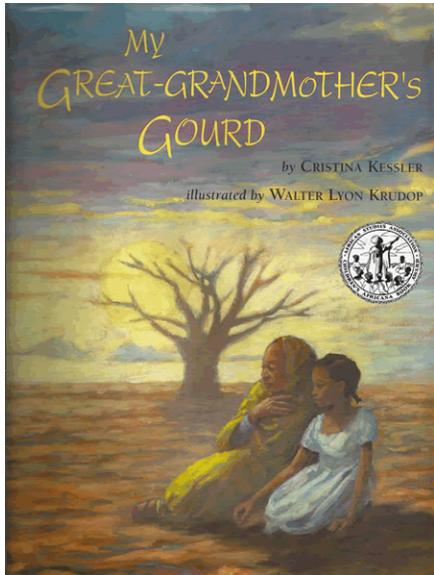




Cristina Kessler
Learning with the Books
My Great-Grandmother's Gourd



Parent-Teacher Guide

MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S GOURD

<https://www.cristinakessler.com/product/my-great-grandmothers-gourd/>

I love baobab trees. And I will never forget the first time I saw a baobab tree that caught my eye like no other. We were driving across the desert of northern Sudan when I suddenly saw a giant old baobab with a locked door up at the top of the tree. The little blue door was right where the massive trunk met the stretching branches. That's when I saw my first locked baobab tree, filled with water.

A small village of 5 huts was within sight of the tree, and kids came running across the desert to see what we were doing. It didn't take long for them to give us a demonstration of what had captured my imagination.



The kids showed us the necklace that surrounded the trunk, a shallow trough that ran around the mighty baobab trunk. They explained to our driver that when the rains come, a team forms of someone up above in the fork of the trunk and branches with a bucket on a rope. Another person on the ground fills the bucket for the person in the tree. And slowly the tree is filled with water collected during the rains.

This giant gourd provides water for the dry season. The tradition goes back for hundreds of years. The trees are owned by the families nearby. They are passed from generation to generation, grandmother to granddaughter. MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S GOURD is based on a true experience I had.

1. Possible topics of discussion are:

- Why was grandmother so sad?
- Why was Fatima so excited about the pump?
- Do you think that Fatima was embarrassed about her grandmother's rejection of the pump?
- What do you think made Fatima change her mind?
- Have you ever done something that other people made fun of you for doing?
- What did you do?
- Were you surprised that Grandmother came to the village's aid after being made fun of?
- Do you think it's wise to combine "old and new" ideas and ways of life?
- Are there any things you do today that your grandmother has always done?
- What is family loyalty?
- Have you ever seen a baobab tree?
- Have you ever hugged a baobab tree? I have!



2. What do these phrases mean?

- “That was then, and this is now.”
- She gives us, “Shade in the day. Shelter in the rain. And water in the dry season.”
- “For some people new ideas are like puddles on the clay: they never sink in.”
- “To fight progress is to fight the wind.”

3. Some amazing facts about baobabs:

- Baobabs grow in 32 countries in Africa.
- They can live more than 1000 years!
- Once a tree is hollowed out by special skilled men it grows a new inner bark that prevents the water from leaking out and keeps the water clean inside.
- The oldest baobab tree is in South Africa. It is 72 feet tall and 155 feet around. It is called the Sunland Baobab. It's the widest in all of Africa.
- A tree 45 feet tall can hold up to 4,500 liters (1,000 US gallons) of water which is equal to about 20,000 glasses of water.
- The trees produce nutritious fruit in the dry season. The fruits have medicinal qualities. The bark is good for making rope and clothes. This is why it's called the Tree of Life.
- Madagascar has six species of baobab trees that only grow there.

On school visits I have made around the world many students have produced their own plays based on the book. It's exciting to see kids get a new appreciation of something they may have seen their whole life.



Baobab painting

