

#10106

WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ IN PEOPLE'S EARS

WESTON WOODS STUDIOS, 1994
Grade Level: K-3
10 mins.

DESCRIPTION

A cumulative African tale of misadventure begins when Mosquito whispers a lie into Iguana's ears. The chain of events that follow result in an Animal Council meeting where the truth is discovered. Animated version of the Caldecott Medal-winning book by Verna Aardema. Narrated by James Earl Jones.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Grades K-4 History—The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World

- Standard: Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe
 - ♦ Benchmark: Understands the main ideas found in folktales, stories of great heroism, fables, legends, and myths from around the world that reflect the beliefs and ways of living of various cultures in times past (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)

Subject Area: Geography—Physical Systems

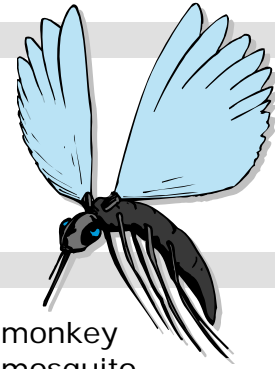
- Standard: Understands the characteristics of ecosystems on Earth's surface
 - ♦ Benchmark: Knows plants and animals associated with various vegetation and climatic regions on Earth (e.g., the plant and animal life supported in a midlatitude forest in North America, the kinds of plants and animals found in a tropical rain forest in Africa, animals and trees that thrive in cities) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2.)

Subject Area: Language Arts—Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
 - ♦ Benchmark: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of familiar literary passages and texts (e.g., fairy tales, folktales, fiction, nonfiction, legends, fables, myths, poems, nursery rhymes, picture books, predictable books) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)
 - ♦ Benchmark: Understands the basic concept of plot (e.g., main problem, conflict, resolution, cause-and-effect) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explore African culture and folktales.
2. To learn about jungle animals.
3. To investigate the concept of cause and effect.
4. To promote the reading of children's literature.



VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. alarm | 6. fault (blame) | 11. monkey |
| 2. council | 7. guilty conscience | 12. mosquito |
| 3. crow | 8. iguana | 13. owl/owlet |
| 4. danger | 9. King Lion | 14. python |
| 5. duty | 10. mischief | 15. whine |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Read the book *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* by Verna Aardema. Locate West Africa on a map. Discuss climate, rainfall, animals, vegetation, and inhabitants.
2. Review known information about mosquitoes. Discuss why mosquitoes might buzz around people's heads.
3. Discuss telling tall tales or exaggerating.
 - a. What is the difference between exaggerating and telling a lie?
 - b. Why do you think people sometimes tell tall tales or exaggerate?
 - c. How would you feel if you found out that something a friend told you was not the truth?

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause when the iguana puts sticks in his ears. Discuss why he did this. Predict what might happen as a result of having sticks in his ears.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Who woke the sun each day? How?
2. What did the mosquito tell the iguana he had seen? Did the iguana believe the mosquito? Why did the iguana put sticks in his ears?
3. What happened when the iguana went by the python? Why didn't the iguana answer the python? Where did the python go? Why?
4. What did the rabbit do when he saw the python coming into his burrow?
5. What did the crow do after seeing the rabbit bounding across the clearing? Why?
6. Why did the monkey hurry through the treetops? How did the monkey kill a baby owl?
7. Why didn't the mother owl wake up the sun?
8. Why did the King Lion call a meeting of the animals?

9. Describe how each animal blamed another animal for their actions. Did they tell the truth?
10. Who did the lion king decide was at fault for killing the baby owl? Do you agree with this decision?
11. Where did the mosquito go when he heard that he would be punished by the council? Was he punished?
12. Why did the mosquito buzz in the man's ear? How did the man respond?
13. What could the iguana have done when the mosquito told him a tall tale? How might this have changed the story?

Applications and Activities

1. Discuss folk tales and characteristics of folk tales. Read other African folktales. Compare and contrast situations, emotions, characters, problems, and solutions. Other titles include:
 - a. *The Tortoise and the Tree*, adapted and illustrated by Janina Domanska.
 - b. *The Village of Round and Square Houses*, written and illustrated by Ann Grifalconi.
 - c. *Why the Crab Has No Head*, retold and illustrated by Barbara Knutson.
 - d. *Who's In Rabbit's House?* A Masai tale retold by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon.
 - e. *Oh, Kojo! How Could You! An Ashanti Tale*, retold by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Marc Brown.
 - f. *Rabbit Makes a Monkey of Lion*, a Swahili tale retold by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.
2. Discuss things learned about African life and culture from the story. Research to learn more about life in West Africa. Share the information gathered.
3. Review the cause and effect situations from the story. Create cause and effect sentence strip puzzles.
 - a. Create two columns on the overhead or board. List several problems (effects) in the right-hand column. Write what caused the problem on the left-hand side.
 - b. Work in pairs. Cut a sentence strip paper in half. Identify a cause and effect from the story that is not on the chart.
 - c. Write the cause in a complete sentence on the left half of the sentence strip and the effect in a complete sentence on the right half of the sentence strip.
 - d. Check for correct grammar and spelling. Trace the words neatly with a marker so that it can be seen easily.
 - e. Make these into two puzzle pieces separating the cause and effect in half by cutting one jagged or jigsaw puzzle looking cut down the middle.
 - f. Collect all of the puzzle pieces and redistribute them randomly so that each student gets one. Move around the room to find the complementary piece.
 - g. When everyone has found their other half, take turns taping their pieces onto the cause and effect chart and share their puzzle.
4. Discuss onomatopoeia.
 - a. Watch the video again to locate the "sound" words and the animals that make those sounds.

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- b. Fold a sheet of paper in half. On the front, write a sound word. On the inside, illustrate what makes these sounds.
5. Show the book, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*. Review the importance of the Caldecott medal. Discuss the illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon.
 - a. Illustrate a favorite scene from the story on Manila paper or card stock. Color the scenes very darkly with crayon.
 - b. Use black tempera paint that has been watered down and "wash" over the colored scenes.
 - c. Write a short summary of the scene, tape to the bottom of the pictures, and display.
6. Write a "why" story to explain something.
 - a. Think of some question you would like to have answered.
 - b. Write or dictate a tale to explain the answer to the question. Be sure the stories ask and answer the "why" question and that each event leads to the next one.
 - c. Illustrate the stories.
7. Create a jungle wall mural on large sheets of paper using paints. Keep physical characteristics of the different jungle animals in mind, including camouflage coloring.
8. Make up movements for the action words in the story (the iguana lumbered, the rabbit bounded, etc.) Teach the class their new movements.
9. Research jungle animals and/or insects. Share the information learned with the class.
10. Add three new jungle animals to the story. Write what they might say or do. Draw a picture to show what the new animals say and do.

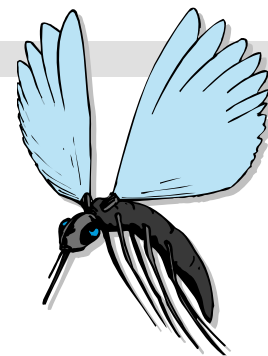
SUMMARY

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears is the story of a mosquito who whispers a tall tale into the ear of an iguana. The iguana, not wanting to hear such nonsense, plugs his ears with sticks. The iguana fails to hear the python call to him. The python assumes that the iguana is angry with him and plotting some mischief. This causes the python to hide in a rabbit hole which disturbs the rabbit. This chain of events goes until a baby owl is killed as a result of the confusion.

King Lion tries to resolve the problem of who killed the baby owl and the antics of the animals are then unraveled. The end of the story finds the animals angry with the mosquito, which was responsible for causing all of the chaos in the first place. To this day, the mosquito buzzes in people's ears as if to say "Zee! Is everyone still angry at me?"

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [*By the Light of the Halloween Moon* #10047](#)
- [*Hot Hippo* #10065](#)
- [*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* #10076](#)
- [*A Story, A Story* #10044](#)
- [*There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* #10101](#)
- [*The Legend of the Blue Bonnet* #2491](#)



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **VERNA AARDEMA PAPERS**

<http://avatar.lib.usm.edu/%7Edegrum/html/research/findaids/aardema.htm>

This Web site from the University of Southern Mississippi contains a large amount of biographical information about the author.

- **MEET AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS**

http://www.childrenslit.com/f_dillons.html

Find out about the couple who illustrated this African folktale and many more like it. This site has a link to a page about Leo and Diane Dillon, with images of their art posters and book cover collection.

- **FOLKTALES: A CULTURAL TEACHING TOOL**

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-africa/TyrHal/index.html>

This lesson relates the story to other familiar tales. Students are encouraged to write sentences related to this and other stories.

- **AFRICA: IT'S NOT A COUNTRY**

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-africa/aindex.htm>

This Web site hosts a wealth of lesson plans for teaching about Africa to early elementary age students. It includes lesson plans for daily life, wildlife, folktales, geography and environment, languages, toys and games, and many other topics. Many of the lesson plans include links to other sites on Africa.

- **NIGERIA LESSON PLANS** <http://fga.freac.fsu.edu/academy/k1niger.htm>

Twenty-four lessons for elementary classrooms, including "Where is Africa?," "Puppet-Making and Drama," and "Making Maps with Play Dough."

- **WHOOZOO GALLERY** <http://www.whozoo.org/gallery.htm>

Large photos of jungle animals and other animals. Students can view the python, iguana, and other animals from the story.