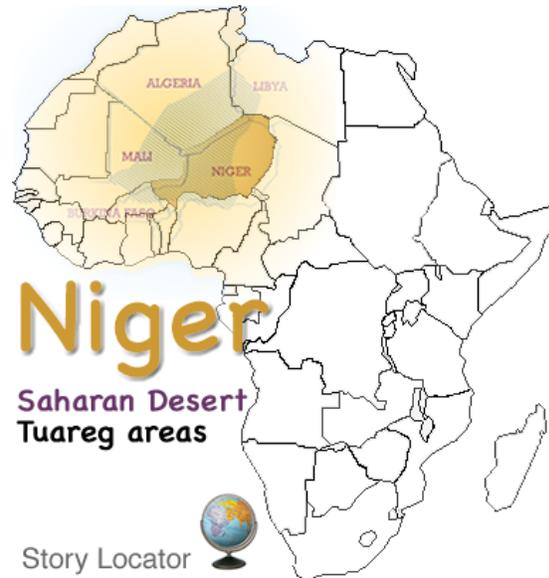
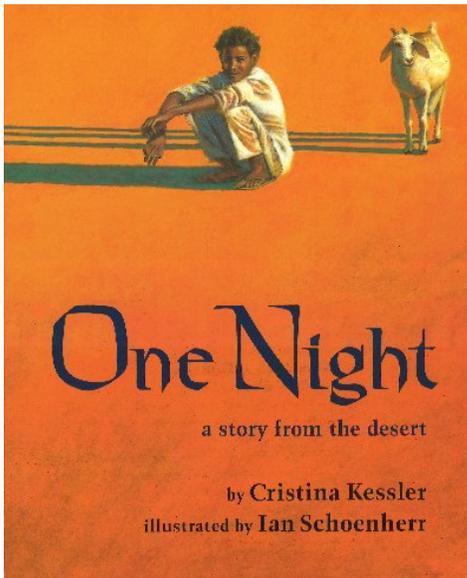




Cristina Kessler
Learning with the Books
One Night: a story from the desert



Parent-Teacher Guide

ONE NIGHT

<https://www.cristinakessler.com/product/one-night-a-story-from-the-desert/>

One Night – a story from the desert fits into many different areas for discussion. I have seen activities based around the desert, nomadic cultures, religion, and responsibilities, rituals, and daily life of different cultures. My favorite activity is when kids really think about what makes them wealthy. This is a bit of a challenge, because Muhamad says throughout the book “I am the wealthiest of boys”. For him, his wealth is what surrounds him, not what he possesses. It’s touching to see what kids come up with when they look at wealth from that perspective.

I have visited schools where before my presentation kids have prepared posters with facts about Tuaregs, facts about the desert, comparisons between Tuaregs and Native Americans (ie: respect for elders, respect for the environment), and comparisons of their daily chores and Muhamad’s.



Poems have been written, as well as one line taken i.e.; “Be at one with your surroundings and you will be at peace”, and then it is explained/interpreted by the kids.

The most amazing was a chart where 6th graders listed all the things that make Muhamad wealthy, and what made each of them wealthy. Each listed three items, they then tallied their list and chose the 6 most common things mentioned by them all and put them next to Muhamad’s list. The teacher said it was amazing how embarrassed the kids were with their list of widescreen TV, big house, fancy cars etc., compared to Muhamad’s list of his father’s trust, his grandmother’s wisdom, his connection to the sky, the peacefulness of the desert, his family’s love, etc.

Teachers have commented many times that in this day and age, when classrooms are composed of many different nationalities and religions, kids of the Muslim faith gain a new sense of pride - of being different, not bad - after reading about and discussing Muhamad. Many teachers use the book as an entre for kids to talk about their backgrounds and cultures, while giving other kids the opportunity to ask questions of their classmates.

1. Possible questions for teachers are:

About Muhamad:

1. What are his daily responsibilities and duties?
2. What are his feelings as he watches his herd graze?
3. What survival skills does he know for living in the desert?
4. What makes him wealthy?
5. What does he think about during his first night alone in the desert?



About Grandmother:

1. As Muhamad's first teacher what things does she teach him?
2. What does she mean when she says "Respect nature and be powerful" or any other line?
3. When is a Tuareg boy ready to go to his father and learn more?

About Father:

1. He tells Muhamad life is a test. What are the three main components of the test?
2. How does he know if his son is doing well?
3. What is the significance of the blue turban?

The range of topics from the book can provide Science, Social Studies, Geography, Writing and Art activities.

2. The questions most frequently asked are:

- How old is Muhamad? (When I hung out with him in the desert in 1990, he was 11 or 12.)
- What do Tuaregs eat? (Sorghum or millet with goat's or camel's milk. Lots of tea.)
- Does Muhamad go to school? (Not a regular school. He studies the Koran with an elder from the family group.)
- How does he live without electricity? (Very happily.)
- What language does he speak? (Tamashek and Arabic.)



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Many kids have offered him their homes in case he ever comes to America. These are just some basic ideas for making good use of One Night in the classroom.

I guess ultimately the teacher's imagination is the limit.

Have Fun!

