

Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears

A West African Tale

Written by Verna Aardema. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon.

Winner of the Caldecott Award in 1976

The Caldecott Medal is awarded to one children's book each year for excellence in illustration. The art is exceptional and helps to tell the story.

The author uses "sound effect" words to help us "hear" the sounds that animals make or the sounds of their movement. These are not words you need to learn. They help us enjoy and tell the story. This is the kind of story that is memorized and repeated from one generation to another. Sound effect words make the story more fun to hear and to tell.

The author also uses a variety of verbs. Pay attention to the different verbs used in place of "said" and "move."

And, of course, pay attention to the illustrations and how the art helps to tell the story.

Discussion questions:

Each animal blamed another animal for their actions. Did they each tell the truth?

Who did King Lion decide was at fault for killing the baby owl? Do you agree with his decision?

A theme is an important idea in a story or book. What theme or themes did you find in the story?

The author used several verbs to describe movement.

Pass by	Prowling
Scurried	Leaping
Lumbered	Crashing
Bounded	Flapping
Running for her life	Crawled
Slithering	Crept

Some of the verbs have similar meaning. Tell the meaning of each verb.

The author uses several verbs instead of the word "said." Tell the meaning of each of these words.

Snapped	grumbled
Crying	screeching
Hooted	demanded
Whining	

Talk about the illustrations in the book. How do they add to the story?

Did you notice an animal in the illustrations that is not mentioned in the story? Why do you think the author included this animal?

Is this a book you would like to share with a child you know? What might a child learn from this story?

As you read the book again, ask questions about words you do not understand.

What other comments do you have about the book?