

Literature for East Africa

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Family

Aardema, Verna. (1996). *The lonely lioness and the ostrich chicks: A Maasai tale.* NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

This is a traditional Maasai tale written as a picture book.

Activities:

- ~ Complete a graphic organizer using sequence.
- ~ Have students participate in storytelling using props and sound effects.

Maasai/Masai people are semi-nomadic pastoralists who live mainly in the Great Rift Valley of north central Tanzania and southern Kenya. "Maasai" translates as "one who speaks the Maa language," hence the spelling with two a's. The spelling "Masai" was first used by British settlers and continues to appear in a variety of contexts, although Maa speakers themselves much prefer "Maasai." In deference to our Maa-speaking friends, we use "Maasai" throughout, except when the alternative spelling appears in a book title.

Ekpa, Anthonia. (2005). *Abo and the crocodile.* Nairobi: MvuleAfrica Publishers.

Oku and Abo almost lose their lives in the river because of their stubbornness and disobedience.

Activities:

- ~ You can use the comprehension questions and list of vocabulary words that are provided at the end of the book.
- ~ This is a great book to use in a social skills lesson as you discuss the importance of obeying your parents and teachers.

Heatwole, Marsha. (1998). *Jambo, watoto!* West Bloomfield, Michigan: Creative Art Press.

Four little cheetahs are left alone while their mother goes out hunting for the day. When other animals invite them to come out and play, they are faced with a choice. Will they listen to their mother's instructions or be swayed by the enticement of the other animals?

Activities:

- ~ Learn Kiswahili names of animals.
- ~ This book teaches a great lesson on obedience and making good choices so you can tie it to your own classroom rules and choices that students make to follow those rules.

- ~ Create flannel board, magnetic board, or puppet pieces for retelling and sequencing this story.

Kiswahili/Swahili is a widely spoken Bantu language, predominantly found in East Africa. The proper form of the word is Kiswahili, with "ki" being the prefix signifying language. More commonly used outside of East Africa, however, is the word Swahili.

Hopcraft, Xan and Carol. (2002). *How it was with Dooms: A true story from Africa*. NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

This tender story, of the bond that developed between a young cheetah and the Hopcraft family who raised Doom, is told through the voice of a young boy.

Activities:

- ~ Have children identify a family experience that they could write up as a narrative using the writing process to organize their writing, complete the editing process, and then present their stories to the class.

Joose, Barbara. (2005). *Papa do you love me?* San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

This story could be set anywhere, but the references to the calabash, birth-right cow, greenheart tree, wildebeest, and other animals make it distinctly African. The people are pictured as Maasai. This particular book can be used to learn more about the Maasai people.

Activities:

- ~ Comparisons to the feelings of parents everywhere toward their children, you can have children interview their own parents with this same question and have the parents share how much they love their children to create a class book.
- ~ Persons familiar with children's literature will notice the similarity to Joose's *Mama Do You Love Me?* set among the Inuit tribes of Alaska. You can use a Venn diagram to have the children compare the two stories for similarities and differences
- ~ Note the universal need for security, clean water, and food in the class book and the Joose's two books.
- ~ To make connections to art, note the distinct dress of the Maasai particularly in terms of color and design (SEE CURRICULA DESIGN BY BEVERLY MILLER)

Mpesha, Nyambura. (1998). *Eleo the chameleon*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

A story about a chameleon that shows self-confidence with his own appearance (colors) and learns a way to be kind to his friends. This book has activities for students to complete on the bottom of each page.

Activities:

- ~ Predict what might happen throughout the story and discuss what the students would do in each situation
- ~ Have your class brainstorm a list of do's and don'ts for being caring. Ask for specific examples of each behavior they identify.
- ~ Bring in (or have children bring in) articles from newspapers and magazines describing situations that show caring and uncaring actions on the part of individuals, groups, or governments. Discuss these situations. In what ways do they demonstrate either caring or uncaring? Perhaps have the class write a group letter to the people involved.
- ~ Hold class discussion about additional scenarios they might imagine.

Shachtman, Tom. (1981). *Growing up Masai*. NY: Macmillan Publishing Company Inc.

The daily life of two young Masai children is described in detail. Striking black and white photographs enhance the text and sayings of the elders reinforce the traditions of the culture.

Activities:

- ~ Compare and contrast the daily life activities of the Masai and people living in the United States.
- ~ Have students take photographs of their daily activities.
- ~ Share and discuss sayings/lessons important to students and their families.

Stuve-Bodeen, Stephanie and Hale, Christy. (2002). *Elizabethi's school*. NY: Lee & Low Books, Inc.

Elizabethi is excited about her new uniform, new shoes, and the first day of school. However, once at school she experiences homesickness for her family. Later at home, after sharing what she learned at school, Elizabethi realizes how proud she is of her accomplishments and looks forward to returning to school the following day.

Activities:

- ~ Have students compare and contrast, through written descriptions or illustrations, Elizabethi's day at school and their day at school.

Unigwe, Chika. (2002). *A rainbow for dinner*. Macmillan-Africa.

For Ada's eighth birthday, she asks for a rainbow for dinner. Mother prepares foods of each color for a rainbow meal.

Activities:

- ~ Create a plate of food with all the rainbow colors represented.
- ~ Share personal stories of seeing rainbows.

Woodling, Rita. (1997). *A game with Granny*. Macmillian-Africa

Simple vocabulary builds confidence in beginning readers as they enjoy the illustrations and silly game between a grandmother and her young granddaughter.

Activities:

- ~ Play "Can you...?" game with culturally appropriate experiences.