

Teacher's Guide:

Obara and the Merchants

Adapted by Michelle Bodden

Illustrated by Kwenci Jones

About the book:

Obara the hunter is finally able to make a delicious stew! But is there enough to share with the hungry merchants who are coming up the path?

About the author:

Michelle Bodden has been an initiated Orisha worshipper for nineteen years. She has always loved to write, and has written many stories and poems. Over the years, Michelle has gained a deeper and deeper respect for the essential life lessons contained in the apatakis, or sacred stories of her religion. She lives in Queens, New York with her two children.

About the illustrator:

Quentin "kwenci" Jones is an artist, teacher and builder. As early as his childhood, Kwenci discovered his works of art made lasting impressions. Since then his murals, paintings and three-dimensional creations have captivated and entertained many. The inspiration for the illustrations of Obara and the Merchants was derived from Kwenci's awe and respect for the creatures, the elements and the forces of nature which make up this gift called Earth. Although a native of New Jersey, Kwenci now makes his home in Brooklyn, New York.

Author Interview:

1. Can you share a bit about your faith and how it influences your work?

One of the core beliefs of my faith is that the development of good character is our highest lifelong goal because that is the most valuable thing any person can have. Achieving this goal does not have to be heavy and hard, however. I write to provide easy, little steps on the journey.

2. What do you hope young people take away from your books?

I hope that seeing that positive force in the characters of the book will help young people recognize more of it within themselves.

3. What are you working on next?

*I'm looking forward to collaborating with kwenci on our third picture book, *The Arrogant King*.*

Pre-reading:

What are merchants? What problem do you think Obara will have with them? Do all main characters face a problem? Predict what you think Obara's might have to do.

Questions to consider:

1. In most of the villages in Nigeria people were happy. Why were they so unhappy in one?
2. Who gave up? Who did not? Would you give up? Why or why not?
3. What does this mean: "Obara was straight and strong as his arrows." How can you be more like this?
4. Explain how Obara got something for his pot.
5. What is your favorite meal? Do you like to share it with others?
6. What did Adebayo follow? What scene makes you hungrier than any other?
7. Predict whether Obara will share his meal with the merchants. Would you?
8. They call Obara, "a generous friend." Do you think people would describe you this way or not? Why?
9. What did the merchants give Obara for his generosity? What would you do with so many pumpkins?
10. What surprise did Obara find? Why was he rewarded?

Projects:**Language arts:**

Michelle Bodden uses simile to help readers see the story in their mind's eye. "Obara was straight and strong as his arrows." Try your own hand at simile (or metaphor) to describe a character in one of your own stories.

Reading:

Good readers make predictions about the story as they read along. After each page, stop and predict what you think might happen next. Remember- being right is not really important because the joy of reading is often being surprised in the end!

Health/Science:

Create a friendship salad. Each student can bring in one piece of fruit that can be added to the mixture. Cut, share, enjoy!

Drama:

Write a play inspired by Obara's story. Share with other classes!

Math:

Solve these problems inspired by Obara's story:

If one pot of stew can serve twenty bowls of soup how many people can enjoy it if they each have one bowl? What if each person has two bowls?

If it costs .50cents a bowl for the ingredients how much does a pot of stew cost to create?

If there are 60 people in the village (and they are very hungry, like in Obara's story so they would each like to eat three bowls) how many pots of stew must be made? How much will it cost to make them?

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.