

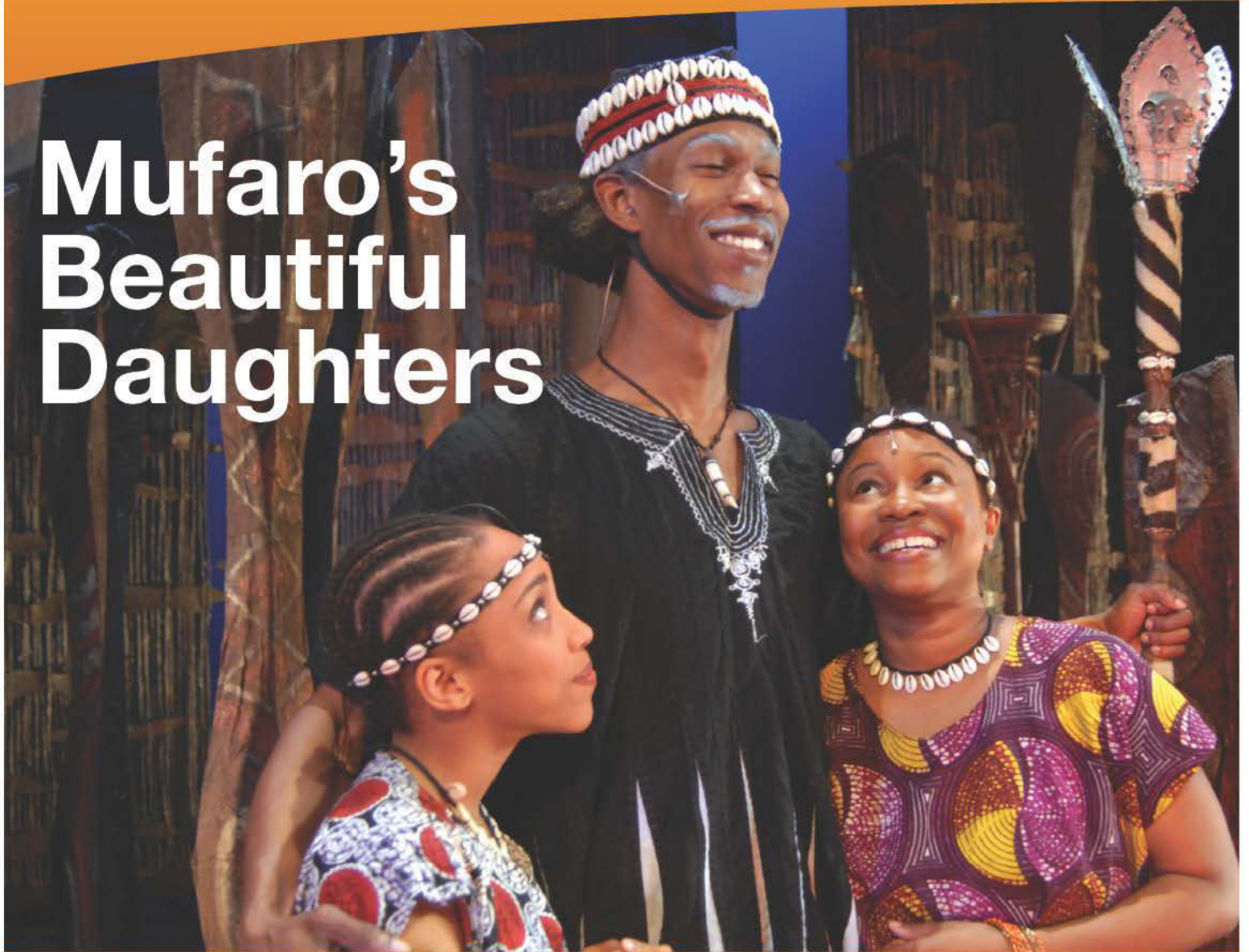


Upper Elementary | Performance Guide



Walton Arts Center

# Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters



*Only the most worthy and beautiful daughters in the kingdom are invited to meet the great African king. Dallas Children's Theater brings a traditional African folktale to life through colorful set, costumes, acting and African music. Live performances of folktales extend the learning of young readers.*

Common Core Learning Standards: CC5 RL: Key Ideas and Details 2 and 3; Craft and Structure 6; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9. CC5W: Research to Build and Present Knowledge 8. CC5 SL: Comprehension and Collaboration 1d. CC5L: Knowledge of Language 3b.

# Ready, Set, Show!

Literature based performances provide opportunities for students to recognize key ideas and recount stories.

## The Author

John Steptoe wrote and illustrated *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, which he based on an African tale recorded in the 19th century. Before writing the book, he researched African history and culture. Mr. Steptoe hoped that his book would lead children, especially African American children, to feel pride in their origins and in who they are. John Steptoe died on August 28, 1989.

## The Story

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is the story of a king who is looking for a wife. The person has to be worthy and beautiful. Mufaro has two daughters, Manyara and Nyasha. Both are beautiful, but Manyara is selfish and bad tempered while Nyasha is kind. The king tests the daughters without their knowledge to determine who is most worthy. In the end, Manyara's selfish ways are revealed and Nyasha is chosen to be queen.

## The Performance

The story was adapted for the stage, and the script developed and written by Karen Abbott. Audiences see the work of the director, designers, choreographer, stage manager, actors and crew from Dallas Children's Theater, who imagined and created the performance. The costume and scenic design references traditional African dress and design motifs. The choreography relates to traditional African dance forms.

## Performance Preparation

Live performance provides a unique opportunity to experience a story as it happens. In the theater, actors are aware of and are affected by audience behaviors. Discuss with students how their role as audience is important. Unlike in television or movies, live actors on stage can hear every sound in the audience and feel rewarded when an audience laughs and applauds. Encourage students to look for:

- > Actors: How do actors bring the characters to life? How do they make the audience believe they are the characters?
- > Setting: How does the set designer show the play is taking place in Zimbabwe, Africa? Notice the difference among the various locations: village, forest, palace, etc.
- > Costumes: How does a costume designer show the various personalities and Zimbabwe culture through the costumes?
- > Lights: How does the lighting designer use light and shadow to help tell the story? What do you notice about how the lighting works to change the stage space from one location to another or set a mood/ tone in a scene?
- > Music: What instruments or kinds of music do you hear?
- > The Shona language: What words do you hear during the play?
- > Environmental Sounds: What animal and nature sounds do you hear? How are they created for the play?

# Learning Activities

## Research

To better understand Mufaro's world, ask students to research Zimbabwe, a country of great opportunities and challenges. Students can learn more about Zimbabwe's climate, people and culture through research and inquiry, then share information in small groups. Ask students to create *field reports* from Zimbabwe. Visit the websites below for pictures and descriptions of Zimbabwe. Get ideas for creating field notes from National Geographic photographers working in Zimbabwe.

[www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/countries/country\\_zimbabwe.html](http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/countries/country_zimbabwe.html)

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0308/feature5/assignment1.html>

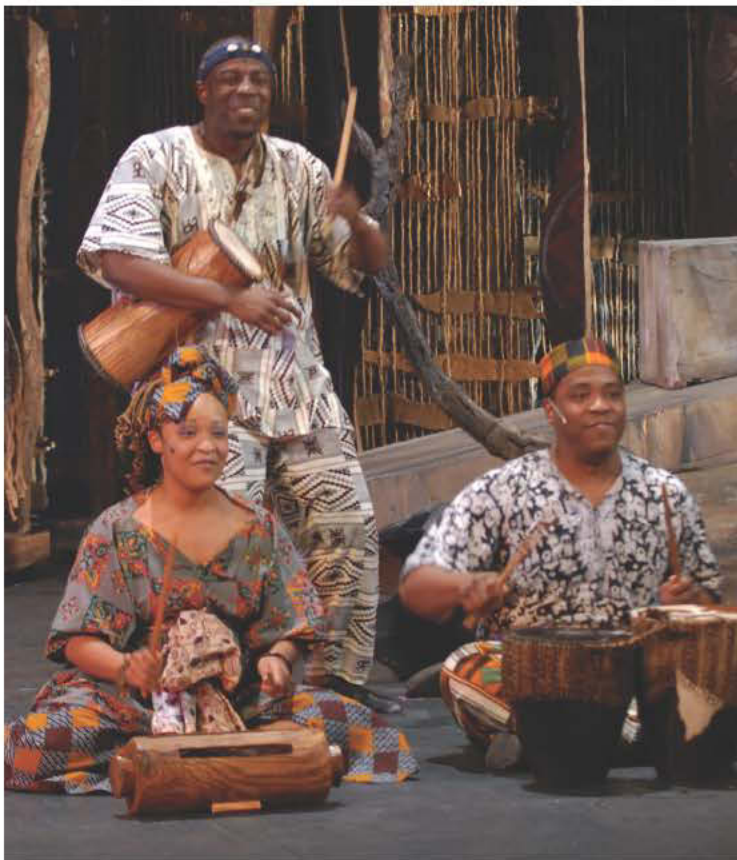
## Discuss

When reading the book aloud to students, stop on selected pages and ask students to hypothesize about what may happen next, what the motives of the characters might be and why something is happening. Ask students to work in pairs to sequence the trials the girls encountered on their journey. Ask students to analyze how each girl responded as either unselfish or selfish and to list or draw a picture about the events to illustrate the challenges they faced along the journey.

## Create

Before reading the book or seeing the play, ask students to write a story about an illustration from the book. Use this activity to reinforce new vocabulary. Words in students' stories might include: yams, ignored, kindness, worthy, bountiful, family. Use the following prompts to support student writing.

- > Who is the story about?
- > Where does the story take place?
- > What happens next?
- > How will this story end?



Storytelling is an important African tradition. In the past and even today, many African stories are shared orally. West African traveling storytellers are called griots (GREE-ohs). They remember and tell the history and stories of their people. Griots are often accompanied by drummers. Drumming is considered the "heartbeat" of a story.

## Focus on Character

### Kindness

In *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, each sister makes a choice to be kind or not. Should we be kind even if no one is looking? Working in small groups, students can list examples of quiet acts of kindness that they could do without anyone knowing. As a whole group, discuss why we might make kind choices—even when no one might be aware of or acknowledge the kind deed.

### Gratitude

Gratitude is when we thank people for the good things they have given or done for others. One of the characters in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* does not show gratitude and there are consequences to her actions. Ask students to think about and share memories of people and events that have made them feel thankful.

### Quick Write

Use a Quick Write process to explore the relationship between Manyara and Nyasha with the following prompts.

- > Describe how Manyara feels about her sister.
- > Why is Manyara jealous of her sister?
- > What can Manyara do about her feelings?
- > Discuss why Nyasha was chosen as queen.



## CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

This season Walton Arts Center celebrates twenty years of integrating the arts with your curriculum. We welcome Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art with excitement! As allies in arts participation, we are working together to create even better access for students and teachers. In this new performance guide feature,

Crystal Bridges' Education team makes connections between the visual and performing arts. Introduce learning about artworks from the Crystal Bridges collection while you enrich student understanding of Colgate Classroom Series performances.



Karen Lamonte, b. 1967  
*Dress Impression with Wrinkled Cowl*, 2007  
Cast Glass, 56 x 21 x 17 in.  
Photography by Martin Polak

### About the artwork

Mufaro's daughters are tested by Nyoka, who has many disguises and turns out to be the King. The artist Karen Lamonte is interested in how one's inner self can be disguised through choice of clothing. Lamonte makes a mold of a figure and then dresses it in various clothing. Next, she creates a new mold of the clothing and the exterior of the figure, leaving a hollow where the figure should be. The mold is then filled with glass pieces and put into a kiln where the glass melts. Each work takes six months for construction of the mold and, once cast, more than eight months to cool through the annealing (controlled cooling) process. Because of the complexity of her pieces and the temperament of glass, Lamonte's sculptures have a 50 percent rate of failure. She currently works in the Czech Republic where there is an industrial glass foundry that enables her to create these life-sized glass sculptures.

### Online Resources

> [www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/education/cuesheets/home.cfm](http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/education/cuesheets/home.cfm)  
Learn more about connecting teachers and students to the Kennedy Center and arts education resources.

> [www.deltaculturalcenter.com](http://www.deltaculturalcenter.com)  
Learn more about oral history in our region.

> [www.proteacher.com/070163.shtml](http://www.proteacher.com/070163.shtml)  
Learn more about games that teach and assess stories and storytelling.

### Resources about Africa

> [www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/index.html](http://www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/index.html)  
Learn more at Boston University's African Studies Outreach site.

> [www.namesite.com/index.php](http://www.namesite.com/index.php)  
Learn about African personal names.

> [www.africanamericandanceensemble.org](http://www.africanamericandanceensemble.org)  
Learn more about African stories and traditions.

### Books by John Steptoe

*Train Ride*  
*All Us Come Across the River*  
*My Special Best Words*  
*Jeffrey Bear Cleans Up His Act*  
*All the Colors of the Race*  
*Outside Inside Poems*

## Volume 9 Number 2

Colgate Classroom Series performances help students meet Common Core Standards.

**Learn more at:**  
**[www.waltonartscenter.org](http://www.waltonartscenter.org)**

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