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# MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS

Author: John Steptoe

Publisher: William Morrow

## THEME:

By celebrating the African heritage of black Americans, we learn about cultural traditions and see how these traditions have shaped the culture of America.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

This is an African tale of two beautiful daughters, one bad tempered, one kind and sweet, from which the king will choose a wife.

Viewers celebrate the culture of Africa in New York City's central park where LeVar learns how African drums are made, then he plays some authentic African instruments. Finally he joins in the festival fun with an African dance troupe, Forces of Nature.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Nyasha and Manyara had very different personalities, even though they were sisters. Discuss with students ways in which they are both alike and different from their siblings.

Invite students to share an incident in which they disagreed with their brother or sister and tell how they resolved the problem.

Discuss why learning about the music, dance, art, stories, and customs of many different cultures is important in today's world.

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Locate Africa on a map of the world and then find the country of Zimbabwe, the setting of this story.

Have students working in small groups make a map of the story. Beginning with Mufaro's village, they will need to recall details from the story that relate to both the setting and events and decide which are the most important to include. Display the maps in the classroom and use them to review the story.

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is a folktale. Explain to students that folktales come from the oral tradition of literature and were passed orally through generations of people before they were written. Good vs. evil (as in the contrast between the two sisters) is a classic motif, or pattern, of folktales. Tell students about other motifs in folktales, such as the inclusion of magical objects

in the story, magical transformations that take place, the appearance of the numbers 3 and 7 in the story (in characters, events, trials, places, etc.), and a long sleep. Have them identify motifs that appear in this story. Discuss other familiar folktales that include some of these motifs.

As a class, do character analyses of Manyara and Nyasha by making "character wheels." On the board or on a large piece of chart paper, write Manyara's name in the center of a circle. On spokes radiating from this circle, write words that describe her. At the end of each spoke, draw another circle. In that circle, write an event from the story that provides evidence of the descriptive word written on its spoke. Make the same kind of wheel for Nyasha. Compare and contrast the descriptive words for both characters.

Invite members of a band or orchestra who play percussion instruments, including different types of drums, to bring their instruments into the classroom. Have them demonstrate the sounds created by their instruments and explain their function in the orchestra.

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is a "Cinderella" story. There are hundreds of variants of Cinderella from different cultures. Obtain several Cinderella stories and read them to the students. (See the "Supplementary Booklist" for suggested titles.) Brainstorm a comparison chart with the students. List the different versions of Cinderella down the left side of the chart. Across the top, list items of comparison, such as the story setting, what the Cinderella character is called, who or what the "fairy godmother" is, under what circumstance Cinderella meets the prince, the magical elements in the story, the outcome, etc. Discuss the similarities and differences of the versions after the chart is completed.

Enlist the aid of the library media specialist in locating other African folktales. Locate the origins of these stories on the map of Africa. Read some of them to see if they remind the students of other folktales they have heard.

Obtain some music with African rhythms, played by instruments that originated in African cultures. Take the students to a spacious area and play the music, inviting students to move in ways that the music makes them feel.

## RELATED THEMES:

folktales

music from different cultures

## RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #96 — Follow The Drinking Gourd

Program #117 — Uncle Jed's Barbershop

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

A native of New York, John Steptoe published his first book, *Stevie*, at age 19 and devoted his career to writing books that he hoped would encourage African American children to accomplish their dreams. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* was the result of two-and-a-half years of work and research and earned Steptoe Caldecott Honor Book recognition. He was also the author of **Reading Rainbow** review book, *Daddy Is a Monster... Sometimes*.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

WHO'S IN RABBIT'S HOUSE?

by Verna Aardema, illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon (Dial)

JAMBO MEANS HELLO: SWAHILI ALPHABET BOOK

by Muriel Feelings, illus. by Tom Feelings (Dial)

JAFTA Series

by Hugh Lewin, illus. by Lisa Kopper (Lerner)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

THE EGYPTIAN CINDERELLA

by Shirley Climo, illus. by Ruth Heller (HarperCollins)

THE KOREAN CINDERELLA

by Shirley Climo, illus. by Ruth Heller (HarperCollins)

ASHPET: AN APPALACHIAN TALE

retold by Joanne Compton, illus. by Kenn Compton (Holiday House)

KONGI AND POTGI: A CINDERELLA STORY FROM KOREA

by Oki S. Han (Dial)

YEH-SHEN: A CINDERELLA TALE FROM CHINA

retold by Ai-Ling Louie, illus. by Ed Young (Philomel)

THE ROUGH-FACE GIRL

by Rafe Martin, illus. by David Shannon (Putnam)

CHINYE: A WEST AFRICAN FOLKTALE

retold by Obi Onyefulu, illus. by Evie Safarewicz (Viking)

THE TURKEY GIRL: A ZUNI CINDERELLA STORY

retold by Penny Pollock, illus. by Ed Young (Little, Brown)

THE TALKING EGGS: A FOLKTALE FROM THE AMERICAN SOUTH

by Robert D. San Souci, illus. by Jerry Pinkney (Dial)

SOOTFACE: AN OJIBWA CINDERELLA STORY

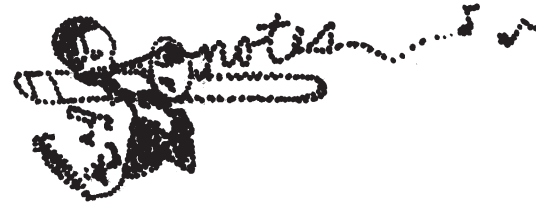
retold by Robert D. San Souci, illus. by Daniel San Souci (Doubleday)

TATTERCOATS: AN OLD ENGLISH TALE

told by Flora Annie Steele, illus. by Diane Goode (Bradbury)

VASILISA THE BEAUTIFUL: A RUSSIAN FOLKTALE

adapted by Elizabeth Winthrop, illus. by Alexandra Koskin (HarperCollins)



Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is a Cinderella story from Africa in which kindness, generosity, honesty, and love are rewarded and selfishness is punished. A related lesson in the story is found in how the kind daughter responds to the teasing and abuse from her cruel sister. Before Reading. ASK: Is it important to be kind even if no one knows it was you who did the kind act?