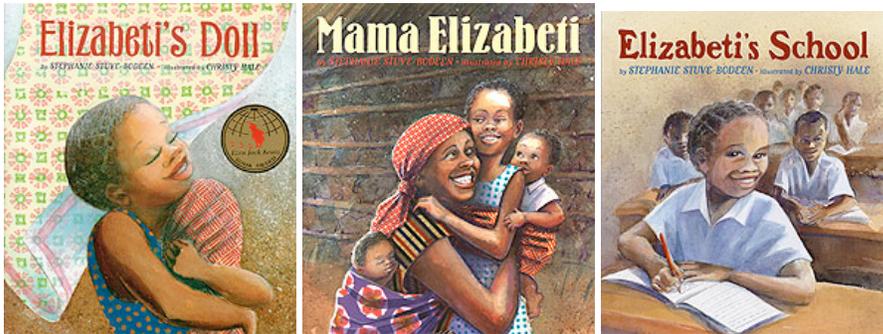


Classroom Guide for the *Elizabeti* series, featuring **Elizabeti's School**

by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale



Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 2-3

Interest Level: Grades PreK-2

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

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Themes

Siblings, Mothers, Family Traditions, African Americans, Parenting, International, Early Childhood, Imagination

Synopsis

Elizabeti's School, the third in the award-winning series about Elizabeti, a young girl in contemporary Tanzania, introduces Elizabeti on her first day of school. Despite the thrill of wearing a new school uniform and shiny new shoes, and the excitement of going to school for the very first time, Elizabeti starts to miss her family very soon after she arrives at the schoolhouse. She worries that her mother might need help with household chores and that her younger brother and sister might need a playmate. When Elizabeti gets home, she is so glad to see everyone that she decides she won't return to school the next day. However, that evening, Elizabeti has a chance to show her family some of the things she has learned in school—counting to five, writing letters, dancing, and playing a game called **machaura**. Her pride in accomplishing these things and her joy in sharing them make Elizabeti decide that maybe she will give school another chance after all.

Background

The Elizabeti books (*Elizabeti's Doll*, *Mama Elizabeti*, and *Elizabeti's School*) are based on the author's experiences while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania in the 1980s. Tanzania is in southeastern Africa on the Indian Ocean. Its capital is Dar es Salaam. Most people there make their living from agriculture. The official languages of Tanzania are English and Swahili (sometimes called Kiswahili).

Although the stories take place in Tanzania, all three Elizabeti books focus on universal childhood experiences and desires: wanting a special toy to love and care for (*Elizabeti's Doll*), sibling love and responsibility (*Mama Elizabeti*), and the first day of school (*Elizabeti's School*).

Before Reading

Prereading Focus Questions

Before sharing *Elizabeti's School* with students, you may wish to have students discuss one or more of the following questions as a motivation for reading.

1. What was your first day of school like?
2. How do you feel about coming back to school each fall? Why?
3. What do you miss about home when you are at school?

4. Why might school be different in other countries? What might some of the differences be?
5. Why is school important?

Teaching Tip

Elizabeti's School is an excellent choice to share with students as they begin the new school year. Children who are starting school for the first time will find the story especially comforting.

Exploring the Book

Display *Elizabeti's School* and read aloud the title. Be sure students see both the front and back cover.

How would you describe the girl's expression on the front cover? What do you notice about the students' clothing? How is this school different from your school? Where do you think this school might be?

Read aloud the author's name. Ask students if they have ever read any other books by this author. Read the illustrator's name. Are students familiar with any other books that she has illustrated?

Teaching Tip

Have available copies of the other Elizabeti books (*Elizabeti's Doll* and *Mama Elizabeti*) to enable students to find out more about Elizabeti and the country in which she lives.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students name some things they think might happen to Elizabeti on her first day of school. Record their ideas on a poster pad or chart paper and revisit the list after students have read and talked about the story. How many of their predictions were right?

Vocabulary

Help students enrich their vocabularies by compiling words from the book and helping students sort the words into different categories. For example, you might make lists of compound words or words that end in the suffix **-ly**, or **-ing**. Another list might include words that describe feelings. Encourage students to think of other categories in which to group the words.

Compound Words

everywhere
newborn
schoolroom
classmates
afternoon

Words Ending in -ly

surely
finally
lonely
certainly
neatly

Words for Feelings

excited
shy
missing
glad
happy

After Reading

Discussion Questions

After reading the book, use these questions to generate discussion and expand students' understanding of the story. Encourage students to refer to places in the story and illustrations that support their answers.

1. How does Elizabeti feel when she is getting ready to go to school? Why do you think she feels this way? How does she show her feelings?
2. Why does Elizabeti slow down when she and her sister first get to the school yard?
3. What is **machaura**? What American game is it like?
4. Why does Elizabeti have trouble paying attention in school?
5. How does Elizabeti help out at her school?
6. Why does Elizabeti decide she doesn't want to go back to school?
7. How does Moshi surprise Elizabeti? How does Elizabeti surprise her mother?
8. How do you think Elizabeti's mother learned to play **machaura**? Are you ever surprised at the things your parents know? Would you like to share an example of this happening to you?
9. Why does Elizabeti decide to give school another try?
10. What do the story and pictures tell you about the importance of family in a Tanzanian village?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Question section of this guide to help group members explore the story.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines or phrases that describe Elizabeti's feelings during the day.
- The **Illustrator** might draw pictures showing his or her interpretation of various events in the story.
- The **Connector** might find other books about the first day of school or adjusting to school.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might find additional information about family life and/or school in Tanzania.

There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started with Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students engage with the story and personalize the text. Students might respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. Do you remember your first day of school? Compare Elizabeti's first day of school to your own. How were they similar? How were they different?
2. What might Elizabeti tell her little brother, Obedi, about school so that he will look forward to it? How might she help him have a good first day?
3. How do you feel when you learn new things? With whom do you share these experiences or information?
4. What are some of the things that Elizabeti likes best about school? What are some of the things you like best?
5. What would you tell another reader about this book?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for them to share and discuss their work.

1. When Elizabeti gets home, she uses the counting she learned in school to count Moshi's kittens. Have students write about a time they have used something they just learned in school at home or in some other place.
2. Have students plan an interview with the author, Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen. Ask students to write some questions about the main character and story in *Elizabeti's School* that they would like the author to answer. Students may also enjoy reading *Elizabeti's Doll* and *Mama Elizabeti*, if they have not already done so, and including questions about these books as well. Interesting links pertaining to setting, characters, and experiences can be made among the three titles.
3. Ask students to name five things they think are most important to Elizabeti. Have them put the items in the order of their importance to Elizabeti. Then have students make a list of five things that are important to them and write a compare and contrast paragraph about the two lists.

- In the story, school is a new experience for Elizabeti. Why is it sometimes hard to adjust to new experiences? Why does it take time? Have students write about a time they had to adjust to a new experience.
- Let students make a timeline of Elizabeti's feelings during her first day of school. For each entry, write what happens and how Elizabeti feels. For example:

Before School	Arrival at School	Learning Machaura	In class
excited, eager	shy, uncertain	happy, comfortable	homesick

ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

- Pair strong English speakers with ESL students. Have the pairs take turns reading aloud and talking about the accompanying illustrations.
- Make a tape recording of the story for students to listen to as they follow along in the book.
- Point out that the numbers and name of the game are in Swahili, a language spoken in Tanzania. Encourage any students familiar with this language to teach some words to the rest of the class.

Interdisciplinary Activities

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, you might try some of the following activities.

Social studies

- Help students locate Tanzania on a globe or world map. Questions that students might answer based on the map include:
 - On what continent is Tanzania located? (Africa)
 - On what part of this continent is Tanzania located? (southeastern)
 - On what ocean is Tanzania? (Indian Ocean)
 - What countries share borders with Tanzania? (Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya)
 - What is the capital of Tanzania? (Dar es Salaam)
 - What large lake forms a border with Tanzania? (Lake Victoria)
- You may wish to have students research more about the life of people in Tanzania. Suggest that they look for information such as what people do for a living, what they wear, what the climate is like, what the landforms are like, what people eat, and how they spend their free time. Students may also enjoy finding out more about Lake Victoria and the countries surrounding Tanzania.
- Remind students that Elizabeti learns how to play a game called **machaura**. Suggest that students make up specific rules for playing and scoring the game and then try playing on the playground or someplace where they can dig holes in the ground.

Science

Students may be interested to learn that Tanzania is famous for its animal wildlife. These include antelopes, zebras, elephants, baboons, hippos, giraffes, monkeys, and rhinos. Explain that the country has vast parks where most of the animals live. Have students use books, magazine articles in juvenile publications, encyclopedias, and the Internet to learn about and report on Tanzania's animals.

Math

Write the Swahili number words, their pronunciations, and their numerical equivalents on the chalkboard.

moja (MO-jah)	= 1
mbili (m-BEE-lee)	= 2
tatu (TAH-too)	= 3
nne (N-nay)	= 4

tano (TAH-no) = 5

Have students practice saying the number words until they are familiar with their pronunciations and meanings. Then give students simple math problems to solve using these number words. For example:

- tatu plus moja equals ?
- moja plus mbili equals ?
- tano minus nne equals ?
- mbili plus moja plus moja equals ?

Art

Have students turn to the last page in the book. Then ask them to draw a dream that Elizabeti might have that night. Display the finished pictures and invite students to explain the dreams and why they think Elizabeti might have them.

About the Author

Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen grew up in Lafayette, Indiana. She joined the Peace Corps in the 1980s after graduating from the University of Wisconsin with a teaching degree. Although her goal was to help change this underprivileged country, the opposite happened—the country and its people changed her. Although Stuve-Bodeen experienced hardships such as thirst, cold, loneliness, and illness, she also fell in love with the people. Says Stuve-Bodeen, “In Tanzania, family is so important that everything else is secondary.” It was during a stay with a Tanzanian family that the inspiration for her first Elizabeti book, *Elizabeti’s Doll*, occurred. *Elizabeti’s Doll* has won numerous honors and awards: the Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award, School Library Journal Best Book of 1998, Child magazine Best Book of the Year, ALA Notable Book, Cooperative Children’s Book Center “Choices” selection, and the Minnesota Book award. The second book in the series, *Mama Elizabeti*, has been honored with the Paterson Prize for Books for Young People and praised as “a loving, sensitive book to be shared and cherished.” (*School Library Journal*, starred review). Stephanie’s latest book published with LEE & LOW is *Babu’s Song*.

Currently Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen lives with her husband and their children in Hawaii at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

About the Illustrator

Christy Hale has worked in children’s book publishing for many years as an award-winning designer, art director, and illustrator. She attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, where she has also taught. Hale found the research for the Elizabeti books “fascinating” and was pleased that Elizabeti’s world included chickens, something she has managed to include in every book she’s illustrated. Among the various papers and other materials Hale used for the illustrations in *Elizabeti’s School* is paper she created herself. Hale now lives in Palo Alto, California, with her husband and their daughter.

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