

Where Stories Come From - (A Traditional Zulu Story)

Long ago, in Africa, there lived a mother, Manza, with her two children. Each evening they would sit round the fire before bedtime. "Tell us stories! Tell us stories!" - the children would ask. But there were no stories, no dreams, no magical tales: so they drew pictures and listened to the wind.

One day Manza decided she must go in search of stories. She brought with her the pictures her children had drawn to remind her of home. She asked every creature she met if they knew where she might find stories.

First, Manza met a hare. "Stories, indeed!" replied the hare, and scurried quickly away.

As Manza continued on her way, she saw an owl sitting in a wild fig tree. "Please tell me stories," she called.

"You dare wake me for stories?" hooted the owl, And off he flew to another tree.

Next, she met an elephant. "Do you know any stories?" She asked.

"My dear, I do not," replied the elephant, "but the eagle, who flies higher than all other birds, might know where to find some."

Manza found the eagle by the river. Excitedly she ran toward him, calling out as he swooped down from the sky to grab a fish. The eagle was so startled, he dropped the fish!

"What is so important that you make me lose my supper?" Cried the eagle.

"Oh, eagle, do you know where I might find stories?"

“I know only things of the earth, or the sky”, replied the eagle, “but the turtle knows secrets of the ocean: wait here! I’ll bring him.”

“Climb on my back and hold onto my shell” - said the turtle, in a deep voice - and down they dived to the bottom of the ocean, where the Mer-People lived.

“We have many stories,” said the Mer-People, “but you must give us something in exchange.”

“But, what can I give?” - Asked Manza.

“We can never leave the sea, but would love to see what the dry lands are like.”

“I have pictures of our home, that my children drew!” Exclaimed Manza.

The Mer-People gave Manza a beautiful shell. “Whenever you want a story, hold this shell to your ear, and listen!” Manza thanked them, and headed back to her own world.

“Tell us a story! Tell us a story!” The children called, and they sat down, together with all the people of the village. Manza put the shell to her ear, and told them about her adventure. And that is how stories came to be!

This is our version of the Zulu tale, which we abridged for our show. You can read the full version via this link:

<https://www.canteach.ca/resources/social-studies/society-and-culture/african-folk-tales/where-stories-come-from/>