Summary

Many years ago in Africa, Sky was close to the ground and filled with food. People became increasingly greedy and began to take more than they needed. This waste made Sky very angry. Sky asked King Oba to tell his people not to waste his food or he would leave. For a time the people were careful, but one day Adese took a huge leg of lamb and couldn’t eat it all, even with the help of the villagers. As he promised, Sky moved away from the ground. People now had to grow their own food.

Objectives

FLUENCY
Students will:
• Build fluency through echo-reading, choral-reading, and repeated reading
• Read with appropriate pauses
• Read question marks

COMPREHENSION
Students will:
• Analyze character
• Compare and contrast
• Evaluate author’s purpose
• Identify cause and effect
• Make judgments/predictions
• Synthesize

GENRE
Students will:
• Identify and analyze features of folktales

VOCABULARY AND WORD STUDY
Students will:
• Build vocabulary: cherish, discarding, splendid
• Build words
• Identify suffix -ful
• Use antonyms

CHARACTER EDUCATION
Students will learn about:
• Citizenship
• Fairness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>F/9-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>G/11-12</td>
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<td>Musician</td>
<td>G/11-12</td>
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<td>Singer</td>
<td>H/13-14</td>
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<td>Weaver</td>
<td>H/13-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mask Maker</td>
<td>I/15-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otolo (oh-TOH-loh)</td>
<td>K/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adese (ah-DESS-ah)</td>
<td>L/24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storyteller</td>
<td>M/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>N/30</td>
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<tr>
<td>King Oba (OH-buh)</td>
<td>O/34</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Day One

Build Background

• Write the word *folktale* on the chalkboard. Ask students to share what they know about folktales and to name some folktales they have read or heard. Discuss whether there are any similar characteristics or features among the folktales they know.
• Explain that some folktales are called *pourquoi tales* because they try to explain why things in nature are the way they are. See Background Information on page 3 and the Learn About Genre sidebar to teach characteristics of folktales and pourquoi tales.
• If students have read a pourquoi tale, ask them to retell what happened in the story.

Introduce the Script

• Give students copies of the script and read the title. Tell them this tale is a pourquoi tale. Point out Nigeria on a world map, and explain that this story was first told hundreds of years ago by the Bini tribe in Nigeria.
• Before reading the back cover blurb, ask students to predict why the sky is far away.
• Read the back cover blurb with students. Ask if they want to revise their predictions about why the sky is far away. Ask them to predict how (the character) Sky’s anger will affect the people.

ELL See page 8 for English-Language Learner and Striving Reader Support.

Learning About Genre: Folktales

• Reflect the culture of the storytellers
• Told by common people and handed down through generations
• Characters are everyday people, animals, plants, forces of nature
• Contain elements of magic or make-believe
• Pourquoi tales are a type of folktale that explain things in the natural world
Introduce Vocabulary

- Divide students into three groups, and give each group a sheet of paper with a circled glossary word in the center. Ask each group to fold its paper into four squares and label each section as follows: top left corner, definition; top right corner, sentence; bottom left corner, synonym; bottom right corner, illustration. Ask the groups to complete the word map. Groups may use a class dictionary to help them complete the word map, or tell them on which page in the script they can find the word: splendid (page 5), discarding (page 6); cherish (page 15).
- When all groups have completed their word maps, invite the groups to share their word maps with the rest of the students. Ask them to explain their word and act it out.
- Invite students to compare the definitions in the glossary with their group definitions.

Model Fluent Reading

Ask students to listen and follow along with you as you read the script aloud to model fluency and expression.

Background Information

Folktales

Folktales are stories handed down orally through many generations. Folktales were told for entertainment and to instill cultural beliefs, values, and practices. Certain types of folktales, such as pourquoi tales and myths, also tried to explain natural phenomena.

There are many types of folktales. Cumulative tales are simple stories with the events following each other in a pattern, for example, “Henny Penny.” Noodlehead stories involve a character who continues to make funny mistakes, for example, “Clever Elsie.” These stories are humorous but they also teach about human nature. Fairy tales are a type of folktale often dealing with magic and enchantment. These stories have stock characters portrayed as either good or evil.

Pourquoi Tales

Pourquoi (poor-KWAH) is the French word for why. These folktales explain why natural events happened and can be found in many different cultures. These stories often start in the past (A long time ago . . . ) and finish when the explanation is complete (and that is why . . . ). Pourquoi tales have animals and natural forces, such as the wind, that talk and act like humans. Some popular pourquoi tales are “How the Leopard Got Its Spots,” “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears,” and “Why a Zebra Has Stripes.”
Day Two

**Build Fluency: Echo-Read**
- Read the script aloud, and ask students to echo-read, or repeat, the lines after you. Stop where necessary to clarify vocabulary and any difficult pronunciations of names encountered during the reading.
- Point out the three periods, or ellipsis, in the lines for Sky on page 4. Explain that this indicates that the character pauses to think. When reading these lines, students need to pause before reading the rest of the sentence.
- Call attention to punctuation marks, and model how to read the lines. For example, point out the question mark in the lines for King Oba on page 5. Model how you read the question by raising your voice slightly at the end of the sentence. Ask students to read the lines as if they ended in a period and then reread the lines with the question mark. Ask them to note the difference in their voices when reading a question and a sentence.

**Build Comprehension**
Ensure students understand the ideas in the story, as well as character development, by involving them in discussion.
- *What events in the story make this a folktale?* (See pages 2, 11, 14, and 15 for examples of folktale events.) (analyze features of folktales)
- *Reread Adese’s lines on pages 12 and 13. What can you tell about the type of person Adese is from what she says here? How do you think she would have said these lines?* (analyze character)
- *What happens when the villagers do not stop wasting food as Sky asks of them?* (identify cause and effect)
- *Why do the villagers argue over who has prepared the best gift for the river festival?* (draw conclusions; analyze character)
- *What do you think should happen to Adese for taking too much food?* (make judgments)
- *How do you think Sky felt when he found out the people had not listened to him? How do you think he might have said the lines on pages 14 and 15?* (analyze character; make inferences)
- *How do you feel about the way Sky punished the people?* (make judgments)
- *Why do you think this story was first told?* (evaluate author’s purpose)
- *What lesson do you think the villagers learned from what happened?* (synthesize)

**Build Vocabulary**
Make sure students fully understand the glossary terms. The Vocabulary in Action suggestions on the inside back cover of the script provide further ideas for building students’ understanding.
**Assign Roles**

- Use the reading levels provided on the front of this guide to help you assign roles that support or challenge each student appropriately.
- This script contains eleven parts, but can accommodate twelve or more readers, since the part of Children can be read as a chorus. You may also want to ask more than one student to read other parts chorally or alternate reading the lines of a character such as Storyteller.
- If you have fewer than eleven students, have one student read several roles, provided the characters are at the same reading level and appear in different scenes in the play.

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**Fluency Assessment Rubric**

- The Reader’s Theater Overview contains an assessment rubric you can use to quickly assess each student. Use the rubric at different times during the lesson to assess different skills. For example, you may want to select students to assess their understanding of characterization during the comprehension discussion. Alternatively, you may wish to use their performance to assess how appropriately they develop their characters.
- Discuss the assessment rubric with students so that they know what you expect of them.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Tips for Voice and Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storyteller</td>
<td>strong, clear, concerned voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mask Maker</td>
<td>thoughtless, boastful, proud, conceited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>generous, concerned, kind, angry, disappointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>thoughtless, boastful, proud, conceited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>conceited, boastful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>selfish, greedy, conceited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Oba</td>
<td>kind, worried, stern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adese</td>
<td>talented, conceited, greedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otolo</td>
<td>worried, concerned, obedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>scared, worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>helpful, obedient, polite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day Three

Build Fluency Skills: Read with Appropriate Pauses

• **Model:** Ask students to listen as you read Storyteller’s lines on page 2 without any pauses for commas or periods. Reread the lines, this time pausing at the appropriate places. Tell students that the periods and commas are signals for you to pause briefly before continuing to read. Explain that pausing not only helps the audience better understand the lines, but also provides emphasis.

• **Guide:** Ask students to look at King Oba’s lines at the bottom of page 6. Discuss how he might feel as he tries to convince Sky not to be angry. Point out the commas, and tell students these indicate brief pauses. Guide students to experiment with the lines, using appropriate pauses as they read.

• **Apply:** Ask pairs of students to select a character and experiment with pausing as they read the character’s lines. Encourage partners to give each other feedback on whether their pauses are appropriate.

**Choral-Read for Fluency**

Involve students in a choral-reading of the script to reinforce the fluency skill of reading with appropriate pauses. Remind them to use dramatic expression to bring each character’s mood or personality to life.

Repeated Reading: Rehearse the Script

• Discuss the expectations you have for student behavior during the rehearsal. Use the suggestions provided here and in the Reader’s Theater Overview.

• Use small-group time for students to rehearse their script. Monitor students as they rehearse, and tell them you will be listening to how they develop the characters through their reading.

• Offer suggestions for expression, voice, and characterization as you monitor students’ work. See the chart on page 5 for tips on voice and expression. Use specific comments, rather than general ones, directed at the character, not the student. For example: *Adese, you need to sound more worried about finishing that leg of lamb.*

• Use this time to observe particular students and assess for behavior. Remind students of the assessment rubric and let them know you will be assessing them as you monitor the rehearsal.

**Expectations for Rehearsing**

When performing, students should:

• know when it is their turn to speak;

• speak in a loud, clear voice using expression and fluency;

• enunciate for understanding;

• prompt others, if necessary;

• accept both criticism and praise appropriately.

See page 8 for English-Language Learner and Striving Reader Support.
Rehearse the Script

- Use small-group time for student rehearsal. Do not interrupt this second rehearsal, but simply observe students as they read.
- Use the assessment rubric to monitor students’ rehearsal behaviors and reading fluency.

Assess Students’ Fluency

- Use the assessment rubric to complete your assessment of students’ fluency.
- Have students fill out a Self-Assessment Response Form.
- Take time to briefly conference with each student to provide feedback on his or her reading and behavior.

Staging and Performance Suggestions

Decide on a stage area, how students will be positioned, and whether props or movements will be added. See staging tips in the Reader’s Theater Overview. Here are some other ideas:

Placement/Movement

- Sky seated stage left on tall chair; King and Messenger together stage left near Sky; other characters seated on lower chairs ranging towards stage right; cluster villagers together
- Storyteller stands stage right and steps forward to read
- Students use hand not holding script to reach up to grab food from Sky

Sound Effects

- Provide background sounds of drums and music for festival
- Play music as story is announced; play again when story finishes

Perform the Script

Invite students to present the script to an audience. The audience might be members of their class, students from other classes, school staff members, and/or parents.

Day Four

When performing, students should:

- know when it is their turn to speak;
- speak in a loud, clear voice using expression and fluency;
- enunciate for understanding;
- prompt others, if necessary;
- accept both criticism and praise appropriately.

Day Five
Support for English Language

Build Background and Make Connections (Day One)

• Introduce the concept of a folktale. Show students folktale picture books. If possible, have available stories from some of the same countries as your students. Discuss the types of characters, for example: animals; elements of nature, such as the sun or the wind; and people from different countries.

• If students recognize any of the folktales shown in the books, ask them to retell the tale.

• Suggest that students group the folktale books by content, such as all the folktales about the sky and all the folktales about animals. Help students read to find out which country each folktale comes from. Ask students to find the countries on a map.

Develop Vocabulary and Language (Day One)

• To preteach words that ELL students are likely to know in their native languages, write words from the story on self-stick notes and match them to pictures either in the script or other sources—for example, sky, storyteller, king, food, garbage.

• After you read the script aloud for the first time, ask students to work in pairs to choose words from the story that they know. Ask pairs to act out the words while others guess the words. Alternatively, they could draw pictures of the word and ask others to guess the words.

• Ask students to find the word *cherish* on page 15 and read the sentence in which it is found. Tell students *cherish* means *to like something very much*. Ask students if they have ever cherished anything. Invite them to use the sentence frame *Something I cherish is ______* to tell what they cherish.

• Provide questions on the chalkboard for students to answer with *yes* or *no*, for example: *Did Adese cherish the food that Sky gave her? Did the villagers cherish all that Sky did for them?*

• Write the word *discarding* on the chalkboard, and pantomime throwing something away. Say: *I am discarding this paper*. Invite students to echo-read the sentence on page 6 that uses the word. Ask them what the people are discarding. Invite students to name things they have discarded today.

• Point to an illustration in a picture book or on the wall. Using the glossary word *splendid*, say: *This is a splendid picture. This is a great picture. This is a wonderful picture*, etc. Invite students to name something they think is splendid and tell why.
Build Comprehension (Day Two)
Engage students in discussion about the script, starting with simple literal questions and progressing to more difficult ones. As students discuss the questions, ask them to point to places in the script that best answer the questions. Suggested questions:
- **Who are some characters in the script?** (recall details)
- **Where do the people get their food?** (recall details)
- **Sky sees the people throw food away. What happens next?** (identify sequence or steps in a process)
- **What was Adese like?** (analyze character)
- **Why did Adese not obey Sky’s wishes?** (identify cause and effect)
- **The villagers could not eat all the lamb. Why?** (identify cause and effect)

- **Do you believe Sky was fair to the villagers?** (make judgments)
- **What lesson did the villagers learn?** (synthesize)

Read and Perform (Days Two–Three)
- Provide extra practice reading the script as a group before students read their individual parts to ensure they are familiar and comfortable with the language and vocabulary.
- You may want to assign two students to a role so they can read the part together. This will help support their reading.
- Be sure to use the reading levels provided on the cover of this teacher’s guide to help you assign the roles.
Literacy Extensions

Word Study

SUFFIXES
• Write the words wonderful, delightful (page 5), and beautiful (page 7) on the chalkboard, and ask students to tell what all the words have in common. Circle the suffix -ful, and explain that it means full of. Discuss the meaning of each word.
• Write the following words on the chalkboard: care, color, force, joy, play. Ask volunteers to use the words in oral sentences. Pair students and ask them to write a sentence for each base word. Then tell them to write a sentence for each base word with the suffix -ful added. Invite pairs to read their sentences, and encourage other pairs to evaluate the usage of the suffix.
• Discuss the part of speech of each base word in the students’ first sentences (noun). Then ask students to compare the part of speech of each word when the suffix is added (adjective).

WORD BUILDING
• Write delight in the center of a word web. Model how you build words from the word delight: delighted, delightedly, delightfully, delightfulness. As you add each word to the web, write a short sentence that uses the word.
• As a group, create a word web for the word care. As students suggest new words, ask them to first use the new word in an oral sentence before adding the word to the web. Words they suggest might include: cared, caring, careful, carefully, carefulness, careless, carelessly, carelessness, caregiver, caregiving, caretaker, caretaking, etc. After students suggest the more familiar words, allow them to use a dictionary to find less common examples.

ANTONYMS
• Write the three glossary words on the chalkboard: cherish, discarding, splendid. Ask students to tell in their own words what each word means. If they have difficulty, ask them to use the glossary for help. Ask volunteers to use the words in oral sentences.
Write the following sentence on the chalkboard: Natalie cherished her little dog. Tell students that you can change the meaning of the sentence by using an antonym for cherished. Write the following sentence on the chalkboard: Natalie ignored her little dog.
• Ask pairs of students to write a sentence for each remaining glossary word: discarding and splendid. Then ask them to write a sentence for each word using an antonym (e.g., I will be keeping these old photos; My dress is really quite ordinary). Invite pairs to share their sentences. Make a list of the different antonyms used.
Reader Response

Ask students to reflect on their reader’s theater experience by writing or drawing in their journals. Students could:

- reflect on their reading experience and decide if they read with appropriate pauses;
- identify the reading strategies they used to make sense of the script;
- write a letter to Sky telling whether they agree or disagree with how he punished the villagers;
- write their own pourquoi tales.

Read Across Texts

- Lead students in a review of the features of folktales. Invite them to tell which of the features of folktales were present in the story *Why the Sky Is Far Away*.

- Ask students to list elements that all stories have: characters, setting, problem/solution, etc. Record these on a features chart. Ask students what is one thing that folktales have that a realistic story wouldn’t have (magic, make-believe, talking animals, etc.) Add other features to the chart.

- Ask students to recall a story the group or class has read recently. Invite them to retell the story. Use the features chart to compare the script with the recently read story.

### Features

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Features</th>
<th>Why the Sky Is Far Away Genre: Folktale</th>
<th>Story: ______ Genre: ______</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>characters</td>
<td>ordinary people; Sky, who has human qualities</td>
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<tr>
<td>setting: time and place</td>
<td>long ago in Nigeria, Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>problem</td>
<td>People are wasting Sky's gifts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solution/ending</td>
<td>Sky goes away to punish the people; people learn a lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real or make-believe</td>
<td>make-believe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>author's purpose</td>
<td>to teach lesson; to explain why the sky is far from the ground</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Citizenship

• Discuss with students what it means to be a good citizen. Explain that a good citizen is someone who obeys laws and rules, and gets involved in his or her community to help create a better life for everybody. Good citizens work to protect the environment and make their communities and schools better places. Invite students to think of the villagers in the story and to tell whether any of them were good citizens. Ask if Adese was a good citizen or not. Discuss the effect on the environment of wasting natural resources and why Sky was justified in moving away from the ground.

• Invite students to think about a time when they were good citizens. Perhaps they did something for their school or an organization in their community. They may have been involved in protecting the environment. Ask students to summarize the events and tell what they did that showed good citizenship. Pair students to brainstorm events or actions that make them believe someone is a good citizen. Ask pairs to share their responses while you record them on a semantic map about citizenship.

Fairness

• Tell students that when someone is fair, he or she plays by the rules, takes turns, and shares. A fair person listens to others and doesn't take advantage or place blame when things go wrong.

• Encourage students to evaluate the characters. Ask: How is Sky fair on page 6? What could Adese do differently on pages 11–13 to be more fair? Is Sky fair when he moves away after the villagers take too much food again?

Demonstrate Citizenship/Fairness

• Invite students to work in groups of two or three to demonstrate the character traits of citizenship and fairness. Provide the following scenario. Say: You are walking around the playground at recess, and you see some kids not playing by the rules in a basketball game. They are cheating and taking advantage of the smaller students. What would you do? Create a skit that demonstrates citizenship and fairness.

• Invite groups to share their skits with the class.

• If time allows, ask groups to change roles or provide other scenarios.