

# A LONG WALK TO WATER

## BOOK CLUB

1 October 2025

Woman & the Rat / Wife Demands the Death of Her Mother-in-law

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# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

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LISA

## **“Wife Demands the Death of her Mother-in-Law”**

In this folktale, there was a young man and a young woman who wanted to get married. However, the young woman had a hard condition, she asked him to kill his mother. The young man agreed and went to his mother's house to do it. But when he arrived, he saw his mother cleaning and taking care of the babies with so much love that he gave up. He decided to move and hide his mother and younger siblings to another village, where he built them a new home. After that, he returned and married the young woman. Each time his wife became pregnant, he made her build their houses. She realized how hard it was without a mother's hands and she always complained about the hard work. Finally, the man brought back his mother and siblings. At that moment, his wife understood the lesson and now they all live together in peace.

## **“How the Woman and the Rat Came to Stay in the Same House”**

There was a rat that lived in the bush, far from people. At that time, all women died during childbirth because their stomachs were cut open. One day, the rat came to the village and asked why the women were being killed at the end of their pregnancies. Then he asked them to call him when the time comes. The next time, a woman gave birth safely, and she did not die. All the women were happy and wanted to give something to the rat in return for his kindness. He said: “Mothers, wherever you live, let me live with you. Wherever you eat, let me share a little with you.” All the women agreed, and now, the rat lives safely indoors, where no one can kill him.

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# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

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ESMERALDA

Not yet submitted

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# CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

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1. Both stories show women doing hard, often invisible work (giving birth, cleaning children, carrying house materials). Why do you think the stories focus so much on this?
2. What roles do women occupy in each story, and what do those roles say about women in Sudanese culture?
3. What kinds of power or choices do the women appear to have in each story, and where do you see limits on that power?
4. When decisions about the household are made, who decides, and what does that suggest about women?
5. How does each story treat the presence—or absence—of a mother?
6. Taken together, what do these stories suggest Sudanese culture values most about women?
7. What moral or lesson about women and family life might Sudanese children take away from these stories?

# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

MARIANA

1. **Demanded** (verb Demand)–asked strongly for something.

*She demanded a glass of water after the long walk.*

2. **Brewed** (verb Brew)–made a drink (like tea or coffee) by soaking in hot water.

*He brewed a fresh cup of tea.*

3. **Gathered** (verb Gather)–came together or collected things.

*The children gathered around the teacher.*

4. **Slaughtered** (verb Slaughter) – killed an animal for food.

*The farmer slaughtered a chicken for dinner.*

5. **Bathed** (verb Bathe) – washed (immersing) in water.

*The baby bathed in warm water.*

6. **Dealings** (noun)– business or interactions with someone.

*He had many dealings with the new company.*

7. **Astonishment** (noun)– great surprise.

*She opened the gift in astonishment.*

8. **Nibbling** (verb)– eating in small bites.

*The mouse was nibbling a piece of cheese.*

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# VOCABULARY BUILDER/ SOUND SPOTTER

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YULIANNA

1. **Slaughter**. verb. [slaugh· ter] to kill an animal, especially for its meat. Synonym: BUTCHER .  
Noun slaughter, adj. slaughtered.

*Farmers slaughter cows to provide meat for the market.*

2. **Dowry** - noun ['daʊri] property and money that a woman gives to her husband when they marry in some societies . synonym : Bride price, gift.

*Her family gave a large dowry when she got married.*

3. **Defecate** - verb [def· e· cate]. to free feces from the bowels . noun: defecation ; adjective: defecatory Synonym: Pooping, Bowel movement.

*The baby defecated in the diaper.*

4. **Pole** - noun [ 'pōl ]. a long, thin, cylindrical object

*They planted a wooden pole in the garden.*

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# SOUND SPOTTER

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FATEMEH

Not yet submitted

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# CONNECTION MAKER

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ANA

Not yet submitted

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# CONNECTION MAKER

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LILY S.

Not yet submitted

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# EMOTIONS EXPLORER

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IRA

I don't even know where to begin.

The title of the fairy tale shocked me even before I started reading it.

The demand itself, the demand from a loving woman to kill the mother of her man.

I was no less amazed by this young man's willingness to comply with this terrible demand.

And then the story left me perplexed by the fact that this man, miraculously realizing how much his mother was doing, gets married, brings children into the world with a woman, who demanded an unimaginably horrible, and at the same time punishes her for years.

For me, a mother is a person who devotes herself entirely to her children: care, love, sleepless nights, someone who is always concerned about whether a child has eaten, whether a child is safe and whether a child needs help, any help...

Therefore, it is almost impossible for me to imagine having anything in common, coexisting with a person after making such a demand.

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# EMOTIONS EXPLORER

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YARIELA

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# WORD ARTIST

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FLAVIA

The next sunny morning the family gathered in the big backyard, with the in laws and the whole community to make a barbecue in honors the mother's return, the family together again and to bury the false mother's death.

The men chatted and drank beer around the fire, while it was burning slowly and the meat was roasting . The crackling of the burning wood mixed with the laughter of the children running and playing nearby.

The women set (out ?) colorful bowls of rice and vegetables on a long wooden table, cover with a vibrant colored tablecloth. The women dresses were colorful too.

It was a time to celebrate. No one cared about the dry weather or the dust rising and blending with the smoke. What mattered was the delicious smell of roasting meat filling the air.

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# WORD ARTIST

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MONICA

Here

# FACT FINDER

MARIA



*The Dinkas are one of southern Sudan's largest groups. They are famous for their facial scars which denote which clan they are from.*

“In the fading light he could see the faces of those nearest him. Two of the men had patterns of V-shaped scars on their foreheads. Dinka patterns again—the kinds that were given to the boys in Salva’s village as part of the ritual of becoming a man. This people were Dinkas, too! Could his family be among them?” (*A Long Walk to Water*)

During a young man’s rite of passage into adulthood, a series of deep of gashes are made on his foreheads, which are used to create permanent scars.

Dinka men traditionally receive scarification on their foreheads, often consisting of three parallel lines across the forehead.

In effect that’s why Salva every time more people joined in the group, tried to find out if any of them had the scar of his tribe to which he belonged and to hope to find his family.

# FACT FINDER

CRISTY



When I read the story about how they respect the rat, I remembered a documentary I had seen, but about India, where they have a temple dedicated to rats. They think the rat is an animal of the gods, and in the temple there are approximately 25,000 rats. The temple is called Karni Mata in India, and they say they are in honor of the goddess Karni Mata and her children. There are also white rats that are believed to bring good luck.

*I know my fact finder isn't from Sudan, but it's from India, a culture that exists a lot in Dallas.*