



Classroom Guide for
BABU'S SONG
by **Stephanie Stuve- Bodeen**
Illustrated by **Aaron Boyd**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 2
Interest Level: Grades 1-3
Guided Reading Level: L
Accelerated Reader[®] Level/Points: 3.4/.5
Lexile[™] Measure: AD600

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Sports (soccer); Giving, Sharing and Making Sacrifices; Grandparents; Disability; Modern-day Africa

Synopsis

Babu's Song takes place in contemporary Tanzania. It is Bernardi's dream to go to school and play soccer with the other boys, but his grandfather, Babu, cannot afford to send him. Instead, Bernardi spends his days at the market selling Babu's handmade toys to make the money they need to get by. One night, Babu gives Bernardi a special music box that plays a song Babu used to sing before he lost his voice. Bernardi can once again fall asleep listening to Babu's song. The next day Bernardi plays the music box while selling toys at the market, and a tourist offers him a large sum of money for the unique toy. Bernardi finally gives in and sells the music box to the woman—now he will have enough money to buy a soccer ball. But when Bernardi arrives home, he shares with Babu that he couldn't bring himself to buy the ball. Bernardi gives the money to Babu. Babu, in turn, uses the money to give Bernardi a very special present: a school uniform so he can attend school. Babu also gives Bernardi a handmade soccer ball and an empty lard tin, which he will use to make another music box.

Background

The United Republic of Tanzania is located in eastern Africa on the Indian Ocean. It became a country when Tanganyika and Zanzibar united in 1964, after both had gained independence from Britain. Tanzania is home to Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa, as well as tropical areas and temperate highlands.

The African population consists of more than one hundred twenty ethnic groups. Major religions are Christianity and Islam. Swahili and English are both official languages; Arabic and many local languages are also spoken. About eighty percent of Tanzanians farm or fish. The Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park are rich in wildlife, although poaching endangers some species. Tourism to these areas is important to the economy.

Author Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen was inspired to write this story, and several others, by the people she met and places she visited as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania in the 1980s.

Teaching Tip

Babu's Song complements many character education programs because it highlights values such as honesty, compassion, giving, and perseverance. It also emphasizes the value of education and shows a person with a disability as a productive member of society.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation with questions such as the following:

1. What are some sports you like to play? What are some other sports you would like to try?
2. Why is education important? What are some advantages it gives you?
3. Do you think every child in the world has the opportunity to go to school? Why or why not? What might hold parents back from sending their children to school?
4. Have you heard of the African country of Tanzania? Find it on a map and tell me what you notice about its location and any special features you see on the map.
5. What does it mean to have compassion? What are some things you have done that showed compassion? Why did you do them?
6. What are some ways in which people who cannot speak communicate with others?

Exploring the Book

Display the book and read the title aloud. Ask students what they think the title means. What do they think the story is about?

Have students examine the illustration on the book's front cover. Ask students what they think the boy and the man are holding. How might this item relate to the title?

Let students look at the illustration on the back cover. What does this image tell students about the story?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students read to find out who Babu is and how his song is important to the story.

VOCABULARY

Choose three or four illustrations in the book that feature Bernardi. Have students work individually to write down words that describe what Bernardi might be feeling in each picture. Then let students share their words and tell which parts of each picture made them think Bernardi felt the way they described.

Have students work in pairs to create sentences for each of the following words and phrases that appear in the story. Have students work with a dictionary to make sure they have used each word correctly. Some of the words have more than one meaning. Accept all sentences that illustrate a meaning of a word.

figure	object	market	vendor
tinkling	tinny	tourist	tin of lard/lard tin
collection	lamplight	kerosene	bolt of cloth
gunnysack	soccer	cranked	

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop understanding for the content. Encourage students to refer back to the text and illustrations in the book to support their responses.

1. Why doesn't Bernardi go to school like the other children? How does Bernardi feel about not being able to go to school?
2. What challenge does Bernardi's grandfather face? How does this affect Bernardi?
3. How would you describe Babu? What is he like? What are some of his strengths?
4. What does Bernardi do first when he gets to the market? Why?
5. What does Bernardi want from the downtown shop? Why? How does seeing this toy make him feel? Why?
6. What gift does Babu give to Bernardi? Why is the gift special to Bernardi?

7. At first Bernardi tells the tourist that the music box is not for sale. Why does he do that?
8. Why does Bernardi finally decide to sell the music box? How does he feel after he sells it?
9. How does Babu react when he finds out that Bernardi has sold the music box? Why do you think he reacts that way?
10. What does Babu decide to do with the money? Why does he use the money as he does?
11. Besides the school uniform, Babu also gives Bernardi two other presents. What are they? What makes them special to Bernardi?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines in the story that suggest how each character is feeling.
- The **Illustrator** might create an illustration showing what Bernardi did after he left the market with the money from the sale of the music box.
- The **Connector** might find information about what life is like for children in Tanzania.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might find more information about famous soccer (football) players from Africa and other countries.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started with Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, essays, or oral discussion.

1. What did you like about the story? Why?
2. How is Bernardi's life like your life? How is it different?

3. Does Babu remind you of an adult you know? In what ways is your relationship with that adult similar to the one between Babu and Bernardi?
4. What are the happiest parts of this story? What are the saddest? Why do you think so?
5. How do students in your school show their determination to learn in and out of school? Do some of them have to make sacrifices to make sure they get a good education? If so, what kinds of sacrifices do they make?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for students to share and discuss their work.

1. Have students research a country in the world where not every child gets to go to school. Have students write letters to the head of education in that country, explaining why all children should have the opportunity to receive an education.
2. Let students pretend they are taking a trip to Tanzania to meet Bernardi and Babu. Have students prepare a list of questions they would like to ask about the country, their lives, and so on.
3. Have students write a review of *Babu's Song* explaining why they would or would not recommend the book to other students.

ELL Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. After the first reading, go back through the story page-by-page and have students orally summarize what happens, using the illustrations to provide clues to the action.
2. Teach ELL students simple phrases such as "I don't know that word." "I have a question." "Speak more slowly." "Please repeat that sentence." Encourage ELL students to use these phrases to communicate their needs while reading.
3. Have each ELL student write three questions about the story. Then have students pair up with strong English speakers/readers and discuss the answers to the questions.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas.

Social Studies

1. *Time for Kids* has an [online unit about Tanzania](#) that students may enjoy exploring to find out more about the country. The site includes a "Tanzania Challenge," a quiz for students to take to see how much they learned.
2. Have students research school schedules and subjects in Tanzania. Compare and contrast what students learn with their own school experience. Students who find this interesting may wish to include some other countries from around the world as well.
3. Have students research markets in various African countries. Encourage them to include countries from different regions of the continent. Look for information about the kinds of items sold in the markets of each country, the materials commonly used, and where the markets are usually located. Students may wish to make a poster with images or photos of the kinds of items found in each country's markets.

Social Studies/Sports

Students may enjoy learning more about Mount Kilimanjaro and what is involved in climbing to the top. Students should then make a list or chart of the physical preparation requires, equipment needed, costs, best time of year to attempt a climb, and so on.

Language Arts

Have students give a short talk about what they admire about Bernardi's dedication to his family and his desire to go to school.

Science

In the story, Babu reuses materials that people discard or might consider to be useless to create toys to sell at the market. Have students research conservation efforts and the impact reducing, reusing, and recycling materials can have on the environment.

Economics/Math

Have students investigate the cost of a soccer ball and the cost of attending school in a variety of countries around the world. The results can be recorded on a line or bar graph.

Music

Interested students may wish to research music boxes, their history, how they are made, and the mechanisms used to create the music.

Art

Have students collect an assortment of items that normally would be discarded (plastic bags, bottles, twine, etc) and then use these materials to make toys. Consider having a "market" to sell the toys. The money raised could be donated to a charity or cause of the students' choosing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen has won numerous awards for her books, including the Elizabeti series (*Elizabeti's Doll*, *Mama Elizabeti*, and *Elizabeti's School*). A native of Wisconsin, Stuve-Bodeen was a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania, where she met the young girl who inspired the Elizabeti stories, and where she saw many children playing soccer. She and her family currently live in Oregon. To find out more about Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, visit her [website](#).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Aaron Boyd made his picture book debut with *Babu's Song*. Since then he has illustrated several other picture books, as well as continuing to create images for stories published in the educational market and children's magazines. Boyd lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he was born.

Book Information

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Babu's Song* at

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/15/pb/babu_s_song

Order Information

On the Web:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/15/pb/babu_s_song (secure on-line ordering)

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