

The Fable of Franny and Her Fabulous Fainting Goat

Background

Goats are an important part of the story of mankind. Along with sheep, they were probably some of the first animals to be domesticated. Although most people in our country depend on cows for milk, people in many other parts of the world depend on goats. The goat is sometimes called “the poor man’s cow,” because goats can live on forage that will not support cattle or sheep. Goats were very important to early European settlers struggling to survive in the New World. Even when conditions were harsh and the goats had little food to eat, they continued to supply settlers with dairy products.

Goat’s milk is easier to digest than cow’s milk, so it is often given to infants who cannot tolerate cow’s milk. Goat’s milk is also higher in calcium, potassium, phosphorous and Vitamins A and C than cow’s milk. In addition to milk, dairy goats provide meat and skins for making leather. Angora and cashmere goats provide mohair and cashmere hair for clothing.

Goats make good pets because they are gentle, friendly and intelligent. They also cost very little to feed and need very little space. A female goat is called a doe, or a nanny, and a male goat is called a buck, or a billy. Fainting goats look and act like any other goat, except that when they are startled, their muscles become rigid, causing them to fall over. After about 15 seconds the animal will get up and move around as before, although its legs will be stiff for a short time. The exact origin of fainting goats is not known. The earliest records trace them to Marshall County, Tennessee, in the early 1800s. Fainting goats can’t jump fences, so they’re easy to keep. That can be a problem, sometimes, though, because they are easy prey for dogs and coyotes. Their condition causes them not to have the flight instinct that other animals have when they are in danger. Instead, their muscles become rigid, and they fall over or can’t move.

Farmers who raise fainting goats usually do so because they are unusual and make for great stories. In one story, a Tennessee Valley Authority official was driving past a herd of goats when his truck backfired. The entire herd collapsed, and the official thought he had scared them to death. He drove to the farmer’s house, apologized and paid him for the goats. The next day he drove past the same farm and saw the same herd of goats —completely recovered.

Another story tells of the time the army was holding mock battles in Tennessee. One day a line of tanks came over a hill and caused a herd of

P.A.S.S.

GRADE 2

Reading—3.1,3,2;
5.1ac,2b,4ab

Writing—1.3; 2.1; 3.6

Oral Language—1.1; 2.1,2

Math Process—2.1; 3.3

Math Content—4.2ab

Social Studies—1.1; 4.2

GRADE 3

Reading—2.1,3; 3.5;
4.1a,2a,4c; 5.1a

Writing—1.1,2,3,4,5; 2.1;
3.1,2,3,4,5

Oral Language—1.1; 2.4

Math Process—2.1; 3.3

Math Content—4.2b

Science Process—1.1

Social Studies—1.1

Materials

digital and analog clocks

world map

Vocabulary

auction—a sale at which things are sold to those who offer to pay the most
angora—yarn or cloth made from the hair of the Angora goat or the Angora rabbit

cashmere—fine wool from the undercoat of cashmere goats

domesticated—adapted to living with human beings and to serving their purposes

flight instinct—the tendency to run or fly away from danger

forage—food (as pasture) for browsing or grazing animals

rigid—not flexible : stiff; hard

goats to topple over. A young officer immediately went to the farmer and wrote a credit from the army for the loss. According to the story, the farmer let the army buy that same herd of goats several times before the training was over.

Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background about goats.
2. Read the story aloud, or have students read the story to themselves.
—Students will write their own fainting goat stories.
3. Discuss the definition of a fable.
—Ask students if the story of Franny is really a fable.
If not, why not, and if so, what is the moral of the story?
—Students will write their own fables with a goat as the central character.

Math

1. Hand out student worksheets.
—Show students the analog and digital clocks, and discuss the difference. Review telling time with both.
—Read the story again.
—Students will place hands on clock faces and write numbers on the digital clocks to show the appropriate times.

Social Studies

1. Students will use online or library resources to research what other kinds of milk people drink in other parts of the world.
—Students will map the different milk-producing animals on a world map.

Science

1. Bring samples of products made from goat milk to class for students to taste. (Goat cheese is available in some supermarkets.)

Extra Reading

Bregoli, Jane, *The Goat Lady*, Tilbury, 2004.

McBrier, Page, and Lori Lohstoeter, *Beatrice's Goat*, Aladdin, 2004.

Miller, Sara Swan, *Goats (True Books: Animals)*, Children's, 2001.

Ottolenghi, Carol, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff / Los Tres Chivitos*, Brighter Child, 2009.

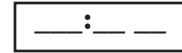
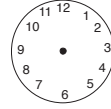
Ray, Hannah, *Goats (Down on the Farm)*, Crabtree, 2008.

Wolfman, Judy, and David Lorenz Winston, *Life on a Goat Farm*, Lerner, 2002.

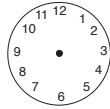
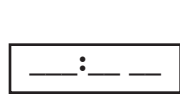
Name _____

The Fable of Franny and Her Fabulous Fainting Goat

The sun was just coming up as Franny Fields and her father, Frank, left the farm. Franny looked at her watch. "Sunrise at **6:00**," she told her father.



"We're leaving in plenty of time," Frank Fields told his daughter. "The farmer's auction doesn't start until **8:30**, and Freedom is only 90 miles away."

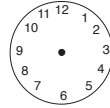
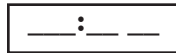


Franny loved the drive into Freedom in the early morning. As they drove along Franny watched the sun shining off the hillsides that lined the river.

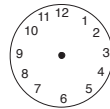
"Do you think anyone will have any goats to sell?" Franny asked her father. Do you think we can get one?"

"We'll just have to wait and see how much they cost," her father smiled.

The clock on the Freedom Bank said **7:45** as the Fields drove into Freedom. "We've got plenty of time. Let's stop for breakfast," Frank Fields said.



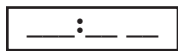
Service was a little slow at the cafe, and it was **8:45** by the time the Fields got to the auction. While Mr. Fields stood in line to get a buyer number from the clerk, Franny watched a farmer unload two small black and white spotted



kids, or baby goats. "Dad, look!" Franny tugged on her father's arm and pointed in the direction of the goats.

"Those are good looking goats. Someone has taken good care of them. They may be too expensive for us, Franny. Don't get your hopes up too high," Frank Fields said as he patted his daughter on the head.

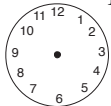
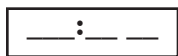
By **11:00**, when the auctioneer's helper finally led the pair of goats onto the auction block, Franny's stomach had started to churn with excitement. The bidding started at \$10 for the pair. For a few moments no one placed a bid; then Frank Fields raised his hand slightly. Quickly a woman across the way raised the bid. Within a few minutes the bid had gone to \$35, and Franny knew her father would go no higher.



"Going once, twice, sold to buyer number 18," the auctioneer cried. Franny's heart sank. Her father's number was 23.

It was nearly **noon** when Franny and her father walked out of the auction into the bright sun. A disappointed

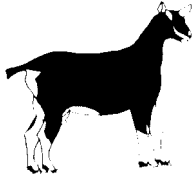
Franny was ready to go home. As the Fields headed for their pickup, a lady approached them. Franny recognized her as the woman who had bought the pair of goats.



"I only wanted the billy goat," the woman told Frank Fields after introducing herself. "Would you like to buy the nanny for \$15?"

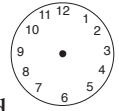
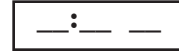
"Yes," said Franny, before her father had time to reply. "Yes," her father laughed.

"What shall we call her," Frank Fields asked his daughter as they rode home along the river. "I think I'll just call her 'Nanny,'" Franny said.



Over the next few days Nanny became a real pet. It would follow Franny all over the backyard and even tried to come inside a time or two. Franny discovered her little kid would eat almost anything, including Mother's flowers.

Franny's mother came home from work one evening at **5:30** and found Nanny eating her marigolds. She jumped from the car

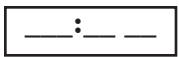


and ran across the yard, clapping her hands and shouting at Nanny. About half way across the yard she stopped in dismay. Nanny had fallen over in the half-eaten flowers. She looked like she was dead.

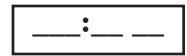
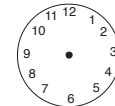
"What ever could be wrong?" Mrs. Fields thought. By the time she reached Nanny, the goat had begun to move. It jumped to its feet and walked away.

Mrs. Fields was still angry about the flowers when she told the story to Franny and her father. Franny thought the story was strange and even a little funny, but she held back her giggles and went to check on Nanny. The little goat seemed fine.

At **7:00** the next morning Franny ran out the back door to feed Nanny. As the screen door slammed Nanny once again fell to the ground. Franny ran back inside to get her father.



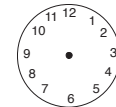
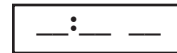
"I guess we'd better call the veterinarian," Frank Fields told his daughter after looking at the little goat. We'll have to wait until **8:00**, when Dr. Wright gets to her office.



Franny was on pins and needles for the next hour waiting for the veterinarian's office to open. "I'm glad I only paid \$15 for that goat," Frank Fields told his wife. "There's obviously something wrong with her."

Dr. Wright looked Nanny over but could find nothing wrong. "I've heard of fainting goats, but I've never seen one, and I don't know very much about them," Dr. Wright told the Fields. She assured Franny her goat was fine. She suggested that Mr. Fields contact the E. (Kika) de la Garza Institute for Goat Research at Langston University.

For the next three days Franny waited anxiously for the **9:45** mail delivery. When the envelope arrived, she ran to the house to read more about her pet. The envelope contained information about the 4-H goat project, information about fainting goats, and the address for the International Fainting Goat Association.



Franny learned that Nanny was a very special kind of goat that simply faints whenever it is frightened by a loud noise. Franny also learned that her \$15 goat could be worth as much as \$400.

The news of Franny's fainting nanny spread quickly. Before long total strangers were stopping by to see the goat. One farmer in town offered to buy her for much more than Franny's father had paid. Franny was in no hurry to part with her pet, though. And Franny's father liked having the pet around. Nanny reminded him that things are not always as they seem. Franny's mother still got angry and shouted at Nanny whenever she got into the marigolds. But her anger turned to laughter every time she watched the little goat fall over in the flower bed.

