention to it. Once she dropped a piece of poisoned meat into the hole of a skunk who was never afterwards seen. But now that there was no Scarface to help she could no longer spend time in breaking every track to their hole. So the end soon came. The dogs followed a hot track to their hole, and soon everybody knew that the family was at home. Then Spot, one of our dogs, did his best to go in after them. The whole secret was now out and the whole family doomed. One of the men began to dig them out, while we and the dogs stood by. Old Vixen soon showed herself in the near woods and led the dogs away but she ran back to find that we were still there and a man was digging.

After an hour's digging the man called: "Here they are, sir!" Before I could interfere three of the little foxes were dead. The fourth and the smallest was saved at the last moment. He gave one short cry, and his poor mother came up and circled quite near. He was dropped into a bag where he lay quite still. His unlucky brothers were buried under a few shovelfuls of earth. And we went back into the house. The little fox was soon chained in the yard. No one knew just why he was kept alive, but there was a change of feeling and no one wanted to kill him.

As night came the little fox became nervous and uneasy. He pulled at the chain and bit it. Suddenly he stopped as though he was listening, then he gave a short cry. A few minutes later a shadowy form appeared in the yard. The little fox ran to meet his mother. Quickly she took him in her mouth and turned to run away. But the moment the end of the chain was reached the little fox was rudely pulled from her mouth and she, frightened by the opening of a window, ran away.



When I was walking across the woods toward the foxes' hole I noticed that the poor heart-broken mother had come and dug out the bodies of her little ones. They were licked smooth and by them there were two of our hens fresh-killed.

Each night old Vixen came to the yard to nurse her baby and bring it fresh-killed hens. Those hens betrayed to my uncle the nightly visits. So, next night he sat and waited, gun in hand, for an hour. The loud "bang" an hour later told us Vixen had been seen.

Again next night found my uncle waiting in the yard. Soon a single shot was heard, but Vixen dropped the hen and got away. Yet next day it was seen by the number of the tracks that she had come again.

Such courage and faithfulness were sure to win respect. Next night there was nobody in the yard waiting with a gun. Could it be of any use? Would she come this time?

Would she? Hers was a mother's love. At midnight next night I again saw her. But she was carrying no food that could be seen. Had she failed at last?

No, far from this. The wild-mood mother's heart and hate were true. Her only thought had been to set her baby free. But everything she tried had failed.

The little fox took something she dropped and began eating it hungrily. But as he ate he cried out suddenly and soon he lay dead. The mother's love was strong in Vixen, but a higher thought was stronger. Now when she must choose for her little one a prisoner's life or sudden death she suppressed the mother in her and freed him by the one remaining door.

### **Do You Understand The Story?**

#### **2 Answer the questions.**

1. Where did the family of foxes live?
2. What did the little foxes look like?
3. What was the training of the little foxes that the author watched?
4. How did the lessons differ when the foxes grew stronger?
5. What did the author's uncle do to protect his farm from the family of foxes?
6. Why did the poison, he sowed the woods with, not help?
7. What did old Vixen do to try to save her little ones?
8. What happened to the little fox that remained alive?
9. How did he try to set himself free?
10. How did the mother fox try to save her baby?
11. What made the uncle sit up at night with a gun?
12. Why did he give up the idea of sitting up at night?
13. Which way to free her baby did the mother fox choose?

#### **3 Find the facts that prove:**

- that the author thought more of the little foxes than he did of the hens;
- that the author's uncle did all he could to protect his farm;
- that old Vixen had great courage and love;
- that Mother fox was heart-broken.

### **What Do You Think?**

#### **4 Think and say :**

- why little foxes were taught in a different way to hunt each kind of animal;
- why the author's uncle had to be cruel and shoot Scarface;
- why nobody wanted to kill the smallest fox;
- why Mother fox's behaviour was sure to win respect;
- why Mother fox gave her little one poisoned food.

#### **5 What do you think were the author's feelings when he thought about the family of foxes and their end?**

### **How Good Is Your English?**

#### **6 Use the proper word from the box.**

observation / law / attention / respect / example / thought
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1. Don't pay any . . . . . to his words – he doesn't know what he is talking about.

2. Mother felt happy at the . . . . . that all her children were safe.
3. The boy decided to follow the . . . . . of his father who was a doctor and study medicine.
4. Of course, robbery is against the . . . . .!
5. If you have . . . . . for the law, you think it's important to obey it.
6. After some careful . . . . . we could describe the birds behavior in many different situations.

**7 Complete the phrases with appropriate nouns.**

- to watch . . . . . (to watch the animal's behavior)  
 to train . . . . .  
 to hunt . . . . .  
 to pay attention . . . . .  
 to follow . . . . .  
 to free . . . . .  
 to climb up . . . . .

**8 Choose the best word to complete the sentences**

1. If you want to understand something of the animal world better, you should ... it carefully.  
 a. a) learn    b) see    c) observe
2. The dogs followed a hot ... to the foxes' hole and soon found it.  
 a. a) path    b) track    c) road
3. He knew that nobody could defend him and felt ....  
 a. a) uneasy    b) unlucky    c) unpleasant
4. We deeply ... his courage and faithfulness.  
 a. a) respect    b) notice    c) love

**9 Match the words which are opposite in meaning.**

careful	friend
near	kind
high	stop
enemy	careless
cruel	low
strength	far
continue	weakness

**10 Use the correct article if necessary.**

- 1 One morning the boy found ... nest of little birds in the forest.  
 a) —    b) a    c) the
- 2 It is not easy to say how animals learn ... laws and rules of... animal world.  
 a) —    b) a    c) the
- 3 We heard ... distant shot and understood that somebody was hunting.  
 a) —    b) a    c) the
- 4 There was always plenty of... food for the animals on the farm.  
 a) —    b) a    c) the

**11 Choose the correct passive structure.**

- 1 As the little foxes grew stronger, they (**were taken / had been taken**) farther away into the forest.
- 2 The little fox felt nervous and uneasy after it (**was chained / had been chained**) in the yard.
- 3 The mother fox had to run away because she (**was frightened / had been frightened**) by the opening of a window.
- 4 After an hour of waiting the man heard a loud "bang" and understood that the mother fox (**was seen / had been seen**).
- 5 The little foxes learned some things by instinct, but very often they (**were taught / had been taught**) by example.