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WELCOME TO THE RETOLD AFRICAN MYTHS

In Africa, the myths in this book would probably not be read. Rather, they would be told. There is a rich and varied tradition of storytelling in Africa—as rich and varied as the continent of Africa itself. This tradition is full of celebration, humor, and entertainment.

But myths aren't only for entertainment. They also carry on a culture's values from generation to generation. A story about how a heroine faces down a deadly snake helps define strength and goodness. And thrift and generosity are taught when a character creates a disaster through laziness or greed.

The myths in this volume can also serve as a kind of encyclopedia. By reading these myths, you can learn what various cultures think and believe. For example, myths show how early Africans explained the mysteries of life and nature. Why do bats sleep upside down in caves? How did human life begin? Why do people die? The myths in this book provide fascinating answers to such questions.

Finally, these myths are simply great stories. Filled with drama, beauty, and humor, they still attract listeners long after they were first told.

RETOLD UPDATE

This book presents a collection of eighteen adapted myths from the African continent. All the variety, excitement, and humorous details of the original versions are here.

In addition, a word list has been added at the beginning of each story. Each word defined on that list is printed in dark type within the story. If you forget the meaning of one of these words, just check the list to review the definition.

You'll also find footnotes at the bottom of some story

pages. These notes identify people or places, explain ideas, show pronunciations, or provide cultural information.

We offer two other features you may wish to use. One is a map of Africa on the following page. This map locates the region where each of the myths was originally told.

You will also find more cultural information in the Insights sections after each myth. These revealing facts will add to your understanding of the different ways of life in Africa.

One last word. Since many of these myths and stories have been handed down for centuries, several versions exist. So a story you read here will probably differ from a version you read elsewhere.

But that's all part of the tradition. Each storyteller is expected to add something new to the old tales. You may even want to read some of these stories aloud. Adding sound effects and acting out parts will help you come closer to the experience of African storytelling.

The oldest known African myth was first told 2,000 years ago. Now it's your turn to read and retell these timeless stories.



CREATION

How Nambi Gained Her Beloved

Obatala Creates the World

Heart Finds a Home

Creation myths are told throughout Africa. Each traditional cultural group tells its own stories of how life began. None of these tales are exactly alike, but they all do one thing. They tell of a supreme god who made the universe.

The Supreme God knows everything. But he is sometimes confusing to humans. For example, he does good things for people, but he can send evil into the world as well.

The Supreme God is known by many different names throughout the continent. In eastern Africa, the Supreme God is usually called Mulungu. Central Africans refer to him as Leza. In the west, he is known as Nyambi. To the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, the Supreme God is Olorun. You will meet Olorun in the second myth in this section.



HOW NAMBI GAINED HER BELOVED

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Below is a list of words that appear in the story. Read the list and get to know the words before you read the story.

- bore**—gave birth to
- edible**—able to be eaten
- ravenous**—very hungry
- relented**—gave in
- resourceful**—clever; skillful
- scornful**—critical; doubtful
- sustenance**—food; nourishment
- willful**—stubborn

Main Characters

- Bee**—friend of Nambi
- Gulu**—sky god
- Kaizuki**—oldest son of Gulu
- Kintu**—first man
- Nambi**—daughter of Gulu
- Walumbe**—son of Gulu