

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain

by Verna Aardema

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Regina Abernathy

A Perma-Bound Production

Note to the Teacher

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain is an African tale discovered in Kenya nearly seventy years ago. The author, Verna Aardema, has recreated this original tale of the Nandi people by pulling in a cumulative refrain and giving it the rhythm of *The House That Jack Built*. Before reading the tale, students may need to be introduced to *The House That Jack Built*. Then a comparison between the two tales may be introduced.

Synopsis

Ki-pat, an African herdsman, usually watched his herd on the plain which was originally fresh and green. Beautiful birds and wild creatures rested and found nourishment there. However, one year, the rains failed to materialize. As a result, a drought occurred and the wild animals migrated to greener pastures.

During the drought, much of the grass turned brown and died. The domesticated animals who depended upon the plains for their nourishment grew thin and thirsty. Finally, a huge black rain cloud shadowed the plain, but the rain did not fall.

Ki-pat, who usually stood on one leg like a huge stork, continued to guard his herd beneath the enormous rain cloud, when an eagle flew overhead and dropped a feather. Ki-pat used the feather, along with a slender stick to make an arrow. Next, he obtained a bow and used it to shoot the arrow and pierce the rain cloud. Then, it began to rain.

Finally, the drought ended. The grass again became green and the herd grew fat. Ki-pat married and had a son, little Ki-pat. Little Ki-pat now tends the herds and shoots down the rain when rain clouds appear over Kapiti Plain.

Biographical Sketch

Verna Aardema's (1911-) career as a writer of children's books spans three decades. Aardema stated that she was always reading about Africa; therefore, her stories were "apt to be set in Ashantiland or the Kalahari Desert." Her interest in Africa led her to the enjoyment of African folktales. Aardema felt these folktales should be rewritten for children.

Although African storytellers embellished their tales with many songs, descriptions and explanations, Aardema believed it was necessary to emphasize cause and effect relationships and strive for brevity when reconstructing the tales to make them more understandable for her audience.

Critic's Corner

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain is wonderfully imaginative African tale of a young man who uses ingenuity to solve a major problem. Not only are the illustrations beautiful, but the cumulative repetition is pleasing to the ear and brings added excitement to the reader. This is a beautiful tale to be shared with children of all ages.

Objectives

1. To introduce students to African folktales
2. To identify characteristics of the African continent, its people, animals, and culture
3. To develop the skill of reading rhyme with a cadence
4. To formulate a continuation of a story based upon individual interpretation

Student Activities

1. Have students use a video camera to shoot the pages of the book, (omit portion containing words) while someone reads the story. This will allow students to begin a video tape library of their favorite picture books. As a group assignment, it could teach not only technical skills, but cooperative learning skills could occur. The tape could also serve as a learning tool for other students. Reading skills can be enhanced by having access to both the audio and visual techniques. Furthermore, the tape could be loaned to other classes consisting of younger students.
2. Have students read the story on cassette tape. The class may begin collecting a tape library of favorite stories. Also tapes could be used for remedial purposes. Once students listen to themselves they may re-read the story to improve oral skills.
3. Students could write a book report.
4. Have students draw pictures of their interpretation of the story.
5. Have students act out the story as someone reads.
6. Have students write the tale of little Ki-pat. (What adventures will Ki-pat have on the plain?) Have students make a book of this tale. They will design a cover, have a title page, and illustrations.

7. Using the methods of a storyteller, students will retell the story to fellow classmates or parents.
8. Students will use story as the basis for a play.

Beyond The Story

The most important aspect of an imaginative tale such as *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* is that it can be integrated into a variety of core subjects. For example:

Geography

(A) The story could be used to introduce students to the continent of Africa. However, the teacher must be extremely careful in avoiding stereotypes and explain that Africa has a variety of people who speak nearly 800 languages. A map of the continent should be presented to students. Also, depending upon class and grade level, each student may choose an African country to research and report to the class about the people, clothing, housing, natural resources, location, customs, language, etc.

(B) Students could make a globe out of paper mache or a balloon and draw the map of Africa and the surrounding bodies of water.

(C) The teacher could define a plain, its vegetation and the many animals that live there. (Pictures or a video of the animals of Africa would enhance the lesson.)

Social Studies

(A) A history lesson will be developed explaining that Africans do not necessarily live in Africa. They have migrated or been transported throughout the world. Therefore, there are -

- 1.) African-Americans,
- 2.) French-Africans,
- 3.) Jamaicans,
- 4.) Aboriginies,
- 5.)

- Africans live on every continent in almost every country.

Science

(A) A lesson could be developed exploring nature's cycle that results in rain.

(B) A lesson could be developed examining the many ways rain assists plants, animals, and man.

Language

(A) Create a lesson exploring the elements of rhyme.

(B) Students could create original rhymes and present them to the class.

Bibliography

ed. Commire, Anne. *Something About the Author: Facts Pictures About Authors and Illustrators of Books for Young People*, Vol. 4.

BRINGING THE RAIN TO KAPITI PLAIN TEST

Vocabulary Test

Read the sentences. Choose the meaning of the underlined words.

1. This is the great Kapiti Plain all fresh and green from the African Rains.
 - A. flat land
 - B. a hill
 - C. a mountain
2. And patches of shades for wild creatures to rest in.
 - A. the grass
 - B. the animals
 - C. the weather
3. And grass for the herdsmen to pasture their cows on.
 - A. rest
 - B. let them roam
 - C. feed
4. But one year the rains were so belated.
 - A. not on time
 - B. early
 - C. coming soon
5. That all of the big wild creatures migrated.
 - A. stayed
 - B. moved to another place
 - C. slept
6. Then Ki-pat helped to end that terrible drought.
 - A. time of too much rain
 - B. time of too little rain
 - C. time of too much wind
7. This is the arrow Ki-pat put together with a slender stick and an eagle feather.
 - A. thin
 - B. fat
 - C. bent
8. This was the shot that pierced the cloud.
 - A. bounced off of
 - B. hit
 - C. went into
9. So the grass grew green and the cattle grew fat.
 - A. cows & bulls
 - B. sheep
 - C. horse
10. Little Ki-pat tends the cows now.
 - A. thinks about
 - B. takes care of or watches over
 - C. plays with

Comprehension

Read the following sentences and choose the correct answers.

1. Where does the story take place?
 - A. the sky
 - B. Kapiti Plain
 - C. The Great Plain
2. On what continent does this story take place?
 - A. Asia
 - B. Australia
 - C. Africa
3. How was the land described before the drought?
 - A. fresh and green
 - B. beautiful
 - C. cold and empty
4. For what reasons did the animals come to Kapiti Plain?
 - A. to mate
 - B. to rest and eat
 - C. to hunt
5. One year, what did not come to Kapiti Plain?
 - A. sun
 - B. rain
 - C. cold weather
6. When the drought occurred, what happened to the wild animals?
 - A. they moved to another area
 - B. they fought each other
 - C. they cried
7. What happened to the cows during the drought?
 - A. they grew fat
 - B. they moved to another area
 - C. they became hungry and thirsty
8. What happened to the grass during the drought?
 - A. it grew fresh and green
 - B. it grew higher than before
 - C. it grew brown and died
9. What bird dropped a feather as he flew over Kapiti Plain?
 - A. a crow
 - B. a sparrow
 - C. an eagle
10. What did Ki-pat make with the bird's feather?
 - A. a bow
 - B. an arrow
 - C. a spear
11. For what purpose did Ki-pat use the bow and arrow?
 - A. to put a hole in the rain cloud so the rain would fall
 - B. to shoot birds
 - C. to shoot at a lucky star
12. After the rain what happened to the cows?
 - A. they left for another area
 - B. they grew fat
 - C. they grew lean and hungry
13. After the rain what happened to the grass on Kapiti Plain?
 - A. it died
 - B. it turned brown
 - C. it turned green
14. Who watched the herds and shot down the rain clouds with his bow and arrow at the end of the story?
 - A. Ki-pat
 - B. Kip-pat's wife
 - C. little Ki-pat

BRINGING THE RAIN TO KAPITI PLAIN ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Test

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. A | 3. C | 5. B | 7. A | 9. A |
| 2. B | 4. A | 6. B | 8. C | 10. B |

Comprehension Test

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 4. B | 7. C | 10. B | 13. C |
| 2. C | 5. B | 8. C | 11. A | 14. C |
| 3. A | 6. A | 9. C | 12. B | |

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