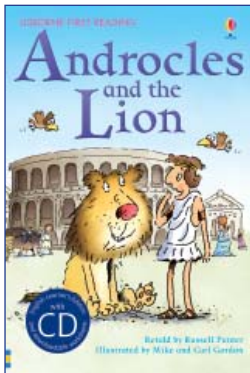


## Androcles and the Lion • Teacher's notes



**Author:** attributed to Aesop

**Reader level:** Intermediate

**Word count:** 794

**Lexile level:** 260L

**Text type:** Folktale/fable

### About the story

Androcles is a slave in Ancient Rome, overworked and ill-treated by his master. One night, he runs away, into a spooky forest where he hears a roar of pain from behind a bush. Going to investigate, he discovers a lion with a thorn in its paw. Androcles pulls out the thorn, and the grateful lion becomes his friend.

One day, though, Androcles is discovered by a Roman soldier, who captures him as a runaway. Instead of being returned to his old master, Androcles is taken to the Colosseum, to fight for his life in the arena. Androcles befriends his cell-mate Marco, but the next day he is thrown to the lions. To everyone's astonishment, the first lion doesn't attack Androcles but greets him affectionately – it is Androcles' friend from the forest. The crowd cheer and the Emperor sets Androcles free. Androcles asks for his friends to be freed too, and they set up their own show with the friendly lion as the main attraction.

### About the author

The story is often ascribed to Aesop, but most probably evolved in Roman times; the earliest recorded version dates to the second century AD, referring to a supposedly eyewitness account from the first century AD. After Androclus (his Latin name) treats the wounded lion, the lion becomes as tame as a dog and even wags its tail. When they meet in the arena, the lion greets Androclus with devotion, and afterwards Androclus is able to walk it on a leash around the city. In a similar medieval legend, a wounded lion seeks out St Jerome in his monastery. The other monks run away, but St Jerome pulls a thorn from the lion's paw and it becomes tame.

#### Key words in the story

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

p3 peel	p16 cave	p31 gentle
p4 slaves	hunted	snarl
scrubbed	p17 stranger	p32 prison
steps	tip-toed	p33 sighed
mopped	p18 unrolled	p34 torn
p5 pots	gasp	p36 dragged
p8 spooky	p19 tickled	tunnel
gulp	p21 sword	p38 cheer
p9 bush	p24 cart	p39 charged
p11 chase	panted	p40 trembled
p12 sniffed	p25 boomed	fear
thorn	p26 bumpy	p43 hugged
stings	ride	incredible
p13 gripped	p28 building	p44 tamed
p14 yelped	arena	hero
p15 sloppy	p30 skinny	p46 show

#### Key phrases

p5	What a life!
p11	as still as a stone
p12	You poor thing
p14	All done
p15	From then on
p19	to get away
p20	Stop right there!
p24	Gotcha! [slang = "Got you!"]
p34	torn to pieces
p36	show time
p37	to put up a fight
p38	Bring on...
p41	it's over [meaning "it's finished"]
p46	Very well [meaning "All right" – formal, old-fashioned]

# Androcles and the Lion • Teacher's notes

## Before reading

It will help the students to understand the story if they know a little about life in Ancient Rome. This book would tie in well with topic work on the Romans.

Search in textbooks or online for a picture of a street scene from Roman times, the more detailed the better. (You'll find some examples in Usborne books such as *Look Inside a Roman Town* or *See Inside Ancient Rome*.) Ask the students if they know where and when these people might have lived. Look closely at what people are wearing. Help students to spot that the ones wearing longer outfits (togas and elaborate dresses) are rich, well-to-do Romans, and the ones wearing short outfits (tunics and simple dresses) are poorer Romans or slaves. Explain if necessary that slaves were people who worked without being paid. Most were from countries that had been conquered by the powerful Roman Army.

Show a contemporary picture of the Colosseum (in ruins) and see if anyone recognizes it. Do they know what it was used for? Explain that it was a place of entertainment (introduce the word arena), where people could watch circus acts, men fighting each other (gladiators) and men fighting wild animals. The entertainment sounds gory to us today, but was wildly popular in Roman times.

Look at the cover of the book. Androcles and the lion are shown in front of the arena – but do they look as though they are going to fight?

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## Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

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## During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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|-----|--|-----|--|
| p3  | Does Brutus look like a kind master?<br>How would you describe him?            | p34 | Why doesn't Androcles want to fight the lions?   |
| p7  | How do you think Androcles is feeling?<br>Does he know where he's going?       | p35 | What keeps Androcles and Marco awake that night? What are they thinking about?                     |
| p10 | Why is the lion making a loud noise?   | p38 | Can you see where the Emperor is sitting?  |
| p12 | Why isn't Androcles scared of the lion?  | p40 | Androcles says "I hope it's over quickly".<br>What is "it"?  |
| p16 | What does Androcles find to eat? What does the lion find to eat? What happens? | p43 | Why is the crowd so amazed? What were people expecting to see?                                     |
| p19 | What does the soldier want?  | p45 | Why do you think the Emperor sets Androcles free? Is it just because he thinks Androcles is brave? |
| p25 | What will make Androcles stay in the cart?                                     | p47 | What is the lion doing in the picture?   |
| p28 | Can you see a clue to what happens in the arena? [The banner showing a lion.]  |     |  |
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## After reading

Ask the students which they'd prefer to see, the lion fights in the arena or Androcles' new show?

You might want to talk a bit more about the Roman games, how the Romans lived long before cinema and television, and how they went to the arena to be shocked and excited. Often the Emperor put the shows on for free, thinking it would keep his people happy.

Encourage the students to think about what is the same today as in Roman times, and what is different. Think about topics such as homes and families, food and clothes, schools, jobs and free time. They could work in groups to come up with two lists. Write their answers in two columns on the board.