

Comprehension

Genre

A **Play** is a story told through dialogue that is intended to be performed.

Evaluate

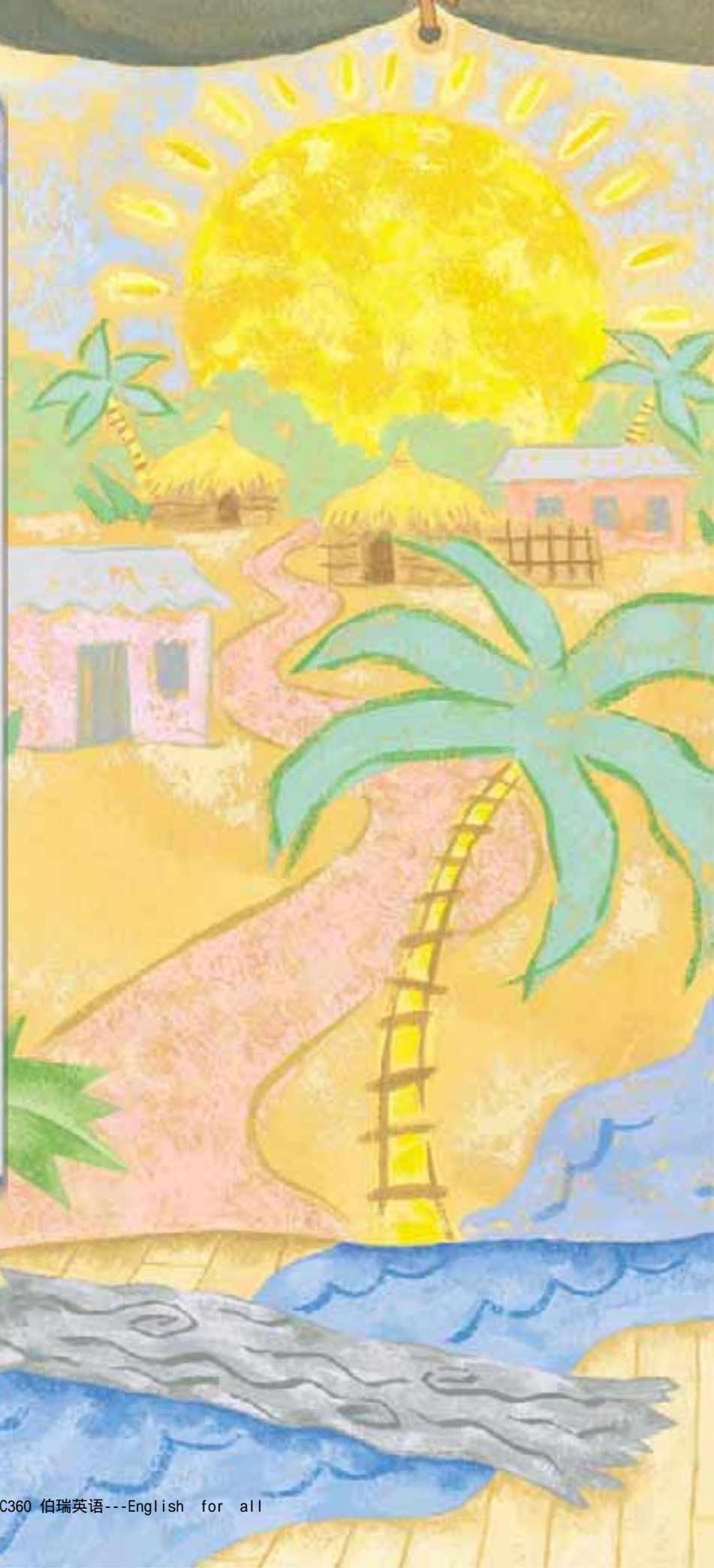
Author's Purpose

As you read, look at your Author's Purpose Chart.

Clues	Author's Purpose

Read to Find Out

What purpose did the author have for writing this play?

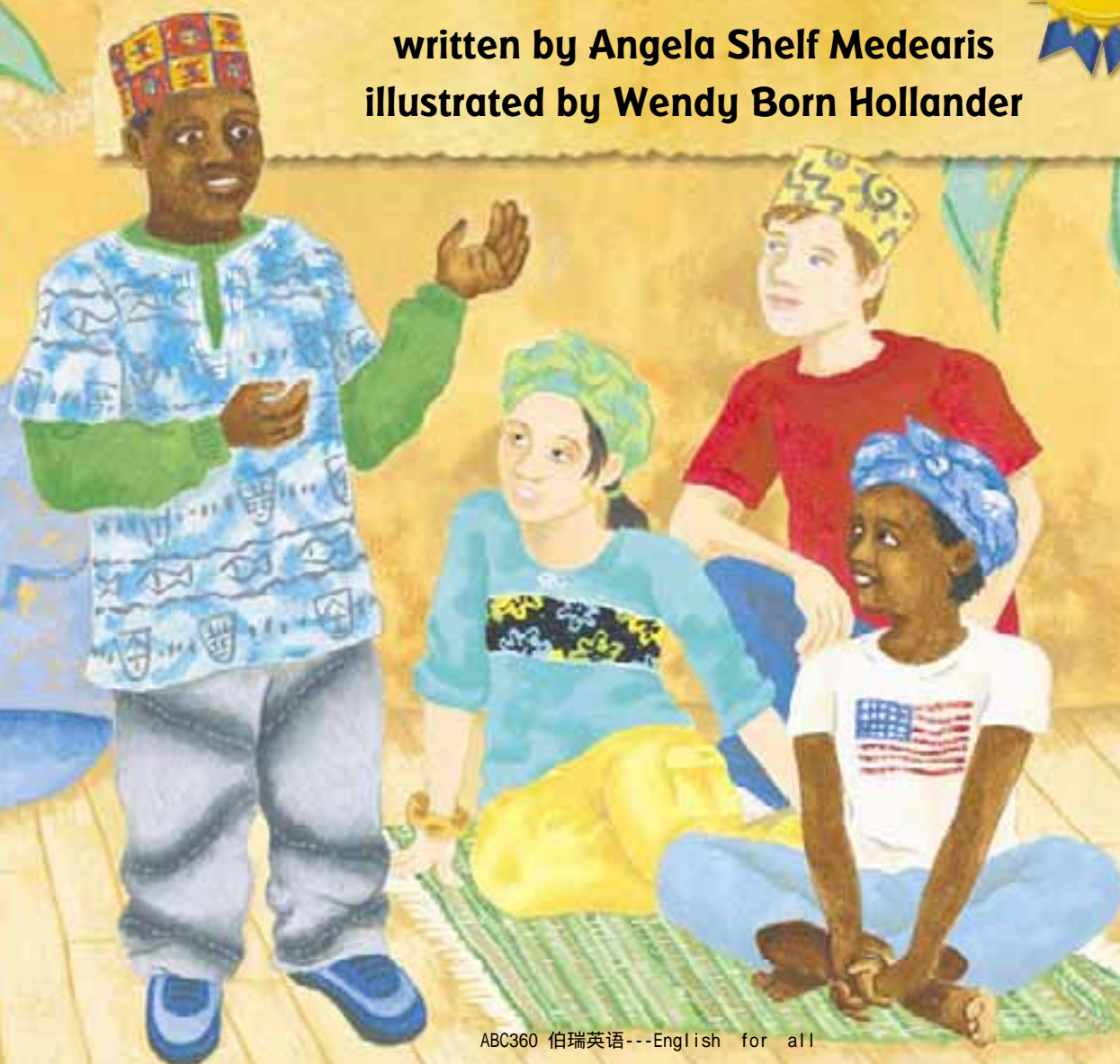


THE CATCH OF THE DAY

A TRICKSTER PLAY

written by Angela Shelf Medearis
illustrated by Wendy Born Hollander

Award
Winning
Author



CHARACTERS

THE GRIOT (STORYTELLER)

GROUP OF CHILDREN

CHILD ONE

CHILD TWO

THE FISHER

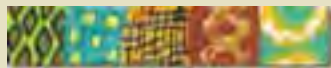
THE BASKETMAKER

THE BAKER

THE WOMAN WITH THE FRUIT

THE FARMER WITH SOME YAMS
AND CORN

THE MAN WITH THE BAGS OF RICE



The **GRIOT** stands in the center of a **GROUP OF CHILDREN** who are seated on the ground. A **GRIOT** is an African storyteller and keeper of the history of the family and the village. It is early evening and time for the nightly story. It is a common practice in Africa to tell stories in the evening to pass on oral history, carry on traditions, instruct and **educate** the village children, and to entertain. The **GRIOT** and the **CHILDREN** are off to one side of the stage. All the action for the play takes place center stage.



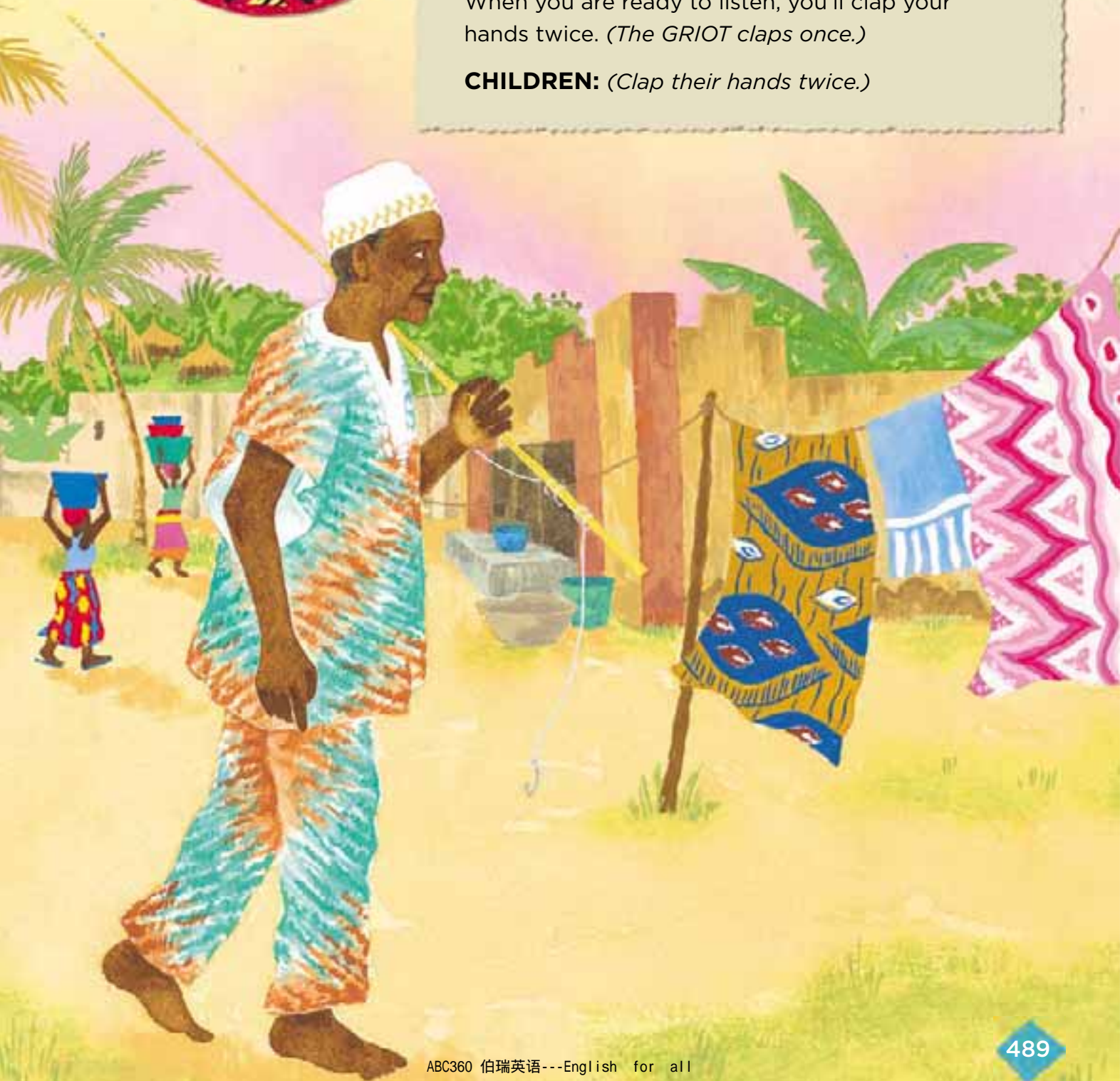


GRIOT: (*loudly*) Jambo, children! Hello!

CHILDREN: Jambo!

GRIOT: I am a Griot, the keeper of the history of my West African tribe, a storyteller, and a teacher. I have a special story to share with you about a tricky fisher and a bridge made out of a log. When I am ready to begin, I'll clap my hands once. When you are ready to listen, you'll clap your hands twice. (*The GRIOT claps once.*)

CHILDREN: (*Clap their hands twice.*)



GRIOT: And now it's time for our story. One day a hungry fisher set out to catch some fish to sell at the village market. He came to a wooden log bridge crossing the river.

FISHER (*walking past GRIOT and standing center stage*): I will cross this bridge to the other side of the river. I know a place on that side of the river that is usually a good place to fish. After I catch the fish, I will sell them at the market. Then I will have lots of money to buy a good basket, some cloth, and maybe some bread, yams and other good things to eat.

GRIOT: The fisher crossed the bridge. Well, it wasn't really a bridge. It was only an old log that stretched from one side of the river to the other. The log bridge had been used by everyone in the village for many, many years. It was the only way to get across the river. Even more important, it was the only way to get from the village to the market.

FISHER: I think I have a nibble! Yes! This is it! (*pulls up fishing line*) Nothing!



Author's Purpose

What is the author's purpose in having the Griot narrate the trickster play?





GRIOT: The fisher tossed his line into the river again and again. He got more and more hungry. And as the blazing sun beat down, it got hotter and hotter.

CHILD ONE: Did he catch anything?

FISHER (*pulling in fishing line*): Nothing!

GRIOT: That's right. Nothing! All that morning, he tried. The fisher pulled out lures with feathers on them and lures with insects on them, but he didn't catch anything. Then he tried using wiggly worms. Still, he didn't catch anything. He continued to try with all of his might to catch some fish.

CHILD TWO: Did he ever catch anything?

FISHER (*pulling in fishing line*): Nothing!

GRIOT: Right again. Nothing! The sun continued to burn down upon the poor fisher. And he was very hungry! He felt he would die of hunger if he didn't catch something soon.

FISHER (*pulling up his fishing line and shaking his head sadly*): My plan was to cross the log bridge and catch lots of fish on this side of the river.

I wanted to sell the fish at the market and buy a good basket, some bread, and other good things to eat! But I didn't catch any fish.

CHILD ONE: So he can't buy a basket.

CHILD TWO: Or bread.

GRIOT: Or other good things to eat. And he was very, very hungry.

FISHER: I'm hungry, hungry, hungry! I can't believe this turn of events! My great-grandfather was a fisher, and my grandfather and my father before me! My family has fished in this very river for generations. It is how we always have earned a living. If I can't catch any fish, I must think of another way to get the things I need.

GRIOT: The poor fisher was about to return to his home. He had one foot on his side of the log bridge when he saw someone starting out on the other side of the log bridge. It was a basketmaker with a load of baskets.

FISHER (*waving and stepping back onto the riverbank*): Jambo!

BASKETMAKER (*calling to the fisher on the other side of the river*): Jambo! How are you today, Fisher? Did you catch anything?

FISHER (*sadly*): No, I didn't catch a single fish today.

BASKETMAKER: That's too bad. I'm sorry, but I don't have time to talk. I must hurry to the market so that I can sell my baskets.

GRIOT: Suddenly, the fisher thought of a way he could get a basket.

FISHER (*holding up his hands in warning*): Stop! Don't try to cross the bridge.

BASKETMAKER: What is wrong with it?

FISHER: I think the recent rainstorms must have loosened it. If I don't hold this log in place it will fall into the river and no one will be able to get to the market.



BASKETMAKER: That's nonsense! I just crossed this bridge two days ago! Besides, you got across!

FISHER: I risked my life crossing this bridge. Besides, I'm an excellent swimmer. If I fall in, I can always swim to safety. But out of the goodness of my heart, I decided to wait here so I could warn people who try to cross about the danger they face.

BASKETMAKER: I don't believe you! I'm going across. I don't care what you say.

FISHER: As you wish, but remember, you've been warned.

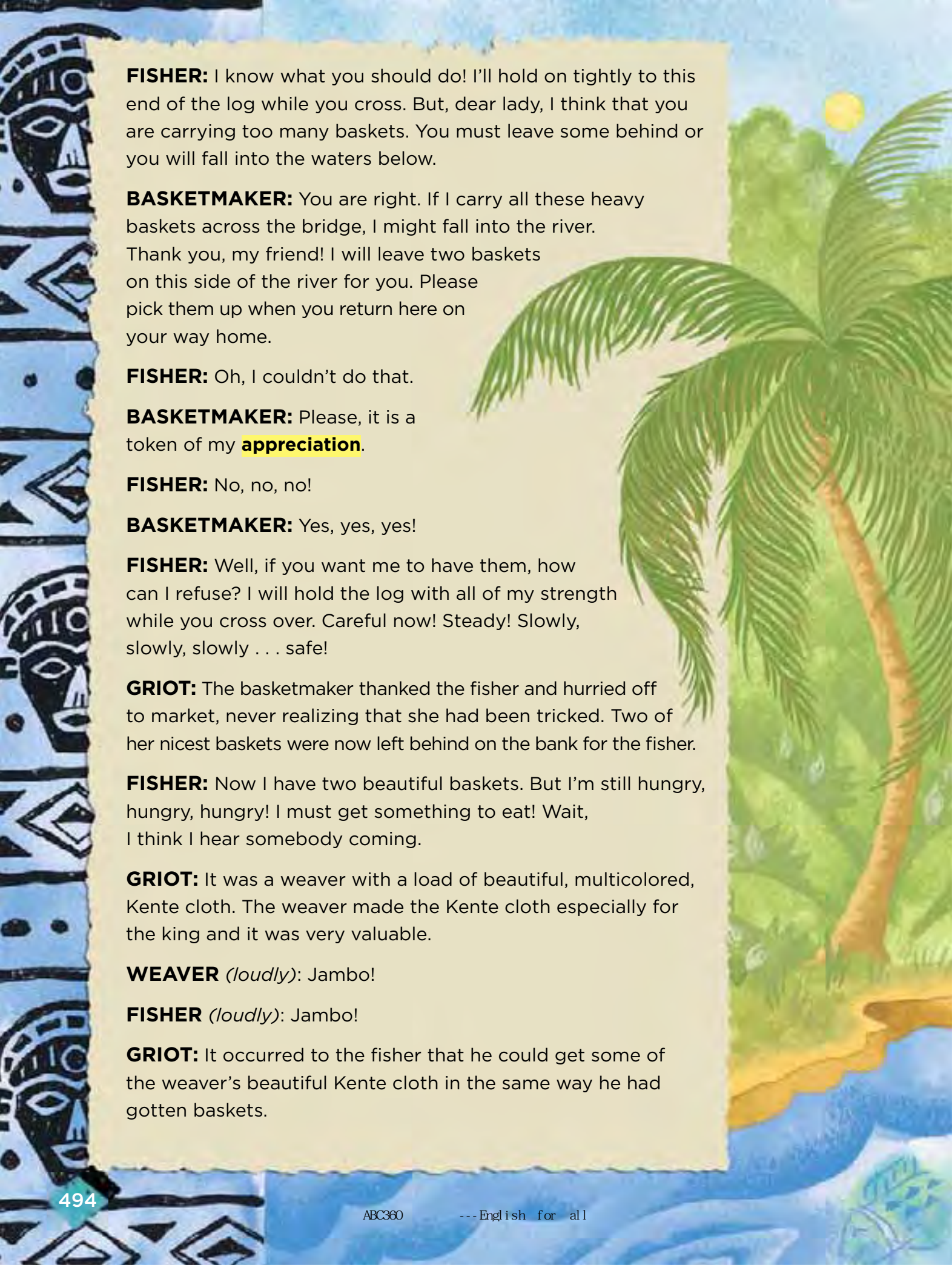
GRIOT: As the basketmaker starts to cross, the fisher secretly shakes the log with his foot when the basketmaker isn't looking.

BASKETMAKER (*loudly*): Oh no! The bridge is falling! Help! I'm going to fall in the river!

FISHER (*waving his arms wildly*): Quick! Turn back! You'll never make it across. I told you that it was too dangerous!

BASKETMAKER: (*running back to the bank she started from*): What should I do? I have to get to market to sell my baskets! This log is the only way to cross the river.





FISHER: I know what you should do! I'll hold on tightly to this end of the log while you cross. But, dear lady, I think that you are carrying too many baskets. You must leave some behind or you will fall into the waters below.

BASKETMAKER: You are right. If I carry all these heavy baskets across the bridge, I might fall into the river. Thank you, my friend! I will leave two baskets on this side of the river for you. Please pick them up when you return here on your way home.

FISHER: Oh, I couldn't do that.

BASKETMAKER: Please, it is a token of my **appreciation**.

FISHER: No, no, no!

BASKETMAKER: Yes, yes, yes!

FISHER: Well, if you want me to have them, how can I refuse? I will hold the log with all of my strength while you cross over. Careful now! Steady! Slowly, slowly, slowly . . . safe!

GRIOT: The basketmaker thanked the fisher and hurried off to market, never realizing that she had been tricked. Two of her nicest baskets were now left behind on the bank for the fisher.

FISHER: Now I have two beautiful baskets. But I'm still hungry, hungry, hungry! I must get something to eat! Wait, I think I hear somebody coming.

GRIOT: It was a weaver with a load of beautiful, multicolored, Kente cloth. The weaver made the Kente cloth especially for the king and it was very valuable.

WEAVER (*loudly*): Jambo!

FISHER (*loudly*): Jambo!

GRIOT: It occurred to the fisher that he could get some of the weaver's beautiful Kente cloth in the same way he had gotten baskets.

FISHER (*holding up both hands and calling to the weaver on the other side of the river*): Stop! Don't try to cross the bridge.

WEAVER: What is wrong with the bridge?

FISHER: I'm holding the log so that it won't fall into the river.

WEAVER: But I've always used this bridge to go to market. I have some Kente cloth I'm going to sell to the king's **treasurer**. I must hurry if I'm going to get to the market in time. You got across safely and so will I.

FISHER: I'm warning you! I barely made it across, and the basketmaker just risked her life crossing the bridge to get to the market.

WEAVER: Oh no! What happened to the basketmaker? Why, there are some baskets on the ground here! Did the basketmaker drop them when she fell into the river?

FISHER (*slowly and sadly with one hand over his heart*): Well, all I can say is that the basketmaker is no longer here with us.

WEAVER (*sadly*): How **unfortunate!** The poor, poor woman! But I must get to the market no matter what. I know what I'll do. I will run across the log bridge very quickly! That's how I'll get across safely!

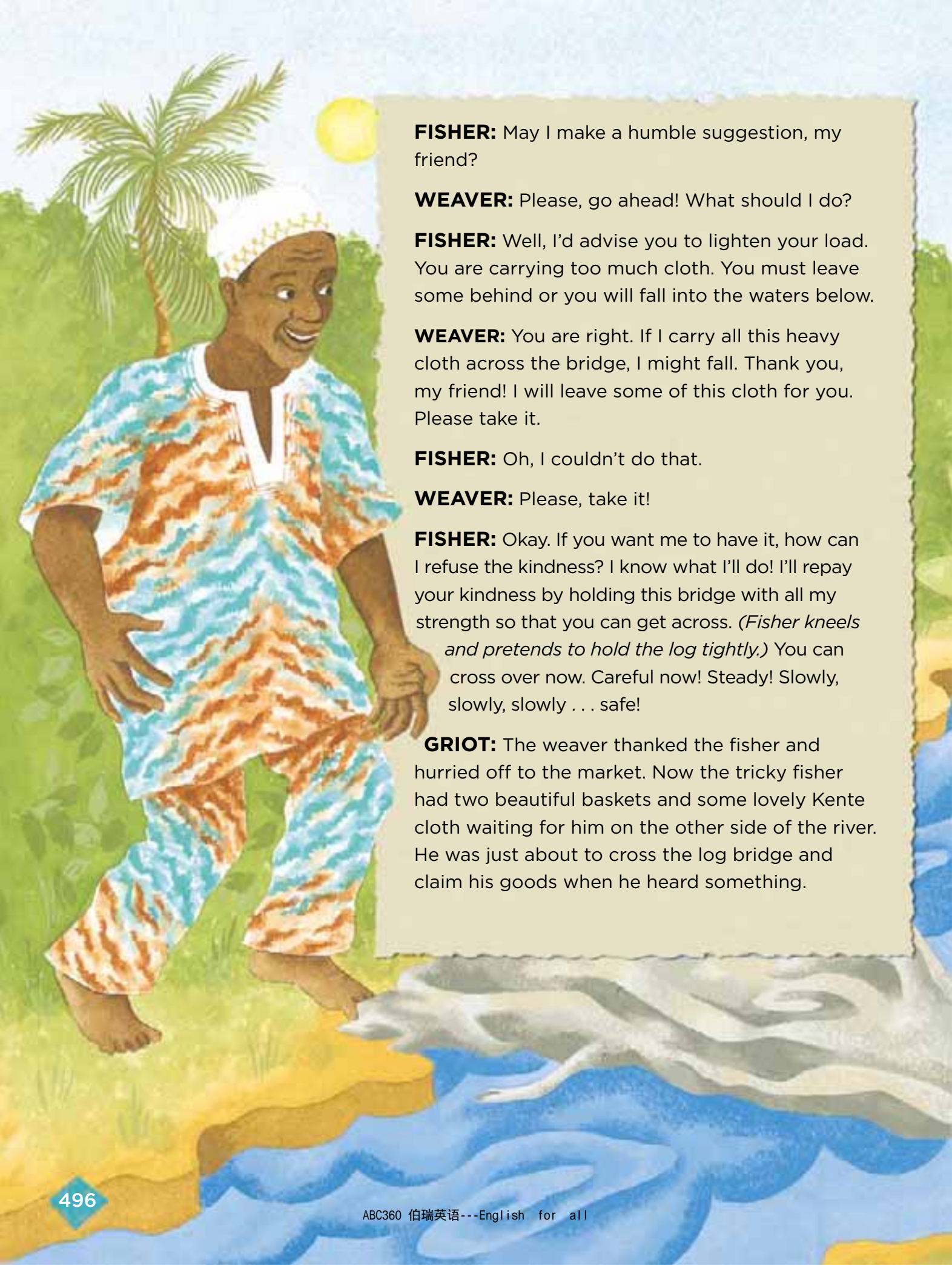
GRIOT: The weaver adjusted the bundle of cloth on his head and tried to run across the bridge. As soon as he reached the middle of the log, the fisher secretly shook it with his foot.

WEAVER (*loudly, swaying back and forth in the middle of the log*): Help! Help! I'm falling!

FISHER (*gesturing wildly*): Go back before you fall in! You'll never make it all the way across! It's much too dangerous!

GRIOT: The fisher stopped shaking the log. The weaver ran back to the side of the riverbank where he started his journey, grateful to be alive.

WEAVER: Did you see that? I almost fell in! What am I going to do now? I must get across the bridge so I can get to the market!



FISHER: May I make a humble suggestion, my friend?

WEAVER: Please, go ahead! What should I do?

FISHER: Well, I'd advise you to lighten your load. You are carrying too much cloth. You must leave some behind or you will fall into the waters below.

WEAVER: You are right. If I carry all this heavy cloth across the bridge, I might fall. Thank you, my friend! I will leave some of this cloth for you. Please take it.

FISHER: Oh, I couldn't do that.

WEAVER: Please, take it!

FISHER: Okay. If you want me to have it, how can I refuse the kindness? I know what I'll do! I'll repay your kindness by holding this bridge with all my strength so that you can get across. (*Fisher kneels and pretends to hold the log tightly.*) You can cross over now. Careful now! Steady! Slowly, slowly, slowly . . . safe!

GRIOT: The weaver thanked the fisher and hurried off to the market. Now the tricky fisher had two beautiful baskets and some lovely Kente cloth waiting for him on the other side of the river. He was just about to cross the log bridge and claim his goods when he heard something.

FISHER: Someone is coming down the path! Jambo!

ALL: Jambo!

GRIOT: It was a baker with a stack of bread, a farmer with a basket of yams, a woman with a basket of fruit, and a man with several bags of rice. The fisher thought he could get some food in the same way he had gotten baskets and Kente cloth. He figured if his trick worked with the basketmaker and the weaver, it would work on the baker with the bread, the farmer with the yams, the woman with the fruit, and the man with the rice, as well.

FISHER (*holding up both hands and calling across the river*): Stop! Don't try to cross the bridge.

FARMER: What is wrong with the bridge?

FISHER: I'm holding the log so that it won't fall into the river.

BAKER: I thought you were fishing.

FISHER: Well, I had every intention of fishing on this side of the river. But, when I tried to cross the bridge I noticed that it was very shaky. I barely made it across with my life. I decided to stay here and warn everyone of the danger.



WOMAN WITH FRUIT: There's nothing wrong with this bridge! I just crossed it yesterday and it was solid as ever.

FISHER: Well, that was yesterday and this is today! I'm warning you! This log shakes when you try to cross it. You see the baskets the basketmaker left behind when she tried to cross and the cloth the weaver left behind when he tried to cross, don't you?

MAN WITH RICE: What happened to the basketmaker and the weaver? *(He looks over the edge of the "bridge" into the river.)* Oh no! Did they fall in?

FISHER: *(slowly and sadly with one hand over his heart):* Well, all I can say is that the basketmaker and the weaver are no longer here.

ALL *(loudly and excitedly):* Oh, that's terrible! What should we do?

BAKER: Well, we have to cross this bridge! It is the only way to get to the market to sell our **wares**. Maybe if we cross the log slowly and carefully, we can make it over the river safely.

WOMAN WITH FRUIT: I think we should try.

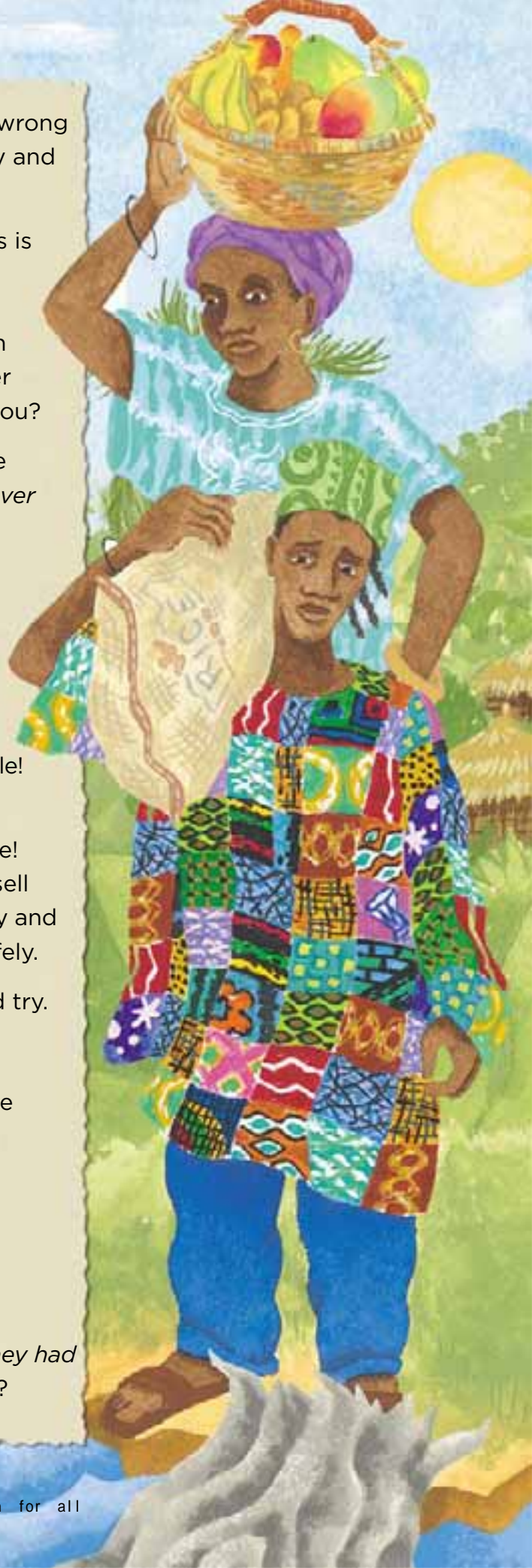
BAKER: Here, I'll lead the way.

GRIOT: As they all reach the middle of the bridge, the fisher secretly shook the log.

ALL: Help! The log is falling! Help! Help!

FISHER: Stop! Turn back! I warned you that you would never make it across. It's too dangerous!

ALL *(running back to the riverbank that they had left):* What should we do? Can you help us?





FISHER: You are carrying too much food. You must leave some of it behind or you will fall into the waters below. Now, put some of your **merchandise** down and cross the log in single file, one at a time. I will hold this log with all my strength while you go across one by one.

BAKER: Perhaps he is right, my friends. If we carry these heavy **burdens** across the bridge, we might fall into the river. Let's leave some of our food behind so that we can safely reach the other side.

FISHER: Good thinking! Now, come across! I will hold the bridge for all of you. Careful now! Steady! Slowly, slowly, slowly . . . safe!

GRIOT: The baker with the loaves of bread, the farmer with the basket of yams, the woman with the fruit, and the man with the bags of rice all slowly crossed the bridge while the fisher held the log. Once they safely reached the other side, they all thanked the fisher, then hurried off to the market.

The fisher waited until they were down the road and out of sight. Then he danced and skipped across the log bridge. He picked up the bread, the yams, the fruit, the bags of rice and the cloth and put everything into the baskets that the basketmaker had left behind for him.

FISHER: Now I have a beautiful basket, some bread, some lovely Kente cloth, some yams, fruit, and a few bags of rice. I'm going to have a good dinner and I won't be hungry, hungry, hungry anymore.

GRIOT: The fisher danced all the way home, thinking about the sumptuous meal he would enjoy that evening.

CHILD ONE: What a tricky fisher! He made everyone think that the bridge was too dangerous to cross!

CHILD TWO: That's how he tricked them into leaving all the food, the baskets and the cloth.

GRIOT: You're right! But remember, even a trickster gets tricked. When the basketmaker, the weaver, the baker, the farmer, the woman with the fruit, and the man with the rice returned from the market and discovered that there was nothing wrong with the bridge, they decided to teach the fisher a lesson.

CHILD ONE: What did they do?

CHILD TWO: Yes, please tell us!

GRIOT: The very next day the basketmaker, the weaver, and all the other people the fisher had tricked met in the village.

BASKETMAKER (*smiling*): I know how we can play the same trick on the fisher that he played on us.

WOMAN WITH FRUIT: How?

WEAVER: Yes, tell us!

BASKETMAKER: In the next village my brother knows someone who makes his living as a fisher. I will travel there with my horse and cart today, and buy some fish from him. Tomorrow meet me by the river early in the morning. Bring a bucket with you.

MAN WITH RICE: A bucket? Why?

BASKETMAKER: You will see.

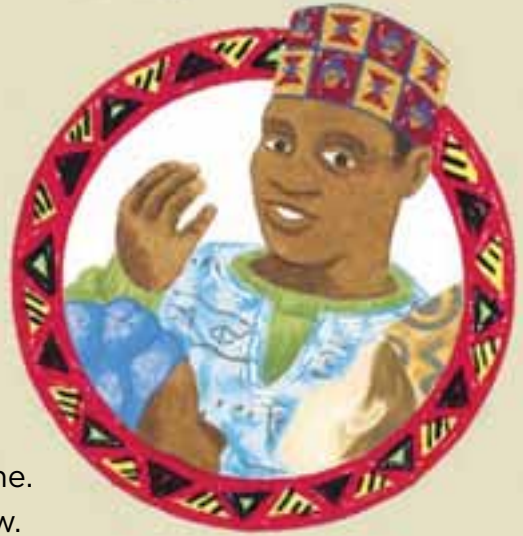
GRIOT: And so the basketmaker traveled to the next village and came home later that day with more fish than any one person could eat. The next morning she met the woman with the fruit, the weaver, the baker, the farmer, and the man with the rice on the side of the river closest to the village.





BASKETMAKER:

The fisher crosses to this side of the river every morning to try his luck. Here, each of you put two fish in your bucket, and fill it with water from the river. I have made a fishing pole from this branch. Ah, and just in time. Here comes the fisher now. *(loudly)* Jambo!



ALL: Jambo! Jambo!

FISHER: Jambo, my friends! What are you all doing?

BASKETMAKER: Why, fishing, of course. It's a great day for it! We have each caught more fish than we can eat!

FISHER: Fishing?! But that's my job!

BASKETMAKER: Come now! The fish in the river are for everyone to catch!

WOMAN WITH FRUIT: Yes, and can I help it if these fish are so eager to be caught, they jumped from the river right into my bucket? *(She shows the fisher the fish in her bucket.)*

WEAVER: Mine, too! *(He shows the fisher his bucket.)*

FISHER: I'm coming over there to join you! I didn't catch any fish yesterday.

BASKETMAKER: Wait, Fisher! You remember the bridge is loose. I had better help you to get across, but you shouldn't risk it unless you are a very good swimmer. It may be even more unsteady than it was yesterday.

FISHER: Oh . . . yes. That's very kind of you. I *am* an excellent swimmer and a person with a good sense of balance.

GRIOT: The fisher walked to the edge of the river toward the log bridge. He knew he had to pretend that the log bridge was loose. The basketmaker kneeled down to hold the bridge. As the fisher walked across, the basketmaker began to shake the log with her hand.

FISHER (*excitedly*): What are you doing? I'll fall into the river!

BASKETMAKER (*pretending to be concerned*): Oh, my! The bridge is so loose! I don't think I can control it! Careful now! Steady! Slowly, slowly, slowly . . . Oops!

GRIOT: The basketmaker shook the log so hard that the fisher fell into the river.

BASKETMAKER: Oh, my! I guess the log is even looser than it was yesterday. Sorry, Fisher!

GRIOT: As the fisher floated in the river, a fish swam right by his nose! He was annoyed at the trick played on him but he knew he couldn't say anything. Clearly the others had discovered that the log bridge hadn't been loose and that the fisher had tricked them the day before. Back on the riverbank, the woman with the fruit, the weaver, the farmer, the basketmaker, and the man with the rice just laughed and laughed. And later that day they ate a fine fish dinner!

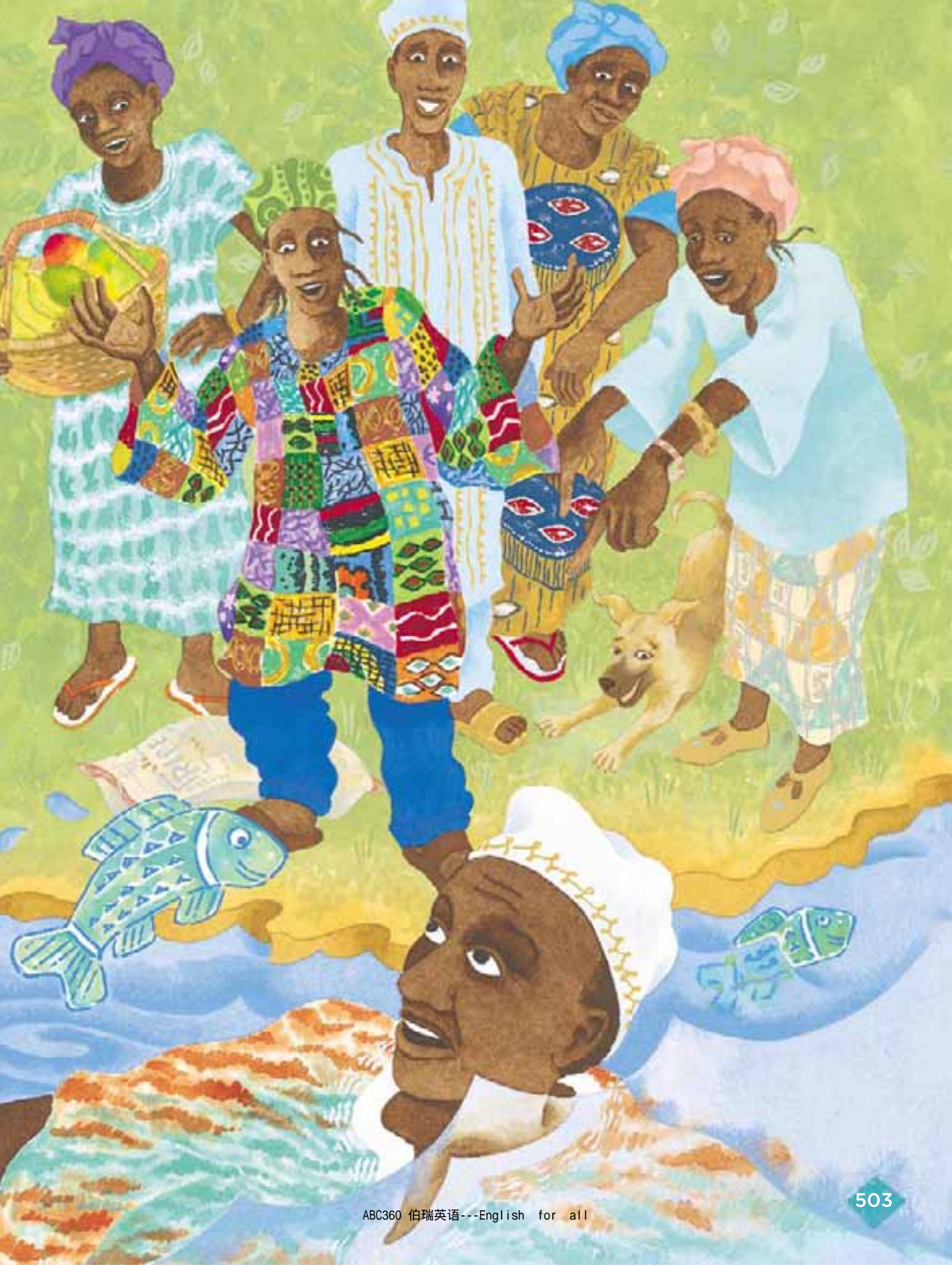
CHILD ONE: Ha ha! I guess the fisher learned his lesson!

GRIOT: Yes! We will all hope he never tries to trick anyone again! (*He claps his hands once.*) That tricky story was fun! Now my time is done!



Author's Purpose

What is the author's purpose in writing this play? Did the author write with a second purpose in mind?

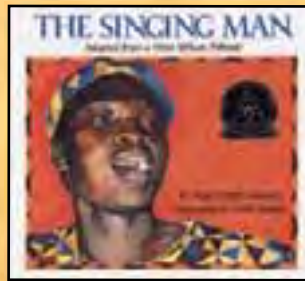


TELLING STORIES WITH ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS

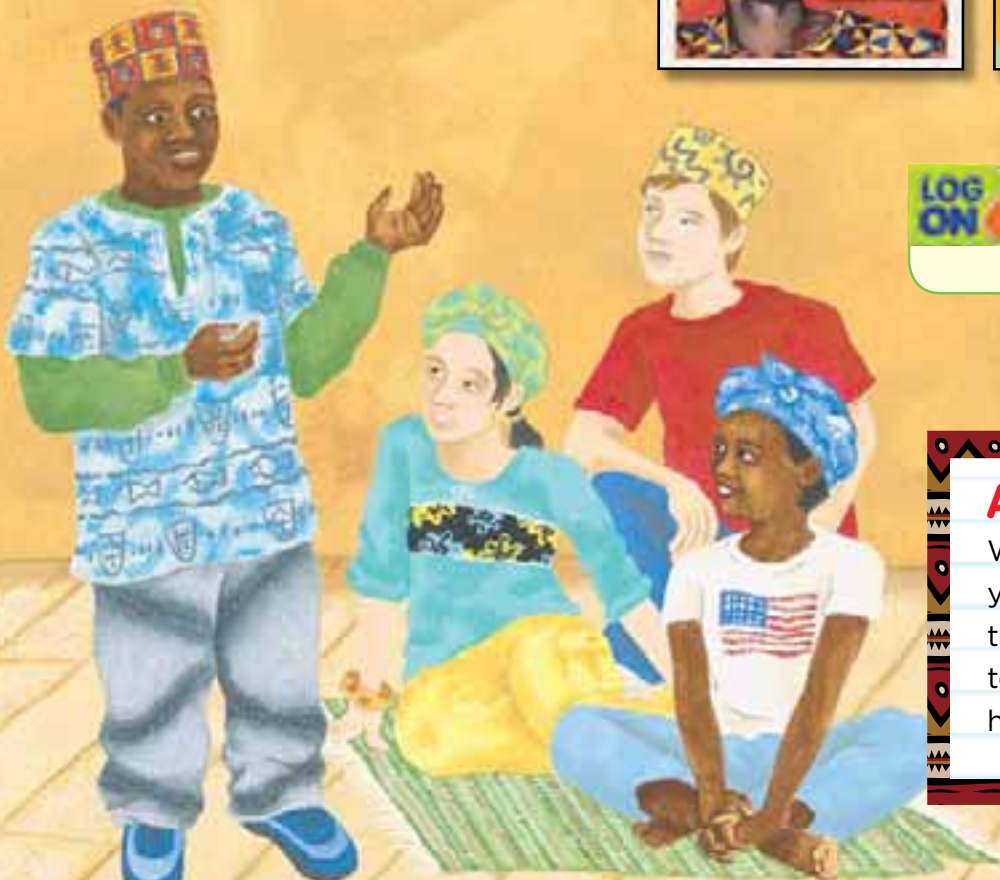


ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS'S father was in the Air Force, so she moved a lot when she was growing up. One of the first things Angela did after moving to a new place was check out the library. She loved reading books, and she loved talking to the librarians. Angela writes because she likes to learn about life and make people laugh. "I enjoy that wonderful feeling you get when you have a great idea and can't wait to get started at it," she says. Angela also writes cookbooks and books about her African-American heritage.

Other books by Angela Shelf Medearis: *The Singing Man* and *Dare to Dream: Coretta Scott King and the Civil Rights Movement*



LOG ON Find out more about Angela Shelf Medearis at www.macmillanmh.com



Author's Purpose

What features in the text tell you that this is a play and that the author intends for it to be performed? Might she have had another purpose?



Comprehension Check

Summarize

Summarize *The Catch of the Day*. Be sure to present the events in the order in which they happened.

FPO

Think and Compare

1. Authors sometimes have more than one purpose for writing a particular selection. What was the author's main reason for writing this play? Use your Author's Purpose Chart to explain your answer.

Evaluate: Author's Purpose

2. Reread the Weaver's lines on page 495 and the Fisher's lines that follow. Why didn't the Fisher give specific answers to the Weaver's questions? **Critical**

3. Would you have participated in the trick to get back at the Fisher. Why or why not? **Analyze**

4. Can playing tricks on a trickster, like the Fisher, be an effective way to get them to stop fooling others who are **unfortunate**? Explain your response. **Evaluate**

5. Reread *Anansi and Common Sense* on page 484-485. Is the author's purpose the same or different in that play as in *The Catch of the Day*? Use examples from the selections.

Reading/Writing Across Texts

Clues	Author's Purpose