



# The Cow-Tail Switch: And Other West African Stories

*Harold Courlander , Madye Lee Chastain , George Herzog*

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The stories of West Africa are about men and animals, about kings, warriors, and hunters. They tell about clever people and stupid people, about good ones and bad ones, about how things and animals got to be how they are. Some stories in this book will make you think. Some will make you laugh. All of them are retold with folk spirit full of generosity and vitality.

## The Cow-Tail Switch: And Other West African Stories Details

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# **From Reader Review The Cow-Tail Switch: And Other West African Stories for online ebook**

## **Bethany Lovhaug says**

I read the story "Talk". It was about a man who was picking yams and the yam told him to not dig him up. Soon a bunch of things were talking to this man (cow, palm tree, branch, rock). Because of this he ran. People questioned him, but soon things were talking to them too. Finally the chief stopped them and questioned them. He claimed they were mad, so he sent them back to work. Then his stool talked to him. The end.

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## **Cheryl says**

Read for Newbery, would not have picked it up otherwise, would have missed a fun & enlightening read.

Concise, a fast and enjoyable read, with lovely pictures. The notes and the vibe make it feel authentic and respectful, and I have seen some of the stories in more modern books, so I trust this as appropriate. The K-word just shows up in the notes as an alternate term for the 'corn' in the story, so I see that as no problem.

I will keep and reread this book. I would love to teach it in conjunction with a collection of Aesop's fables, probably to children age 8-10.

I wonder if Sansa memory chips were named after the WA'n musical instrument?

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## **Molly says**

This is a collection of stories from West Africa. The tales are mostly amusing with some being very odd. I like that there are notes at the end explaining the origin of each tale and a glossary of African words found in them. Overall, I enjoyed this collection.

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## **Charlie Moses says**

An interesting collection of folk tales from Western Africa.

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## **Fadi Baidhani says**

this book is about stories,it is folktails.,the writer of the book is

i choose this book because i wanted to learn about west african stories.i also wanted to learn more about them so i thought they reading about there stories could help me.i liked this book because there are very funny stories.i think the type of reader that would like to read this book is a person who loves to learn about other people or a person who loves stories.

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### **Mona says**

TITLE: The Cow-Tail Switch: And Other West African Stories

WHY I CHOSE THIS BOOK: It is a Newbery Honor Books; and it met my reading challenge criteria being connected to the book before it, The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child, being same format, short stories

REVIEW: Overall interesting stories. Although I liked some better than others. My two favorite were: the one about the guy who tricked his neighbor into doing all the work. Sounds horrible but it was cool. The neighbor is one who always tried to trick others trying to get something for nothing. So it was fun to see the tables turned on him. The other one I really liked was about a guy who was known for his honesty. This enraged a chief who wanted to prove no one could not lie all the time. His plan, which was kind of dumb, was to tell the honest guy to relay a message to the chief's wife, but then the chief wouldn't do the things the message said he would. I always thought about being untruthful was about intentionally telling a falsehood, not passing on misleading information that you could not know was not accurate. But anyhow .... how the honest man kept his reputation without realizing it was in jeopardy or that he was doing anything clever... was wonderful to behold. The back stories on the stories at the end of the book was very instructive.

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### **\*Elsa Frost\* says**

This was a fun read--and was pretty humorous for a folklore collection! Usually the folklore collections I come across have some really depressing stories and the "moral" isn't clear. But this was a delightful read, and displayed its moralistic endings well! My favorite in this collection is "Talk," for sure. It's hilarious and entertaining!

I ended up coming across this book because of the novel Redemption in Indigo, which is a retelling of "Ansige Karamba, the Glutton." (To make it clear, "Ansige Karamba, the Glutton" is an original folklore tale and is included in this collection of African folklore.) I'm glad I came across this collection after reading this wonderful novel, and I definitely recommend this book.

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### **Brennan Wieland says**

Out of these stories I only read "Kaddo's Wall".

It was a simple story with an easy to understand moral. Since it was short, it didn't go much into detail about anything. The story did get its point across though, with the moral being about being kind to others and sharing what you have, because you never know when you might need there help.

I enjoyed this story, its interesting and easy to understand. I felt like it could have been longer though and gone into more detail.

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### **Chris says**

I read this book as a recommendation from a former student, but it didn't have the same positive effect for me after completing the book as it did on her. The tales/fables are quite different than many of the ones I have read from Native American cultures in both structure and substance. Besides the few tales with the famous trickster, Ananasi, most of these stories were dry, didn't have a clear message, and did not give me the detailed aspects of the many different African tribal cultures that I was hoping for from the book. Easy read for middle school aged kids, but might not impress upon them what African traditions have to offer.

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### **Christina Packard says**

Interesting tales to learn from.

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### **Bish Denham says**

What a great collection of West African folk tales. I was particularly thrilled to read the stories of Anansi as I grew up hearing stories about him in the Caribbean and have written a collection of ten retold Jamaican stories, called Anansi and Company.

In reading these stories I got a clear feel for how the culture of the West Africa trickled into the Caribbean, how it took root, changed and adapted. It was like reading "origin" stories. Some were odd (by Western standards) some were humorous, some serious. But at their heart I could relate to them because of where I was raised.

Perhaps not everyone will appreciate them but that may be because they did not grow up, as I did a white child within a black majority, in a culture that was closer to it's African roots than in other parts of United States.

Wonderful!

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### **Doria says**

An excellent collection of West African folk tales, told in spare but clear prose, eminently readable and tellable, and appropriate for a wide range of ages, child to adult. This edition is notable also for its excellent notes and useful pronunciation guide, which is an invaluable guide for anyone who is interested in reading the stories aloud and/or telling them with any kind of authenticity and awareness of their socio-cultural provenance. Courlander's collections remain some of the finest to be found, and this one provides a terrific selection of Ghanaian and Ashanti tales, both for those who are new to this narrative tradition and those who are familiar with its many satisfying delights.

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### **Mckinley says**

Could have been jazzed up a little but I liked the stories reminded me of reading the Grimm's fairy tales in German before they were jazzed up.

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### **SmokingMirror says**

This was a thrilling find from the thrift shop, but it didn't satisfy me the way King's Drum and Other African Stories did. The Anansi stories were the type in which the trickster gets tricked, and overall too many of the stories were about people being foolish, and instead of learning something wise, they simply were shamed into realizing they were foolish.

The edition I read is a recent one, but the book was originally published in 1947, and was awarded the Newbery honor for that year. It does, however, contain some assertions that generalize about African people in a way that is offensive now. The K-word also appears.

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### **Jacki says**

I love folktales. They tell so much about the culture that spawned them. In this book, we see the variety of tribal cultures of West Africa. We have a glimpse into their world of language barriers, hunting expositions, social pride, and humor. They are delightful to read and a fantastic learning tool in Language Arts and Social Studies.

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