

It Takes A Village

- written and illustrated by Jane Cowen-Fletcher

This book is about a girl name Yemi who is supposed to watch her brother while their mother sells mangoes at the market. When Kokou wanders off, Yemi fears he is hungry, thirsty, frightened, hot and tired. She soon discovers that other people in the village have been taking care of him for her. A key point for understanding is how a community can raise a child. When Yemi is not around to look after Kokou, others in the market meet his needs. The whole village shares the responsibility of taking care of its children.

Before reading:

- * Introduce the story by showing the child the front cover of "It Takes A Village",
- * Read the author and illustrator, who happens to be the same person.
- * Explain what the author and illustrator does.
- * Note: A village is a community. It is smaller than a town.
- * Note: This story takes place in a village in Africa.
- * Discuss the cover of the book and make predictions about what the book may be about.
- * Point out the parts of the book, for example, the spine (to support the book) and the back cover
- * As you open the book, discuss the title page. "What do you see?"

During Reading:

- * There are some key vocabulary words to stop and discuss during reading.

(1) restless - means to move all around and twist and turn. In the story, Kokou became restless while riding on Yemi's back. That means he just kept moving around and couldn't stay still. If you sat at your desk for a long time, you might get restless. Sometimes you get restless while standing in a long line at an amusement park. If your friend said that they had a terrible night's sleep and kept waking up all night, what would you say about your friend? You could say, "My friend had a restless night."

(2) wandered - means to walk off without a place to go. In the story, Kokou wandered off from his sister Yemi. That means that Kokou left the place where he was suppose to stay. Sometimes cats wander around a neighborhood. If a girl walked around a museum looking at any painting she wanted what might you say about her? You might say, "The girl wandered through the museum."

(3) responsible - means you are in charge of taking care of that person or thing, for example parents are responsible for their children, owners are responsible for the pets. In the story, Yemi was given the job of taking care of Kokou. Another way of saying that is that Yemi was responsible for Kokou. If a boy had the job of feeding his dog every day, what might you say about the boy? You might say, "The boy is responsible for taking care of his dog."

(4) vendor - means a person who sells all kinds of goods, such as food, jewelry, and clothing. A vendor at an amusement park may sell hotdogs. In the story, Yemi talked to a mat vendor in the marketplace. That means the man sold mats to people shopping in the market place. If a lady took money from your friend and her a muffin and juice, what might you say about that lady? You might say, "The vendor sold a muffin and juice to my friend."

(5) searching - means you are trying hard to find a person, place, or thing. In the story, Yemi was searching everywhere for her brother. that means Yemi was looking very carefully for Kokou. If you couldn't find one of your shoes, you might search your bedroom. If mom lost her keys, she might as you to search the house. If a boy dug around his backpack looking for a pencil, what could you say about him? You might say, "The boy searched in his backpack for a pencil."

(6) support - means to help someone do something that they might not be able to do by alone. In the story, when Kokou was lost, people at the market helped him by giving him food, water, and a place to rest. Another way to say that is that they gave Kokou support. Fans support their team by cheering for them to win. If a boy carried the lunch of a friend who was on crutches, what might you say about the boy? You might say, "The boy supported his friend by carrying his lunch."

Questions to ask during reading:

*Who is restless... a man waiting in a dentist's office for a long time or a man sitting and listening to music he loves? Why?

*Which does a wandering person do...sit on a bench and watch squirrels in the park or walk slowly along any path in the park? Why?

*Which is a responsible person...the girl who shoveled her sidewalk so no one would fall or the girl taking a nap? Why?

*Which would a person get from a vendor...her teeth cleaned or an ice-cream cone? Why?

*Which would a person search for...fish swimming in the aquarium or a lost dog? Why?

*Which person is showing support...an older sister helping her brother with his homework or an older sister learning to drive a car? Why?

Questions to connect with vocabulary and comprehension:

*Mama asked Yemi to be **responsible** for Kokou while she sold mangoes. What happened that made Mama think Yemi was not being responsible?

*Kokou got **restless** when Yemi was carrying him. What do you think Kokou did to act restless?

*Kokou **wandered** off when Yemi turned her back to buy peanuts. What are some places Kokou wandered to?

*Many people at the market **supported** Yemi by watching Kokou. Who was one person who supported Yemi? How?

*Ask child to use the word **searching** to tell what Yemi did in the story.

*Kokou took a nap on one of the mat **vendor's** mats. What other kinds of vendors are in the story?

Literary Element: Realistic Fiction

"It Takes A Village" is a story that could really happen. In real life, people go to a market and older sisters baby-sit for younger brothers. What else happens that seems true to life.

After Reading:

*Ask the child about Yemi's problem and how it was solved. Sometimes a problem can be something troubling that happens. The solution is how it gets fixed. Let's think about what happens that Yemi worries about.

*Discuss ways to support family and friends.

*Find the continent of Africa on a map or globe

*Discuss the importance of the market place and the various items that are available at the markets.

*Write and/or draw your favorite part of the story.

*What would you have done if you were Yemi?"