

THE VILLAGE OF ROUND AND SQUARE HOUSES

The Village of Round and Square Houses

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Themes: African Culture/Relationships

Grade Level: 3-5

Length: 12 minutes, iconographic

Summary

THE VILLAGE OF ROUND AND SQUARE HOUSES is set in a village in Africa.

The houses of this African village are of two shapes, square and round. The square houses shelter the men of the village. The round houses shelter the women and children. As the story unfolds, the routines of the villagers, including work, play, mealtime, and bedtime routines are explored.

One night, a grandmother tells her grandchild the story of how the village came to be divided into round and square houses. As she tells it, a volcano in the distance erupted and left only two houses standing, one square and one round. The villagers took this as a sign of special significance. The village chief assigned the men to the square house and the women to the round house. The people of the village have been living this way, in peace and harmony, ever since.

Objectives

- Children will learn about African culture
- Children will explore relationships among family members
- Children will investigate the importance of assuming responsibility and working together

Before Viewing Activities

Locate Tos in West Africa on the map. Discuss the climate and vegetation. Compare it to where the children live. Share the book *The Village of Round and Square Houses* with children. Then ask: How were the men, women, and children's responsibilities different from one another? What kinds of crops were grown in the village? What did the people of the village do after the night's dinner? How were the tools that the villagers used for both work and play similar to/different from ours? What would you like most/least about living in a village like this? Would you rather be a man, woman, or child in this village? Why?

Talk with children about their daily lives with family members. Encourage children to describe the different responsibilities family members share at home, and the ways responsibilities are divided. Later, explain that the kinds of responsibilities family members have, and the ways they are divided, vary from culture to culture.

Ask children to listen as well as observe carefully. Tell children that they will hear many different kinds of background sounds. After viewing, see how many different sounds children can recall. (These sounds include background music of different kinds, crickets, wind, and a volcano erupting.)

After Viewing Activities

Talk with children about the different kinds of materials that might have been used to construct the round and square houses in the film. Then supply children with an assortment of art materials which might include construction paper, pipe cleaners, cardboard, tissue paper, etc. Let children use the materials in any way they see fit in order to construct their own round and square houses. Later, arrange the houses to form a vil-

lage and display them in the classroom. Children can write stories about events that occur in their homemade village and share them with others in the group.

Choose a day where children will prepare their own lunch in the classroom. Have children divide into groups and take on the roles of the men, women, and children of the village. As children prepare, serve, and eat their lunch, have them act according to the ways their roles are defined. (Remind children of the order of things as they exist. For example, the men of the village are served meals first. The children help prepare and carry the meal. The women eat after the men, the children last.) After children have had some fun enjoying their lunch this way, ask: How did you feel about what you had to do during lunch? Do you think the men, women, or children had the most fun? Why? Who do you think had the hardest job? What might have happened if some people did not do their job? How would you have felt if you had to do everything alone?

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