



Who's in Rabbit's House?: A Masai Tale

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

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The opening pages of the book set the scene as the expectant onlookers gather before the drawn curtain. Then, as the play begins, the perspective shifts and reader becomes the real audience to this unique performance.

Who's in Rabbit's House?: A Masai Tale Details

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From Reader Review Who's in Rabbit's House?: A Masai Tale for online ebook

Blake White says

This book has great illustrations. The characters come to life. It's cool how it's a story based off a Masai play.

This would be a great book for children to read because of how it's written. It's writtens so you are kind of guessing what happens next. This is good for a child's imagination and also for a child learning to read and again the pictures would spark their interests.

Kacey Marshall says

An amusing twist on an otherwise typical book, Verna Aardema retells this folktale in a traditional style, presenting it in a play format. I enjoyed the story, but I thought it ended rather abruptly and had no moral or purpose to the tale, which is common among folktales. Leo and Diane Dillon created incredible illustrations, merging their own ideas with elements of Masai artwork. The pictures show the story in a play setting, complete with Masai tribe members in animal masks. I would recommend this book to any classroom teacher or parent wishing to present African folktales to children.

Katherine Cowley says

I liked this because it's a story from another culture, with a different approach to storytelling. It's also has a frame story: we see the characters setting up the play, and the whole time we're reminded that this is a play because the characters wear animal costumes on their heads. I loved doing voices for the different animals. My 3 year old loved this book, and the fun twist at the end.

Betsy says

This is a story our children's librarian used to tell via flannel board and the kids LOVED it. The Dillons' art has offered a unique interpretation: the humans are putting this on as a play and use masks to indicate which animal they are. The final page shows the real animals looking on in disbelief--as if they're wondering what in the world those silly people are doing.

Carole says

Rabbit lives in a hut on a bluff beside a path leading to the lake. All the animals pass by on their way to and from the lake. One day rabbit is coming back to his hut and hears someone's voice from inside his hut harshly saying that, "I am The Long One. I eat trees and trample on elephants. Go away! Or I will trample on you!"

Each animal tries to find out who the speaker is and tries unsuccessfully to get him out of the hut.

Carol Scrimgeour says

Don't know how I missed reading this book, but now that I have I do recognize the similarities that Julia Donaldson's *The Giant Jumper* has to it.

Cheryl says

Awfully long. But it would make a great play for a classroom, as there are so many juicy roles.

(Watched on youtube, because it's on the Horn Book Fanfare list for 1977, which I was exploring because I just learned about Fanfare and also learned that they have archives back to 1938!)

Arline says

Another good Aardema read aloud book! The pictures show the action beautifully.

It would be interesting to have a class come up with the moral to this story. First make a story map of the problem and resolution on a chart with students. Think of Why questions we can ask to understand the reason the characters do what they do.

Turn this story into a Readers Theater. Students could work on expression and tone.

Laura says

My summary: This retelling of a traditional Masai tale turns it into a dramatic performance by masked Masai actors before their fellow villagers, in which the jungle animals try to help Rabbit reclaim his house.

The Dillons' exotic, evocative illustrations give a new twist to this retold folk tale by making it a masked performance by Masai actors. The dynamic illustrations show movement through a series of still frames, and the masks change ever so subtly to convey the character's emotions. Aardema incorporates ideophones to enhance the African flavor of the text. Suitable for ages 4-8 and perhaps a story time (with a crowd that has a longer attention span!) Also good for classroom use or an adaptation to reader's theater, so children can make their own masks and act out the story themselves.

No journal reviews found, but it was positively reviewed by Meena Khorana in her book "Africa in literature for children and young adults : an annotated bibliography of English-language books."

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 a wonderful addition to any geography or history or culture lesson. A great addition to any children's library.

Madison M. says

This story is told by setting the scene as the audience gathers in anticipation for the play to begin. After the curtain is drawn, it shows native Masai people with masks on who are acting out as animals of the desert. In the story, the rabbit cannot figure out who is in her house. This big, bad creature calls themselves "The Long One" and claims that it eats trees and tramples on elephants and tells the animals to go away before it tramples on them too. The rabbit asks the leopard, elephant, and rhino to do the job, all the while the frog tells the rabbit that he can get the job done.

This folk-tale teaches its audience not to judge someone by their size or lack of visible ability because brains are just as important as brawn. It can also be used to start a conversation about how we shouldn't judge people by the way they look. I think in the real world, we're all guilty of being, at least somewhat, judgmental and this story could be a life lesson for everyone.

I read this to the little girl I babysit, she's three, but she is very bright for her age. She asked lots of questions, which I was able to answer using the lessons above. I found that the way the story is told makes it difficult for younger ones to understand. The illustrations are of native people with masks and other costumes on, which makes them hard to determine what the animal the characters are. I would recommend this book to parents and teachers who are trying to teach insight into another culture by sharing a folk-tale. This could be grouped with other books from other cultures that might share a similar message.

Mariel says

Who's in Rabbit's House?: A Masai Tale

Who's in Rabbit's House?

By Verna Aardema

This book is a very adventurous and funny. Rabbit seems to like being by himself, and one day at his home someone decided to play a prank on him by not letting him in. This animal pretended to be a scary animal called the Long One and wouldn't let Rabbit in his home. All the jungle animals tried to help but rabbit wasn't very appreciative of all the options because he was too worried about his home, and finally the smallest animal helped him get the animal out of his home. This book is great for preschool to 8 years old. It really gives the lesson of do not underestimate the little guys, and always appreciate people who try to help you because you never know when you will need them again.

Heather says

This book kicked off our love for African tales. My kids couldn't get enough of them.

The pictures are bold and colorful. The story is clever and just plain fun. We loved making the noises that go along with the actions.

We use this for our study of Africa, but love to read it any time we can.

Abigail says

When an unknown monster calling itself "The Long One" takes over her home, Rabbit isn't sure how to get rid of him. A series of animals offer their solutions, all of which turn out to be as destructive as they are helpful, until finally Rabbit turns to Frog, whose help she refused at the beginning.

Originally published as *The Long One* in Aardema's 1969 collection, [Tales for the Third Ear](#), this Masai folktale is illustrated by the marvelous Leo and Diane Dillon, who worked with Aardema on the Caldecott Medal-winning [Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears](#). The Dillons' artwork make the Masai context clear, as they present the story as a play, performed by people wearing animal masks. I understand that this format is quite appealing to young readers, although I found it somewhat distracting. I found myself wondering why the illustrators would choose to use masks that are not part of the Masai tradition, in order to retell a traditional Masai story. However that may be, the artwork was still gorgeous (as always), and the story engaging.

Ben says

Do youth services librarians still facilitate readers' theater? If so, this should be part of the standard repertoire. The connections between art, folktale, and geography are there to explore in the richly simple illustrations, the archetypal personalities, and the world in which the story takes place.
