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# Who Is King?

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Africa, we hear from Beverly Naidoo in the foreword to her delicious collection, may have been the first home of stories. Whether or not this is so, the African continent is her source for the ten stories herein.

Featuring all manner of animals and varying in length from two amusing and extremely brief Amharic tales from Ethiopia, **Who Is King?** in which we hear what happens when Lion issues the question to the animals and discovers who really reigns supreme, and **The Ox and The Donkey**, to a South African Zulu tale **Unanana and One Tusk** and **The Miller's Daughter**. The latter, a Moroccan tale wherein the girl of the title (with the help of a jinni), uses her intelligence to outwit a stony-hearted sultan, is fascinatingly akin to the European **Rumpelstiltskin**.

We also have a Yenda pourquoi tale **How Elephant got his trunk** (he doesn't use it as a spanking device like Kipling's **Elephant's Child** though, but for ease of eating and drinking). An elephant features large in the Unanana story too. This one is a child-swallowing pachyderm that meets his match in the young widow girl whose children he gobbles up, even though she has to get the better of him from inside. Another pourquoi tale **Why Hippo Has No Hair** comes from Kenya and tells not only what the title says but also how Water replaces Fire as Hippo's best friend.

Every one of the vivaciously told stories reads aloud beautifully ? one would expect no less from Naidoo ? and all are wonderfully animated by Grobler (not that animation is really needed, so strong are the verbal renderings. His visuals vividly capture the various moods of the characters ? animal and human. The latter he clothes in traditional garments from the various regions and the former are often beautifully adorned with patterns, stripes or spots: all radiate the humour inherent in the tellings.

A superb volume, essentially for reading aloud (although it could also be enjoyed by individual readers) that can be enjoyed in many settings ? home or school, around a camp fire even. Find some appropriate background music, read, dance, sing, play and above all, enjoy.

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