Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Sebgugugu the Glutton: A Bantu Tale from Rwanda by Verna Aardema, Nancy L. Clouse", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Daniel A. Nkemleke and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/210. Entry version as of November 19, 2026.

Verna Aardema , Nancy L. Clouse

Sebgugugu the Glutton: A Bantu Tale from Rwanda

United States of America (1993)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions Gods

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Sebgugugu the Glutton: A Bantu Tale from Rwanda
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1993
First Edition Details	Verna Aardema, *Sebgugugu the Glutton: A Bantu Tale from Rwanda*. Ill. by N.L. Clouse, Trenton, N.J.: Africa World, 1993, 32 pp.
ISBN	0865433771
Genre	Folk tales, Illustrated works
Target Audience	Crossover (children and young adults)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde I, wandasi5@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators

Verna Aardema , 1911 - 2000
(Author)

Verna Norberg Aardema Vugteveen was born in New Era, Michigan on June 6, 1911. She taught elementary school in Michigan from 1934–1973. She is known for her ability to adapt and retell traditional tales and folklore from distant cultures (usually Africa and Mexico) to children. She published her first collection of stories, *Tales from the Story Heart* in 1960 and in 1976 her book, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* earned her the Caldecott Medal. She died on May 11, 2000 and was buried in Fort Myers, Michigan.

Sources:

en.m.wikipedia.org (accessed: July 29, 2021).

booklogymagazine.com (accessed: July 29, 2021).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com

Nancy L. Clouse (Illustrator)

Nancy L. Clouse is an American author and illustrator of children's books like *Puzzle Maps U.S.A*. She graduated from Michigan State University in 1969 with a degree in Art Education. She is an art teacher at Michigan and a docent in the Grand Rapids Art Museum where her works have been exhibited.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Source:

Cedar Springs library features Nancy Clouse in rotating art exhibit, mlive.com, published January 4, 2019 (accessed: July 30, 2021).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, The University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Summary

Sebgugugu is a poor man who lives in a hut with his wife, Unanana, and their two sons, Zitu and Zabala. All they own is one cow named Gitale, on whose milk the sons feed. One fateful day Unanana leaves to tend her garden in the forest. A bird comes around their hut and Sebgugugu is convinced that its chirping is a message from Imana, the God of Rwanda. He tells his wife that if he kills the cow, they will have a hundred more. But she is not convinced and warns him not to do anything foolish. He finally slaughters the cow but none appears. The family feeds on beef for days, after which they go hungry and resolve to migrate in search for food.

When they cannot find anything, Sebgugugu begs Imana, the Lord of Rwanda, for help. Imana hears his pleas and leads them to an orchard with different kinds of fruits and vegetables. He asks them to harvest as much as they want but warns that the plants should not be destroyed. But after enjoying the bounty of the orchard, Sebgugugu tells his wife that the plants will produce more if he trims them. Unanana reminds him of Imana's warning but he pays no heed. He trims the plants which wither and die shortly afterwards. Again, they are left hungry and again, Sebgugugu pleads with Imana to rescue them. Imana then takes them to a rock with a small crack on it and commands the rock to bring out food. All kinds of food come out and again, Imana warns them to eat as much as they want but they should not disturb the rock. After a while, Sebgugugu decides that the crack is too small and decides to widen it. For a second time, his wife cautions him about Imana's warning but he does not listen to her. When he tries to force the crack open, it instead closes up and once again, they have to go and search for food. For the third time, Sebgugugu implores Imana to help and in his mercy, he points out a cattle kraal to them. He asks them to feed on the milk from the cows and give some of the milk to Igwababa, the crow, and Imana's servant and herdsman. Sebgugugu and his family live there until their sons were all grown up. Then Sebgugugu tells his wife that since his sons are big enough to tend cattle, there is no use for the crow anymore, and so he will kill it. For the third time, his wife reminds him of the warning and as usual, again he does not listen to his wife. Then he ambushes the crow and with his bow and arrow, brings it down. Instantly, Imana causes all the cattle together with Sebgugugu's wife and children to disappear without trace. That is how Sebgugugu lost everything.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Analysis	Greed and ingratitude are vices that almost all world cultures, from ancient to modern, frown at. These vices are associated with gluttony, which constitutes one of the seven deadly sins. These sins usually incur the wrath of the God(s). The Christian Bible warns, in Proverbs 23:21, that "drunkards and gluttons shall come to poverty…" which is the fate reserved for Sebgugugu's in the above myth. Not only does he fail to comply with Imana the creator's restrictions, but he also pays no heed to his wife's cautions. In this regard, he manifests traits of a typical patriarchal male who thinks he has the final say; the woman's voice does not count. Nonetheless, the woman's advice in this story proves right thereby weakening and questioning the patriarchal stance on male monopoly of knowledge. In his quest for more, Sebgugugu disobeys Imana and tests his patience thus incurring his wrath. As punishment, his whole family is lost in the void. This teaches Sebgugugu that there is always a price to pay for greed, ingratitude, and disobedience particularly when it comes to the gods. The story of Sebgugugu functions as a warning tale to people of all ages to beware of greed, ingratitude, and disobedience of the gods as the punishment or misfortune that awaits any such person is usually severe.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions Gods
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Disobedience Punishment Relationships Religious beliefs
Further Reading	Knappert, Jan, *Kings, Gods, & Spirits from African Mythology*, New York: Peter Books, 1986.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	Mbitu, Ngangar and Rancor Prime, *Essential African Mythology: Stories That Changed The World*, San Francisco: Thorsons An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1997.
Addenda	Country of origin: Rwanda.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.