

Comprehension

Genre

A **Folk Tale** is a story based on the traditions of a people or region which is handed down from one generation to the next and becomes legendary.



Make Inferences and Analyze

Cause and Effect

As you read, use your Cause and Effect Chart.

Cause → Effect
→
→
→
→

Read to Find Out

What is the cause of Chameleon's generosity?

The Magic Gourd



by Baba Wagué Diakité





It all began

when the sun refused to allow the clouds to gather, and there was no rain. First came drought. Then came **famine**. Everyone was hungry. And it was then that Brother Rabbit wandered around the parched countryside searching for wild roots to feed his starving family. As he walked, he sang . . .

Feeyeh ku, feeyeh ku.

Waara sa kun tay.

Luck will come. Life will be good.

Suddenly, Rabbit was interrupted by a sweet little voice that called out, “Dogo Zan! Dogo Zan! Rescue me from this thorny bush! My arms are being poked and scratched! Help me, and I will pay you well.”

Rabbit was busy, but still he stopped. “I will help simply to avoid seeing my brother suffer,” said Rabbit. Gently he lowered his hand between the thorny branches and saved the green **chameleon**. As Rabbit turned to leave, Chameleon called out to him once again.



“Dogo Zan! Don’t go yet! Would you mind getting my gourd from the bush, too?”

“A gourd?” cried Brother Rabbit. “You want me to scratch myself again for a little gourd?”

“Please, Dogo Zan,” begged Chameleon. “I will reward you well.”



Again, Rabbit's kind nature got the best of him, and he bent into the thorny bush and **rummaged** around.

Rabbit brought out a beautifully decorated gourd and handed it to Chameleon. But Chameleon just said, "Keep it. It's your reward."

"It's just an empty gourd," Rabbit cried.

"It's not *just* an empty gourd," Chameleon replied. "It's MAGIC!"

"*Ee ko dee!*" cried Rabbit. "A magic gourd?"

"Oh, yes!" said Chameleon. "Watch this: Magic Gourd, fill yourself up with insects!"

Brother Rabbit watched in amazement as Chameleon licked up a bowl full of insects.

"Why are you giving me such a valuable gift?" Rabbit asked.

"You were kind to me, Brother Rabbit," Chameleon said. "Besides, I have my own secret for catching insects," and he quickly unrolled his lo-o-o-o-o-ong tongue for Rabbit to admire.

Rabbit thanked Brother Chameleon and rushed home with his gourd.



Cause and Effect

What happened as a result of Rabbit's kindness?



As soon as he arrived home, his entire family eagerly gathered around.

“An empty gourd?” they all gasped in disbelief.

“It’s not *just* an empty gourd,” said Brother Rabbit.

“It’s a magic gourd! Watch this: Magic Gourd!” he said.

“Fill yourself up with carrots!”

To their astonishment, the gourd magically filled with carrots. Happily, they ate them all.



“Magic Gourd! Fill yourself up with couscous!” he said.

Again they ate until they were satisfied.

“Magic Gourd! Fill yourself up with water!” he said, and they drank deeply.



From that day on, Brother Rabbit's family drank and ate well.

But as much as they wanted to keep the magic gourd a family secret, they also could not sit and watch friends and neighbors suffer. So they invited them to share their meals every day.

And this is how word floated around from one to the other until it came to the house of Mansa Jugu, the greedy king.

One day, the greedy king and his soldiers broke into Rabbit's compound and forced the little gourd away from him. Now, with the magic gourd in his possession, Mansa Jugu sat day and night commanding the little gourd to fill and refill with more and more gold.

Meanwhile, unable to get the magic gourd back, Rabbit returned once again to his poor life, **scrounging** for wild roots to feed his hungry family. Despite the hardships of the moment, he still had courage to sing . . .

*Feeyeh ku, feeyeh ku. Waara
sa kun tay.*

Luck will come. Life will be good.



Cause and Effect

What happened when Rabbit decided to share the gourd with his neighbors?

One day, while hunting for roots, Rabbit heard his name being called again.

“Dogo Zan, Dogo Zan!”

Recognizing the sweet little voice, he turned and looked in all directions. Slowly the chameleon came into view right next to him on a sparkling green rock.

“Dogo Zan! What has happened to you?” cried Chameleon. “You look skinny and **pathetic!**”

Rabbit told him all about the greedy king who stole the gourd. Again, Brother Chameleon offered a gift to Brother Rabbit. This time, it was the beautiful crystal rock he had been standing on.

“What is this, Brother Chameleon?” asked Rabbit.

“This is just a *fara*, a little rock!” As soon as the words came out of his mouth, the rock leaped into the air and bounced off his head.

“Eee-heeeee! *Fara!*” cried Rabbit. “Stop! Stop!”

Again, the rock knocked his head.

“Excuse me, Dogo Zan,” said the chameleon. “You must call him by his name, *Fara-Ba!*” With that, the rock dropped silently to the ground. Rabbit thanked Chameleon for this unusual gift and returned home.



The next day, Brother Rabbit rolled the rock in a fresh *sheeyo* leaf and walked to the king's palace. "I have brought you a mysterious gift, your Majesty," said Brother Rabbit.

"*Aaa ha! Moondon!* What is it?" asked the king anxiously. Rabbit slowly unrolled the rock from the *sheeyo* leaf and showed it to Mansa Jugu.

"*Eeeeeeh! Fara doron?*" exclaimed the king. "A simple rock?"

And with that, the little rock began **ricocheting** off the head of the king.

"*A tob! A tob!* Stop this rock!" cried the king, but no one could capture it. All day and all night the little rock played music on the heads of the king and his soldiers. The annoyance continued and the king became troubled. Mansa Jugu was finally forced to call on Rabbit for help.

Cleverly, Brother Rabbit demanded his little gourd back first.

"You may take all the gold, but leave me the gourd," said the greedy king.



“But the gourd was a gift to me,” replied Rabbit.

“Then take all my food from my royal storage bins, but leave me the gourd,” cried the annoyed king.

“*Ee dusu dab*. Let us bargain,” countered Rabbit. “My little gourd is my prize.”

The king angrily shouted, “*U-TAH, U-TAH—TAKE IT ALL!* Take the gold, the food, and the little gourd!”

Rabbit took the gourd, but left the gold and the food behind. And before he turned to flee, he shouted, “*Fara-Ba!*”

Calmly, the little rock dropped into Rabbit’s hand.

Fearing revenge from the king, Rabbit’s family escaped to the country to join their faithful friend Chameleon. From Chameleon’s great lessons in disguises, Brother Rabbit learned the skill of hiding in the bush. Today Dogo Zan and his family are masters at going **undetected**. One could be hiding in your backyard right now.



Mansa Jugu, the greedy king, and his soldiers felt embarrassed by their defeat at the hand of a rabbit and a small rock. The king could not believe that in his moment of weakness, he had given away the wealth of his kingdom. Exhausted and hungry, the king sat down to eat before pursuing Brother Rabbit for revenge. Upon opening his storage bins, he was surprised to discover that all of his wealth and food remained.

“Come eat!” he called to his soldiers and servants. “Let us appreciate what we have been given.”

From this final kind act of Rabbit, the greedy king, Mansa Jugu, began to learn the importance of **generosity** and friendship.

As for Rabbit and Chameleon, they have always understood that loyal friendships are the true treasures that make one rich.

And for their many good deeds, all sang a song of praise to Rabbit and Chameleon.





Glossary



Here are some words from the story that are in Bambara, the national language of Mali.

Dogo Zan (DOE-go ZAHN) - Brother Rabbit

Mansa Jugu (MAHN-sah JOO-goo) - greedy king (mansa means ruler; jugu means greedy)

* **Ee dusu dah** (ee du-SU dah) - Let us bargain; calm down

* **Ee ko dee** (EE ko DEE) - exclamation of surprise when a person doesn't believe what they have just heard (What did you say?)

Fara (FAH-rah) - rock

* **Fara-ba** (FAH-rah BAH) - Mr. Rock (title of respect)

Fara doron (FAH-rah DOH-ron) - a simple rock

Moondon (MOON-don) - What is it?

Sheeyo (SHEE-yoh) - a bush with large leaves found in Mali

A toh! (ah TOH) - Stop!

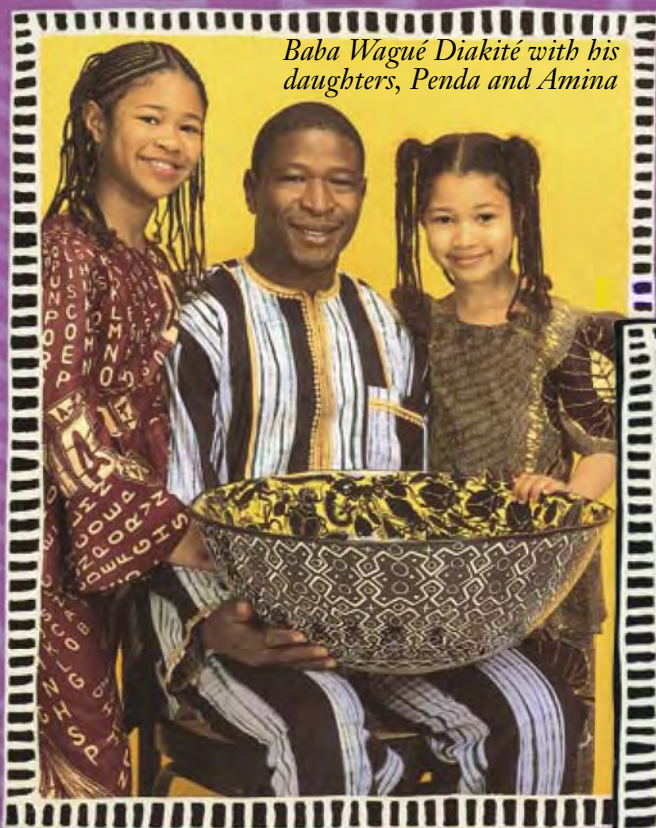
U-tah (OO-tah) - Take it all!

* **Feeyeh ku, feeyeh ku.** (FEE-yeh koo) **Waara sa kun tay.** (WA-rah sah KOON-teh) - This is a chant of encouragement to give hope for survival in difficult times. (Note: Bambara is a metaphorical language, so the English translation is not always literal.)

* Not a literal translation



Meet the Storyteller



Baba Wagué Diakité with his daughters, Penda and Amina



Baba Wagué Diakité grew up in Mali, West Africa. During the evening meal, his whole family told stories, often about the rabbit Zozani [Zoh-Zah-NEE]. Zozani was clever and could always find a way to solve a problem. In the end, Zozani sings a song of praise, something storytellers in Mali have been doing for centuries.

In addition to ceramic art, Baba Wagué Diakité used mud cloth designs to illustrate this story. These are traditional designs painted with dark mud on cotton cloth. Each design means something special. For example, a flower means family happiness.

Other books by Baba Wagué Diakité:
The Hatseller and the Monkeys and
The Hunterman and the Crocodile



Find out more about Baba Wagué Diakité at
www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

The main purpose of this tale is to entertain. It also teaches that kindness pays and gives a fictional origin for rabbits' ability to hide. Why do rabbits need to hide in the real world?





Comprehension Check



Summarize

Use your Cause and Effect Chart to help you summarize *The Magic Gourd*. What causes Brother Chameleon to give Brother Rabbit the gourd? What effect does the gourd have on Brother Rabbit and the King?

Cause → Effect
→
→
→
→



Think and Compare

1. Something unexpected takes place at the end of *The Magic Gourd*. What is it? What causes this event to happen? How does this event help you understand the moral of the story? **Make Inferences and Analyze: Cause and Effect**
2. How does the weather affect the characters in the story? Use examples from the text to support your answers. **Synthesize**
3. Think of a time when you did a good deed for someone. What happened? How did your **generosity** help? How did it make you feel? **Evaluate**
4. Who gets the bigger reward from the gourd: the King or Brother Rabbit? Explain why. **Analyze**
5. In “Keira’s Magical Moment” on pages 80-81, Keira says her great-grandmother left Senegal because of a famine. What do you think the role of a folk tale such as *The Magic Gourd* would have in Keira’s great-grandmother’s native culture? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**