Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

John Steptoe
1987
New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard

LOVE
Zimbabwe
Folktale
Reading Time: 11 minutes

CONCEPTS

**Love
Compassion
Respect
Generosity
Justice**

SUMMARY

Inspired by an African folktale, this story tells of a father's unconditional love for his two daughters, one bad-tempered and one kind and sweet. Steptoe's powerful illustrations portray the culture and characters with warmth and vision.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss love, compassion, generosity, respect, and justice as they apply to the story, and will be encouraged to perform kind acts at home and school.

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Research the meaning of your name or your favorite name. (Keyword: first names meaning) Write a bio-poem about yourself and use the meaning of your name in the poem if it applies. (Keyword: bio-poem)

2. Identify characteristics in the book that make it an African Cinderella story. Read Cinderella stories from other cultures. (Keyword: Cinderella stories cultures) Compare and contrast with the European Cinderella story.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Find out about Victoria Falls and/or other national parks in Zimbabwe. (Keywords: Victoria Falls Zimbabwe; national parks Zimbabwe). Report to your class.

2. In small groups, color and label the countries on outline maps of Africa.* Use the world map or globe as a reference. Write facts about Zimbabwe such as surrounding countries, distance to an ocean, and/or size.

ART

Make smaller versions of the clay pot Nyasha is crafting at the beginning of the story. If possible, have your pots fired in a kiln and paint with designs used on Zimbabwean pottery. (Keyword: Zimbabwe pottery)

SCIENCE

In pairs, research in books and online to find out about animals and plants in Zimbabwe. (Keyword: Zimbabwe flora fauna) Report findings to class. Print out photos from the Internet or draw and label animals and plants. Post around a map of Africa and connect to Zimbabwe with yarn or string. Post facts from Social Studies #2 around the map.

* Visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Teaching Heartwood, Activities, Primary, for the bio-poem instructions and outline map of Africa.

DISCUSSION

1. What characteristics best describe Mufaro's daughters? Which qualities do you respect in Nyasha? Give examples. How do you show respect to others? Which qualities would you look for in a friend?

2. The names of the characters have special meaning in the story. Nyasha means "mercy," Mufaro means "the happy man," and Manyara means "ashamed." Talk about the significance of these meanings (see Language Arts #1).

3. How does Nyasha show caring and kindness to the snake, the hungry boy, and the old woman? Do you think she shows compassion toward her sister? Why or why not? Tell about times you or someone you know showed compassion by helping someone in need.

4. How does Mufaro show love for both daughters? How do Nyasha and Manyara show love for each other? Describe how your family shows love to you. Give examples.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate Zimbabwe on the world map.

2. Words can be said in a kind way or an unkind way, e.g., "Sorry!" With a partner, role-play telephone conversations contrasting kind and unkind ways of speaking the same words.

3. In small groups, brainstorm things to do in school involving kindness and/or respect for others or the environment. Write ideas on separate slips of paper, put together in a "Kindness Envelope," draw one idea each day, and complete the task.

4. Nyasha means "mercy" in the Shona language. Together write a class bio-poem about Nyasha.* Use the word "mercy" for the last line.

WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal* write about Heartwood attributes in the story. List the attribute and draw or write an example.

2. Write about and illustrate two ways you show kindness and generosity in school, such as sharing or helping a younger student.

EXTENSION

1. Complete Home Connection pages and take home to share with families.

2. Make a coupon book as an act of love for your family. Have at least one coupon for each person describing a kind act you will do for him/her.

VOCABULARY

millet	foretold	mercy
silhouetted	garments	
destination	descended	