



Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears

Verna Aardema , Diane Dillon (Illustrator) , Leo Dillon (Illustrator)

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Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears Verna Aardema , Diane Dillon (Illustrator) , Leo Dillon (Illustrator)
In this Caldecott Medal winner, Mosquito tells a story that causes a jungle disaster. "Elegance has become the Dillons' hallmark. . . Matching the art is Aardema's uniquely onomatopoeic text . . . An impressive showpiece."--Booklist, starred review. Full color.

Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears Details

Date : Published June 1st 1985 by Weston Woods Studios (first published 1975)

ISBN : 9781560080817

Author : Verna Aardema , Diane Dillon (Illustrator) , Leo Dillon (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Folklore, Cultural, Africa

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From Reader Review Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears for online ebook

Kiera Burnett says

Summary and Critique:

This west African tale uses all of the key features of a modern folktale, including talking animals, personification, and the explanation of naturally occurring events. When a buzzing mosquito sets the animals in a tizzy, it is up to King Lion to sort out the mess using a classic reversal of events. This book would be ideal for teaching cause and effect or allowing students to practice reversal strategies of their own.

Additionally, the author uses countless sound words throughout the story, one of my favorite literary tricks. I would love to use this book as a leeway into having students write their own explanation of why a natural event occurs. In addition to a strong literary basis, this book contains gorgeous illustrations. Just by flipping through the pages, one can see an entire rainbow of colors. It is also interesting to see how on the pages where one animal is blaming another, the accused animal is depicted as ferocious. The subsequent page explains that said animal was not to blame and the pattern repeats until it is traced back to the pesky mosquito.

Classroom use:

I would incorporate this book into a unit about folklore around the world.

Genre: Folklore

Format: Picture Book

Reading level: Grades 3-4

Theme: Animals, Blame

Topic: Explaining animal behaviors

Gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status:

Because this is an African folktale, it presents African individuals as the majority. While this is accurate, it is not always a racial portrayal with which children are familiar.

midnightfaerie says

A great educational book for your children over the preschool age. My 5 yr old loved it. Lots of good information with beautiful pictures that will help keep children engaged. Aardema is wonderful for an addition to a geography or history lesson. And this one is a Caldecott award winner so it's worth the read for the illustrations alone. A great addition to any children's library.

Melissa Coyle says

How a lie has a dreadful consequence!

Makenzie Moore says

This folklore story reminded me a lot of "There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly." I'm thinking this is because of the rhythmic nuance and pattern of the story. This book would be great for grades 1-6. Not only could the students catch on to the patterns near the middle-end of the story, but they could predict what is going to happen as the mosquito and the rest of the animals make their decisions. This book is also a great book to teach cause and effect. The animals' actions are the perfect example of "if this, then that", "because of this, this happened." I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found that the pictures were beautiful as well.

Ronyell says

"Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears" is a Caldecott Award winning folktale from Africa about the consequences of lying to other people and how they affect others. Verna Aardema's playful narrative and Leo and Diane Dillon's colorful and vibrant illustrations make this book an instant treat for children and adults alike.

Verna Aardema's magnificent retelling of an ancient West African folktale is both funny and dramatic. The story of how a mosquito's lie eventually causes chaos in the forest and the unfortunate death of one of Mother Owl's owlets is an extremely dramatic moment in this book and it teaches children how lying can affect other people in a negative way, whether it involves the person having a bad reputation because of the lie or it results in someone getting seriously hurt in a physical or a mental way. Leo and Diane Dillon's vibrant illustrations are colorful and creative as they display the animals in a flat style and design the other animals to be larger than the mosquito (even though in reality, the mosquito is smaller than the other animals) which might suggest that the mosquito is more like a small pest while the other animals were trying to go about their business in the forest.

Parents should know that this story involves the death of a child and that would upset many sensitive children and adults. Many parents would feel sympathy for Mother Owl as one of her owlets gets killed and how distraught she was when she finds out about this incident as many parents who lost their children before would relate deeply to this situation. Also, small children might be frightened about the subject matter of death and parents need to reassure them about how they will always be there for their child and how death is apart of life (how you would explain to them about death is up to you).

"Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears" is a wonderful and cautious book about the consequences of telling people lies and many children would surely enjoy this classic book for many generations. Of course, I would recommend this book for children ages five and older since it does deal with the death of a child.

Review is also on: [Rabbit Ears Book Blog](#)

Stanley says

I don't usually write reviews, but this is one of my favorite books. I use it every year in my class to teach about community. Specifically, how the actions of one member of the community can adversely affect others. The language and the pictures are awesome, too!

ABC says

I got this book when I was a kid, but I didn't care for the illustrations so I don't think I ever read it.

Well, approximately twenty years later I have read it to my five year old child, and I still don't like it. Now, as an adult, I like the pictures. They are not typical cute drawings, but they are interesting. Now I don't care for the story--it's rather boring and involves the death of an owlet and its mourning mother. Worth reading once, but not worth buying. (Luckily our copy is from the library!)

Rumana Nasrin says

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Jeimy says

African myths feel more like folk tales. This one was very entertaining.

Book Concierge says

Diane and Leo Dillon were awarded the Caldecott Medal for their woodcut illustrations of this African folk tale.

When the mosquito tells the iguana what he saw, the iguana gets annoyed. Not wanting to listen to such nonsense, he plugs his ears. As a result, he doesn't hear the python's greeting, and the snake believes iguana is angry with him and plotting some sort of revenge. So, python looks for a hole to hide in, which frightens the rabbit Etc It's a fun, repetitive story that children will enjoy listening to, and which explores the unintended consequences of our actions.

Laura says

1976 Caldecott Medal

This folk tale is written in a cumulative or a chain format, similar to other popular children's books such as: *Their Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly*, *This is the House that Jack Built*, and *The Napping House*. I think it could open up some great discussion on the effects our behavior can have on those around us, being honest, and taking time to communicate. I only wish the illustrations were done better. They fit the story, but they just didn't feel engaging enough.

AgnesO says

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears is a Caldecott Award winning picture book written by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. I selected the book from the ALSC website. In this pourquoi tale, the author retells an African story of how the mosquito developed its habit of buzzing. According to the tale, which is written in a cumulative format, the mosquito spotted the iguana drinking at a waterhole and announced, "I saw a farmer digging yams that were almost as big as I am." The iguana, annoyed by the mosquito's nonsense, put sticks in its ears and moved away from the insect. With its ears plugged, the iguana could not hear the snake's greeting and continued mindlessly on its path. The snake, convinced that the iguana must be angry and scheming against it, looked for a place to hide and slithered into a rabbit hole. The rabbit, terrified at the snake's sight, jumped out of its burrow and raced through the forest. The crow noticed the frightened rabbit and, thinking that there must be some danger, cawed to alarm the forest creatures. When the money heard the crow's warning, it leaped through the treetops to caution the other animals accidentally killing an owlet. The Mother Owl, overwhelmed with mourning, neglected her duties of waking the sun. Once the animals, with King Lion in charge, finally deciphered the sequence of events, they blamed the mosquito for the tragedy. And then, the readers learn why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears...

The artwork in this picture book is magnificent. The vibrant illustrations capture the reader's attention and delightfully portray the simple yet engaging and suspenseful plot. The vivid watercolors uniquely outline the animal characters and illuminate the tale bringing it to life. In addition to its appealing artwork, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* teaches a universal moral. Besides the message that misunderstandings can have major consequences, I think that the underlying theme in this tale is that our actions affect others and that we should take responsibility for our actions. Therefore, I think that this picture book can be implemented to teach cause and effect relationships. In particular, the animals in the story blame each other for the unfortunate events, while the mosquito hides in order to escape punishment. Furthermore, the author enriches the story through the imitative repetition of animal sounds, which are great examples for teaching onomatopoeia. The tale can also be valuable for discussing the characteristics of African folktales. Additionally, reading *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* can help students make connections to their cultural heritage. I would implement this book in grades K-3.

Michelle says

In this West African folk tale, a mosquito's lie makes the iguana grumpy, setting off a chain of events in the jungle that answers the question of why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears.

This book would be great for elementary age children. The author gives each animal a made up sound to mimic their movement or traditional sound. The illustrations are colorful and contribute to the mood and flow of the story. This book could be used in a folk tale unit or as a funny read aloud on a camping trip. This

book could also be viewed as a cautionary tale of the perils of stretching the truth or lying. Viewing it as a cautionary tale does make it a darker story overall and may be frightening to some children.

Galib says

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Breanna Newton says

Why Mosquito's Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon is a sweet read about an West African tale. This book has been remade into updated versions throughout the years but the original is the best. The illustrations of the book were bright and colorful. The animals in the pictures gave a playful read to the reader as they looked like cutouts or coloring book drawings. The author lays out the text in an easy manner for the reader to understand. The mosquito started a chain reaction of events to happen which in turn led to an owlet dying and the mosquito was hiding so that he wouldn't get punished. The tale behind this story is that mosquito's buzz in people's ears because they want to know if people are still angry with him.

This book would be a great read for grades 1st and 2nd. As a classroom teacher, one could use this book to teach about cause and effect. A teacher could lead a discussion with the class about misunderstandings and how if left alone it can become a bigger problem. A game to play with the students could be telephone. Make sure to gather children in a circle and whisper a sentence to the child on your left or right. Have that child whisper the sentence to the next child. Continue until the sentence goes all the way around. Have the last child say the sentence aloud and share the original sentence. This would then lead to a great discussion about what happened to the original message.

Margaret Chind says

We read this one today to follow up after reading the version by Verna Aardema illustrated by Jan Brett included in Childcraft #1 Once Upon A Time (1988). We enjoyed discussing the emotions portrayed in the Dillon illustrations but all agreed we like the Jan Brett images and creatures more. I would love to have hers as a stand alone book version.

This book is on many lists, but I bought it from Memoria Press' recommendation.

Ken Moten says

Another story from my youth. About a careless lie that leads to death and a near eternal night. For the kids.

Zoe's Human says

This has fun art and loads of animals, but the story fell a bit flat with me. All of the animals, excepting the rabbit, seemed to overreact, and I just don't think the mosquito should have born the burden of the punishment for everyone's absurd behavior. The story could be used to mentor about unintended consequences and overreactions by an engaged parent though.

Picture book folktale

Grades: PreK - 5

Ages: 3-10

Lexile Measure: AD770L

DRA Level: 30

Themes: African animals, African folktales, lying, unintended consequences

Juwairiyah Sa-eed Abubakar says

loved this book!!!

Dolly says

This is a fun story, along the lines of "There was an old lady who swallowed a fly..." And our girls said it reminded them of Crazy Alphabet by Lynn Cox.

In any case, it's a story that builds upon itself one creature at a time. It's fun to read aloud and the illutrations are angular and look almost primitive. We really enjoyed reading this book together.

This book was selected as one of the books for the October 2015 - Quarterly Caldecott discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.
