



# THE OAK & THE REEDS

## APPLYING AESOP'S FABLE TO THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM



### THE FABLE (SUMMED UP)

A Giant Oak and some slender Reeds live along a brook. When the wind blows, the Reeds bend and bow while the Oak stands upright.

The Oak mocks the Reeds for bending, but when a hurricane arrives, the stubborn Oak is knocked down while the flexible Reeds bend and are unharmed.



### RESILIENCE (BUZZWORD 2020)

The Oak and the Reeds in Aesop's tale both initially display resilience, but when conditions change, only the Reeds adapt and evolve. The Oak relies on what has worked in the past, while the Reeds reflect and change.



### APPLICATION

At key points in the semester - holiday breaks, midterms, finals - how can you be like the Reeds? What perspective from students might be helpful? What needs to stay consistent in your approach, and what can change? Is a deadline or project format causing too much student - or instructor - stress?

### EXAMPLES

- You discover that a deadline conflicts with a religious observation or other event. Can you change the deadline?
- Students are confused by a project's instructions. Can you offer alternatives, or create a simpler project?
- Students are not adding anything substantial to the discussion board, and you're burnt out grading "I agree" posts. Is there a way to encourage meaningful participation?

### GROWTH

The Oak is impressive, but sometimes what worked five semesters ago might not work now. Reflect on your teaching: What do you enjoy, and what is frustrating? How can you increase enjoyment? What are your goals for students, and what sort of feedback from students would help you adjust the course?

Another perspective:  
Moore et. al. 2021. "One Year Later...and Counting: Reflections on Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning." *EDUCAUSE*.