

The Story of Marwe and Chura

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A folktale from East Africa

Recommended Key Stage: 1 and 2

Synopsis: Marwe and Chura, two orphaned children, work for a cruel owner. One day, monkeys steal the beans that two children were guarding, Marwe dives fearfully into a deep pool, where she finds herself in the Land of No Light. Knowing that she may be tricked into staying there forever, Marwe refuses all offers of food and settles down to hard work alongside the other children. Meanwhile Chura searches for her and eventually is taken in by a tribe of Masai warriors. After killing a lion to protect their cattle, he becomes a warrior and is given the name Simba. Years later, Marwe decides to leave the Land of No Light and she is set a test. As she has worked so hard and asked for nothing in return, she passes the test and is allowed to leave the Land of No Light on the condition that she marries a man named 'Simba'. Back in the real world, many seek to marry Marwe, but she refuses them all. When Chura finds her, she is saddened by her promise—until he reveals that Simba is his Masai name. They marry and live happily ever after.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the video **Stories from the Woodshed: Marwe and Chura**

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

KS1 questions	KS2 questions
• Which moment in the story did you most like? • What is the saddest moment in the story? • Which words would you use to describe Chura? • Which words would you use to describe Marwe?	• Which moment in the story did you most like? • What is the saddest moment in the story? • One of the themes of the story is "Don't judge people by their appearances". How does that relate to how people treat Chura in the story? • What are some of the other messages in the story? • Suggested answers could include: - Be brave - Work hard - Be loyal - Be good on the inside - Love people for who they are - Be patient – good things come to those who wait - Be open to possibilities. • Can you create a hierarchy for these values? Which is the most important to you? • What are Marwe's best qualities? • What are Chura's best qualities? • Which of these qualities could you try to share?

Part 3: Play the Story

KS1 activities	KS2 activities
Story Walk - The students stand in different spaces in the room. - They each become Chura in their own story worlds. - Read out the text in Resource A line by line. As you read, the students mime their interpretation of the words said.	
Monkey's footsteps - Play Grandmother's footsteps with one or two children being Chura and Marwe guarding a bag of beans (you could use buttons or paper clips) and the others being monkeys. - Can the monkeys creep up and steal the beans without being spotted?	Explore the emotions in the story - Explore words to describe the emotions of Marwe and Chura in the story. Arrange the words on A4 sheets across the classroom from most sad to most happy. Words could include: <i>hopeless, frightened, desperate, lonely, patient, brave, hopeful, happy, disappointed, joyful, kind.</i> - Pick a moment in the story and ask children to stand near the word which sums up Marwe's emotions at the moment. - If the children choose a range of words, ask them to discuss why they chose that one. For example: How did Marwe feel when she was running away from the field? How did Chura feel when Marwe said she could not marry him?
Freeze Frames - Choose an important moment from the story and ask the children to create a tableau showing that moment. Children can act as people in the story, animals and objects. - Spotlight on each small group and ask them to bring their freeze frame to life for a moment. What is happening at that moment? - Ask one child to explain the scene. - Ask individual children how they felt at that moment in the scene.	Now you see me - Draw around one child on a large piece of paper to create an outline. This is Marwe or Chura. Read the story again stopping regularly to discuss what we know about the character's physical appearance. Write these words and phrases around the outside of the outline. - Read the story again and ask the children to think about the character's invisible qualities. Write these in a different colour inside the outline. - Compare the two sets of words and discuss how this relates to not judging by appearances.
	Positivity Jar - Ask children to consider their best qualities and to write some down on small pieces of card. e.g. I am kind. I am in control of my own behaviour. I can be who I want to be, I am a great friend. I can forgive. I can and I will... - Place these inside a jar and fill it with confetti or shredded coloured paper. Children can keep these for moments when they need a boost or are feeling low. They open the jar and pick out a card to remind themselves that they are special.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities
What if...? • What might have happened if Marwe had made different choices? • Construct a story in which she accepts food from the old woman. What happened next? How might Chura be able to help her then? Would she have stayed there forever or would there be a way back to the Land of Light? • What might have happened if Marwe had chosen the hot water? Construct a story that shows what happened next. Would she be able to return to the Land of the Light? Would Chura be able to find her? • Students role play their ideas in groups and present their ideas to the rest of the class. They may use Resource B to help.	Heroes and anti-heroes • Neither Marwe nor Chura look like conventional heroes and it is their physical features which are the foundation of their love for each other. As a class, discuss: - What the students expect a hero or heroine to look like. - How are Marwe and Chura different from a conventional story hero? - How are they the same as a conventional story hero? - Why might it be a good thing to tell their story? • In groups or pairs, students create their own antihero character: a hero who behaves heroically, but doesn't look like a conventional hero. • Draw your character showing their clothes, hair, face - Think of their name – remember Chura is called Toad at the start of the story because of his looks. - What is your character like? - List his or her positive qualities e.g. bravery, patience, kindness, loyalty. - Make up a story in which the anti-hero character saves the day thanks to his or her unexpected behaviour. • Share your story idea with the group
	What if...? • What might have happened if Marwe had made different choices? • Construct a story in which she accepts food from the old woman. What happened next? How might Chura be able to help her then? Would she have stayed there forever or would there be a way back to the Land of Light? • What might have happened if Marwe had chosen the hot water? Construct a story that shows what happened next. Would she be able to return to the Land of the Light? Would Chura be able to find her? • Students use Resource B to develop the story further.

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories to Marwe and Chura

Stories that teach us not to judge by appearances:

Tatterhood (Europe)

Little Burnt Face (Africa)

Stories about underdogs being rewarded:

Cinderella/Asenputtel (Europe)

Chinye (Africa)

A story about getting lost in the woods:

Hansel and Gretel (Europe)

A story with a journey to the underworld:

Orpheus and Eurydice (Europe)

Wider curriculum links

KS1 PSHE

- about what is kind and unkind behaviour, and how this can affect others
- about how to treat themselves and others with respect; how to be polite and
- courteous
- to recognise the ways in which they are the same and different to others

KS2 PSHE

- that personal behaviour can affect other people; to recognise and model respectful behaviour online
- to recognise the importance of self-respect and how this can affect their thoughts and feelings about themselves; that everyone, including them, should expect to be treated politely and with respect by others (including when online and/or anonymous) in school and in wider society; strategies to improve or support courteous, respectful relationships
- about respecting the differences and similarities between people and recognising what they have in common with others e.g. physically, in personality or background
- to listen and respond respectfully to a wide range of people, including those whose traditions, beliefs and lifestyle are different to their own
- how to discuss and debate topical issues, respect other people's point of view and constructively challenge those they disagree with

Marwe and Chura

Resource A

Story Walk Prompts

- You are Chura. You are scaring away the monkeys by waving your hands at them.
- Oh, you are so thirsty! Take Marwe's hand and go down to the stream to collect some water.
- You have a drink and relax for a moment.
- Turn around – oh no! the monkeys have eaten all the beans from the field. You know the master will beat you! You look terrified.
- Run away into the woods.
- You've lost Marwe! Put your hand over your eyes to search for her.
- Put your hands to your mouth to call for her.
- Sit down and cry.
- Stand up and dry your eyes.
- You're going to ask everyone if they've seen her. Whenever you approach anyone they turn away or call you names. Your head goes down as this is hard to take.
- You come to a Masai village and the people welcome you. Shake hands with them. Settle down to work watching their herd of cows.
- A lion attacks the cows. Carefully...approach the lion. Lift up your spear and be prepared to throw it on three. One ...two...three....throw it at the lion!
- You are a hero! Raise your arms above your head in a victory dance!
- Put on your lion skin cloak and stroke the soft fur.
- Journey back to the pool where you last saw Marwe.
- You spot a beautiful girl – scratch your head – could it be Marwe all grown up?
- It is! Put your hands on your heart – she is alive and even more beautiful than you remembered.
- She says she has made a promise to marry someone. Look at your feet – you are so disappointed.
- Wait – she has to marry a man called Simba? That's your new name. Go down on one knee and propose to her straightaway.
- Show your happiness when she says 'yes'.

Marwe and Chura

Resource B

What if...?

Story structure	Notes for our story plan	Modelled example
Marwe asks if she can return the Land of the Light.		"Please may I return to the Land of the Light?" asked Marwe. "I want to see Chura again."
She is asked a question.		"Hot or cold? Asked the mysterious figures.
She chooses one of the pots.		Marwe thought longingly of the warm water and chose hot.
What happens?		She plunged her crooked leg into the water and magically it became strong.
What does the old woman say?		The old woman explained that Marwe's choice would give her the strength to find her way home, but then her leg would return to its previous weakness.
How does Marwe react?		Marwe was excited and ran back to the woods where she had lost Chura.
How does the story end?		Marwe searches every village and eventually finds him with his Masai warriors. They accept her into the tribe because of her strength and determination.