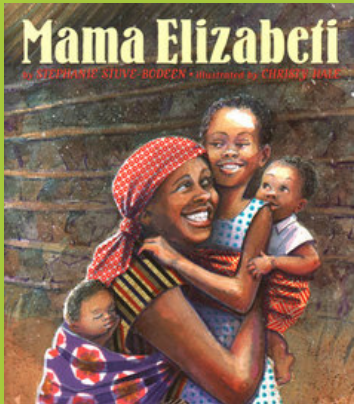


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# Mama Elizabeti

written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen

illustrated by Christy Hale

## About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**\*Reading Level:** Grades 2–3

**Interest Level:** Grades PreK–3

**Guided Reading Level:** M

**Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points:** 3.7/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD570L

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Siblings, Identity, Self-Esteem and Confidence, Responsibility, Families (Siblings), Mothers and Children, Dolls, Imagination, Cultural Diversity, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Poverty, Games, Home, African/African American Interest

## SYNOPSIS

Elizabeti has a new baby sister, so now Elizabeti has to help take care of her younger brother, Obedi. Looking after of a real child isn't as easy as looking after her own "baby," a rock doll named Eva. Elizabeti tries to sweep the floor, but Obedi pulls her hair; Elizabeti sifts rocks out of the rice, but Obedi spills it on the ground. When Elizabeti goes to get water, Obedi wiggles so much the water jug falls off her head. But all Elizabeti's frustrations disappear when she finds a sweet surprise—Obedi takes his first steps right in front of her. He even gives her a big wet kiss. The rock doll never did that!

Author Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen and artist Christy Hale have again created a loving, tender story that all children—and mothers—can relate to. *Mama Elizabeti* has proven be a classic for all ages.

### Awards and honors:

- **Children's Books of the Year, Outstanding Merit**, Bank Street College Children's Book Committee
- **Parents' Choice Recommended**
- **Paterson Prize for Books for Young People**, The Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College
- **Honor Book Award**, Society of School Librarians International
- **Best Children's Book Award**, Peace Corps Writers



## BACKGROUND

**Tanzania:** 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. (See here for more information on the Peace Corps: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/tanzania/>). This interview with the author includes more information about her experiences: <http://www.peacecorpswriters.org/pages/2001/0109/109talkstubo.html>.

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). Find more geographical information about Tanzania here (<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/tanzania/#tanzania-masai.jpg>). See sample photos and information about life in a rural Tanzanian village here (<http://www.our-africa.org/tanzania/food-daily-life>).

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*). Each book touches on experiences that many children share, highlighting the sweet innocence of a child's imagination and the love between mother and daughter, while at the same time offering an intimate view of contemporary African culture. Readers are sure to share Elizabeti's joy and wonder as she discovers the important and sometimes humorous responsibilities of parenting and the excitement of learning.

This contemporary, award-winning series follows a young girl in Tanzania as she adjusts to the trials and rewards of becoming a big sister, and to the mixture of excitement, anxiety, and relief she feels on the first day of school. Author Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen and illustrator Christy Hale have created a loving, tender series to which all children—and parents—can relate.

### Additional titles to teach about siblings and family:

***Elizabeti's Doll*** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/elizabeti-s-doll>

***Cora Cooks Pancit*** written by Dorina Lazo Gilmore, illustrated by Kristi Valiant  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cora-cooks-pancit>

***Featherless/ Desplumado*** written by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Jamel Akib  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bringing-asha-home>

***No Mush Today*** written by Sally Derby, illustrated by Nicole Tadgell  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/no-mush-today>

***The Jones Family Express*** written and illustrated by Javaka Steptoe  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-jones-family-express>

***My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito*** written by Amada Irma Pérez, illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-very-own-room-mi-propio-cuartito>

***Where Fireflies Dance / Ahi, donde bailan las luciérnagas*** written by Lucha Corpi, illustrated by Mira Reisberg  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/where-fireflies-dance-ahi-donde-bailan-las-luciernagas>

***Bird*** written by Zetta Elliott, illustrated by Shadra Strickland  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bird>

***The Birthday Swap*** written and illustrated by Loretta Lopez  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-birthday-swap>



## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students.

Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

kanga, sifted, jug, sack, market, thorn tree

### Academic

gently, chores, squirmed, slapped, wiggled, slumped, ruined, sighed, piled, spread, returned, squeal, chubby, snuggled, nestled

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Do you have siblings? Are they older or younger than you? What is your favorite part of having a sibling? What can be challenging about having siblings?
2. What chores do you do at home? When a family has a new baby, how might older siblings be helpful?
3. What's it feel like to realize you're growing up? What's exciting about growing up? What's hard about it?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author and illustrators' dedications, and illustrations.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out about:

- what Elizabeti's life is like in her village
- what Elizabeti must do to help her family
- what the experience is like for her and what she learns

Encourage students to consider why the author, Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, would want to share this story with young people.



## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses.

**To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)*  
*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)*

1. What's happening in Elizabeti's family? What does Mama have to do? What does Elizabeti have to do? How does she know how to take care of a baby?
2. How does Elizabeti get ready for her day of watching Obedi?
3. What chores does Elizabeti need to do? What does Obedi do?
4. What does Elizabeti have to do to get water? What happens when Obedi wiggles? What does Elizabeti have to figure out?
5. Who walks past? Why can't they help Elizabeti?
6. What does Elizabeti do with Obedi so she can refill the water jug? What does she realize when she returns to the kanga?
7. Where is Obedi? (Do you see any clues in the illustration on the page before he comes out?) What does he do when he comes out?
8. What does Obedi do when Elizabeti lifts him up? What does Elizabeti think?
9. How does Elizabeti get Obedi and the water jug home safely?
10. What does Elizabeti do at bedtime? What does she think about?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)*  
*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)*

1. What do you think a rock doll is? How would taking care of a doll help Elizabeti know how to take care of her brother?
2. Based on the clues in the book, what's a kanga?
3. Why is it harder to do chores while carrying Obedi than carrying a rock doll?
4. How does caring for Obedi help Elizabeti better understand what things are like for her mother? Why does Elizabeti wish she could just take care of Eva again?
5. How do you think Elizabeti feels when she realizes Obedi is missing? What does she worry about? Why do you think this bothers her?
6. Why is it surprising that Obedi is walking? Why is this a special moment?
7. Do you think it's a slow or fast walk home from the water pump? Why?
8. How do you think Elizabeti feels when Obedi snuggles up with her? Why does she decide "there would be time for Eva tomorrow?"
9. Why do you think Elizabeti's parents want her to take care of Obedi? What might they hope she learns? What do you think Elizabeti might do differently when she takes care of Obedi in the future?
10. Why do you think the title of this book is *Mama Elizabeti* even though Elizabeti is the sister?
11. What did you learn about life in Africa from reading this story? What are you interested in learning more about?

### Reader's Response

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)*

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize





★“Stuve-Bodeen builds on the poignant themes of ELIZABETI’S DOLL, while giving readers an expanded view of life in this African village. This is a loving, sensitive book to be shared and cherished.”(starred review)

–*School Library Journal*

“[T]his sweet sequel to the wonderful, award-winning ELIZABETI’S DOLL will hit a chord in any child who has had to care for a younger sibling.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*

“This book shares with its predecessor a resolutely childlike point of view and a matter-of-fact presentation of another culture (that of rural Tanzania).”

–*Horn Book*

their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader’s response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Create a two-column chart with words that describe Elizabeti as a character on one side and evidence from the text to support each description on the other side.
2. What strategies does Elizabeti use to solve problems? Write about a time when you had a problem and couldn’t find anyone to help you. What did you do?
3. How is caring for a real baby or toddler different than taking care of a doll? What’s more challenging? What’s more fun? Give examples from the story and your own ideas or experiences.
4. Using examples from the story, compare and contrast your life with a child’s life in an African village. What’s the same? What’s different?
5. Do you think it’s fair that Elizabeti has to watch her brother and do so many chores? Why or why not?

### ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can

alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.

2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students’ level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about their chores at home.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students’ prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.



## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1 and 2, Craft and Structure, Strand 4 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strand 3)

1. Revisit the text to make a list of words for how the characters (especially Obedi) move. Act out words like squirm, slap, kick, wiggle, and slump. Act out Obedi toddling home and falling down. Discuss how precise vocabulary helps the reader better imagine the story and encourage students to use precise words in their own writing.
2. Have students write or act out a sample conversation between Elizabeti and her parents about what happened at the water pump. Brainstorm how Elizabeti might explain what happened at the water pump and what her parents might say in response.
3. Put dolls and other related props (e.g. pieces of bright fabric for kangas, rocks for “rock dolls,” a broom, a big bowl for rice, plastic “water jugs,” etc.) in your dramatic play area. Invite students to use ideas from the story in their pretend play.
4. Read other the other Elizabeti stories (*Elizabeti’s Doll* ([https://www.leeandlow.com/books/45/hc/elizabeti\\_s\\_doll](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/45/hc/elizabeti_s_doll)) and *Elizabeti’s School* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/elizabeti-s-school>)). Talk about how each of the three stories presents themes relevant to most children, even if they do not live in Africa. Ask your students what other stories they’d like to read about Elizabeti’s life.

5. In this interview, the author shares that Elizabeti was inspired by a girl with a rock doll she remembered from her time in Tanzania: <http://www.peacecorpswriters.org/pages/2001/0109/109talkstubo.html>. Ask your students to share memories of particular people they’ve observed. Why were they significant? Experiment with writing stories inspired by those people. Have students work individually or using shared writing. Alternatively, have students invent stories about a person in a picture or video clip.

### Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1 and 2 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Re-read the text with the specific purpose of learning about life in an African village. Make a list as you read of aspects of life that students notice and/or are curious about (e.g., wearing a kanga, cleaning rice, doing laundry without a machine, getting water at a pump, carrying items on your head.) Have pairs or small groups of students read more about each concept and report back to the class, or look at photos or resources together.
2. Read this sample “Day in the Life” of a child in Tanzania from *Time for Kids* (<http://www.timeforkids.com/destination/tanzania/day-in-life>). Compare this child’s day to Elizabeti’s day in the story. Discuss the importance of appreciating the diversity of others’ experiences when learning about a far away place; not everyone in Tanzania has the same experiences, just as the students in your class may not have the same experiences. (You may wish to read aloud *Elizabeti’s School* to add to your comparison.)
3. Talk about common gender roles using examples from the story. Ask students to predict how Obedi’s life might be different than Elizabeti’s as he gets older. Read more about efforts to ensure girls in developing countries receive an education, such as those of this organization Nurturing Minds in Africa (<http://nurturingmindsinafrica.org/why-girls/>).



4. Have students learn more about the Peace Corps using the links in the Background section. If you have access to an individual who served as a volunteer, invite him/her to speak to your class. Or, show some of the videos from the Peace Corps YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/peacecorps>). Ask your students to write about or discuss whether they would like to be a Peace Corps volunteer and why or why not.
5. Use these instructions from illustrator Christy Hale to make rock dolls and kangas like Elizabeti's (<http://christyhale.com//ElizabetiProjects.pdf>).

### School-Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Have students interview an adult family member about their chores and responsibilities when they were growing up. Also ask what the adult hopes the student will learn from having chores as a child. Share and compare responses at school.
2. Ask a family or school community member who has traveled to Africa to share photos, artifacts and stories about their experience.

### The Elizabeti series:

**Elizabeti's Doll** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/elizabeti-s-doll>

**Mama Elizabeti** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-elizabeti>

**Elizabeti's School** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/elizabeti-s-school>

**The Elizabeti Series Collection:** <https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/elizabeti-series-collection>



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen** has won numerous awards for her Elizabeti series. A native of Wisconsin, Stuve-Bodeen was a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania. She now lives in the Midwest with her husband and their two daughters. Find her online at <http://www.writersabodeen.com>.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Christy Hale** is the author and illustrator of *The East-West House: Noguchi's Childhood in Japan*, a Kirkus Reviews Best Books of the Year selection, and *Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building*. She has also illustrated several award-winning picture books, including *Elizabeti's Doll*, its two sequels, and *Amazing Places*. As an art educator, Hale has written about artists for Instructor magazine's Masterpiece of the Month feature and workshops. Hale lives with her family in Palo Alto, California. Visit her online at [christyhale.com](http://christyhale.com).

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

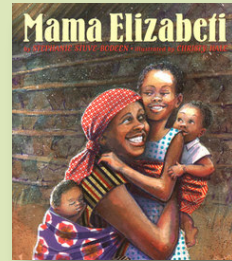
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-elizabeti> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for Mama Elizabeti



\$9.95, PAPERBACK

978-1-58430-236-0

32 pages, 8-1/2 x 9-1/2

\*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: 3.7/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD570L

**THEMES:** Siblings, Identity, Self-Esteem and Confidence, Responsibility, Families (Siblings), Mothers and Children, Dolls, Imagination, Cultural Diversity, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Poverty, Games, Home, African/African American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-elizabeti>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.