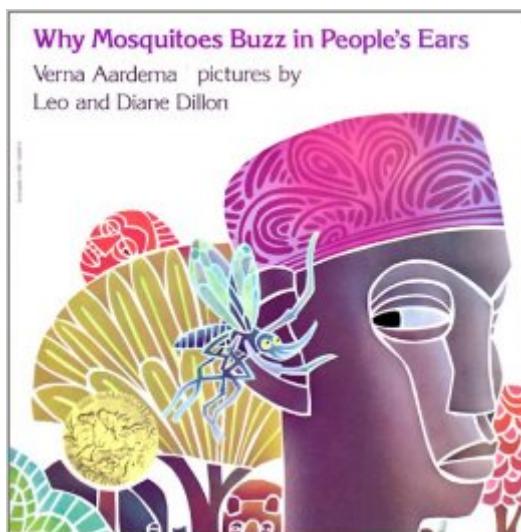


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# Why Mosquitoes Buzz In People's Ears



## **Synopsis**

A retelling of a traditional West African tale that reveals how the mosquito developed its annoying habit. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

Age Range: 4 and up

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Scholastic (June 1980)

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Product Dimensions: 8 x 8.3 x 0.1 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (98 customer reviews)

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## **Customer Reviews**

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema, Pictures by Leo and Diane Dillon. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1975. Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears is an African folktale which offers a great lesson to be learned by children. The story is about a mosquito who tells a lie to an iguana and annoys the iguana. This sets off a series of events that affects everyone who lives in the forest and the initiation of daylight. It is an excellent story for a young reader to learn the consequence of telling lies and the detrimental affect it can have on individuals and/or communities. After reading this story to a child parents should ascertain whether the child understood the lesson of this folktale and emphasize how important it is to always tell the truth. The illustrations in this book are spectacular. Each page is filled with brightly-colored pictures that will capture the interest of a young child and keep them reading until the very end. The illustrations also correspond directly to the storyline which will give the young reader the ability to glance at the pictures and help them read the printed words. This is not only a good story for children, but for adults too. The end offers a humorous reason for why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears, and why people shoo them away. This is definitely a good book to keep in every home and school library. Nancy Paretti

From Aesop's fables to Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears, Africans explain natural

phenomenon in the form of a story. This story also has a moral at the end. Ask your reader what it is. This question will tell you if the reader understood the sequence of the story and the main idea. The illustrations are fabulous. The story is great-especially when all the animals go before the council to explain what the problem is. They actually talk it out which is a concept we need to reinforce with our children.

The book was the Caldecott Medal winner in 1976 for the best illustrated children's book of that year. The book is a retold version of a West African folk tale which will charm anyone who hears it. This book is not only good for parents to read to their children, it is also appropriate for use in the classroom for K - 2nd grade. The book subtly explores the unseen hand of causation to expand children's horizons about the effects of what they do. In so doing, it raises a number of interesting issues that you can discuss together. The story is organized as follows. A mosquito sets off a string of causation. At the end of the causation, there is an investigation which gradually unveils the causation. Realizing the causation solves the problem, and has an unintended consequence. The book's overall point is that we all need to be better listeners. Since poor communication and listening are the most important causes of problems, this story can be the foundation to focus a child on improving in both of those areas. "The mosquito said, 'I saw a farmer digging yams that were almost as big as I am.' 'I would rather be deaf than listen to such nonsense!' was the Iguana's reaction. So he put 2 sticks into his ears to block out the sound of the mosquito. (Hardly a good role model for listening.) Because Iguana could not hear, he ignored Python's greeting. Frightened by this, Python dived down the nearest rabbit hole. Doing this caused the rabbit to scurry away. Crow spotted the rabbit running, and raised the alarm that danger was near. Monkey heard the cry and leapt through the trees. One of the branches broke, and Monkey fell into Owl's nest killing an owlet. When Mother Owl returned, she was so heart broken she could not hoot to awaken the sun. So night continued. King Lion called a meeting of the animals to investigate. Beginning with Owl, he uncovers the source of the problem. The last to be questioned was Iguana. "Yes," said the iguana. "It was mosquito's fault." The cry went up, "Punish the mosquito!" "When Mother Owl heard that, she was satisfied. She turned her head towards the east and hooted . . . ." "And the sun came up." Mosquito has listened to all this from a nearby bush. Mosquito crept away. "But because of this the mosquito has a guilty conscience." "To this day she goes about whining in people's ears. 'Zeee! Is everyone still angry at me?'" "When she does that, she gets an honest answer." The illustrations are based on cut-outs of vivid pastel shades that make the story even more lively. As you can see, the book takes causation past where responsibility really goes. So you will have a chance to discuss

that mosquito wasn't really guilty of the owlet's death. It was just an accident. The mosquito was an indirect cause of the owlet's death, but not a blameworthy one. Iguana plays a much bigger and more blameworthy role, but is still not a murderer. But everyone tends to see the blame lying elsewhere (in this story, as in real life). Obviously, the science facts are not all correct here. The sun would rise anyway, and the mosquito's sound probably plays some role in reproduction. You should discuss with your child how the human mind makes associations that are not logical and miss the real causes. Also, who should be punished in this story? Actually, no one, but societies tend to create punishments even for innocent activity. This animal group is no exception. Despite not being guilty, mosquito still feels uncomfortable. This is a good thing to discuss. Victims of crimes often blame themselves for somehow causing their own victimization. Finally, what would have been a better response by Iguana? Why did Python run rather than sticking around to get better information? You can use these areas to help your child understand the important role of questions in unlocking solutions. I also suggest that you practice a little together. Find some event, and try to trace the causes of the event back to the contributing origins. Perhaps you'll help stimulate a better thinker as a result! Ask questions until you understand!

I don't recommend this book to the mosquito lovers of the world. If you've a soft place in your heart for those buzzing swarming little blood-sucking fiends, you probably shouldn't peruse this particular book. **HOWEVER**. If you happen to enjoy a good "why" story from Africa, you could hardly do better than the lushly illustrated "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears". In a kind of *Chicken Little* series of events, a lying mosquito sets off a chain reaction ending, ultimately, in the sun no longer rising. When the animals of the forest slowly track down the reasons behind the sun's disappearance, they eventually reach the conclusion that mosquito is the one to blame. Ever since, mosquitoes will sometimes ask people whether or not "everyone" is still angry at them. The answer is a satisfying (I love this descriptive sound) *KPAO!* The illustrations are splendid. During the day they are set against a white background. By the time the sun disappears, they pop out of a black setting. Kids will like finding the small smiling pink bird that cleverly pops up in every scene. It's a fine fine text that bears more than a passing resemblance at times to the classic nursery rhyme "The House the Jack Built". And who knew that the sound lions make when they laugh is "Nge nge nge"? Not I, said the fly. A lovely read.

This is a great story for all..it is about real life. This story was read to me and my siblings as children and I loved it so much, I sought it for my own children (both less than age 2) in hopes that they too

would grow with the lessons of the story. It teaches the consequences of gossiping. African stories always have a moral to teach, that's why I love them so. Another must have for an international library.

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