

# Fainting Goats

## Utah Content Core



### Objective

1. Students will practice telling time while reading a story about a fainting goat.

### Materials

"Fable of the Fainting Goats" worksheet for each student

### Background

Goats have played a role in the evolution of human civilizations. Along with sheep, goats were among some of the first animals to be domesticated. Although most people in our country depend on cows for milk, many people in other parts of the world use goats for milk. The dairy goat is sometimes called the "poor man's cow, since they 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 in harsh conditions, they continued to supply settlers with dairy products.

Goat's milk is easier for some people to digest than is cow's milk, so it is often given to infants who cannot tolerate cow's milk. Goat milk is higher in calcium (Ca), potassium (K), phosphorus (P), and Vitamins A and C than cow's milk. In addition to milk, dairy goats provide meat and hides. Angora and cashmere goats are not considered dairy goats, but do provide mohair and cashmere hair for clothing. Goats sometimes make good pets since 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, but records trace them back to Marshall County, Tennessee in the early 1800s. Fainting goats can't jump fences, so they are easy to keep. However, not being able to flee by jumping fences can be a potential problem as it may make them easy prey for dogs or coyotes. Their fainting condition causes them not to have the fleeing instinct that other animals have when they anticipate danger. Instead of fleeing their muscles become rigid which essentially immobilizes them.



**Time:** 1 hour

**Grade:** First, Second

### **Standards:**

Integrated Mathematics and Content Core

Farmers usually raise fainting goats because they are unusual and have great entertainment value. 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 owner's house, apologized and paid him for the goats. The next day he drove past the same herd of goats and saw them completely recovered and healthy!

Another story tells of the time when the U.S. Army was holding training exercises in Tennessee. One day a line of tanks came over a hill and caused a herd of 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 the same herd of goats several times before the training was over.

### Activity Procedures

1. Hand out student worksheet.
2. Have students read the story. Then, instruct students to place hands on clock faces and write numbers on digital clocks to show the appropriate times.
3. Share background information.

### Additional Activities, What's Next?

1. Have students write their own story about a fainting goat.
2. Have students write letters to the International Fainting Goat Association, asking for more information about fainting goats. Collect the letters and place them all in one envelope for mailing.
3. Have students research what other kinds of milk people drink in other countries. Students may use a world map to chart the different milk-producing animals.
4. Discuss the definition of a fable. Ask students if the story of Franny is a fable and what the moral of the story is.

### Vocabulary

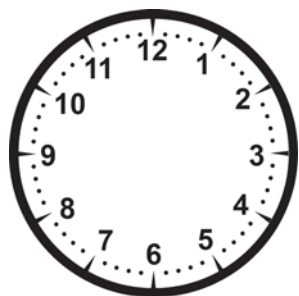
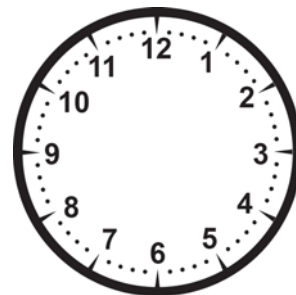
1. **buck**—A male goat.
2. **doe**— An adult female goat.
3. **forage**—The portion of feed for animals that is largely secured from the leaves and stalks of plants, such as grasses and legumes used as hays.
4. **immobilize**—To render an object immovable.
5. **mohair**— Long hair from an Angora goat used to make cloth.

# Fable of the Fainting Goats

## Instructions:

Read the story. As you read, place the clock hands in the correct position on the clock faces, and write in the correct numbers on the digital clocks.

The sun was just coming up as Amanda and her father, Dan, left the farm. Amanda looked at her watch. "Sunrise at **6:30**," she told her father.

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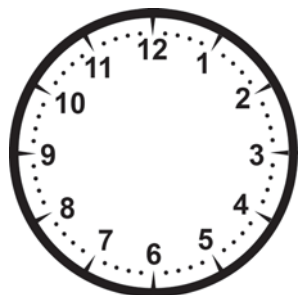
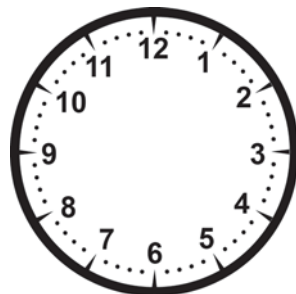
"We're leaving in plenty of time, Dan told his youngest daughter. "The livestock auction doesn't start until **9:00**, and Sunnydale is only 75 miles away. That will give us plenty of time to get there and look around."

Dan and Amanda both loved the drive into Sunnydale in the early morning. As they drove along Amanda watched the sun chase the shadows away from the hillsides.

"Do you think anyone will have goats to sell?" Amanda asked her father. "Can we get one?"

"We'll just have to wait and see if there are any and how much they cost," her father said.

The miles seemed to go quickly as Amanda and her dad talked about things they loved: the farm, animals, and school. The First National Bank clock read **7:00** as they drove into Sunnydale. "We have plenty of time. Let's stop for breakfast," Dan said.

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The café was crowded and it took a little longer than expected to get their food. It was **8:30** by the time Amanda and Dan got to the auction barn. While her dad stood in line to get a buyer number, Amanda watched an elderly gentleman unload two black and white spotted baby goats.

"Dad, look at the kid goats!" Amanda pulled her father's coat sleeve and pointed toward the goats.



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“Those are good looking goats. They look like they may be purebred. They may be too expensive for us, Amanda. Don’t get your hopes up too high,” Dan said as he and Amanda looked for a seat close to the auction ring.

It was **11:00** when the ring men finally led the pair of goats into the auction ring. Amanda’s stomach had started to churn with excitement. The auctioneer called for a \$10 opening bid. For a few moments no one placed a bid, then Dan nodded his head slightly at the ringman. The auctioneer called the bid and quickly a woman across the way raised the bid. Within a few minutes the bidding had gone to \$35 and Amanda knew that her father would go no higher.

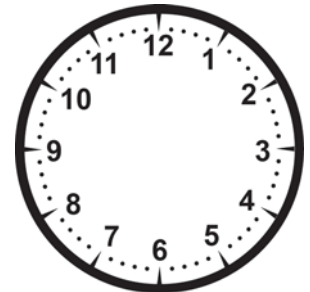
“Going once, going twice, sold to buyer number 36,” Amanda heard the auctioneer say. Tears welled up in Amanda’s eyes as the reality sank in. Her father’s number was 73.

It was nearly **4:00** when Amanda and her father walked out of the auction barn. The bright sun caused Amanda to squint. She was disappointed and ready to go home. As Dan and Amanda headed for their pickup, a lady approached them. Amanda recognized her as the woman who had bought the two kid goats.

“I only wanted the billy,” the woman told Dan after introducing herself “Would you like to buy the nanny for \$15?”

“Yes,” said Amanda before her dad had time to reply. “Sure,” Dan laughed.

“What are you going to name her?” Dan asked his daughter as they rode home. “I think I’ll call her Franny,” Amanda said.



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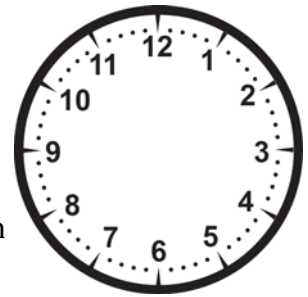
Amanda did not talk much on the way home. She was thinking about all the things she would do with her new goat. It was close to **7:30** by the time they got home. It had been a long day, but Amanda helped her Dad unload Franny. Then, Amanda got some feed and water and watched while Franny cleaned up every bit.

Over the next few weeks, Franny became a real pet. It would follow Amanda all over the backyard and even tried to come inside the house several times. Amanda discovered her new kid goat would eat almost anything, from Mother's flowers to her brother's socks hanging on the clothesline.

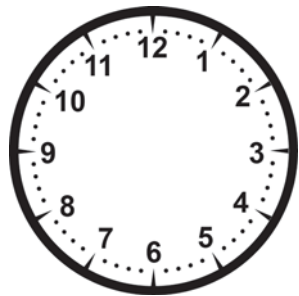
Amanda's mother came home from work one Friday evening at **5:30** and found Franny eating her chrysanthemums. She jumped from the car and ran across the yard, clapping her hands and yelling at Franny. About halfway across the yard, she stopped in dismay. Franny had fallen over in the flowerbed. Her legs shook a little bit and then she was still, like she was dead.

"What in the world?" Amanda's father had come running when he heard all the commotion. By the time they had walked over to Franny, the goat had begun to move. Then it jumped up and walked away.

Amanda's mom was still a little angry about the flowers, but Amanda was more concerned about the goat. When she went to check on Franny, the little goat seemed fine.



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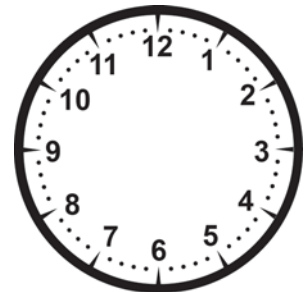
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At **7:00** the next morning, when Amanda ran out to feed her goat, she accidentally let the back door slam. It was a loud noise, and Franny once again fell to the ground. Amanda ran back inside to get her father.

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

Amanda was on pins and needles for the next 45 minutes waiting for Dr. Stewart's office to open. "I'm glad I only paid \$15 for that goat," Dan quietly told his wife. "There is something really wrong with her and it's going to break Amanda's heart," he trailed off.

Dr. Stewart looked Franny over carefully, but could find nothing wrong. "I think you have a fainting goat on your hands." Neither Amanda nor her dad had ever heard of fainting goats. Dr. Stewart told them they were sometimes called "scare goats" because of their reactions when they were frightened. The veterinarian gave Amanda an address for the International Fainting Goat Association so that she could write for more information.



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For the next four days Amanda could hardly wait for the school bus to drop her off at **3:30**. She raced to the mailbox every day until the envelope arrived. Amanda rushed to the house so that she could read all about her new goat.

Amanda learned that Franny was a special kind of goat that simply faints when frightened by loud noises or sudden movement. Amanda also learned that her \$15 goat could be worth as much as \$500.

The news of Franny, the fainting goat spread quickly. Before long lots of people were stopping by to see the goat. A neighboring farmer offered to buy Franny for much more than Dan had paid. Amanda was in no hurry to part with her new pet, though. Amanda's father liked having the little goat around too. Franny reminded him that things are not always as they seem. Amanda's mother still got angry and shouted at the goat when it got into the flowerbeds, but her anger turned to laughter every time she watched the little goat fall over in the flowers.