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Activity Guide

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Las Bellas Hijas de Mufaro

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ABOUT THE STORY

Inspired by an African folktale originally published in 1895, this story tells of Mufaro's two beautiful daughters, Nyasha, who is sweet and kind, and Manyara, who is selfish and ill-tempered. When the king announces that he will choose a bride from among the most worthy and beautiful daughters in the land, Manyara resolves to be the one chosen. Details and illustrations are based on the ruins and on the flora and fauna of the Zimbabwe region.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Explain to students that this is a modern fable, inspired by a folktale about a man who has two beautiful daughters – one who is kind and loving and the other, ill-tempered and selfish. When Mufaro hears that the king is looking for a queen, he declares that only the king could choose between Nyasha and Manyara. Ask the students what traits the king might look for in a queen.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children how they think mice, cats, and dogs interact. Explain that this book is about a cat that invites mice to dinner and gets a surprise guest.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What did Nyasha do when she found the little snake in her garden?”
- “What did Manyara do when she found out that the king was looking for a wife?”
- “Why do you think Manyara saw a monster when she got to the city?”
- Compare the ways that Manyara and Nyasha are treated by the people they met on the road to the city.” (*Make judgments*)
- “How did Manyara feel about Nyasha? How did Nyasha feel about Manyara?” (*Make inferences*)
- “How do you think Nyasha treated Manyara when she was queen? Explain.” (*Draw conclusions*)

Verbos y Adverbos

Verbs are action words. Have children act out these and other verbs from the story:

cantar	plantar	encontrar	buscar
reír	llevar	correr	gritar
llorar	volar		

Adverbs are words that describe verbs. They often answer the question “how”. In Spanish, adverbs are formed by adding *-mente* to the feminine form of an adjective. Look at the following examples from the story.

Esa noche, Manyara se escabulló silenciosamente fuera de la villa.

(That night, Manyara slipped away silently from the village.)

Entonces, miró, directamente a los árboles y se rió fuertemente.

(Then, she looked directly at the trees and laughed loudly.)

Have children find other examples in the book. Then have them form adverbs from these adjectives. Use them in sentences.

rápido	lente	claro	correcto
cortés	contento	cuidadosa	tranquilo

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: Beautiful Birds

Look at the illustrations in *Las Bellas Hijas de Mufaro*. The artist uses bold strokes and brilliant colors to depict the beautiful birds and wildlife native to Zimbabwe. Supply various materials (paints, pastels, tissue paper, etc.) for children to create their own “beautiful birds”. Use the book or other reference guides for ideas. The birds can be used as part of a bulletin board display.

Geography: Where in the World

Duplicate and hand out copies of an outline map of Africa. Locate and color Zimbabwe, the setting for this story, on the map. Research with children to learn basic facts about the country of Zimbabwe.

Social Studies: Brothers and Sisters

Brothers and sisters who do not get along is a common theme in many folktales. Have children think of other stories they know where brothers and sisters are at odds (Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, etc.). Read one or more and have children determine in what ways the story is the same as and different from this one.

Language Arts: What's in a Name?

On the dedication page, it says that in the Shona language, Nyasha means “compassion” and Manyara means “ashamed”. How are Mufaro's daughters like their names? Use examples from the story to explain your answer.