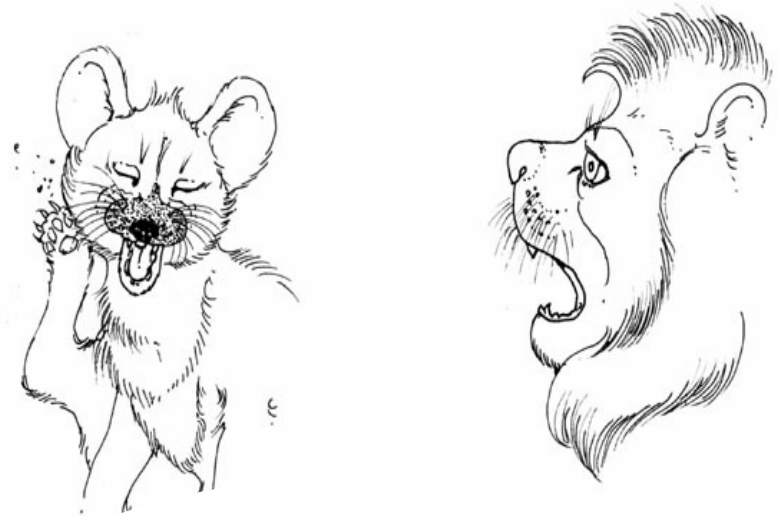




THE SONG COMPETITION



*and why you need
to treat lice ; not
pretend you do not
have them*

THE SONG COMPETITION

The animals are holding a Song Competition. They have one every year. Sometimes they sing alone, sometimes in groups, sometimes whole families sing together. This year there are many new songs. Three Monkeys sing 'Give us another Banana'. Everyone likes this song. A group of Frogs perform 'I love you, CROAK, CROAK, CROAK'. This one goes on for a long time. The Crocodile has a song. He calls it 'Can I have you for a meal at my place?' This one will not win a prize. Nobody likes the Crocodile.

Everyone thinks that a group called 'The Happy Hyenas' will win. There are four of them, Bouki and his three children. Their song is called 'Laughing is the best medicine.' Everyone is humming it already...everyone except Sonko the Hare. Sonko cannot sing, and he doesn't like hyenas. How can he stop Bouki winning the prize? Then one day he has his chance

A NOTE TO TEACHERS

About the Story

This story uses a characters from traditional African stories, later transferred to the Americas in the Uncle Remus tales and modern television culture such the Eurovision Song Contest as well as similar contests promoted by networks over the world. It is suitable for children 6-9 year old in almost any culture.

Activities possible

If telling the story, make it relevant to the children's experience. Use examples from popular songs and song competitions they know.

There is plenty of scope during the second half of this story for fun activities such as drama, role playing and drawing . But there are also important opportunities for discussion. Discuss with children "What other diseases and conditions need to be spotted quickly and reported?" e.g. worms, scabies . "Are there more serious diseases?" e.g. measles, whooping cough, T.B.? . Children can play games to show how epidemics are spread.

Try asking children to retell the story from the point of view of one of the little hyenas.

Source Child-to-Child Reader *The Market Dentist and Other Stories* , Harlow: Longman **1995** (abridged by Hugh Hawes from his own original story)

Bouki is worried. His oldest child is always scratching his head. Sometimes his head bleeds where he scratches it. When he combs his hair little white things fall out. Bouki decides to ask Ma Porcupine. Ma Porcupine has a hundred grandchildren. She always knows how to cure them when they are sick. Bouki tells her about his child. "Your child has lice," says Ma Porcupine. "Those little white things are called 'nits'. They are the eggs of the lice. You must get rid of them quickly. If you do not, all the children in the animal school will catch them."

"But my children are not dirty," says Bouki.

"They can catch lice even if they are clean," replies Ma Porcupine. "But you **MUST** get rid of the lice and the eggs. They will spread. Don't be proud. Go to the health worker. The health worker will give you medicine to put in water. Then you must wash the children's hair with this water and soap. How often do your children wash their hair?"

"Once a year," says Bouki proudly, "...on their birthdays"

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“Try once a week,” says Ma Porcupine. “And when you get your medicine, also wash all your children’s clothes and bed things. Dry them in the sun. That will get rid of the eggs. The health Worker will tell you.”

Bouki thanks Ma Porcupine, but he thinks, “Nobody must know my child has lice. NOBODY.”

But someone already knows. Sonko lives next to Ma Porcupine. As soon as Bouki goes out Sonko hops in. “What did Bouki want?” asks Sonko. “Advice,” says Ma Porcupine.

“What advice?” says Sonko.

“Advice about lice,” replies Ma Porcupine. “I told him to go to the health centre. Lice, scabies, ringworm...lots of children have them. They can easily be cured. But if you leave them they spread very quickly. Also if you scratch, dirt can get into the wound. Then you can get very ill.”

“Has Bouki gone to the health centre yet?” asked Sonko. “Not yet.”

table and walks towards his house. The little Hyenas follow him...still scratching. “Have a lice day,” shouts Sonko after him.

By the time the little Hyenas reach home, they are very angry. “Why did you not take us to the health worker?” they ask Bouki. “We asked you. We all asked you. Why are you so proud? Our song is the best, but now the Monkeys. the Song Competition.”

Bouki doesn’t answer. “I know what we will do,’ says the eldest little Hyena. ‘We will go there ourselves. We will get rid of the lice, and next time our song will win.’”

So off they go, the three little Hyenas. One after another and in the end Bouki just has to follow them

“Because they are too proud,” he says in a loud voice.

“What?” says the Lion. “Pride doesn’t make you scratch.”

“It does,” says Sonko. “These children have lice. Their father needed to take them to the health centre. But their father is too proud. Now my children will catch lice, and all the other animal children will catch it. Maybe even your children will catch it. It is all because Bouki is too proud.”

“What do you say, Bouki?” asks the Lion.

“I say Sonko is a liar,” shouts Bouki. He comes over to the table where the Lion is sitting. “I say we have no lice. I say NO! NO! NO!” At each ‘No!’ he shakes his head. At the third ‘NO!’ two big fat lice fall down onto the table in front of the Lion.

The Lion looks at Bouki. Bouki looks at the lice. Then very slowly he walks away from the

Next day Bouki and the eldest little Hyena set off for the health centre to get the medicine. Sonko is standing just outside their door. “Hello, you two,” he says. “I do like your song. How does it go? Laughing is the best medicine? I suppose you never need medicine.”

“No, never,” says Bouki, and he takes the little Hyena back into the house.

“My head itches,” says the first little Hyena two days later. ‘Please take me to the health worker.’

“My head itches too,” says the second little Hyena. So Bouki takes the two little Hyenas out, but first he looks left and right. Sonko is not there. They walk towards the health centre. They turn a corner. There is Sonko. He is eating a carrot.

“Hello you three,” says Sonko.

“We are taking a walk,” says Bouki loudly. “Walking is good for health.”

“Let me walk with you,” says Sonko. So they walk back to the Hyenas’ house. Sonko keeps on the other side of the road, away from Bouki’s sharp teeth.

“Our heads itch,” say the first and second little Hyenas two days later. “Please take us to the health worker.”

“My head itches too,” says the third little Hyena. So Bouki takes the three little Hyenas to the health centre. He does not go by the road. He goes through the fields. It takes them a long time.

At the gate of the health centre there is Sonko. “Hello, you four,” he says. “Are you going to see the nurse?”

“Nurse Crane is a friend of mine,” says Bouki. “We are just going for a cup of tea.”

“But the nurse is busy now,” says Sonko. “It’s time for the children’s clinic. She is giving them medicine; for worms and scabies **and lice.**”

“Is that so?” says Bouki. “Maybe we will come back later.”

“Let me walk back with you,” says Sonko. But he is still careful to walk on the other side of the road.

Two days later it is time for the Song Competition. All animals put on their best clothes. The Lion comes to judge them and give the prizes. He wears a fine red cloak and a crown. The competition starts.

The crocodile sings Everyone boos. The frogs croak and croak. The lion has to stop them. Everyone likes the monkeys and claps them after their song



Now it is time for the Hyenas. The animals clap loudly. They want to hear the new song. The Hyenas line up on the stage, but something is wrong. The little Hyenas cannot stand still. One is scratching his hair, one under his arms. The third even opens a button on his new shirt and scratches his chest. “Why are they scratching?” asks the Lion in a loud whisper. Sonko hears him. He leans forward.