

Sara

THE SPECIAL GIFT



INTRODUCING SARA AND HER FRIENDS

This is the first of a series of comic books produced by UNICEF in Eastern and Southern Africa on the adventures of Sara, an adolescent girl who is quickly becoming a role model and symbol for girls' empowerment in Africa. The story concerns "pushout" from school and the heavy workload girls endure at home. It tells how Sara with the help of her friends Juma, Amina and her pet monkey, Zingo, uses her negotiation and problem solving skills to stay in school when the odds are very much against her. The story is full of fun and adventure but deals with the real problems faced by female children in Africa and points to solutions in a culturally-sensitive way.

This comic book is part of a package of communication materials including an animated film/video, a poster and users' guide (also included in the back of this book). Other materials are also under development.

The Special Gift is the first product of a large team of artists, writers and researchers from Eastern and Southern Africa who have worked together since October 1994, evolving the characters, setting and stories of the Sara series through active reflection with thousands of villagers and peri-urban dwellers in 10 countries from Eritrea to South Africa. (See credits inside back cover.)

The Special Gift was produced by the Communication Section, UNICEF-ESARO, with financial support from the Government of Norway and UNICEF Committees in The Netherlands, United States and Germany, and in collaboration with UNICEF country offices in Eastern and Southern Africa.

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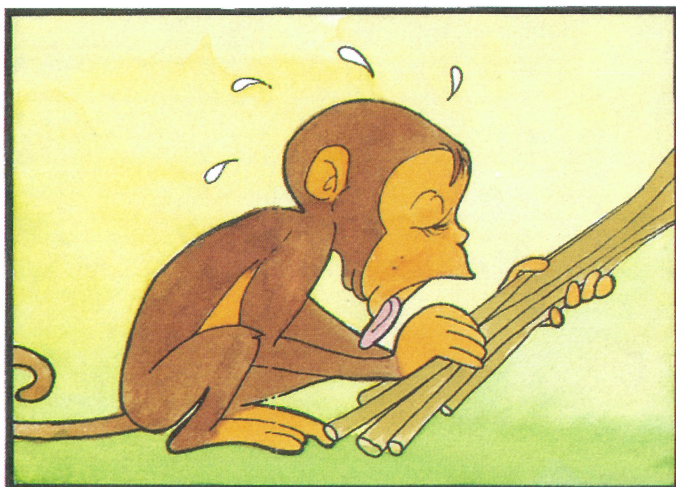
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United Nations Children's Fund

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE NEAR A SMALL TOWN IN AFRICA THE HOT MID-DAY SUN IS BURNING FIERCELY. WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE GATHERING NEEDED FIREWOOD. SARA AND HER FRIEND AMINA, TWO SCHOOL GIRLS, HAVE COLLECTED AS MUCH FIREWOOD AS THEY CAN FIND AND ARE HEADED FOR HOME WHERE MORE WORK AWAITS THEM. SARA'S PET MONKEY, ZINGO, IS ALSO GATHERING WOOD TO HELP SARA.







AS THEY REACH THE TOWN, SARA AND AMINA SAY GOODBYE AND RETURN TO THEIR HOMES.



MEANWHILE IN SARA'S HOME COMPOUND, HER UNCLE, WHO IS LOOKING AFTER THE FAMILY WHILE THE FATHER WORKS IN THE CITY, WAITS FOR THE CHIEF TO ARRIVE.

WHAT WILL I SAY TO HIM?

I MUST SAY SOMETHING WHICH WILL SHOW HOW POPULAR I AM WITH THE PEOPLE...

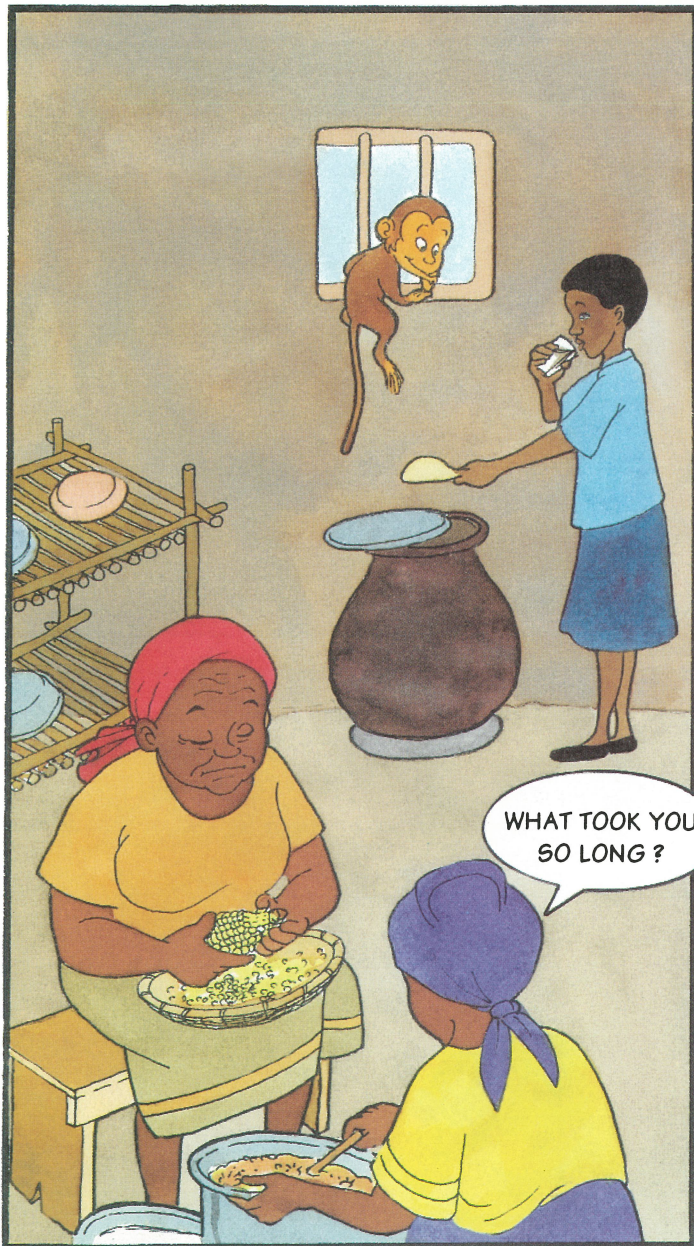
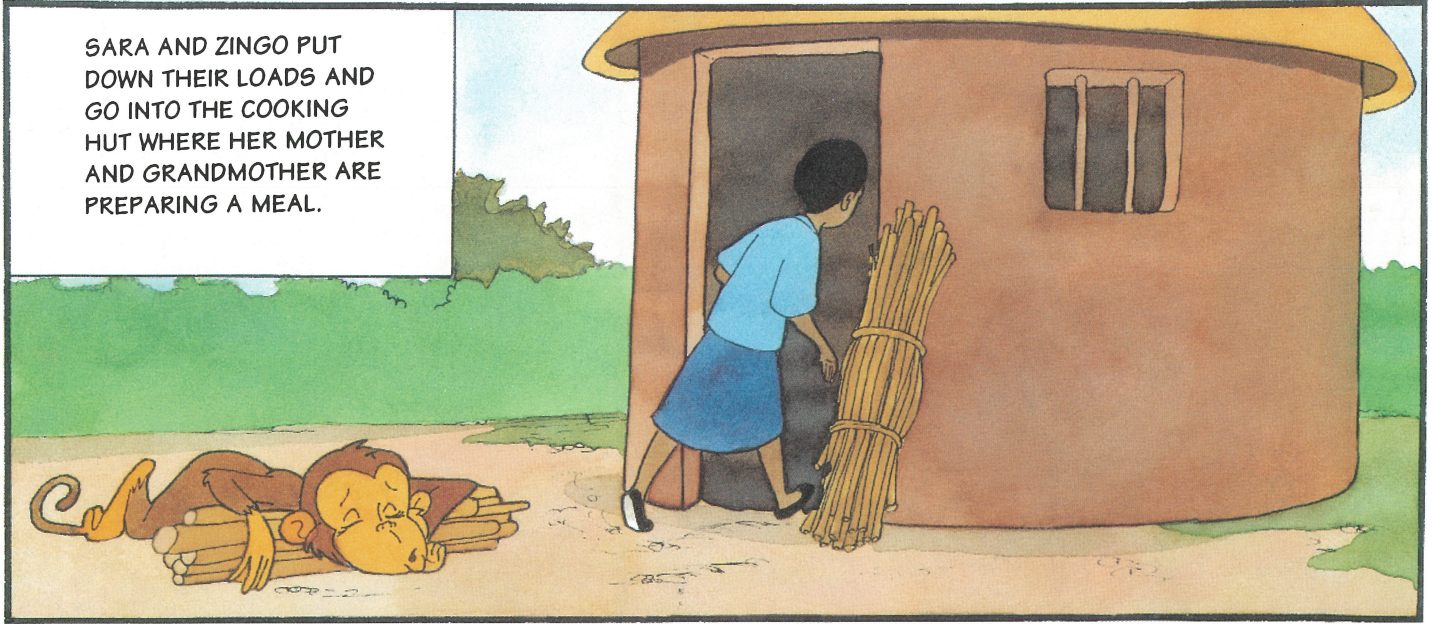
AH CHIEF! GOOD MORNING!

GOOD MORNING TO YOU.

YES, CHIEF, HOW ARE YOU? I'M GLAD YOU COULD COME.

WATCH OUT FOR THE FIREWOOD! THESE GIRLS!

SARA AND ZINGO PUT DOWN THEIR LOADS AND GO INTO THE COOKING HUT WHERE HER MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER ARE PREPARING A MEAL.

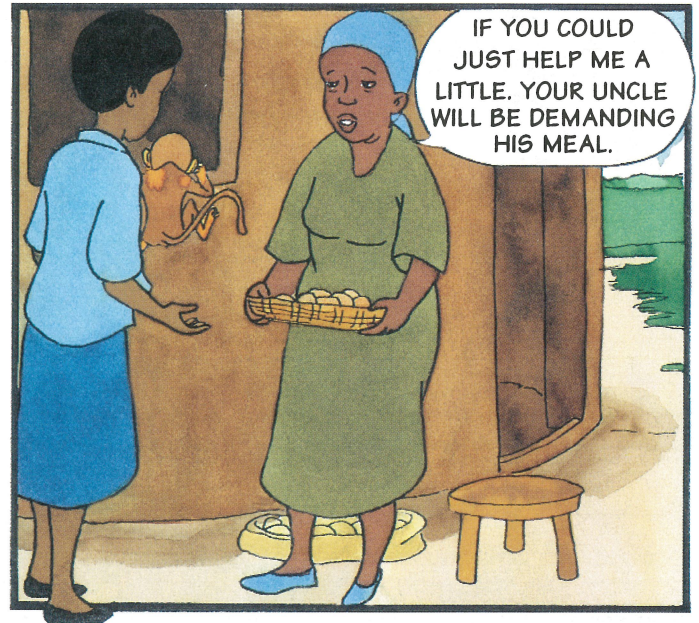


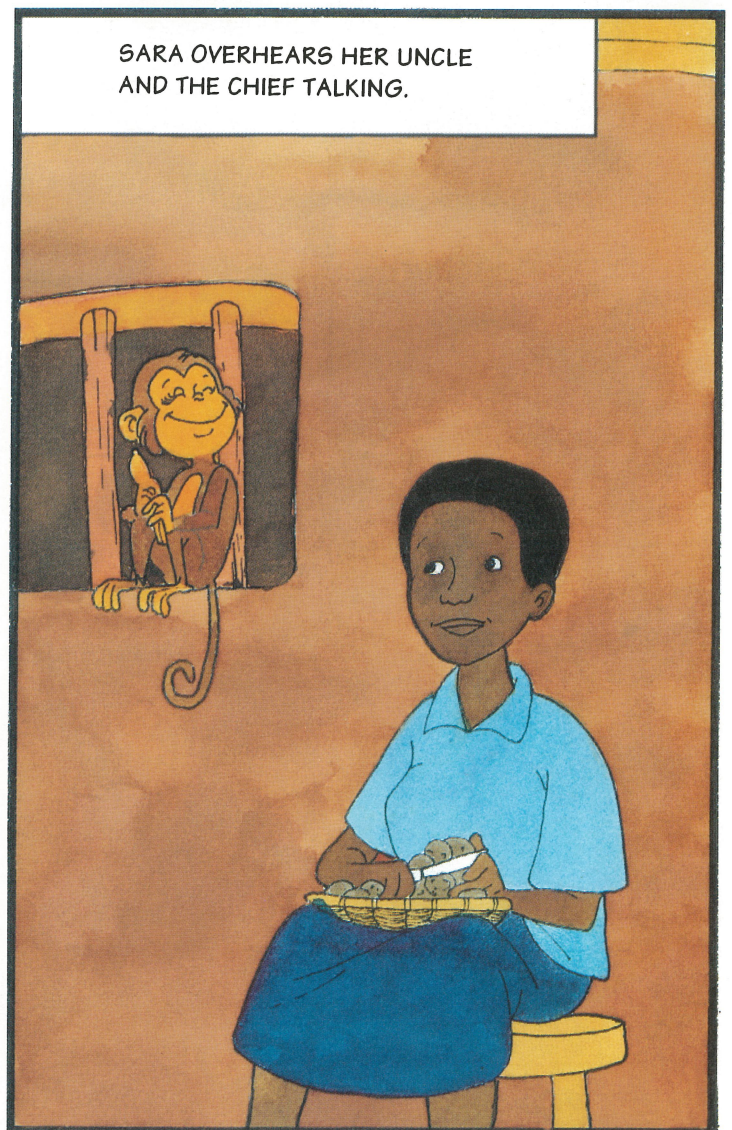


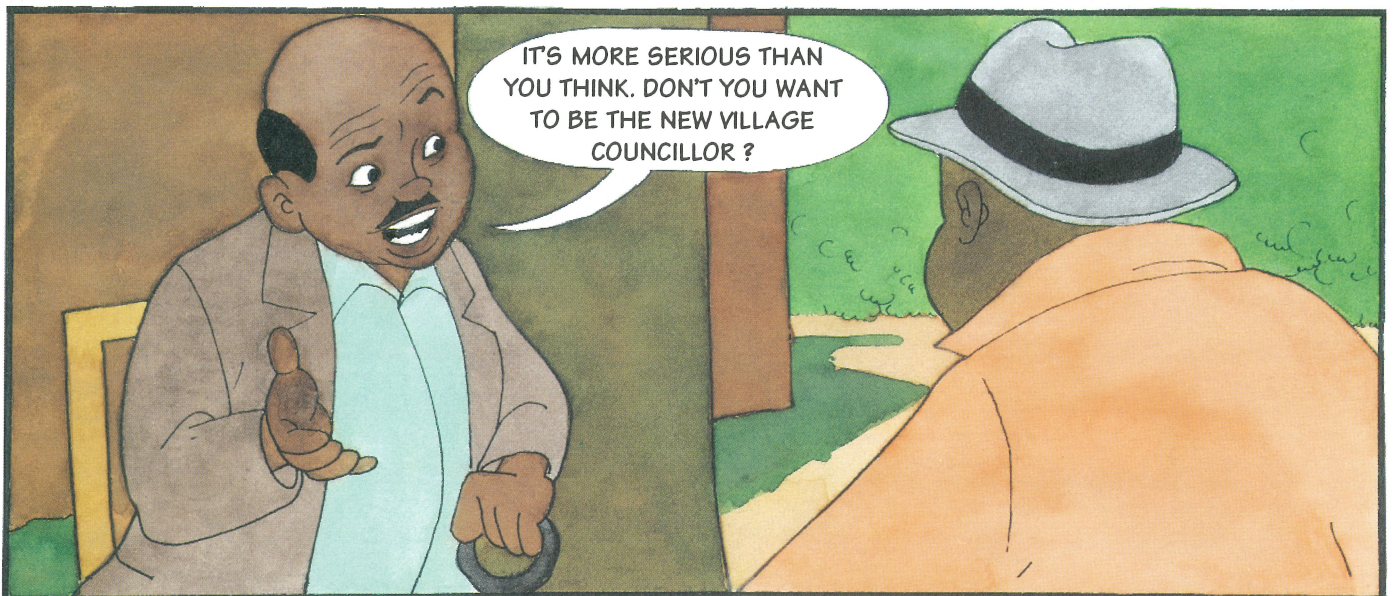
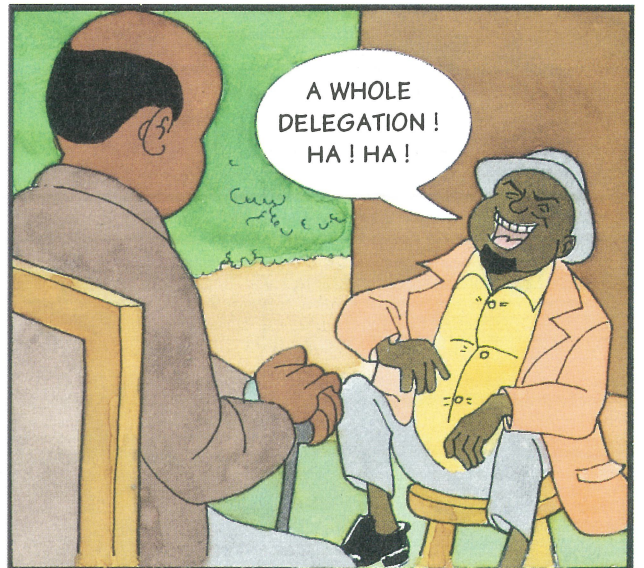
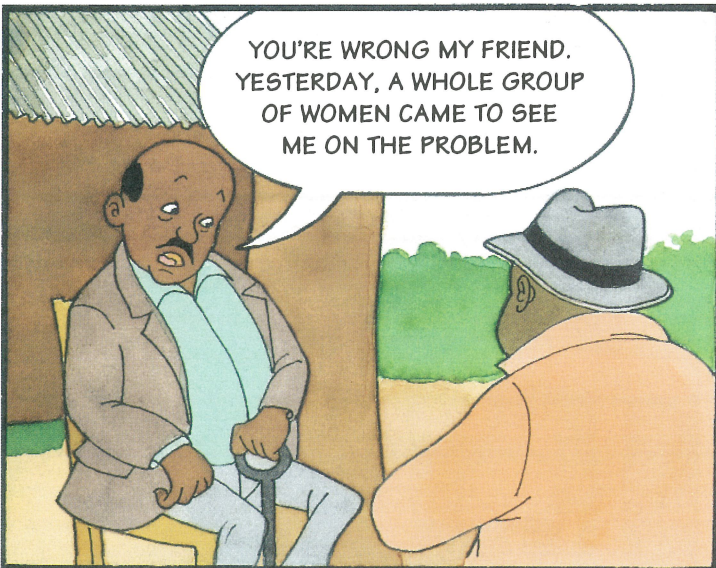
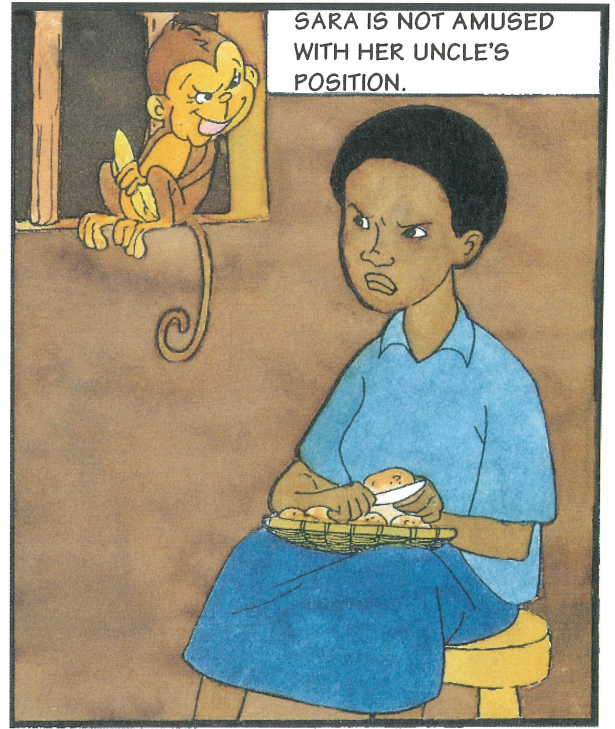
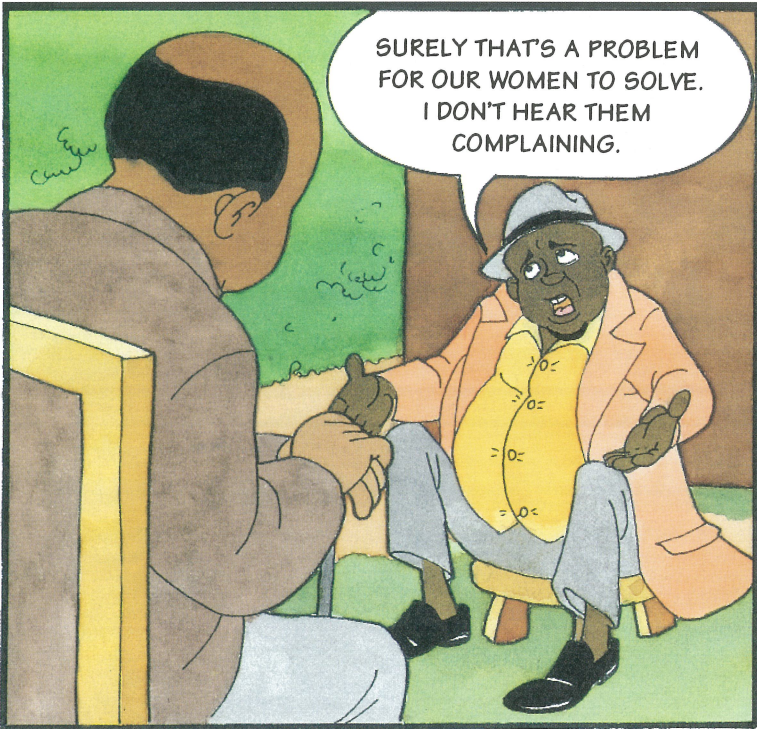


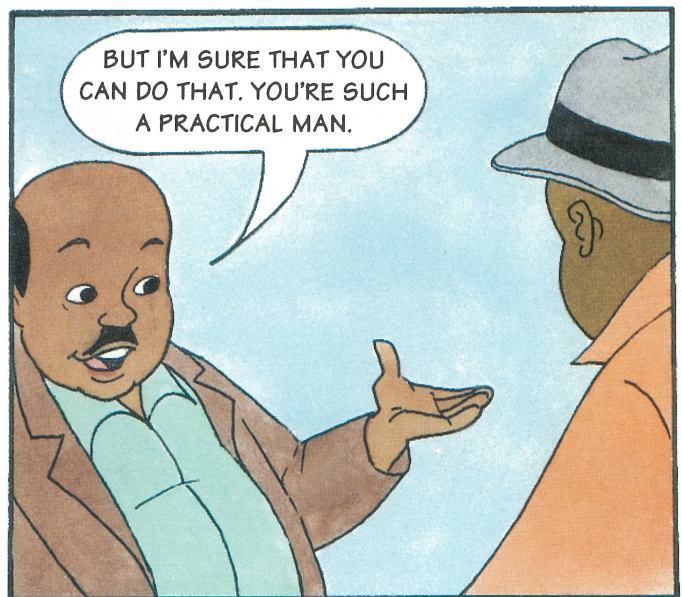
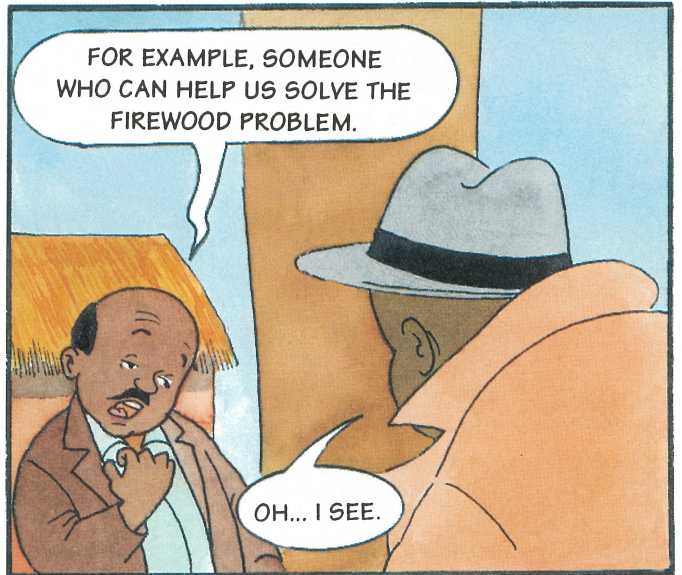
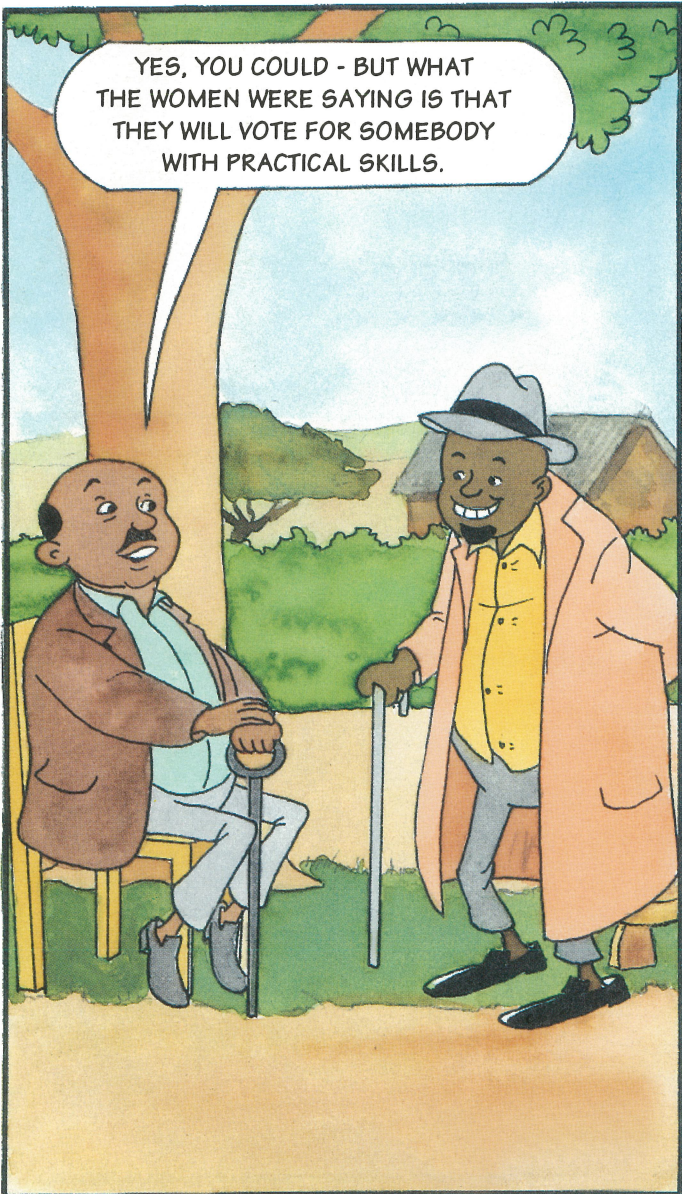
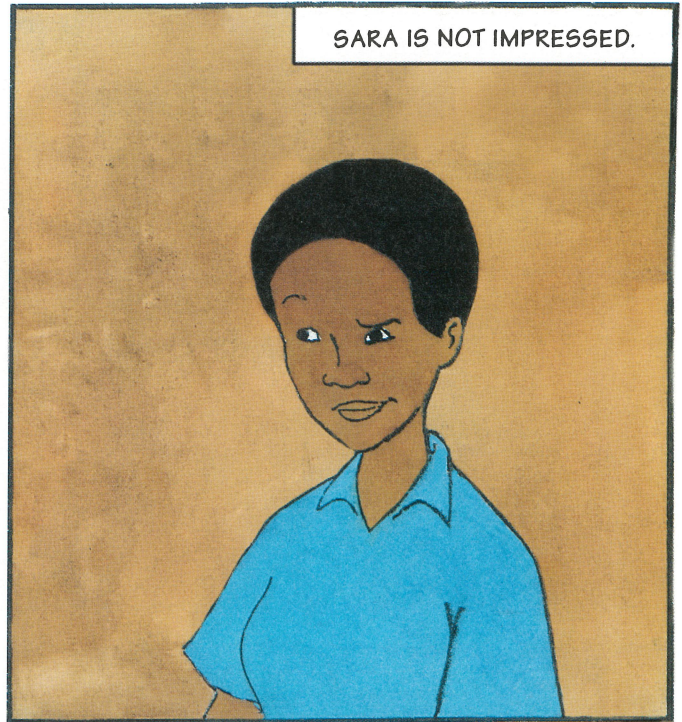
SARA AND ZINGO CROSS THE COMPOUND TO HER UNCLE'S HOUSE TO HELP HER AUNT.

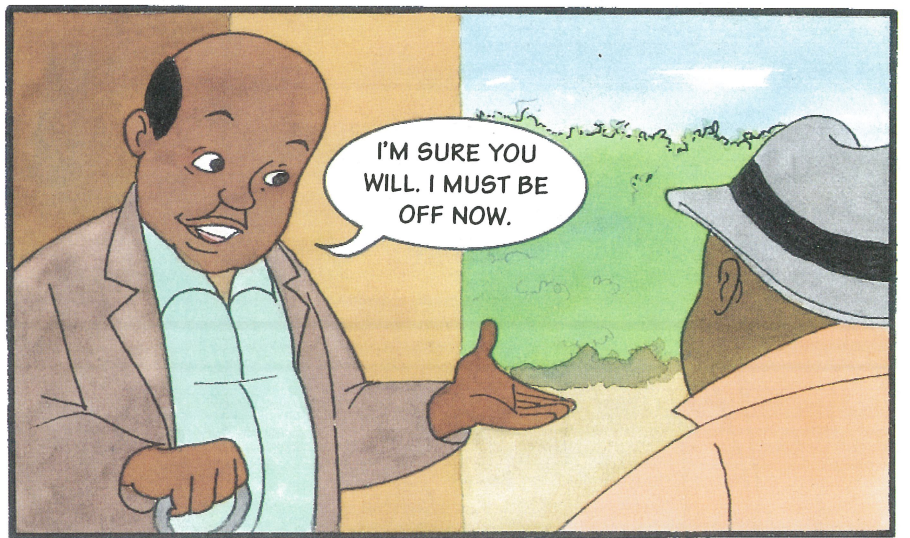




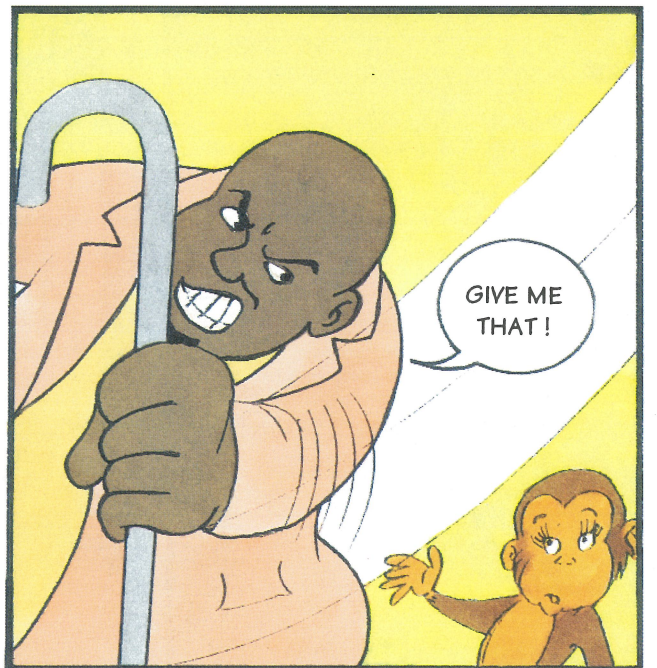
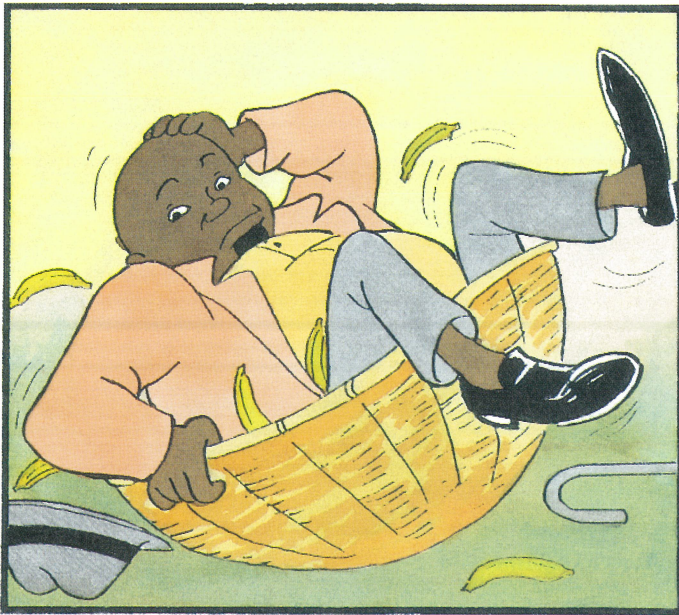
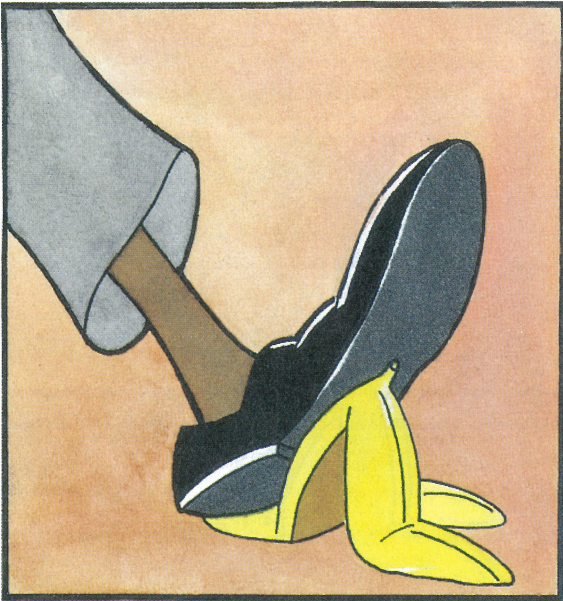


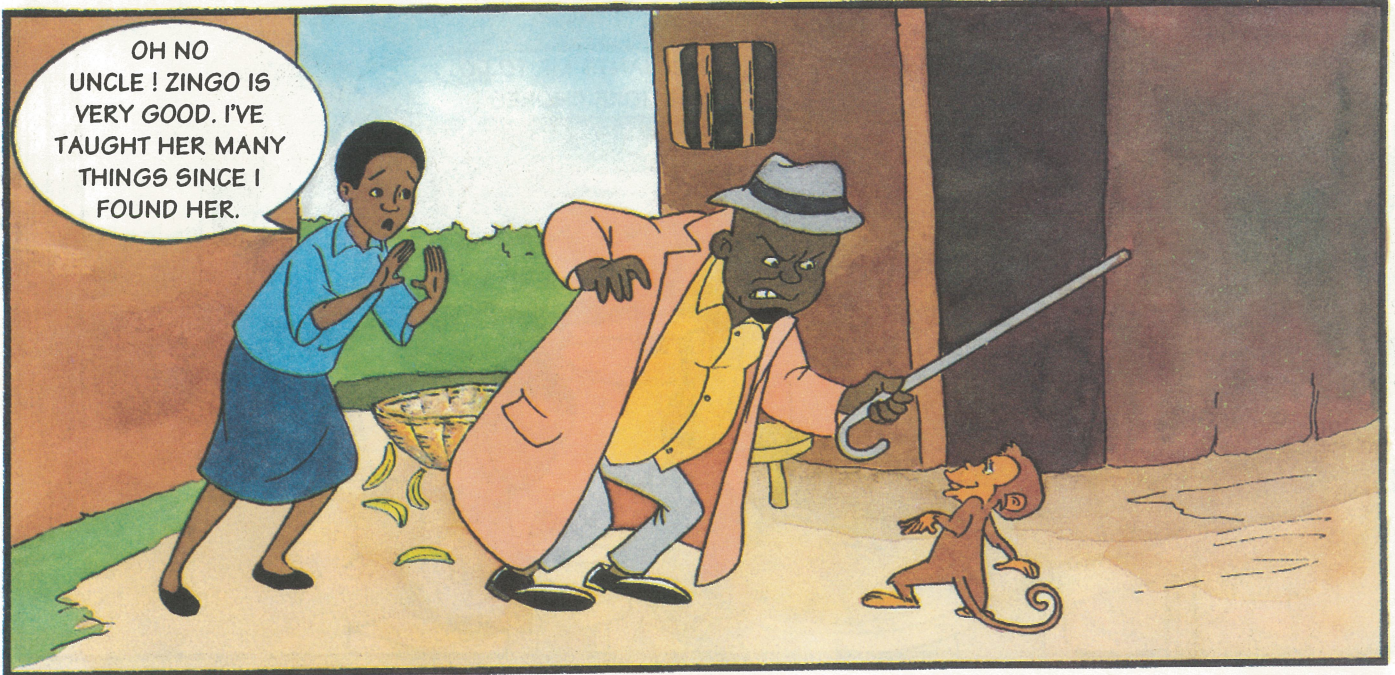


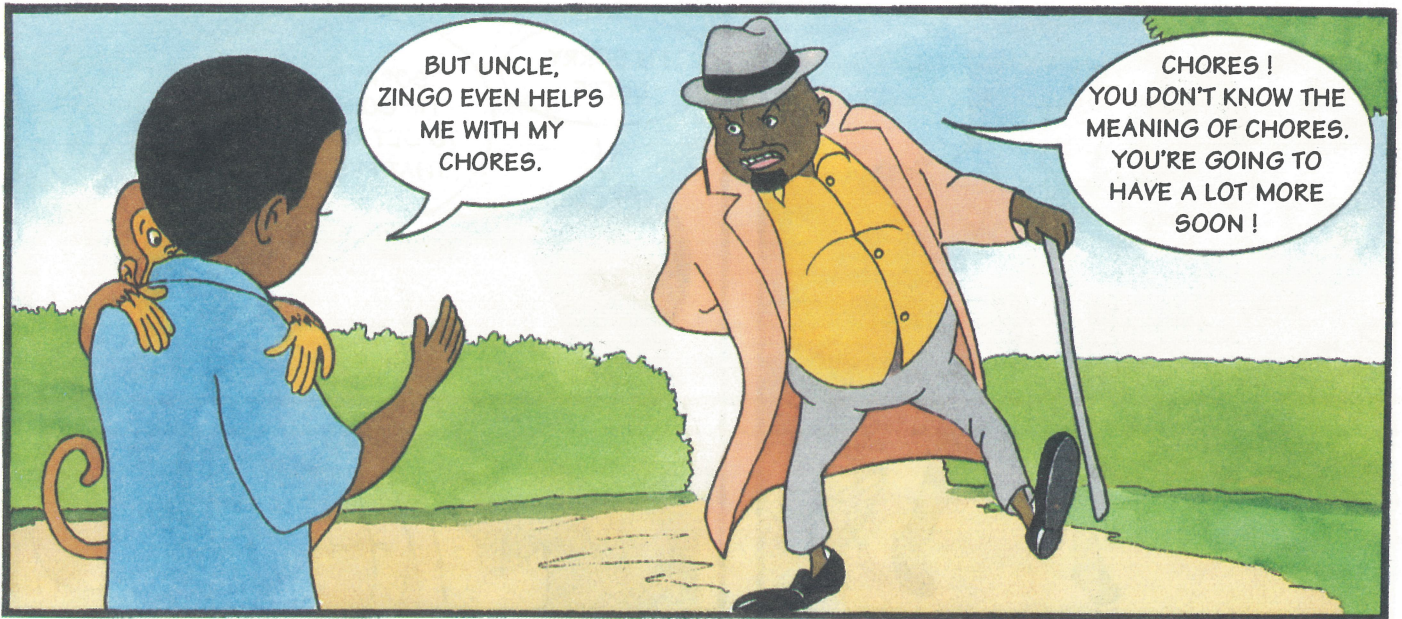












BUT UNCLE, ZINGO EVEN HELPS ME WITH MY CHORES.

CHORES ! YOU DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF CHORES. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A LOT MORE SOON !



SARA RETURNS TO HER MOTHER'S KITCHEN. HER BROTHER TSUMI AND SISTER MARIA ARE THERE.

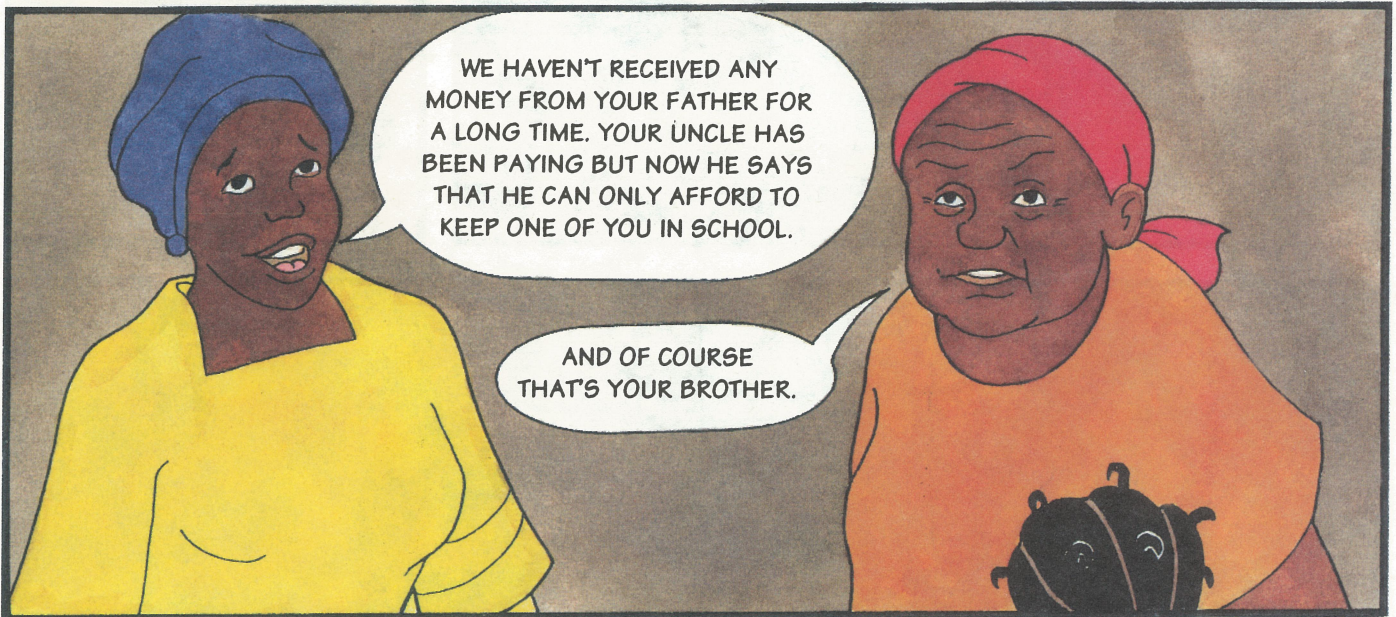
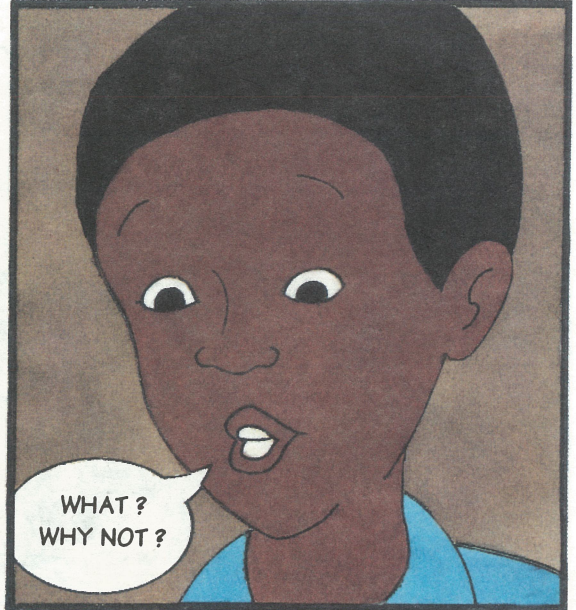
UNCLE WANTS ME TO DO EVEN MORE CHORES !



HOW AM I GOING TO DO ALL MY HOMEWORK IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ?



YOU BETTER TELL HER NOW.





SECONDARY SCHOOL IS EVEN MORE EXPENSIVE.

BUT I LOVE SCHOOL SO MUCH! I WANT TO BE...



TSUMI'S A BOY AND YOU'RE A GIRL.

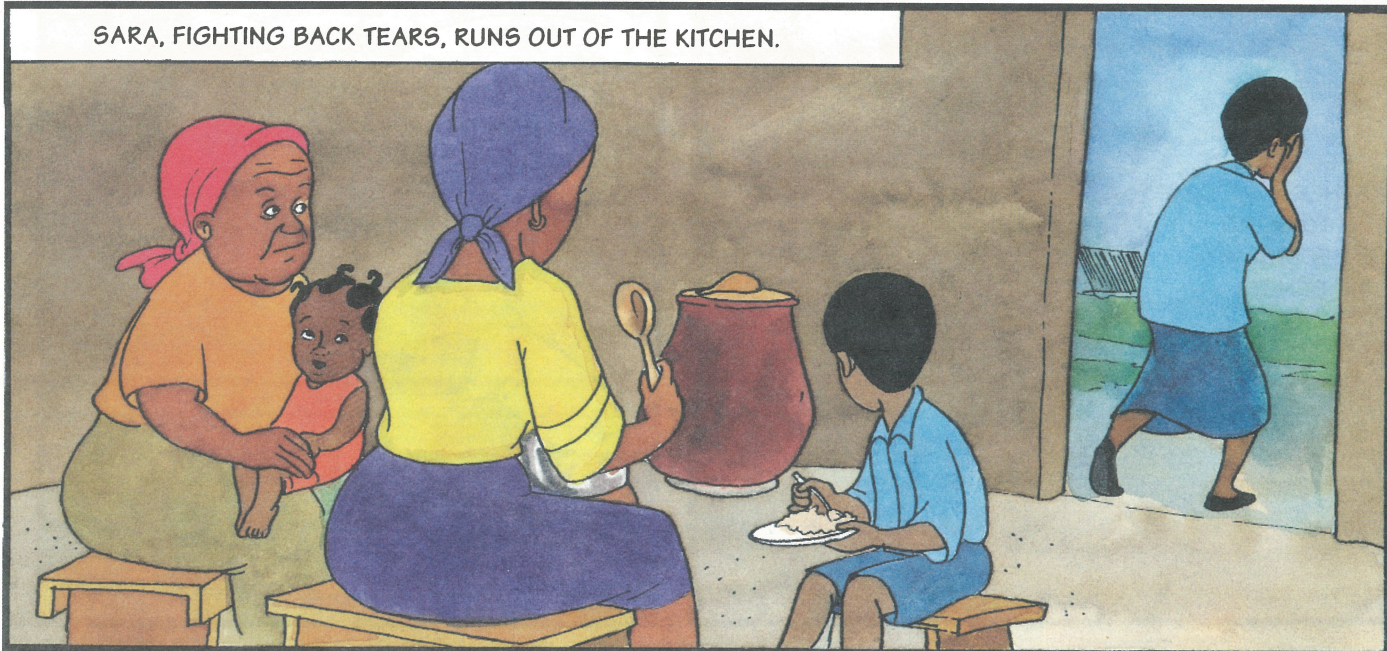


WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THAT MAKE?

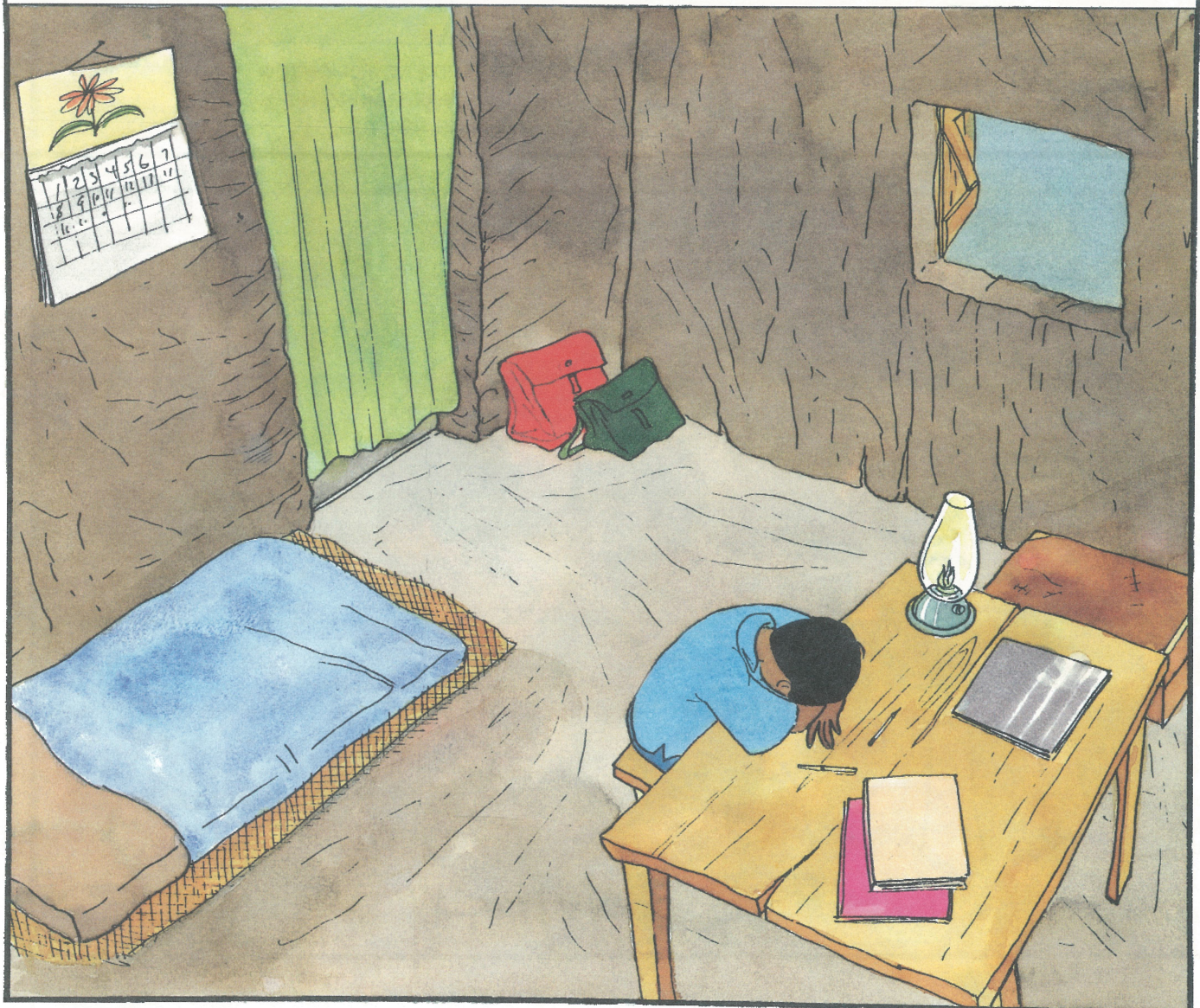
IT SHOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE AT ALL... BUT YOUR UNCLE IS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY WHILE YOUR FATHER IS AWAY.



SARA, FIGHTING BACK TEARS, RUNS OUT OF THE KITCHEN.



IN HER ROOM THAT EVENING, SARA TRIES TO READ BY THE LAMPLIGHT BUT SHE CANNOT CONCENTRATE. SHE TAKES OUT HER SCHOOL BOOKS AND LOOKS AT THEM BUT IT'S NO USE.



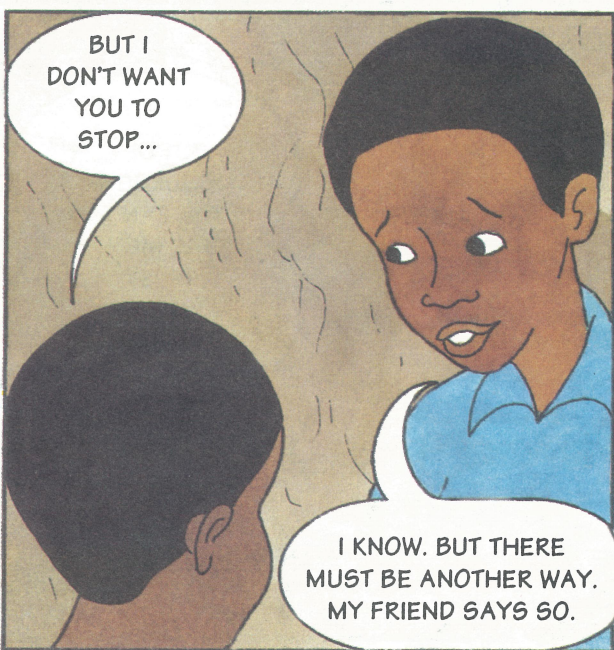




I'M GOING TO LEAVE SCHOOL SO YOU CAN CONTINUE.



NO, TSUMI. THAT ISN'T THE ANSWER.



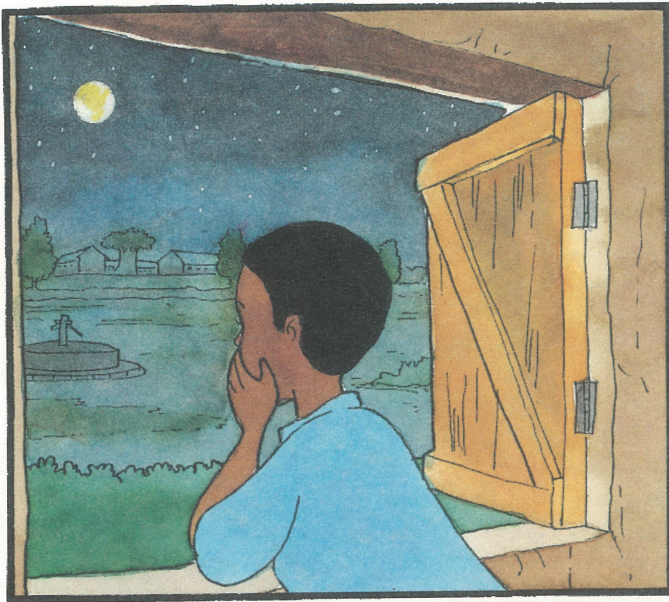
BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO STOP...

I KNOW. BUT THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY. MY FRIEND SAYS SO.



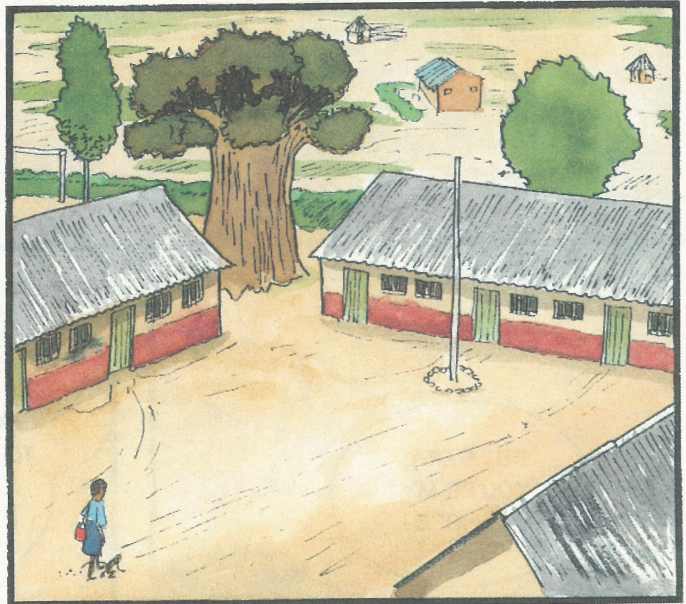
WHAT FRIEND ?

OH, - YOU DON'T KNOW HIM.



TSUMI GOES TO BED AND SARA GOES BACK TO THE WINDOW TO THINK ABOUT HER FUTURE. THE SCHOOL CAN BE SEEN IN THE DISTANCE, BATHED IN MOONLIGHT. TEARS COME TO HER EYES. BUT SHE STRUGGLES HARD TO THINK WHAT SHE CAN DO NEXT.

THE NEXT MORNING, THE LAST DAY OF THE SCHOOL TERM, SARA RISES EARLY AND DOES HER CHORES. THEN SHE GOES TO SEE HER TEACHER, MS MATATA.

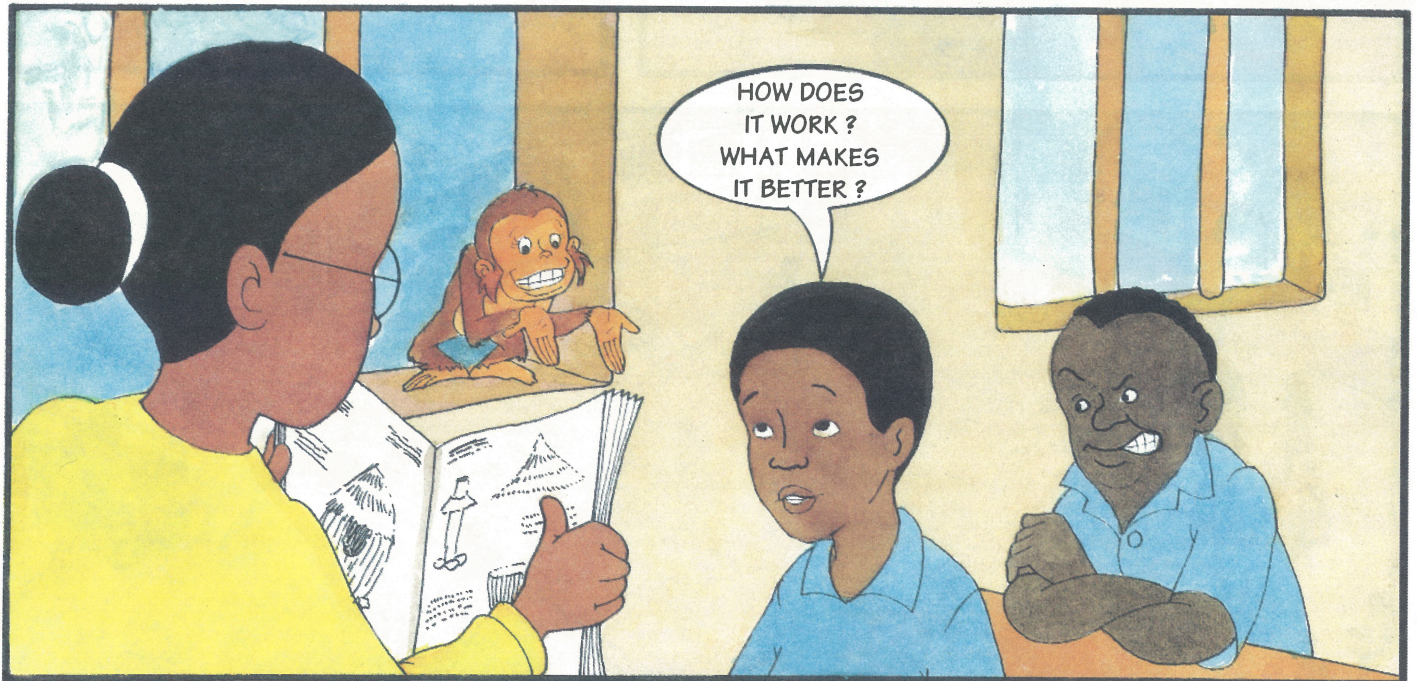
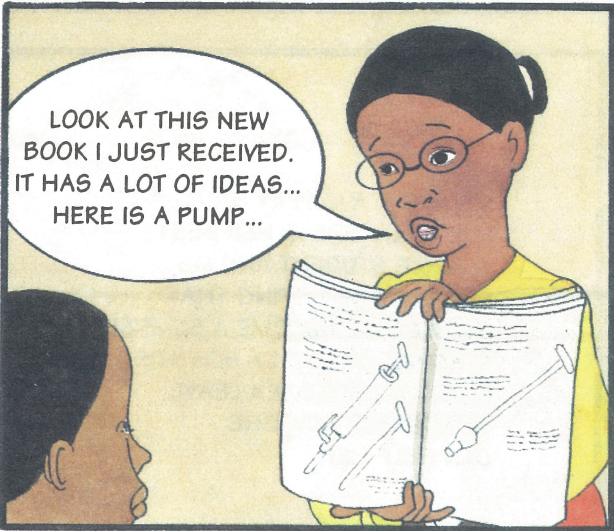
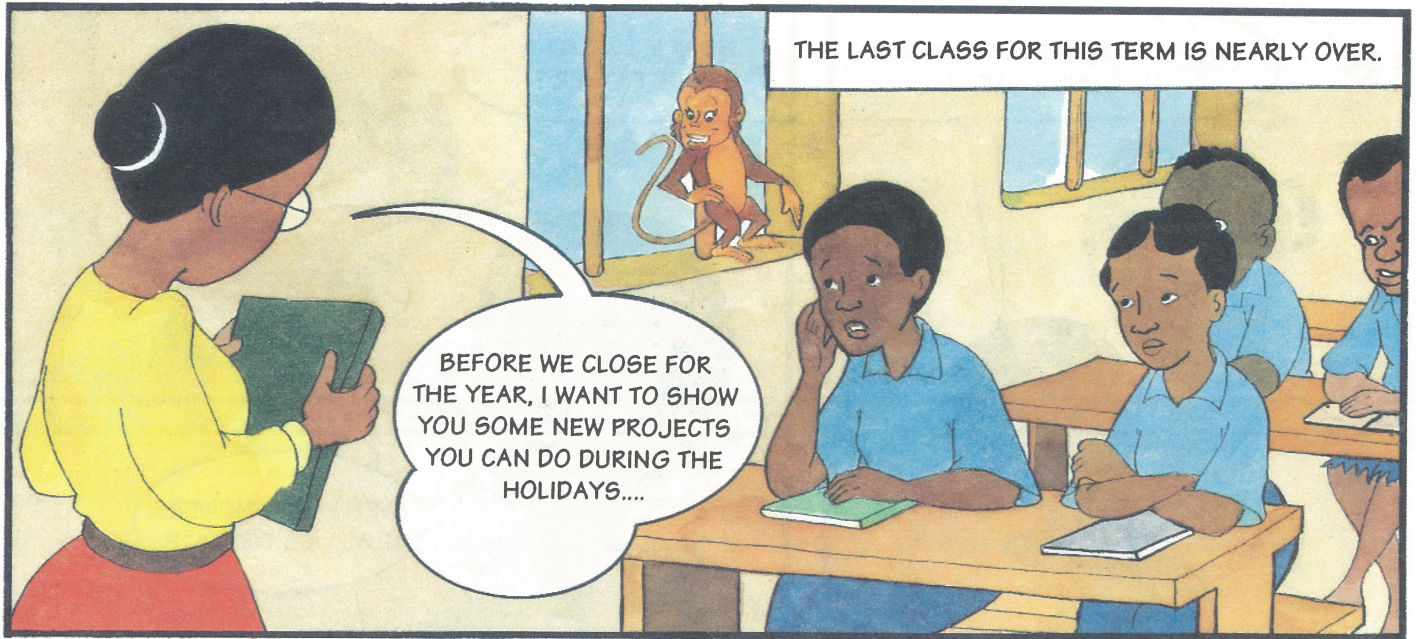


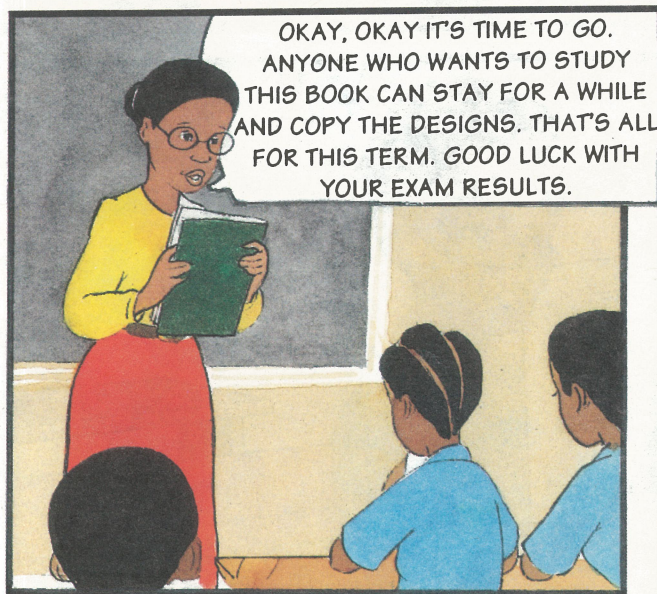


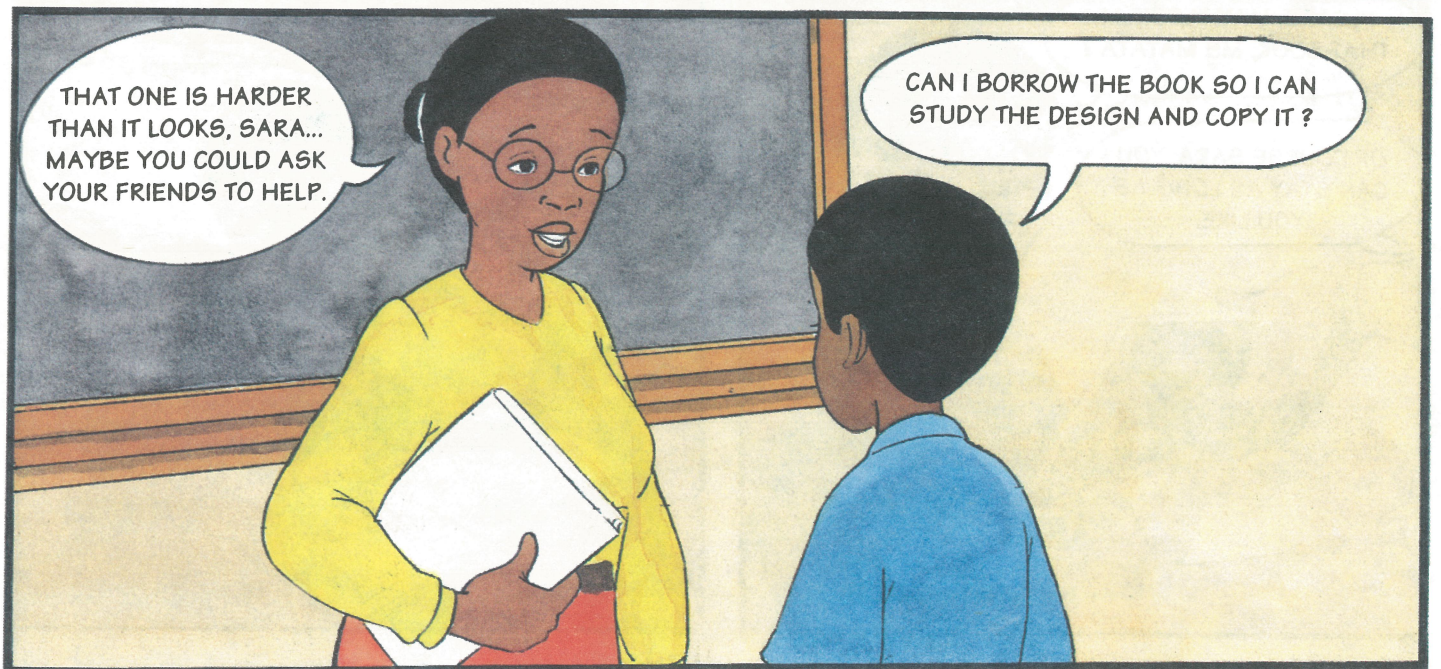
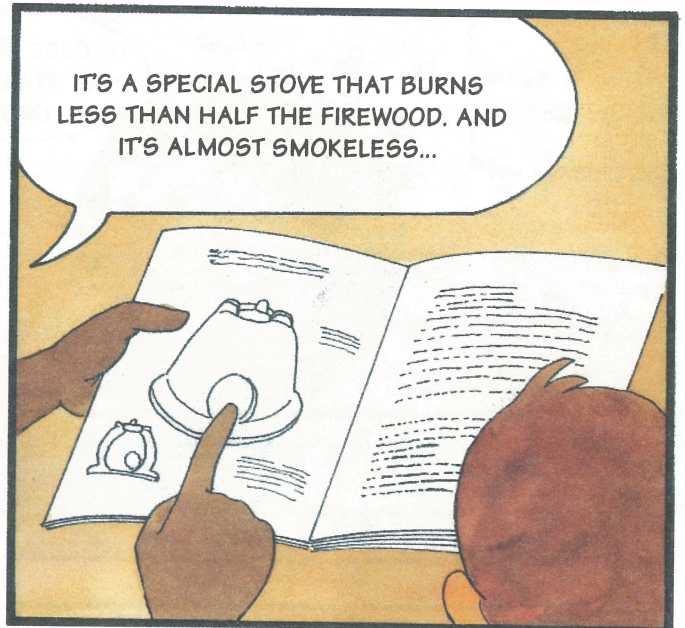


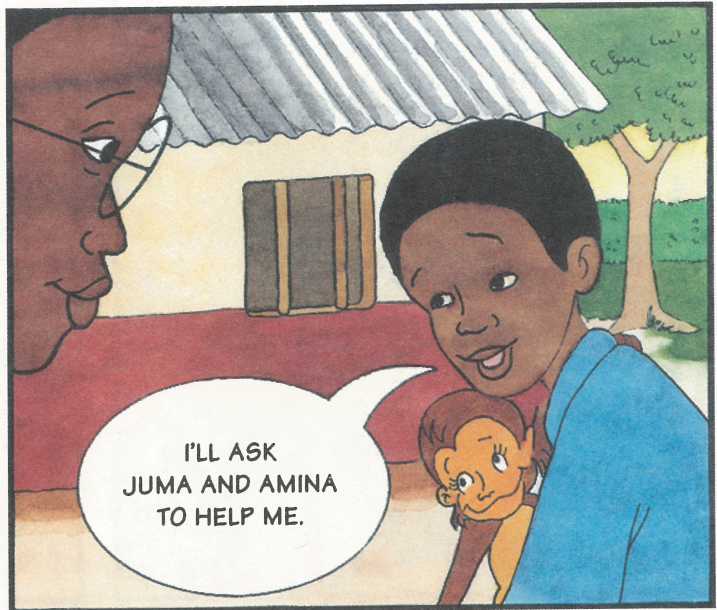
MS MATATA IS VERY SAD FOR SARA. SHE IS HER BEST SCIENCE STUDENT AND MS MATATA WAS HOPING THAT SARA COULD BECOME A SCIENCE TEACHER, OR EVEN A SCIENTIST. SHE WATCHES SARA LEAVE, WONDERING HOW SHE CAN HELP HER.

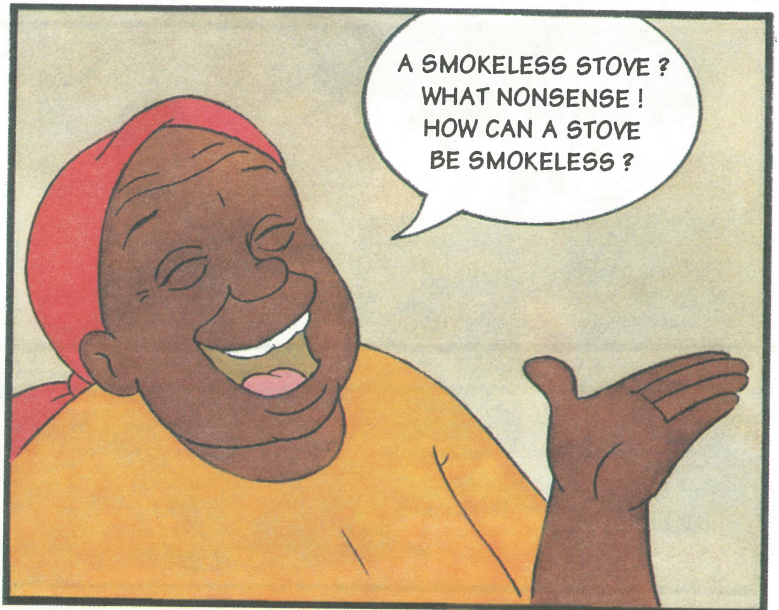


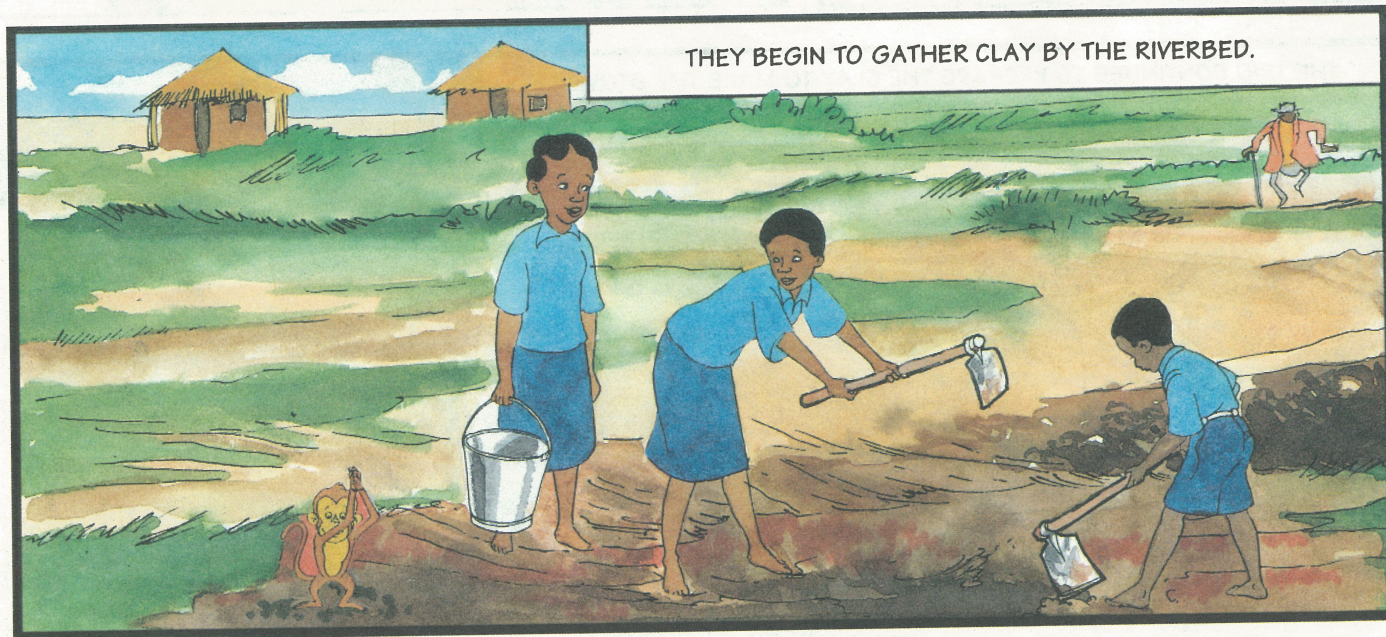
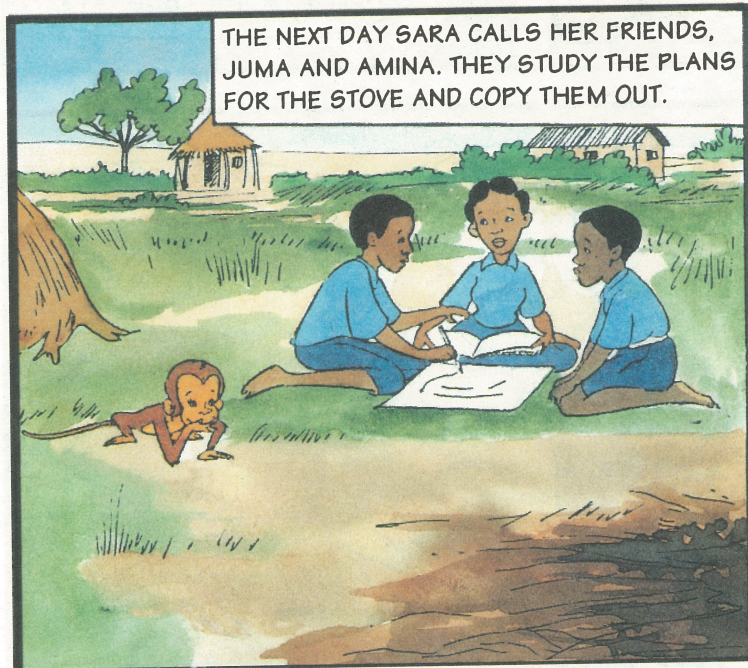


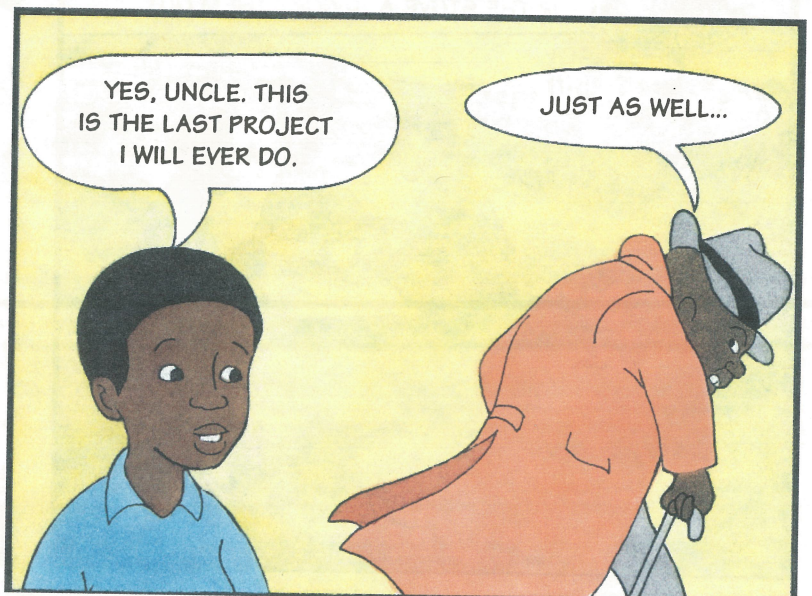












THEN THEY CONSTRUCT THE STOVE IN AUNTIE'S KITCHEN... BUT UNCLE RETURNS.



IS MY SUPPER READY?

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE!
I TOLD YOU TO STOP PLAYING
AROUND SARA.

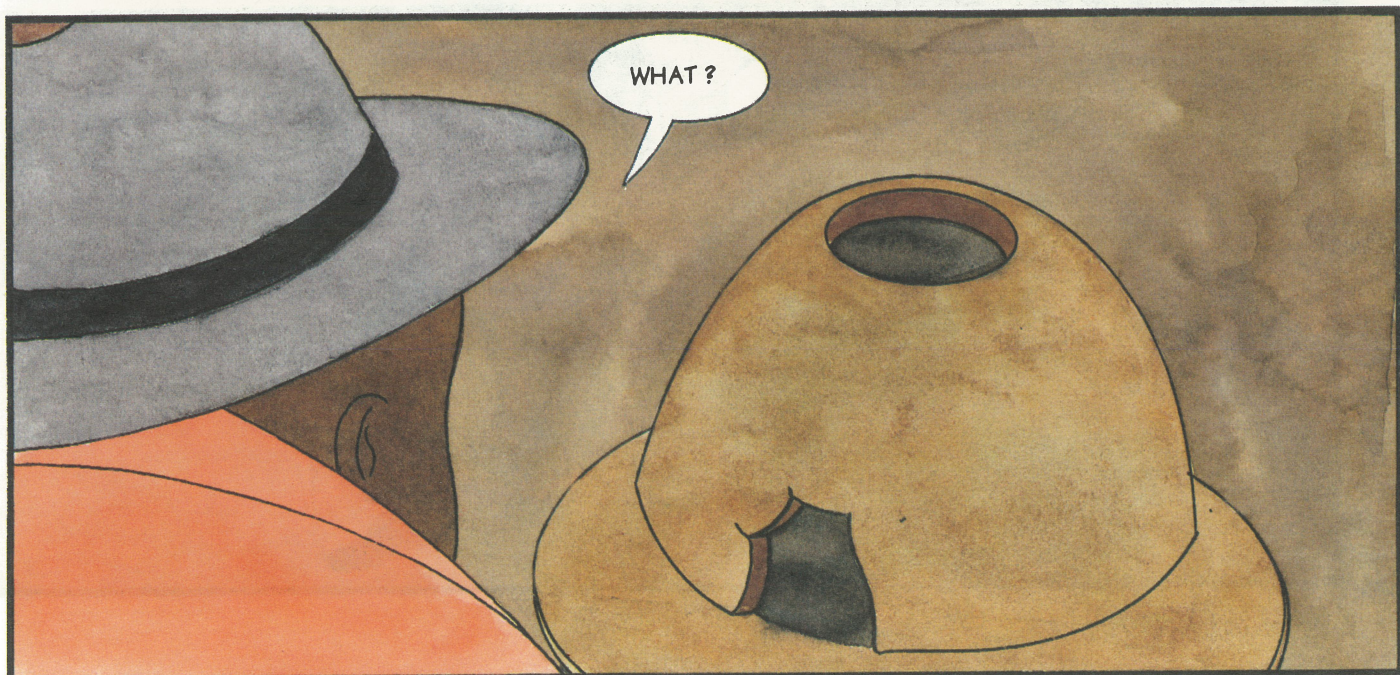


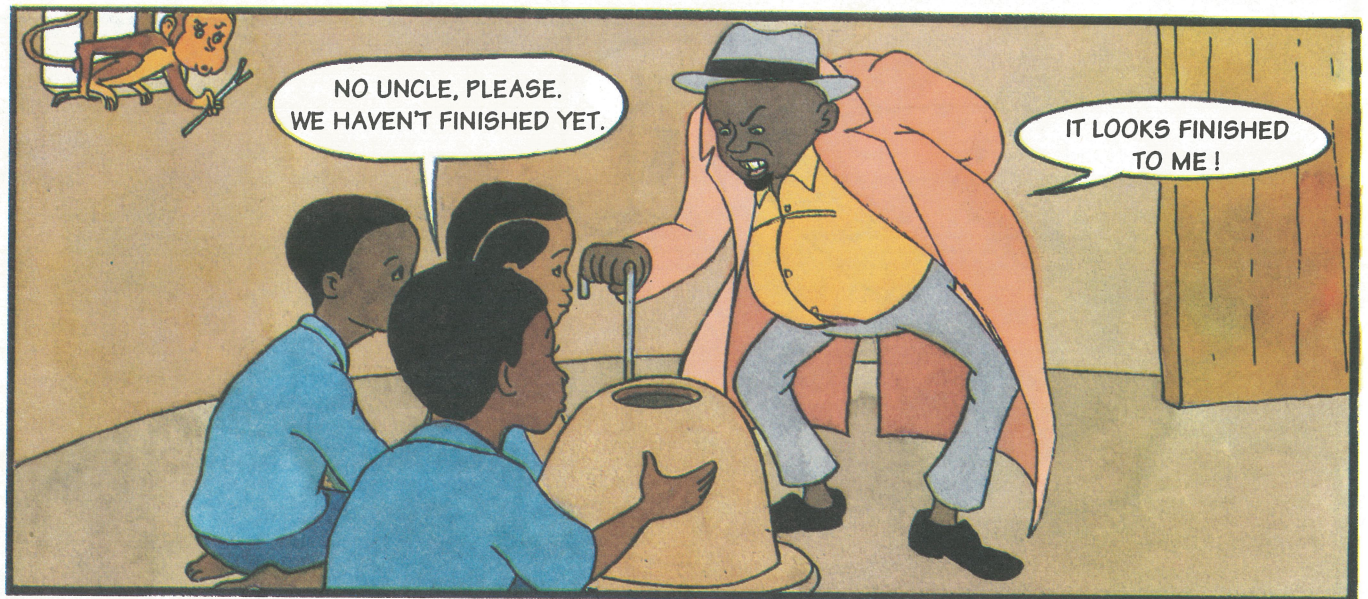
THEY SAY IT'S A STOVE WHICH
USES HALF THE FIREWOOD.

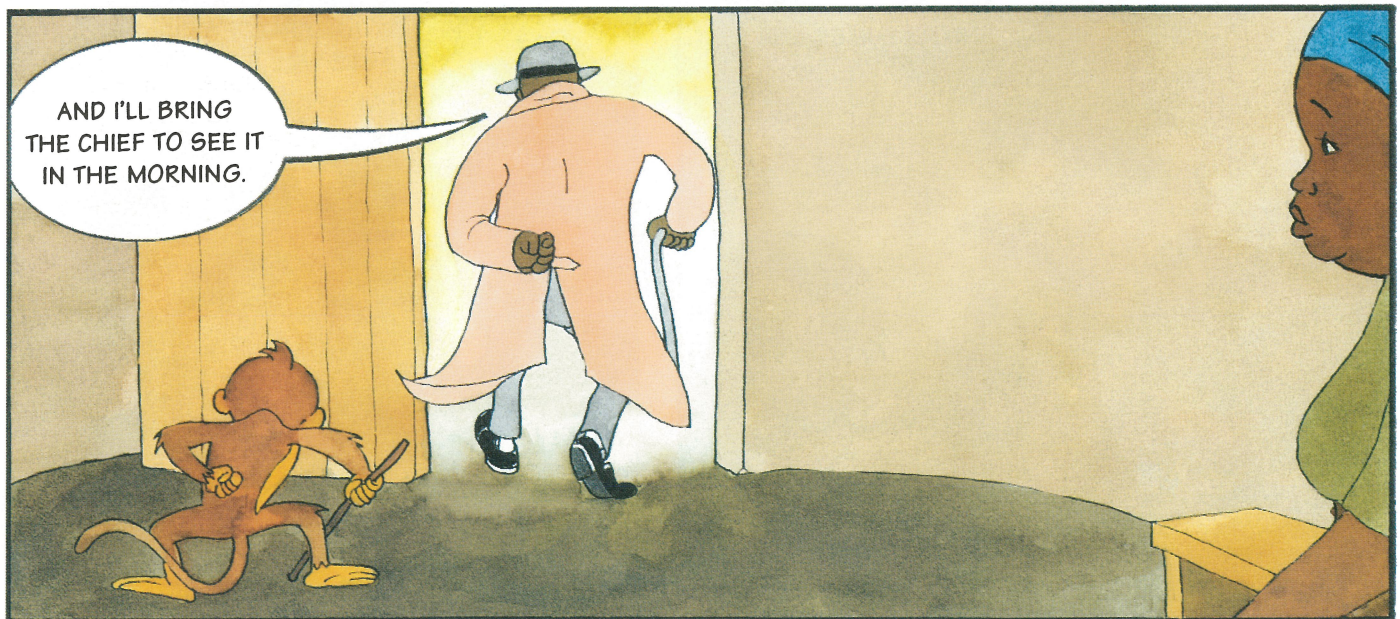
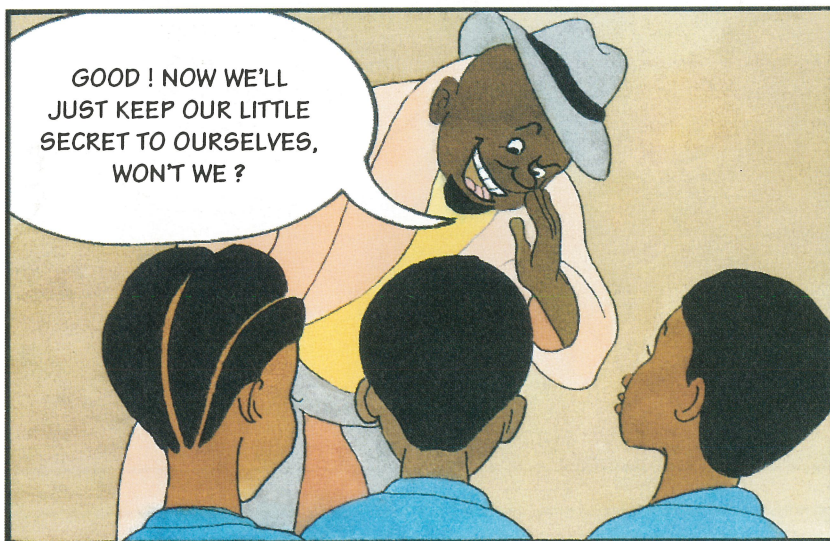
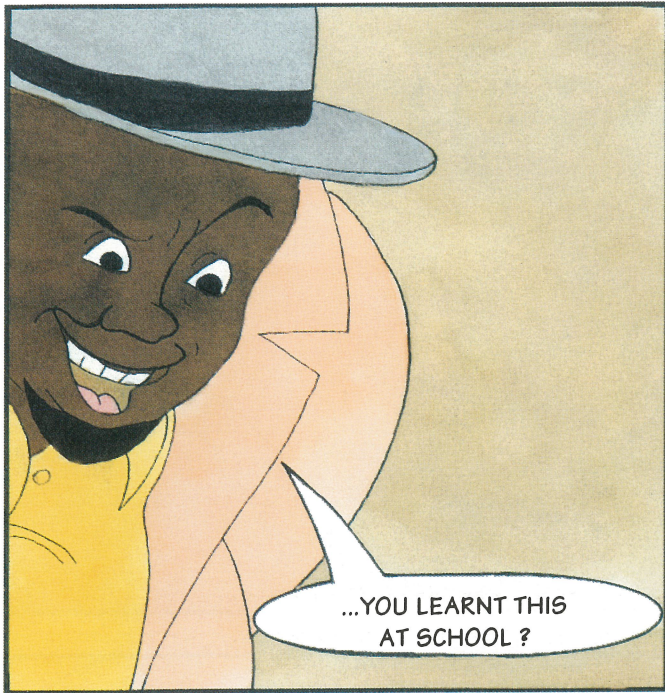
I DON'T CARE.



WHAT?





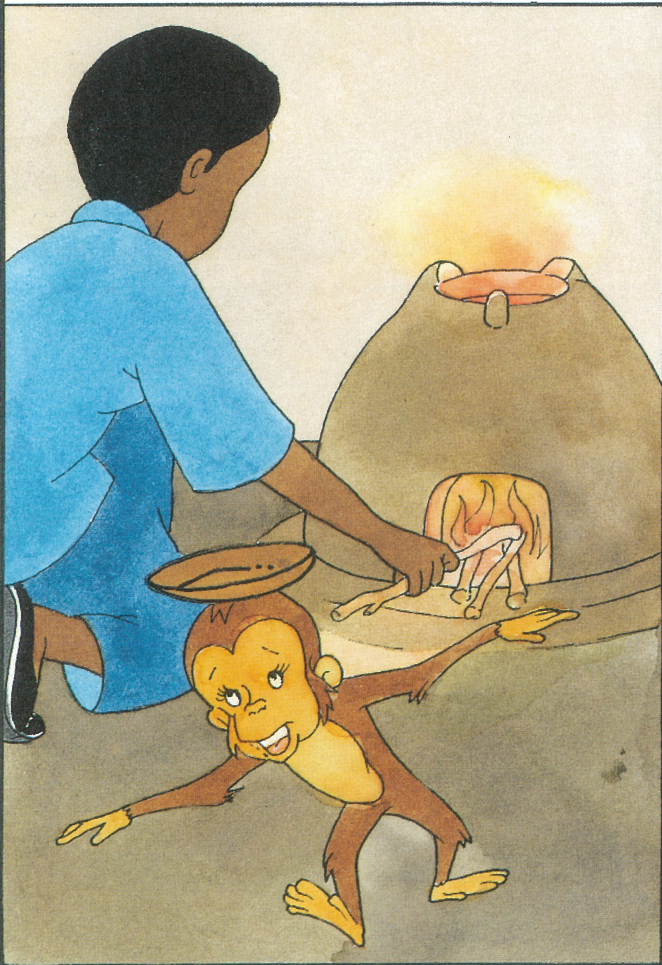




EARLY THE NEXT MORNING SARA AND ZINGO GO TO AUNTIE'S KITCHEN TO CHECK OUT THE NEW STOVE.

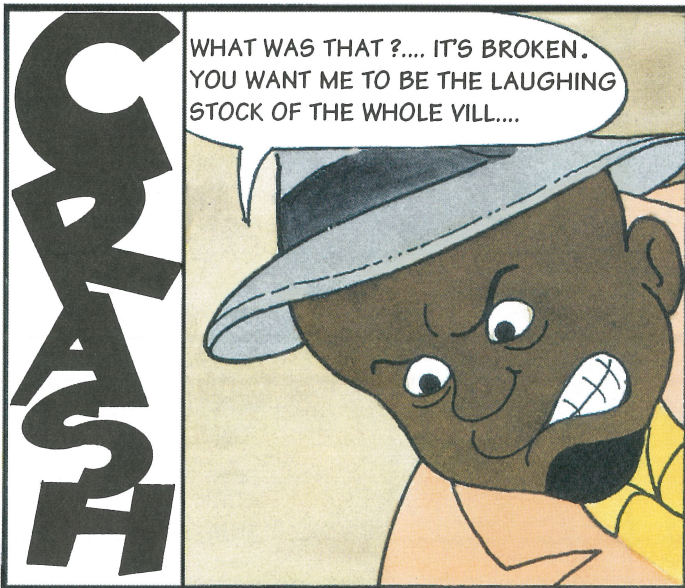


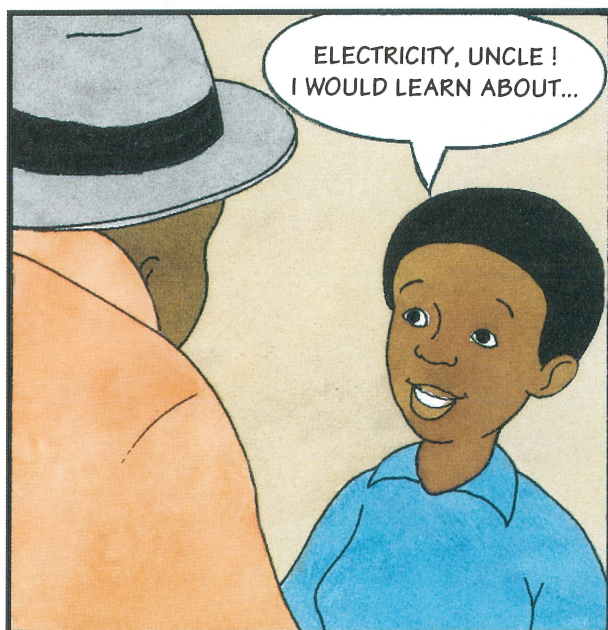
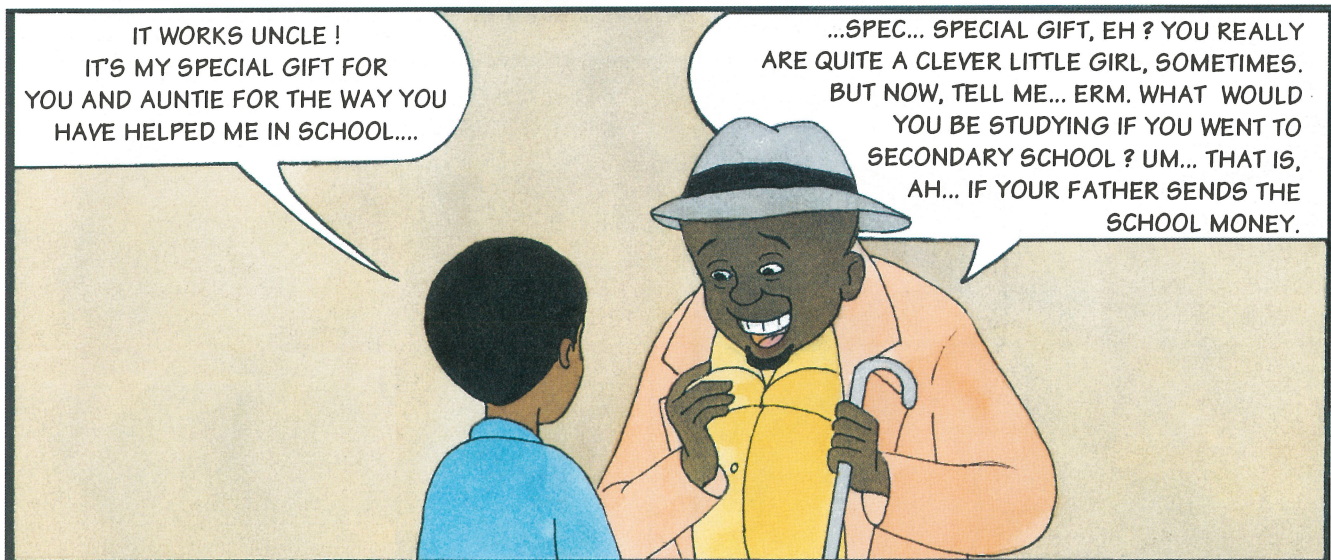
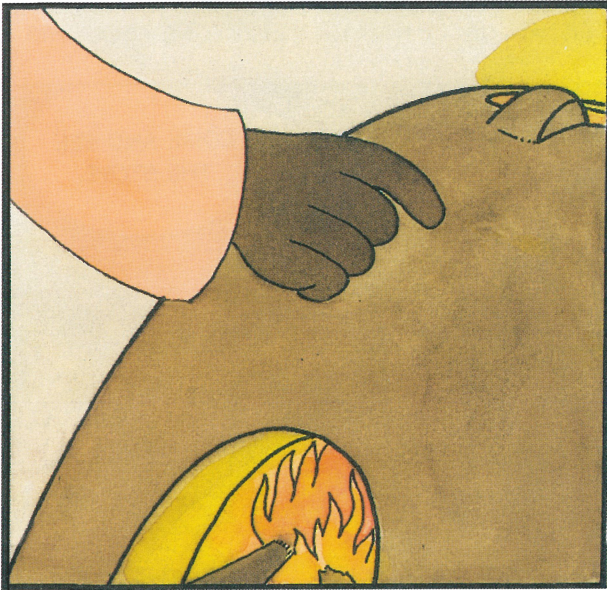
SARA TAKES SOME FIREWOOD AND LIGHTS UP THE STOVE. IN A SHORT TIME A GOOD FIRE IS BURNING.



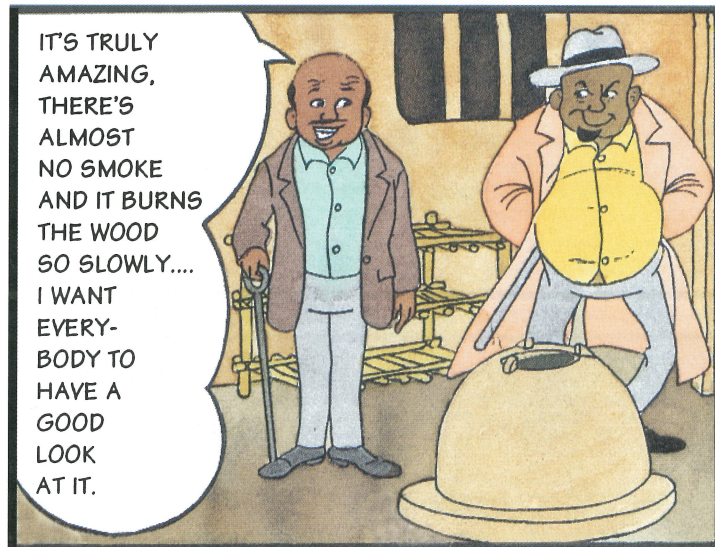
GOOD MORNING UNCLE. GOOD MORNING AUNTIE.

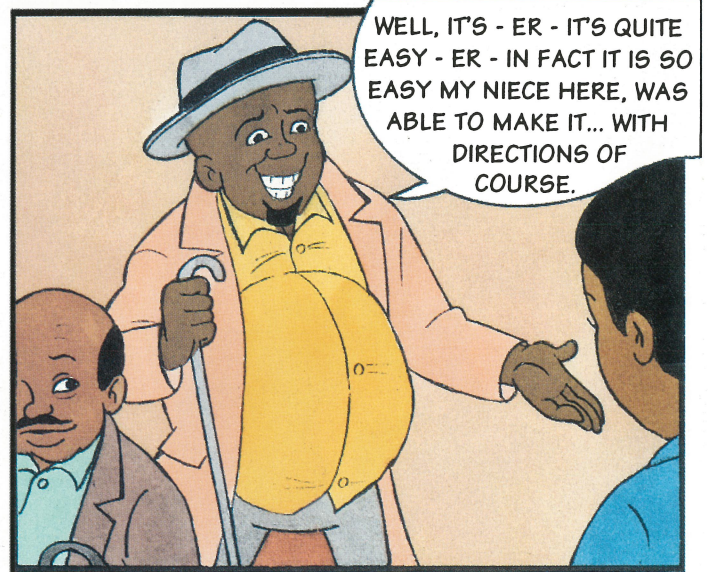
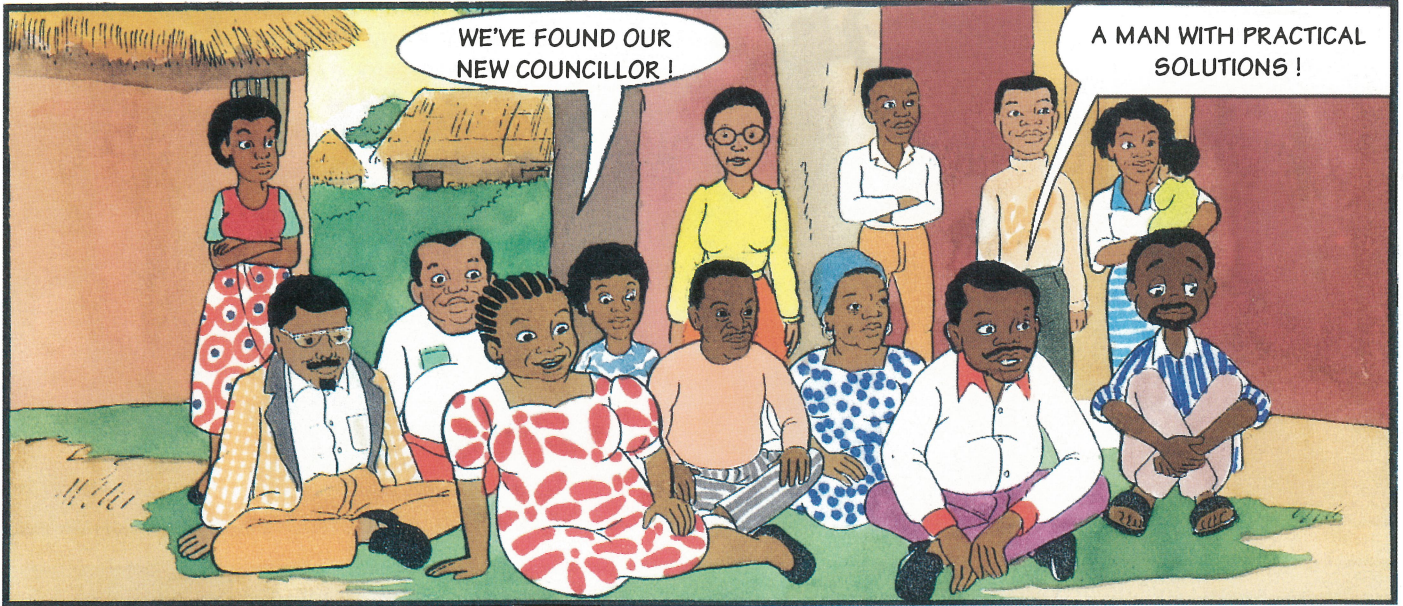


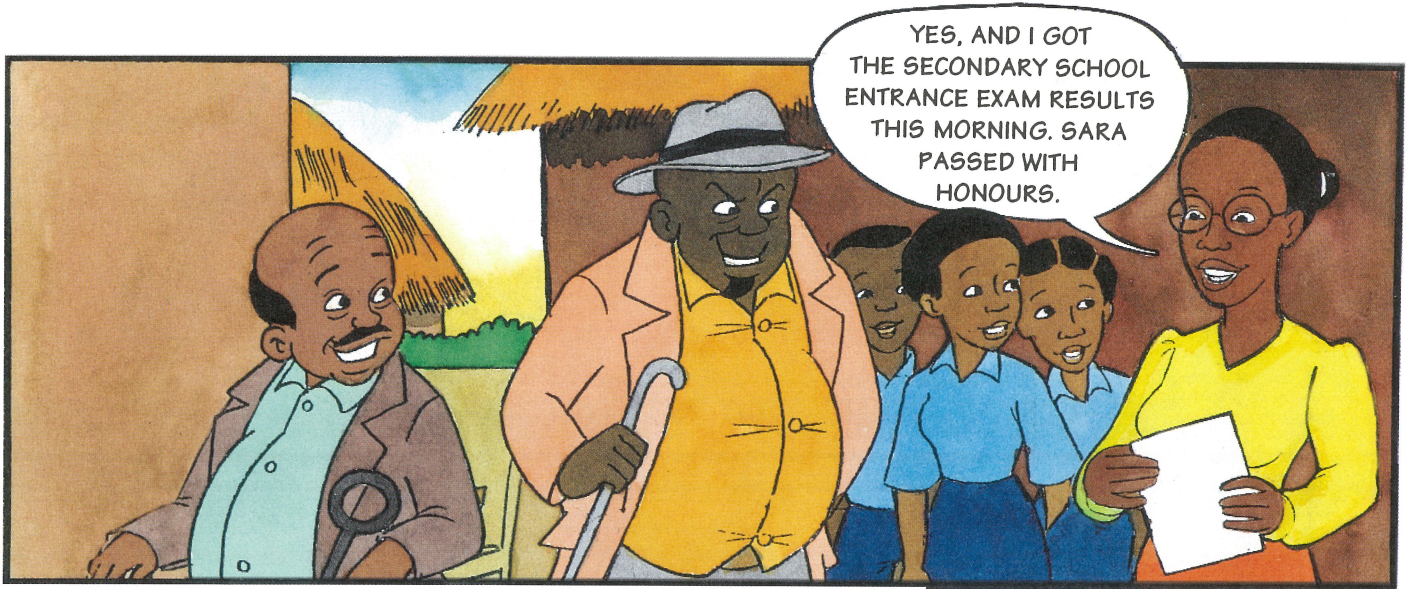




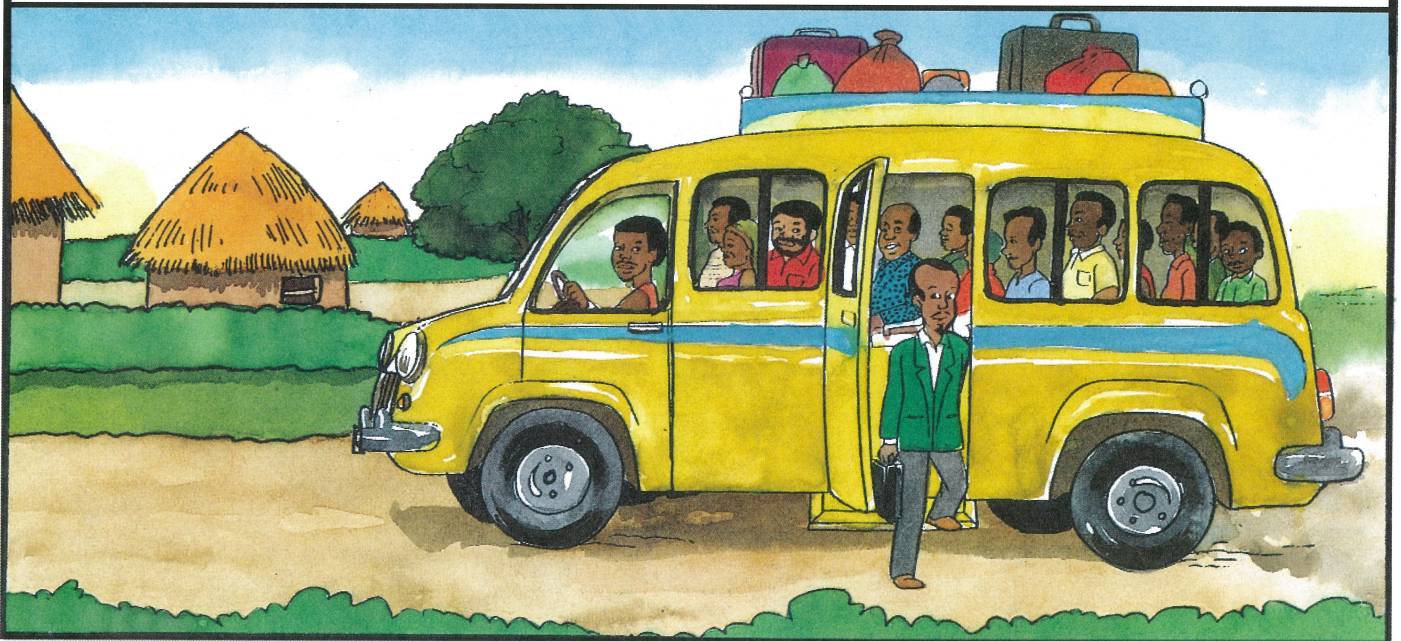
THE CHIEF ARRIVES AT UNCLE'S COMPOUND FOLLOWED BY A LARGE CROWD. UNCLE HAS TOLD EVERYONE ABOUT HIS NEW STOVE.

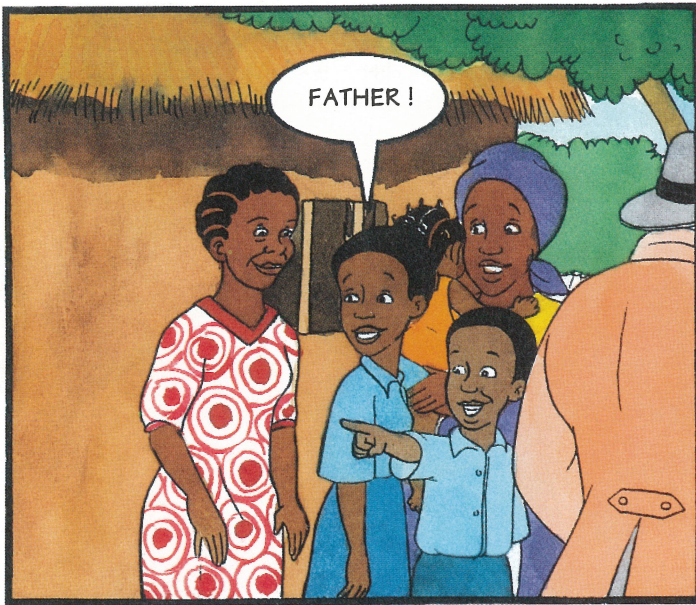






A BUS COMES TO A STOP ON THE ROAD BESIDE SARA'S HOME. A MAN STEPS OUT AND WALKS TOWARDS THE COMPOUND.





FATHER !



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE ? IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT ?

YES ! EVERYONE HAS COME TO SEE OUR NEW STOVE.

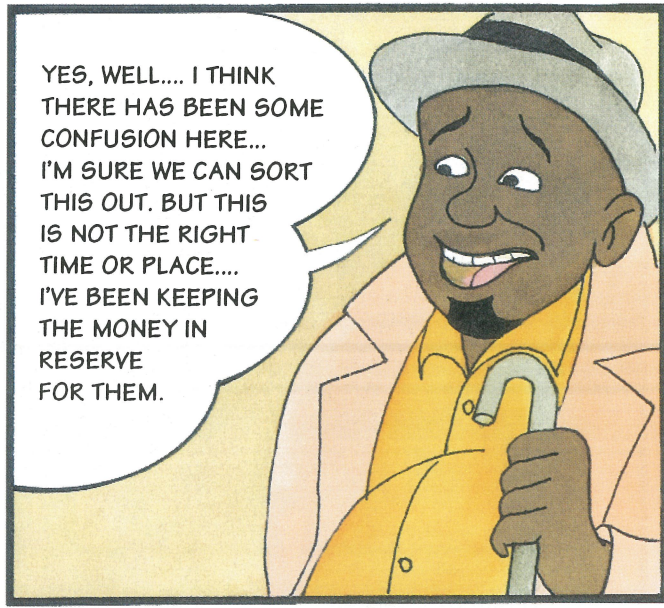
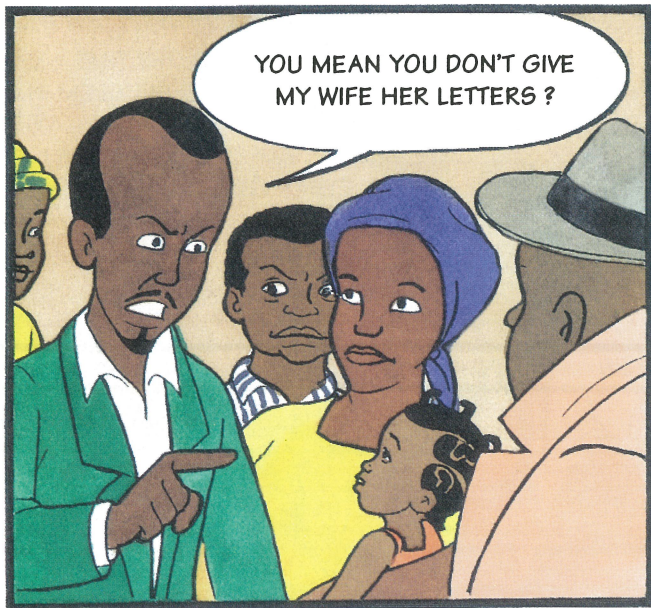
BROTHER... YOU, AH... YOU HAVE COME HOME JUST AT THE RIGHT TIME. I HAVE SOLVED THE FIREWOOD PROBLEM IN OUR VILLAGE. I HAVE THIS AMAZING STOVE WHICH ONLY BURNS HALF THE WOOD OF A NORMAL STOVE. EVERY FAMILY CAN BUILD ONE.

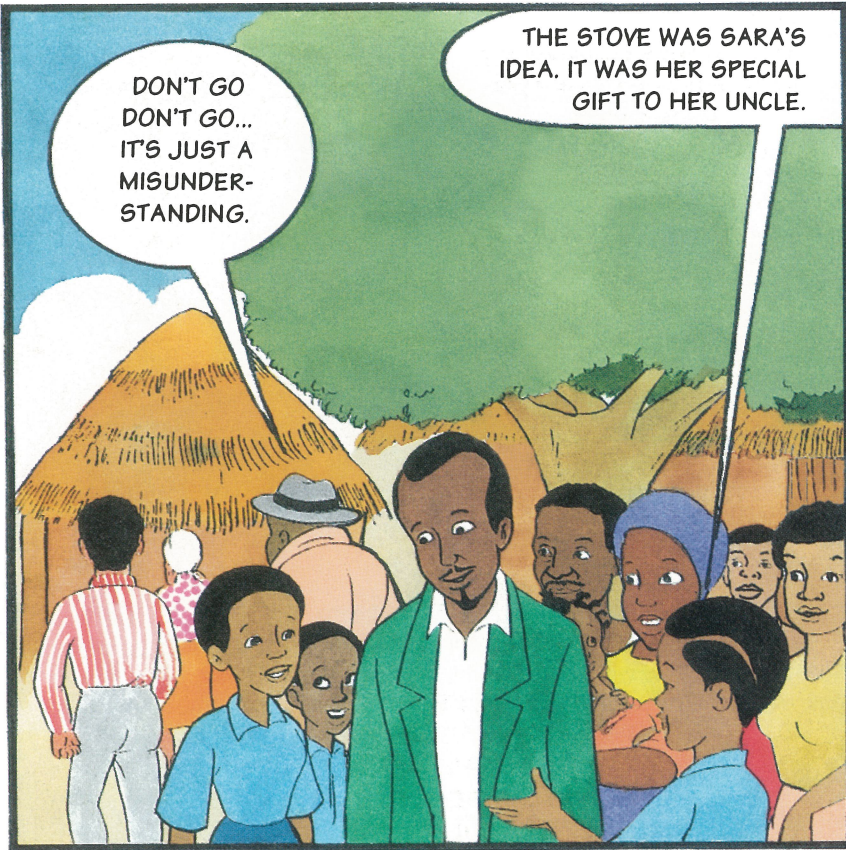


YES. HE MUST BE OUR COUNCILLOR !

WELL, CONGRATULATIONS, BROTHER ! I NEVER KNEW YOU HAD SUCH TALENTS.

AND UNCLE HAS NOW OFFERED TO PAY FOR MY SECONDARY SCHOOL.... ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL FATHER ? I WAS SO WORRIED WHEN HE TOLD ME I WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE SCHOOL.





THE STOVE WAS SARA'S IDEA. IT WAS HER SPECIAL GIFT TO HER UNCLE.

DON'T GO DON'T GO... IT'S JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING.



OF COURSE MY DAUGHTER MUST STAY IN SCHOOL.



WHAT A LUCKY MAN I AM TO HAVE A DAUGHTER LIKE YOU. - YOU'RE MY SPECIAL GIFT.

Sara

Communication Initiative

USERS' GUIDE TO "THE SPECIAL GIFT"

INTRODUCTION

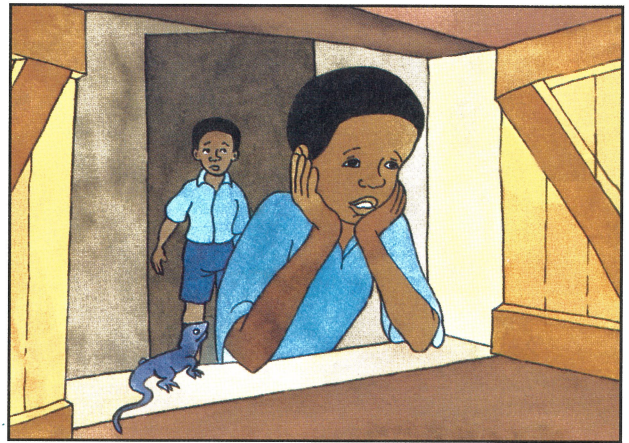
Staying in school has become a major concern for the survival, protection and development of girls in Africa. Recent research confirms serious disparities in the access and retention of girls in the education systems of most African countries.

"The Special Gift", produced by UNICEF-ESARO's Communication Section, is designed to support the many interventions already in place to reduce the "push out" rates of girls from school. It is recommended for use by organizations and individuals working for children's survival, protection and development.

ABOUT THE STORY

"The Special Gift" is an animated film and comic book about Sara, an adolescent African girl who lives with her mother, younger brother, sister and grandmother in her uncle's homestead. Her father has gone to the city to look for work. Sara loves school and has her eyes set on higher education. But this ambition is threatened when there is a financial crisis and her uncle, who doesn't believe in education for girls, decides she should leave school to allow her younger brother, Tsumi, to continue.

Appalled at the prospect of losing her dream, Sara thinks of a way to change her uncle's mind. She discovers a fuel-saving stove from a book and builds one with the help of her friends, Amina and Juma, and Zingo, her pet monkey. Her uncle is delighted with the innovation, seeing in it a chance to boost his popularity and further his political ambitions in the community, which is facing a serious firewood crisis.



Sara intends to let him take the credit for this as her way of negotiating her continuation in school. The community is excited with this invention and asks the uncle to explain how he made "his" stove. Sara comes to his aid and in the process he publicly declares he will ensure Sara stays on in school "to learn more useful things". However, the uncle's false claims are revealed in an ironic twist when Sara's father returns.

OBJECTIVES

While the story provides great entertainment and may be used purely as such, research has shown that it can be used effectively to:

- Create awareness on the situation of girls in Africa.
- Highlight the importance of education for girls.
- Encourage girls to take up science and technical subjects.
- Motivate students to transfer what they have learnt into practical use.
- Enhance the participation of young people, especially girls, in community development.
- Encourage positive boy-girl relationships.

The story is available in:

- VHS video (all signal systems)
- U-matic or Betacam (broadcast quality)
- 16mm or 35mm film versions on special order
- Comic book format

BEFORE YOU START

Facilitators using this story in video or film format may do well to consider the following:

- Why do you want to show the video?
- Who is your audience? (gender, age, profession, etc.)
- Where do you want to show the video? (office, school, seminar, community, etc.)
- What facilities are available for showing the video? (power supply, seating space, chairs, etc.)

Note:

Make sure you have the right video cassette for your play back system. Facilitators using generator power should ensure that the generator is placed at a reasonable distance from the group to minimize noise level. Ensure there is enough cable wire for this.

When you are satisfied everything is in place, explain to your group that the story is about the need for girls to stay in school and their household workload. Inform them that there will be a discussion on the film afterwards. This will help them to stay focussed on the issues of the story.

**AFTER SHOWING THE VIDEO/FILM OR READING THE STORY**

You may start the discussion by asking general questions.

Note:

These questions should be used only as guidelines for facilitating the group discussion. They are not meant and should not be used as a rigid questionnaire.

Allow the discussion to be as natural as possible, ensuring maximum participation from everybody in the group.

- Did you like the story?
- Who is the main character of the story?
- Which characters did you like best in the story?
- Which ones didn't you like? Why?
- Do such things happen in your community?

You may now want to ask some specific questions on comprehension of the story:

- Where were Sara and Amina coming from in the morning?
- What was the chief discussing with Sara's uncle that morning?
- Who put a banana peel on uncle's path and why?
- Why was Sara told she would not be going to secondary school?
- How did Sara react to the news about not going to school?
- Where did Sara get the idea of the smokeless stove and why did she want to make it?
- Why did her uncle want to inform the chief about the stove?
- Who helped Sara make the stove?
- What did the villagers think about the stove?
- Did the uncle become a councillor?
- What happened to his ambitions and why?

QUESTION GUIDES FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS:**GIRLS:**

- Do you like Sara? Why? Why not?
- Do you think girls do as well in school as boys? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think more girls than boys leave school before completing?
- What do you learn from the story?
- What would you like to be when you are an adult?
- Do you want to be like Sara?
- How do you think you can be like Sara?

BOYS:

- Have you seen or heard of girls like Sara in your community/school?
- Do you think girls do as well in school as boys? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think many girls leave school before completing?
- Would you like your sister to leave school so you can continue when there is a shortage of money?
- What do you learn from the story?
- Should girls become scientists and technicians?
- Should you help your sisters gather firewood and do other chores around the house? Why? Why not?

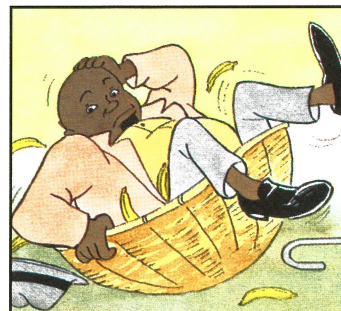
PARENTS:

- Have you seen or heard of girls being forced out of school like Sara?
- Do such things happen in your own community?
- Why do you think many girls leave school before completing?
- As parents, who would you keep in school if you had to choose between a boy and a girl? Why?
- What can we do to encourage girls to stay in school in our own families, and as parents working together in the community?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

The following are suggestions for activities which will improve understanding of the Sara story and how this relates to the situation of girls' education in their own community. The activities will help to motivate the group to find ways to support more girls to complete their education. These are just examples. Please experiment with your own ideas.

The activities lead through a process from **Understanding to Action to Reflection**. They seek to develop different **Life Skills**, such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, assertiveness and communication.



Encourage the group members to participate fully in planning and carrying out these activities.

A. Group Discussions

Let the group discuss the story among themselves. One member can lead the discussion. This can be done in groups of two, three or more.

B. Drawings

The group members could draw pictures of their favourite parts of the story. Discuss why they enjoyed that part.

C. Survey

Ask the group to conduct a small survey in their community to find out how many children have left school in the last year. How many girls? How many boys? What classes were they in? What ages were they? Why did they leave school? What are they doing now? Discuss what they found out in the survey and make a list of the reasons why girls drop out of school.

D. Role Play

Create a role play on some of the reasons why girls drop out of school. (eg. a role play on son preference, forced marriage, etc.) Try reversing the gender roles in the play. (That is, girls could play male roles and boys could play female roles.)

Ask questions:

- How did you feel when you acted as a boy/girl?
- How do you feel about the situation in which you found yourself in the role play?
- Ask other members to react to the role play.

E. Brainstorming

Brainstorm on a list of actions which could be taken in the community to prevent children, especially girls, from dropping out of school.

F. Planning Action

Ask and discuss how they, as a group, are going to help girls to stay in school.

If appropriate, let each person make a personal statement on what he or she is going to do. Work together to prepare a plan of action to realise these commitments.



G. Community Involvement

The group could share the ideas of Sara's story with their community through some of the following activities. The group can perform these in public, with friends, in schools, churches and other religious or community venues:

- A drama or skit with alternative endings and discussions.
- Story telling with alternative endings and discussions.
- Debates on issues in the stories.
- Puppet shows with Sara characters.
- Create songs, dances and games on the themes of the story.
- An open day at school to demonstrate the value of educating girls.

You may also want to start a Committee or Club for girls themselves or of 'friends of the girls'. These groups could monitor education and other issues concerning girls in the community.

H. Discussing Results

After a few weeks the group can meet to discuss:

- What they have done at home and in the community. How did people react?
- What activities were successful? What problems arose?
- What can they do to reinforce their efforts to help girls stay in school?



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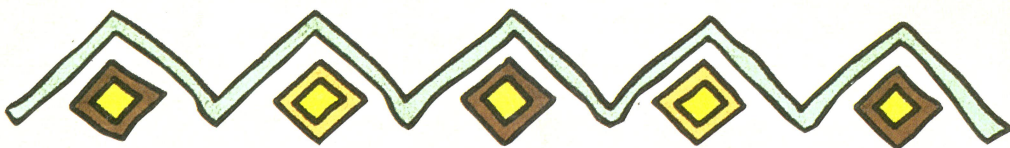
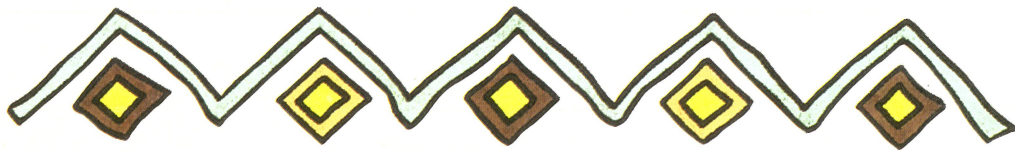
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