

***Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* Lesson Plan**

A guide to using John Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* in class.

About this book

Grade Level Equivalent: 5.2

Guided Reading Level: N

Genre: Fables, Folk Tales and Myths

Subject: African, Kindness and Compassion, Manners and Conduct, Sibling Rivalry

Activity/Visual Literacy

Explain to the class that the Caldecott Medal is named after an English artist, Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886), who is considered the originator of children's picture books. The medal is given annually to an illustrator in the United States for the most distinguished children's picture book published during the previous year. Review the art in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* with the class to see why it won this award. Then have students find other Caldecott winners to see what made them "the most distinguished" that year.

Genre: Folktale

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters was inspired by an African folktale. Share with students that folktales are stories handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth; these tales are told by ordinary folks. Folktales are found in just about all cultures. Explain that long ago before books were available, people told stories as a way of preserving them. Today, many folktales have been retold and handsomely illustrated as children's books.

Activity/Reading Focus

On the chalkboard create a chart such as the one shown here. Explain that the chart shows some of the main characteristics of a folktale. Ask students to look for these as they read *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. Use their responses to complete the chart.

Folktale Characteristics

The characters are all good or all bad

There are magic or make-believe parts

There is a lesson or moral

The story takes place in a long-ago setting

Cultural Connections

Remind students that this story takes place in Africa, and point out that the characters' names come from the Shona language. After reading the story through, explore the following with students:

- How do the plants and animals reflect an African setting?
- What else in the illustrations suggests an African setting?
- Does this story remind you of Cinderella? In what ways?

Activity/Comparing Stories

Provide other versions of the Cinderella story and have students compare them. Possible titles include: *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* retold by Ai-Ling Louie; *The Egyptian Cinderella* by Shirley Climo; *The Rough-Face Girl* by Rafe Martin. How do these versions differ? In what ways are they alike? How do they reflect the culture they come from?

Vocabulary

These words may be unfamiliar to students.

ignored	bountiful	grieve	millet	considerate
stole (verb)	silhouetted	grove	acknowledge	garments
commotion	plumed	transfixed	enclosure	hysterically
praise	weakness	temper	chores	beneath
chamber	proclaimed	rent (tore)	daughter	silly

Activity/Word Search

Try this activity to help make some of the unfamiliar words in the story familiar. Have students work with partners or in small groups. Assign each team a page or two in the book, and ask them to identify four or five words that they find difficult. Provide dictionaries and tell the teams to look up their words and write them on a sheet of paper. Then have students pass around the paper so that each team member can write a sentence using the word. Conclude by having the teams present their words and sentences to the class.

Introducing the Book

Here are a few strategies for introducing the book to the class.

- **Build Background** Write this question on a large poster pad: What is beauty? Call on volunteers to share their conceptions of beauty. Make a list of students' ideas. Explain that the book students will read is titled *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. Ask students to note how beauty is treated in this story.
- **Preview the Cover** Hold up the book so both the front and back covers are visible. Tell students that the covers show Mufaro's two daughters. Ask students to study the illustrations and then comment on the girls. Ask: *What is each one doing? What expressions do they have on their faces? What preliminary conclusions might students make about the girls from these pictures?*
- **Locate the Setting** On a globe or world map, help students locate Africa. Tell students that the story comes from an African country called Zimbabwe. Have a volunteer find Zimbabwe. Then locate the city of Nyanda. Explain that the story takes place just south of Nyanda in and near the walled city of Great Zimbabwe. Explain that the modern nation is named after this ancient city.
- **Enrich Students' Appreciation** Explain that the illustrations in this book show the fortress-city of Great Zimbabwe in ancient times. This city was a main trading center of the Shona people starting in the 1400s. There, the Shona sold gold, copper, and ivory to Arab merchants. The remaining ruins of the city show that the Shona were skillful builders. The ruins of three of their stone structures—the Hill Complex, the Great Enclosure, and the Valley Complex—are still visible. Ask students to see if they can find any of these in the book illustrations.

Curriculum Extensions

Use these ideas to help students relate the literature to other areas of the curriculum.

Science: *Snake Search*

Remind students that the king is disguised as a garden snake (also called a garter snake in some places) in the story. Budding herpetologists might find out about the habits of such snakes and why they are helpful to gardeners. Point out that although there are many kinds of snakes in the world, most are not poisonous and only about 50 are truly dangerous to humans.

Art: *Wedding Bells*

Students might create fanciful invitations to the wedding of Nyasha and the king. Their invitations might include time, place, guests of honor, and appropriate dress. Students might also draw pictures of the wedding gift they would give to the newlyweds.

Social Studies: *Building a Building*

Tell students that the stone buildings at Great Zimbabwe are considered architectural marvels because they were made with dry walls. In a dry wall, the stones are cut and placed so exactly that no mortar or cement is needed. To help students understand the skill this requires, have them try to build a mini wall with small stones. How many layers can they add before the stones start to fall?

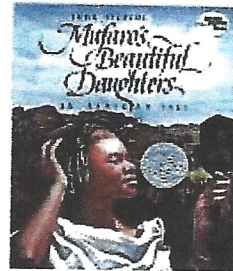
LITERATURE GUIDES

Reading Experiences to Inspire Acts of Kindness

MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS

by John Steptoe

Fairy tales are great stories for helping students work out complicated moral issues in a make-believe context. The Cinderella story has a universal theme of an under-appreciated, kind, and honest child who finally gets what she deserves. Found in countries all around the world, the same story plays out in different contexts. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is a Cinderella story from Africa in which kindness, generosity, honesty, and love are rewarded and selfishness is punished. A related lesson in the story is found in how the kind daughter responds to the teasing and abuse from her cruel sister.



Before Reading

ASK: Is it important to be kind even if no one knows it was you who did the kind act? Discuss/think of some kind acts that could be done without letting others know you did them. Why would you want to keep it a secret?

SHOW: The front and back covers of the book and talk about where and when this story might take place. How does it look different from your area? Encourage predictions and creative observations.

CONNECT: We are going to read a story about two beautiful daughters one of whom may marry a king if she is worthy. I wonder what a king would be looking for? How can he be sure he picks the right one?.

During Reading

ASK: Stop several times to ask the student to predict what might happen next. Ask him or her to describe each sister.

SHOW: Discuss the artwork and notice the different types of wildlife that are seen on each page. "In what ways does the environment in the book look different from your own area?"

CONNECT: No one can see the selfish and selfless acts of the daughters in the woods. Why does each one act the way she does?

After Reading

ASK: When do you think the king decided that Nyasha was the one to become queen?

SHOW: Nyasha entered the chamber even though her sister warned her there was a monster inside. Look at her face and hands when she sees the snake. What can you tell about Nyasha from this picture?

CONNECT: Notice all the people watching the new queen on the last page. Why would the king want to make sure his country's future queen was not selfish?

Activities

1. Discuss and make a list of some ways that you can show kindness to people you live with, friends, and strangers.
 - Are the acts of kindness the same for each group of people?
 - Be sure to think of small acts of kindness as well as a bigger act that may involve some time and giving up an opportunity for yourself.
 - Make a plan to do some of the things on your list.
 - After some time, come back to talk about the list again. Did you do some of the things you planned? How did you feel? How did the people you were kind to react?
 - Can you add some ideas to your list?
2. How did Nyasha respond when her sister was unkind to her? Think of a time when someone was unkind to you. How did you respond? How do you wish you had responded? What would you like to try next time?
3. Draw a picture or diagram showing the sequence of the trials that both girls encountered on their journeys. Analyze how each girl responded to each trial. Think of words to describe each action, such as proud, generous, and afraid.
4. Spend some time looking at maps of Africa. Read the names of the countries and talk about different regions and their climates and wildlife. Find Zimbabwe and South Africa.
5. Compare this story to the classic fairy tale Cinderella. How is this story like Cinderella and how is it different? Make a chart showing the comparisons.
6. Use paints or markers to copy a flower or animal from the story. Talk about what medium the artist may have used to create the pictures.
7. What does it mean to get what you deserve? Did the sisters get what they deserved? Was it fair that Nyasha became queen? Was it fair that Manyara became a servant in her household? Do you think this idea is real? Do you feel that you get what you deserve? Do you treat people the way you want to be treated or do you treat them the way they treat you? What is the best policy?



Africa



Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters - Mapping the Story

Author: Katie Shea

Grade Level: Early Elementary

*This can be done in two days. Have students illustrate cards one day and map the next. *

Objectives:

1. After hearing Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, students will be able to create a story map.
2. Students will be able to identify that Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters takes place in Africa.

Materials Needed:

1. Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe, Lothrop, Lee and Shepard books, New York, 1987 (ISBN 0-688-04045-4)
2. 11x17 sheet of construction paper for each student
3. Glue, crayons, markers, scissors
4. Sheet of paper divided into 15 squares each square labeled with one of the following: Village, City, Palace, Forest, Garden, Nyasha, Manyara, Mufaro, Myoka, Hungry Boy, Old Woman, King, Messenger, Laughing Trees, Man with Head.

Procedures:

1. Introduce folktales and Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by saying the following: "Folktales are stories that are heard and remembered. They are passed from one generation to another by word of

mouth. Can you think of any folktales you have heard? Today we will read Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters. It is an African folktale. See if it reminds you of a folktale you might know (Cinderella). The illustrations in this book were inspired by the ruins and the flowers of an ancient city in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is in South Africa."

2. Show the students where Zimbabwe is on a map of Africa.

3. Continue. "The names of the characters in this folktale are from the Shona language and mean the following: Mufaro (moo-FAR-on) means "happy man" Nyasha (ne-AH-sha) means "mercy," Manyara (mahn-YAR-ah) means "ashamed," and Myoka (nee-YO-kah) means "snake." Today we will be making a story map. "Who can tell me what they think a story map is?" Wait for responses. "A story map helps us remember the story. It also helps us keep track of the story in our heads. You will need to listen very closely to the story and try to picture it in your head. We will be drawing some of the people in the story so pay attention to the details. As we read the story, notice things in the pictures and words that help you identify this folktale is from Africa. I will read the story the first time so we can enjoy it. We will then work on our maps."

4. Read the story out loud to the class one time for enjoyment.

5. Discuss what clues they saw in the pictures and heard in the words that helped them realize that this tale was from Africa. "How is it different from where we live? How is it the same? What story does this remind you of?"

6. Pass out the **divided and labeled paper**. Discuss what goes in each square. Have students draw a picture in each square. Have the students cut out the squares when finished.

7. Pass out plain construction paper. On one side of the paper have students write one clue they found that helped them figure out this tale was from Africa. Have the students turn the paper over. Read the first page aloud to the class. Have students describe places mentioned. Have students draw the river on their paper. Discuss the placement of the river, village and city. Have students glue the village, and city on the page.

8. Have students pull out the place cards (Village, City, Palace, Forest, and Garden). Discuss the placement of each and have students place them accordingly. Check for accuracy before students glue them in place.

9. As you read the story, have the students follow along by placing or moving the character cards along their map. (Option: Do a large map in front of the class as students do map at their desks.)

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

Village	City	Palace
Forest	Garden	Nyasha
Manyara	Mufaro	Nyoka
Hungry Boy	Old Woman	King
Messenger	Laughing Trees	Man with Head

10. After you have finished the story, have students pick their favorite event and glue the characters on their maps to represent that part. Display maps on a bulletin board entitled, "The African Cinderella Story."

Evaluation:

1. Students will have placed the following cards appropriately (in reference to each other): African Village, City, Garden, Forest, and Palace.
2. Students will have an appropriate clue on the back of their storymap.

Story Elements Graphic Organizer

Story Title _____

Four boxes for students to record information in:

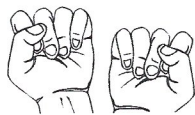
Character



Setting



Problem



Solution



Name: _____ Date: _____

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters Comprehension Test

Directions: Fill in the oval next to the correct answer.

1. Who was the father of the two daughters presented before the king?
 Enkidu Mufaro Nyoka Manatona
2. What daughter was constantly in a bad temper?
 Nyoka Mufaro Nyasha Manyara
3. What item of food did the hungry little boy get from Nyasha?
 sunflower seeds banana millet yam
4. Because the king's village was so beautiful, Nyasha thought what must be true?
 it cost a lot of money she deserved to live there she thought she was having a dream a great spirit had to guard there.
5. What did Manyara find sitting in the king's stool?
 A snake with five heads. A tiger A friendly garden snake A giant
6. What did Nyasha find sitting in the king's stool?
 A snake with five heads A tiger A friendly garden snake A giant
7. The king ended up being who?
 a hungry boy an old woman Nyoka All three
8. Who helped Nyasha to get ready for her wedding?
 her father and sister the village servants the king's mother and sisters her special friends
9. What type of grain was used to make the wedding bread?
 millet barley wheat corn
10. Who became a servant in the queen's household?
 Nyasha Mufaro Manyara Nyoka

Name: _____ Date: _____

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Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

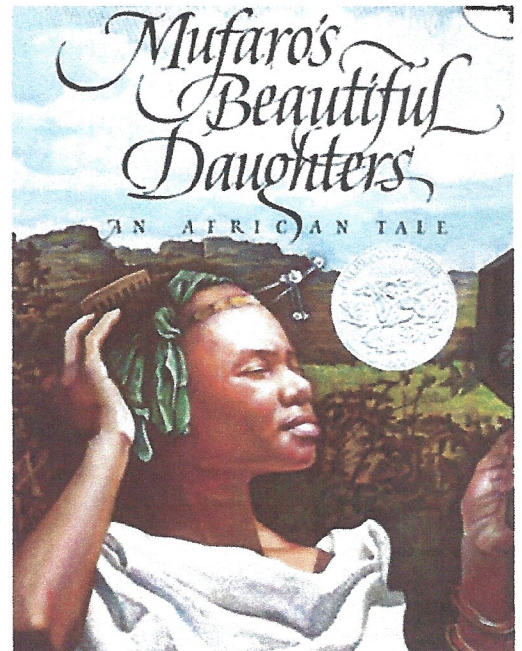
An African Tale

Author: John Steptoe

Publisher: William Morrow

Summary

Both of Mufaro's daughters are beautiful but one is bad tempered and one is kind. When the king of the land asks the daughters to appear before him so he can choose a queen, the prideful, bad tempered daughter decides to set out in the night so she can get there first. Along the path are many opportunities to show one's true character. The kind daughter who follows the same path the next day makes different decisions - with different results and a surprising ending!



Problematizing the moral:

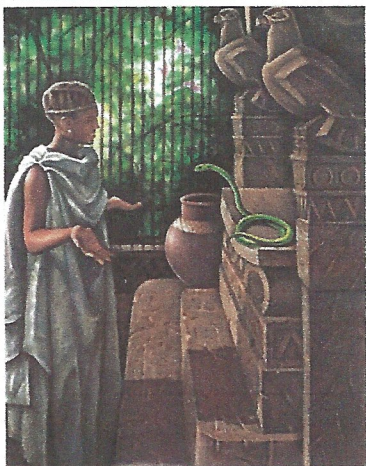
1. What is Manyara's personality like in this story?
2. What is Nyasha's personality like in this story?
3. Whose personality is yours most similar to?
4. Who becomes queen, and what do you think the author's point is?
5. Do you agree or disagree with this point?
6. Do you think someone who is selfish is worse than someone who is self-effacing/altruistic/kind to others? Why or why not?



Worthy goals in life/The allure and nature of power/The politics of gender:

1. What is Nyasha's reward in the story?
2. What do you think of this reward?
3. What do Kings and Queens have that ordinary people do not?
4. What do they not have that ordinary people have?
5. Would you want to become king/queen? Why or why not?
6. Do you think someone who is selfish is worse than someone who is self-effacing/altruistic/kind to others? Why or why not?
7. Should a King have a different personality than a Queen? If so, what should those differences be?
8. Is Nyasha's personality good for being a good queen? Why or why not?

The nature of worthiness and the meaning of beauty:



1. What makes a King or Queen "worthy"?
2. What makes anybody "worthy"?
3. What does it mean to be "worthy"?
4. In the story, the King desires "The Most Worthy and Beautiful".
5. Does being beautiful make someone more or less worthy.
6. Are beauty and worth different things?
7. Why does the King want someone who is worthy and beautiful, instead of just worthy, or just beautiful?

The nature of True Happiness:

1. What is Manyara's personality like in this story?
2. What is Nyasha's personality like in this story?
3. In the story, Mufaro, the girls' father, is described as completely happy, because he does not know that Manyara is mean.
4. Can one be truly happy if one does not know the truth about one's situation?
5. Would you rather have the happiness you could have by believing lies, or would you rather have unhappiness that comes from knowing the truth? Why?
6. What about for someone you loved?

7. Would you rather someone you love, like your parent, believe something that is a lie and be happy, or would you rather them know the truth and be less happy?
8. Would you tell someone you loved the truth, if you thought it might hurt them?
9. Should Manyara have told her father the truth?
10. How about Nyasha?
11. If Nyasha had told her father the truth, would she have been being nice to him, or mean?
12. Do you agree that Nyasha is a very nice daughter, since she does not tell her father the truth?

Ethics:

1. What is Manyara's personality like in this story?
2. What is Nyasha's personality like in this story?
3. In the story the King deceives Manyara and Nyasha by pretending to be a snake, and by having them pass tests without telling them.
4. Was this a good idea?
5. What was the purpose, and what did it accomplish?
6. Was the King successful?
7. If you were the King, would you have done something similar?
8. Do you think the King was being unfair to Manyara and Nyasha by deceiving them, or do you think it was okay to deceive them? Why?
9. Is it okay, in general, to deceive people? If so, why? If not, why not?
10. Are there special cases where it is okay, like the situation in the story?
11. What makes this a special case?
12. How do we know if a case is a special case?

