

PENGUIN CLASSICS

AESOP

THE COMPLETE FABLES



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AESOP probably lived in the middle part of the sixth century B.C. A statement in Herodotus gives ground for thinking that he was a slave belonging to a citizen of Samos called Iadmon. Legend says that he was ugly and misshapen. There are many references to Aesop found in the Athenian writers: Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle and others. It is not known whether he wrote down his fables himself, nor indeed how many of them are correctly attributed to his invention.

OLIVIA TEMPLE was born in London and educated at a convent grammar school in Hertfordshire. She has published extracts from her diary and written articles and reviews for a variety of magazines. She is a figurative painter, with works in private collections in Europe, America, Hong Kong and New Zealand.

ROBERT TEMPLE has a degree in Sanskrit and is the author of eight books, including a history of Chinese science. He translated the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was produced at the Royal National Theatre in London in 1993, and has published several articles about the scientific works of Aristotle. His book *Conversations with Eternity* includes studies of ancient Greek oracles and divination techniques. He is also a television drama producer.

For our godchildren  
Camilla, Edward, Antony,  
Niralie, Alice, Laurie,  
Joshua and Benjamin  
and also for Emma



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**AESOP**  
**THE COMPLETE FABLES**

TRANSLATED BY OLIVIA AND ROBERT TEMPLE  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT TEMPLE

Aesop's famous *Fables* are full of humour, insight and savage wit as well as many fascinating glimpses of everyday life, yet earlier English versions have been both sanitized and highly selective. This is the first translation ever to make available the complete corpus of 358 fables.

Aesop was probably a prisoner of war, sold into slavery in the early sixth century BC, who represented his masters in court and negotiations and relied on animal stories to put across his key points. Such fables vividly reveal the strange superstitions of ordinary ancient Greeks, how they treated their pets, how they spoil their sons and even what they kept in their larders. As these stories became well-known, 'Aesopic' one-liners were widely quoted at drinking-parties, and the collection eventually came to include more satirical tales of alien creatures – apes, camels, lions and elephants – which presumably originate in Libya and Egypt. All have now been brought together in this definitive and fully annotated modern edition.

The cover shows a detail of a mosaic showing a Nile scene, from the House of the Fawn, Pompeii, second century BC, in the Museo Nazionale, Naples (photo: Scala)



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