

**Teachers Notes (Primary)**  
by Jeanette Carter

**Gezani and the Tricky Baboon**

Valanga Khoza, Illustrated by Sally Rippin

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Recommended for ages 6 - 12

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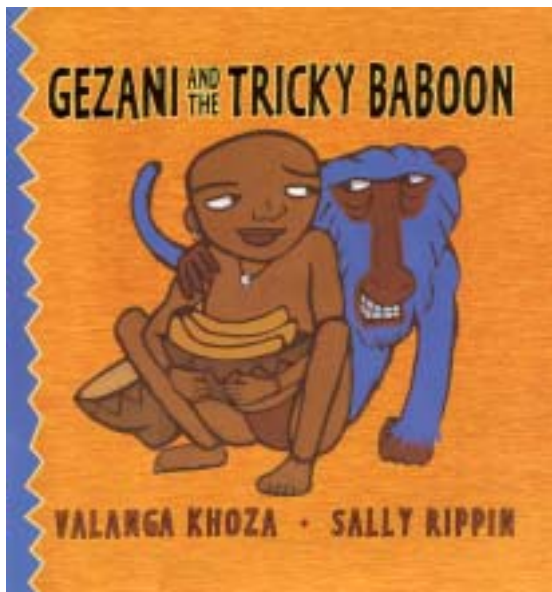
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83 Alexander Street  
Crows Nest, Sydney  
NSW 2065  
Australia

PO Box 8500  
St Leonards  
NSW 1590  
Australia

ph: (61 2) 8425 0100  
fax: (61 2) 9906 2218

info@[allenandunwin.com](mailto:allenandunwin.com)  
[www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Valanga Khoza is a South African-born storyteller based in Melbourne. Sally Rippin is an author and illustrator of books for children and young adults.

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* is a children's picture story book. It is a work of collaboration between Valanga and Sally to recreate in print Valanga's exciting and vivid storytelling.

"Bananas, bananas, bananas on my head,  
Bananas, bananas, if you're hungry you'll be fed,  
Bananas, bananas, bananas on my head"

Gezani sings as he takes a bunch of bananas to his cousins on the hill.  
But that tricky Baboon has other ideas – he wants those bananas all for himself!

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* tells a story of family respect and responsibility. To regain his self-respect and the respect of the villagers, Gezani takes his own tricky revenge on Baboon and, in the end, successfully delivers food to his cousins.

## CURRICULUM FOCUS

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* lends itself to discussions across the curriculum:

Arts	English	Studies of Society & Environment and Health and Physical Education
Story telling in different cultures	Narrative point of view	Self-esteem
The use of music in stories	Understandings of characterization and language style	Power and authority
The role of illustrations, colour and design in picture story books	Use of animals in fiction	Punishment and revenge
	The role of illustrations, colour and design in picture story books	Values and how they are learned

It therefore can be used to connect students' learning across the curriculum.

## THE USE OF MUSIC IN STORIES

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* employs music throughout the text as an integral part of the story. This allows students to explore this aspect of particular cultures and to bring the story to life through their own movements whilst reading the story.

- ◆ Have a drum available for use when reading.
- ◆ Organise session with the music teacher where students use the rhythm of the words to improvise on tuned and untuned percussion instruments.
- ◆ Have students include music in their own stories they write.
- ◆ Consider the roles of music in society:

- Which music?
  - When?
  - Where?
  - Who performs and who listens?
- ◆ Students can create dances which show Gezani' feelings throughout the story.

## **THE ROLES OF ILLUSTRATIONS, COLOUR AND DESIGN IN PICTURE STORY BOOKS**

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* provides us with the opportunity to explore visual communication and intertextuality.

- ◆ Discuss the book cover:
  - Colour
  - Layout
  - Relationship between Gezani and the Baboon
  - The role of drums and bananas
- ◆ Consider the choice and use of colours throughout the book.
- ◆ Discuss with students how the pictures work with the text.
- ◆ Explore the presentation of the characters (Gezani, grandfather, farmer).
- ◆ Have students find other representations of characters in other picture story books being read:
  - Look at patterns of how females/males are portrayed
  - How are different workers characterised visually?
  - What national stereotypes are presented?

## **NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW**

For students to develop their understandings of others' reasons for particular thoughts and actions, a useful tool is for them to adopt a character from a story and present the character's thinking. This can be done 'in character' or as an argument.

Students can take on a point of view of each of the characters and role-play their position.

The can rewrite the story for other characters' points of view.

Have students take up the issue of corporal punishment/vengeance/treatment of animals by humans and present arguments from a range of points of view.

Link these activities with the music and dance activities by making masks to wear while role-playing.

## **UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHARACTERIZATION AND LANGUAGE STYLE**

*Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* can be used for text analysis. The narrative structure can be a model for students' own writing or can be used as a point of comparison with other stories being read in class within the same theme.

*Story starter: A long, long time ago ... ⇒ Where? ⇒ Who? ⇒ One day ... ⇒ The task presented by Grandfather ⇒ How Gezani undertakes this task ⇒ The initial complication introduced by the baboon's trick ⇒ Result of the*

*trick* ⇒ *The effect on Gezani's feelings* ⇒ *The further complication of Gezani's trick on the baboon* ⇒ *How the trick works* ⇒ *Resolution: how Gezani restores himself with Grandfather and peers.*

Explore with students the language style of *Gezani and the Tricky Baboon*. Compare this text with other texts being read. Look at presentation as well as language. Use aspects as models for students' own writing.

- ◆ Font size
- ◆ Quotation marks
- ◆ Paragraphs
- ◆ How specific phrases signal particular actions
- ◆ Use of the wavy text to indicate a song
- ◆ Use of the song within this story
- ◆ Repetition of the song to show resolution
- ◆ Sentence level analysis:
  - Past tense markers when telling a story set in the past
    - Said
    - Sang
    - Was
    - Felt
    - Walked
    - Stepped
    - Looked
    - Were having
    - Didn't take
  - Use of adjectives
  - Word order

## **STORY TELLING IN DIFFERENT CULTURES**

Consider fairy tales, fables, stories from the school LOTE and/or cultural backgrounds of students in your class. For example:

- ◆ Dreamtime
- ◆ Greek
- ◆ Chinese
- ◆ Lebanese
- ◆ Italian
- ◆ Somali

Students can write their own tale based on research into the tales of another culture.

## USE OF ANIMALS IN FICTION

Explore other stories that use animals as characters:

- ◆ Fables
- ◆ Legends
- ◆ Dreamtime stories
- ◆ *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- ◆ *Winnie the Pooh* by AA Milne
- ◆ Popular animal stories by Babette Cole

Consider how these animals are used and how they behave:

- ◆ Do they change over the course of a story?
- ◆ Can we discern stereotypes of particular animals?
- ◆ Are there differences in the way animals are used in traditional stories and modern tales?
- ◆ What value do we place on the animals in the range of stories under examination?

## SELF ESTEEM

Gezani's grandfather gives him an important job: taking food to his extended family. Gezani fails in this task and is publicly shamed because he lets himself be tricked by the baboon. Gezani restores his self-esteem by playing a trick back on the baboon and successfully delivers food to his family. Consider Gezani's actions:

- ◆ Why was he taking the bananas?
- ◆ To whom was he taking them? Why? What does that say about the social structures in his culture?
- ◆ What important jobs do you or your siblings do for your family? For the school?
- ◆ How do you feel when you make a mistake?
- ◆ How do you know when you are old enough to do important jobs for your family or school?
- ◆ Develop a role-play of other ways of working through the taunts from his peers, other ways of dealing with the baboon.

## POWER AND AUTHORITY

Grandfather is a strong authority figure who commands Gezani's respect and teaches him responsibility.

Explore the concepts of power and authority:

- ◆ What authority figures are in our lives? What are their roles ... responsibilities ... rights?
- ◆ What are our roles, responsibilities and rights in relation to these authority figures?
- ◆ Where do power and authority come from?
- ◆ Discuss our personal power/agency.

## **PUNISHMENT AND REVENGE**

Both the shaming of Gezani by his peers and his revenge on the baboon will be problematic for some readers.

Discuss the ideas of punishment and revenge within the context of the welfare statements and policy of the whole school.

- ◆ What is acceptable/unacceptable at school? In your family? In the broader community?
- ◆ What are the common elements across these?
- ◆ What are the common elements across cultures?

## **VALUES AND HOW THEY ARE LEARNED**

As part of your social program, *Gezani and the Tricky Baboon* can be used to introduce the concept of cultural values:

- ◆ What do we mean by values?
- ◆ Have students list some classroom/school/family/social/cultural values.
- ◆ How do we learn the values of our families?
- ◆ How do we learn who to trust?
- ◆ What values are present in *Gezani and the Tricky Baboon*? Do you agree/disagree with them?
- ◆ Consider how we cooperate with people who hold different values to us
- ◆ Consider shared values.

## **ABOUT THE WRITER**

Jeanette Carter is a Melbourne primary school teacher, with a background in critical literacy, Teaching English as a Second Language and music teaching.