

COMPARATIVE FOLKLORE

On this sheet are three versions of the same fable. Compare and Contrast: How are they alike? How are they different? Circle your favorite parts of each version. Draw a line through the weakest parts. Use these three versions to write one of your own. You can borrow ideas but you must use your own words! You can change the animals, change the setting, change a few of the plot details or you could even change the moral of the story!

This is a transcription of an actual performance recorded and typed verbatim:

It was a beautiful day, much like today. The sun was shining. It was springtime. The flowers were blooming. You could smell the springtime in the air. These two good friends, best of friends were walking down a trail, walking through the forest. As they were walking along ... rrrroooarrrr ... out came a bear!

One of them saw the bear and took off running and climbed up into a tree.

The other one saw the bear too late. He knew if he tried to run the bear would catch him and eat him. So instead of running, he fell to the ground and pretended he was dead, because everyone knows a bear will not eat dead meat.

He lay perfectly still. The bear came over next to him ... gggrrrr. The bear nudged him, he did not move. The bear sniffed and smelled around his head. *(How many of you would scream if a bear were smelling your head? If you scream, the bear is going to eat you.)* He did not scream, as a matter of fact, when the bear was this close, he held his breath so the bear thought he was dead. The bear wandered away.

Meanwhile the man who was up in the tree who had been watching the whole time, saw the bear was far enough away that he felt safe. He climbed down out of the tree. He walked over to his friend, who was still laying on the ground, and he tried to play it off like he wasn't afraid. He said, "That bear, that bear looked like he was whispering in your ear. What did that bear whisper in your ear?"

The man on the ground got up and he brushed himself off. He said, "The bear? What did he say to me? He said, do not trust a friend one inch if he deserts you in a pinch."

The Travelers and the Bear

Two friends were traveling on the same road when they met a bear. The one, in great fear, without thought of his companion, climbed up into a tree, and hid himself. The other seeing that he had no chance, single-handed, against the bear, had nothing left but to throw himself on the ground and feign to be dead; for he had heard that the bear will never touch a dead body. As he thus lay, the bear came up to his head, muzzling and snuffing at his nose, and ears, and heart, but the man immovably held his breath, and the beast supposing him to be dead, walked away. When the bear was fairly out of sight, his companion came down out of the tree, and asked what it was the bear whispered to him, -- "for," says he, "I observed that he put his mouth very close to your ear." "Why," replied the other, "it was no great secret; he only bade me have care how I kept company with those who, when they get into difficulty, leave their friends in the lurch."

Thomas James' Translation of Aesop



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The Bear and the Two Travelers

Two men were traveling together, when a Bear suddenly met them on their path. One of them climbed up quickly into a tree and concealed himself in the branches. The other, seeing that he must be attacked, fell flat on the ground, and when the Bear came up and felt him with his snout, and smelt him all over, he held his breath, and feigned the appearance of death as much as he could. The Bear soon left him, for it is said he will not touch a dead body. When he was quite gone, the other Traveler descended from the tree, and jocularly inquired of his friend what it was the Bear had whispered in his ear. "He gave me this advice," his companion replied. "Never travel with a friend who deserts you at the approach of danger." Misfortune tests the sincerity of friends.

This fable is from the web site, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aesop/fab.html>