

Who Has the Better Plan?

One evening, as the sun was making its journey toward the ground, Rabbit decided to visit the home of Cat. Now Rabbit did not do this because he was a friendly creature. Rabbit liked to brag about his own ideas and accomplishments. He was an animal who thought very highly of himself. If Lion was King of the Forest, then Rabbit was surely the King of Boast!

“I have had a very lazy day. All I have done is to lay in the shade of the baobab tree and wait for the monkeys to drop sweet flowers down for me to snack upon. Now it is time for me to show just how clever I am. Poor Cat. I know she is afraid of the dogs. She probably does not know what to do if the dogs chase after her. I have made many plans to escape from them if they ever foolishly decide to run after me. Cat will be impressed with the many plans I have devised.” Smiling to himself, Rabbit hopped the rest of the way to Cat’s house imagining how she would tell all the animals of his wisdom.

It wasn’t long after arriving at her home, that Rabbit looked slyly at her. He asked, “My dear friend, Cat, what would you do right now if the dogs came? Do you have plans to escape from them?”

Cat did not even hesitate. She replied, “Yes, I have a plan Rabbit. Why do you ask? Do you need my help? I will be happy to help you think of a plan to get away from the dogs.”

When he heard this, Rabbit laughed and laughed. “Of course I do not need help, Cat. I have many plans to get away from the dogs.

I am afraid for you, though, my friend. Do you have only one plan of escape?”

Cat looked sheepishly at her friend. “Yes Rabbit, but I think my one plan is a very good plan. I will race to the nearest tree and climb right up it. I will sit very still as Snake does when he is waiting for his prey. The leafy branches will hide me from the snarling dogs. They may even think I have flown away like the birds in the sky. When they have gone to chase after something else, I will come down.”

“Silly Cat,” laughed Rabbit, “one plan is not good. You must think of many plans. The dogs growl loud like the lion, and they have teeth like the crocodile. Now, I, being the wise and clever creature I am, have many plans to escape from the ferocious dogs.”

“What is it that you will do, my friend?” asked Cat.

“My first plan is to race like the winds that blow across the land during the cold season,” bragged Rabbit.

Cat thought, “But the dogs are swift runners, too.” She said nothing, though, as she didn’t want to upset Rabbit.

“My next plan is to run even faster like the cheetah. I will raise my little tail in the air and the dogs will see how speedy I am.”

Cat twitched her whiskers and wondered if Rabbit knew that dogs in pursuit of prey could also be speedy like the cheetah.

“The next plan is to run faster still. I will race with my ears flapped over my shoulders and my tail will be down. My speed will be great, and no one will be able to get me.”

By now Rabbit was feeling quite proud of himself, indeed. He imagined Cat visiting each of the animals’ homes and saying, “That Rabbit is very clever. He has made many plans to escape from the

dogs. We must surely listen to him when he speaks, as he is very wise. With these thoughts in his head, Rabbit puffed out his chest and continued, “My final plan is to run by the large pile of stones. Then I will pretend to be asleep. The dogs will run right by me. When they have passed, I will get up and run in the opposite direction.”

Just as Cat was about to speak, the two friends heard growling and snarling. “Dogs!” screamed Cat. She raced to the nearest tree. Her legs seemed to fly up the branches, and she perched on an upper limb. High in the air like a giraffe, Cat watched the scene beneath her.

Rabbit’s hind legs pounded the earth as he began his race. Cat breathed in deeply. Her heart pounded in rhythm with the rabbit’s legs. Snarls and growls filled the quiet of the evening. Cat tried to shout to her friend, but her cries were like whispers in the raucous air. She watched as the dogs ran faster and faster. Finally, they grabbed her friend.

Despite his many plans, this wise Rabbit was no more.

Activities to Extend Your Thinking...

Expressive Language...

Complete one of the following activities:

- There are many metaphors in this folktale. Make a list of the metaphors. Next to each one, tell how this expressive language helps you to better understand nature in Africa.

- Find words in this tale that might be difficult for readers to understand. Make a glossary of these words.

Creature Characteristics...

- In this folktale the lion is called the King of the Forest. The rabbit is called the King of Boast. Name ten other animals and give them “King of _____” titles.
- Read about African wildlife. What kind of dogs might be described in this story? Imagine you are a biologist who is giving a lecture about this type of dog. Give the lecture to your class or tape it.

Life Lessons...

Write a journal entry explaining the lesson rabbit teaches you. Did you learn something about how to interact with others?