



Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale

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The tale of Mufaro's two daughters, two beautiful girls who react in different ways to the king's search for a wife - one is aggressive and selfish, the other kind and dignified. The king takes on disguises to learn the true nature of both girls and of course chooses Nyasha, the kind and generous daughter, to be his queen.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale Details

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From Reader Review Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale for online ebook

Ann says

A tale of kindness and selfishness, and their corresponding consequences.

I've loved this book ever since I saw it on "Reading Rainbow" as a child. For whatever reason the book was burned into my memory and I was always delighted whenever it was featured on the show. The story, the illustrations... everything made a huge impression on me.

SO, as an adult I was anxious-excited and anxious-apprehensive to find out if the book would still be as wonderful as I remembered.

I still love it! Yes, upon reading it as an adult there are things that I would like a teeny more depth to, and for that I'd probably have awarded this four stars, but I thought the fact it made such an impression on me when I was younger deserved the extra star.

Elizabeth Westlund says

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is loosely based on the traditional Cinderella story, and elements of that can be seen throughout the story. It begins with two sisters, Manyara who is selfish and cruel and Nyasha who is clever and kind. Mufaro never saw the difference in personality in his two daughters, but Manyara continually mistreated her sister and others, much like the evil step-sisters in Cinderella. When the King asked to see the sisters, they were put through a series of character tests along the way. In the end, the morality of the sisters meant their fate.

I did see connections to Cinderella, but thought the stronger foil between two characters made this story unique. It also represented another culture and country, adding to the interesting nature of this book. The illustrations are good extensions of what is happening in the text. This would be a good book to use when exploring lessons and themes with younger readers.

Dolly says

This is a fabulous tale, full of magic, wonder, kindness, grace and even greed and jealousy.

The illustrations are marvelous and really enhance the story. Our girls enjoyed this story a lot and I had fun reading it to them.

This book was selected as one of the April 2011 Royalty themed reads for the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Book group here at Goodreads.

This book was also selected as one of the books for the August 2016- Caldecott Honor discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

This book was also selected as one of the books for the May 2018 - Boston Globe-Horn Book Picture Book Award Winners 1983-1990 discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

Zequoa Hyché says

I have not read this book in such a long time. I was probably 10 years old or younger when I first read this book. Reading Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters again brought back the memory of how inspiring and moving it was. I remembered the plot, but what was new to me this time was the illustrations, language and how the story used multiple subjects to disguise the prince. This story touches lightly on the African culture through these things. I liked the story when I was younger, but even more so now that I am older.

Q_Barb says

This Caldecott Honor picture Book of an African folk tale is illustrated and shared with us by John Steptoe. It is the story of a man, Mufaro, in an African village whose king is seeking a bride and how the man's two daughters, Nyasha and Manyara, pursue that dream. Its premise is of pride going before a fall, but for me it was more than anything a story of kindness rewarded for its own sake.

This is one of the most beautifully illustrated books I have read, with lush, deep shades of colors in the foliage and sky. It is illustrated in the Realism style and Steptoe's artistry with the expression on the characters' faces and hand gestures is superb.

I highly recommend, however, listening to this tale as it is read by Robin Miles and following along in the book. Her African accent lends a beauty to the fable that my feeble imagination could not.

Dedicating his book to the children of South Africa, Steptoe writes that he was inspired by a folktale collected by G.M. Theal and published in 1895 in his book, Kaffir Folktales. The illustrations were inspired by the ruins of ancient city in Zimbabwe. The author note also goes on to explain the characters' names and what they mean in their native language.

I think this book could be used in a classroom curriculum in multiple ways, such as unit studying the message and characters in the fables and folk tales from foreign countries, that could include as "How many spots does a leopard have? and other tales" by Julius Lester which includes African and Jewish tales, "Folk tales & fables of Asia & Australia" by Robert Ingpen & Barbara Hayes, "Russian folk-tales" retold by James Riordan, as a few examples. Whenever possible, have the same choices available to be heard as well as read, such as "The rainbow people" by Laurence Yep.

Or it could be paired with other African folktales, such as "The Lion and the Ostrich Chick" by Ashley Bryan, which includes folk tales from Hausa, Angolan, Masai, and Bushmen people of Africa and then extend it on with non-fiction during a unit on Africa.

It also could be as an example of how to notice important parts of the illustrations. It could be used for lessons on sequencing, or writing with dialogue. The overall message could spur a good discussion at many grades, from kindergarten up. It would be a wonderful thing to have in a listening center for younger students such as second -graders.

Also there is a recorded Spanish version of this that I haven't listened to yet or read, as well as another version of the tale by Debbie Diller and a teacher's resource guide for the tale that I haven't found yet, but plan on getting.

Anne says

This story teaches a lesson in kindness. Mufaro (meaning “happy man” in Shona) is a king who has two beautiful daughters one named Manyara, meaning “ashamed”, who is a mean spirited princess while the other named Nyasha meaning “mercy”, is kind towards everyone even her mean sister. I was glad to read a folk/ fairytale of a different culture this one being formed from the African culture. The images in the book reflected the events in text but they showed what the text didn't and couldn't describe about the setting of this story. The illustrations of this book immediately immersed me into the lush green setting that resembled Zimbabwe. I loved getting to see all the bright beautiful birds and flowers. The story can not only teach kids about how their kindness will be rewarded but it can also introduce them to some aspects of the African culture.

Antoinette Scully says

I remember having this book as a child and bought it for my own daughters a few years ago. I've read it many times, and love that something I cherished could be passed on to them, teaching a great lesson in being kind to others, including your own sister.

Lisa Skripps says

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, John Steptoe, is an African Cinderella story. Mufaro was a happy man and a very proud father. Mufaro had two very beautiful daughters who lived with him. Nyasha was kind, considerate, and very beautiful. Manyara, Mufaro's other daughter was very cruel, mean, and rude. Everyone knew this about Manyara; everyone except for Mufaro. Manyara spent all of her time teasing her sister. One day, the king decided he wanted to get married and invited "The Most Worthy and Beautiful Daughters in the Land" to appear before him. Manyara wanted her father only to send her, but Mufaro decided that only the king could choose between his most worthy daughters. Manyara, of course, didn't agree, and set out to make certain that she would be chosen by leaving before everyone else. Along the way, the magical king had disguised himself as an old woman, a garden snake, and a young (and very hungry) boy. Manyara treated all of these people very rudely, however Nyasha was kind. Her kindness in the end is what won the heart of the king, and they lived happily ever after!

Manybooks says

John Steptoe's absolutely brilliant Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is basically an African take on the globally-known and ever popular *Cinderella* folklore theme (both narrative and illustrations are outstanding in every way and their lovely and evocative marriage, their delightful combination, turn Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters into truly a shining and glistening gem of a picture book, and not only for children, but actually for anyone interested in and appreciative of global folk and fairy tales). And while the tale, while John Steptoe's presented or rather his adapted narrative (like many if not most Cinderella-type stories) is indeed perhaps rather predictable, it is still and indeed engagingly narrated and the evocative accompanying illustrations are simply and utterly almost too beautiful for words. Furthermore, the fact that details of the illustrations are

based on the ruins of an ancient city found in Zimbabwe, pays necessary and cultural homage to the historic civilisations of Africa.

Now personally, I especially and particularly have enjoyed that Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters really features no absolute and horrible villains. Manyara might be vain, proud, unhappy and most definitely constantly teases her sister Nyasha, but she also NEVER tries to actively harm her sister (unlike so many of the other Cinderella-type stories, where the stepsisters or siblings, as well as the stepmothers not only constantly make life miserable for the heroine, but often try to actively harm, and sometimes even kill the poor girl). And when Mufaro and Nyasha finally arrive in the city, Manyara even attempts to warn her sister about the supposed monster. Manyara thus, even with her proud vanity, even though she is selfish and often prone to teasing and nastiness, cares about her sister's safety and she obviously could not have known that for Nyasha, having passed the test that Manyara herself has failed, the snake would turn into the king (and then of course become Nyasha's husband).

Now with regard to folkloric equivalences, aside from the obvious Cinderella thematics, Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters also rather strongly does remind me of some of the (what I would call) sibling quest type of tales, where two very different sisters or brothers go on a similar quest, but only one (the virtuous, humble sibling, who shares his/her food and is kind and loving to all) receives a reward (and there is perhaps even a suggestion of folklore that features a monster bridegroom, namely the snake that turns into the king). And finally, while I do appreciate that John Steptoe has included a short author's note, acknowledging his main sources, the folklore enthusiast in me would have most definitely preferred a more in-depth analysis and discussion of origins, sources and comparisons; his author's note is more than adequate, but it does leave me wishing for a bit more detail (and indeed, a more thorough and involved author's note would definitely have made Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters into a five star book for me).

Tamara says

Loved it!

Lisa Vegan says

The illustrations are magnificent, with lovely depictions of the people and animals.

This tale is fairy tale like predictable but very entertaining.

I appreciated how the author-illustrator gave credit to the folktale that was his inspiration and how at the beginning he translates the meanings of a few names. (But, why name each of your daughters that way?! Self-fulfilling prophesy???)

The Children's Books group has chosen this book for one of its picture books for April, for the Picture Books Club there; the April theme is royalty. This book fits well enough, and it's such a beautiful book that I'm glad it was chosen. I already had it out from the library when the 5 winners and 1 alternate books were announced.

Ronyell says

“Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters” is a Caldecott Honor Book by John Steptoe and it is about how Mufaro’s two beautiful daughters are invited to the king’s palace so that the king will choose a worthy bride, but Manyara, the greedy sister, tries to go off to the king’s palace by herself and meets some disastrous results. “Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters” is a magnificent tale that children will definitely read for many years!

John Steptoe has done a magnificent job at both illustrating and writing this book. John Steptoe effectively retells this ancient African folktale with such tenderness that children will easily get the message about how true kindness towards others will bring the greatest rewards and how greed will bring about the downfall of a person with an extremely proud heart. John Steptoe’s illustrations are extremely beautiful as he makes the characters look extremely realistic and colorful. The highlighted images in this book are the images of the forest itself as the forest looks eerie at night since the branches of the trees are shadowed in a creepy way and when the forest is shown during the day, then the forest looks tranquil and beautiful as you can see various flowers blooming all over the pages of the forest.

“Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters” is great hit for children who love African folktales and will be a favorite for the whole family to enjoy for many years. I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since there are some African names like “Manyara” and “Nyasha” that might be difficult for smaller children to pronounce.

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

Monica Edinger says

I should say this is a gorgeous, gorgeous book and Steptoe deserved all the awards and acclaim for it as a work of art. What it is NOT is a book to introduce children to either Cinderella or Zimbabwe. He was inspired by a visit to Zimbabwe to do the story and beautiful it is, but it is absolutely not the way to introduce children to the continent of Africa or Zimbabwe, for that matter. And since the story is one made-up by Steptoe I question using it as an intro into Cinderella stories.

Julie says

This is such a fantastic "Cinderella Story" that teaches the importance of kindness towards everyone, regardless of their appearance, not just because of the potential rewards (snakes are probably not all kings), but because you are no better than them. The illustrations are wonderfully detailed, it is obvious why it received a Caldecott honor; I loved that Steptoe reflects African culture in a beautiful way, rather than depicting it as dirty or "third world" as we are so accustomed to seeing. This reflection allows an outlet for learning about the African culture, which is one that young students rarely hear about outside the context of slavery, which I believe is as important as its moral lesson. It also provides an alternate version of *Cinderella*, which can allow students to compare how stories can vary by culture. There really is just nothing I disliked about this book, as it has something to offer from almost every angle of storytelling; there are diverse characters, an interesting plot and integral setting, illustrations that contribute to the emotions felt by the characters, and a great moral lesson that is simplified for children to prevent a feeling of heavy-

handedness. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale* is definitely worthwhile to read.

Crystal Marcos says

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tales was an African tale reminiscent of Cinderella. The illustrations were lovely. I can see how it was a Caldecott Honor Book.

All the woman of the land are invited to the king's palace so he can choose his worthy bride. Both Mufaro's daughters are beautiful, but only one is beautiful both inside and out. Nyasha was so compassionate that she didn't even tell her father the way Manyara treated her because she was too considerate of her father's feelings to complain. I love the magic of the story and the way the story ends. A classic good trumps evil tale.

This was another wonderful monthly read of the Picture Book Club
<http://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/5...>
