

An Animal Conference Determines the Wisest Animal A Folktale from South Sudan



Once upon a time, there was a debate about which animals were the smartest and wisest on earth and why they were so clever. It was decided that a conference was necessary to settle this question. An invitation was sent across the earth to all the animal groups, including reptiles, fish, birds, and those that lived on the land. The conference was held on one of the biggest islands. All the animals attended.

Each group of animals proclaimed itself to be the wisest and, therefore, the boss of everyone. The biggest animals, including the elephants, claimed the title because they were the strongest. But the smallest animals said that strength did not bring wisdom.

The reptiles and fish said they were the smartest because they ruled the rivers, lakes, and oceans. The land animals said no. The birds argued that since they were the eyes of the earth flying everywhere, they knew more than anyone. Everyone else disagreed with them.

Then a man and woman came forward. They said they controlled the earth, and that meant they were the wisest. Nearly all the animals agreed with them.

Only two animals, a cat and a dog, refused to honor the man and woman. The cat and dog said they would agree with all the other animals that men and women were the smartest only if the animals answered "Yes" to one question.

Hearing this, the other animals became split in their opinions. Some of them said, "Please don't waste your time with such kinds of animals as the dog and cat." But others said, "Let them ask their question because men and women are the boss on earth."

The cat replied, "Listen you stupid animals. You said men and women are the smartest. But did you know they are our servants? They wash our bodies clean and feed us. They pet and love us. They let us live in their homes. We can even jump on them. So, here is the question: Can any of you use men and women in this way?"

Every animal said "No." "Some of us may be very strong or big," said the lion on behalf of all the animals, "but we cannot make men and women do these things for us. We must admit that the cat and dog are really the smartest animals living on earth because men and women respect them so much."

Then all the animals returned to their homes with sadness because they knew they were not the smartest.