

Temo and the plant thieves

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Illustrations by Magriet Brink and Leo Daly

Temo was a clever young girl who lived in the village of Qunu. She loved going to school and learning new things.

One day at school, her class learnt about planting and growing vegetables. Temo was so fascinated by this idea that she could not wait to get home to tell her parents about it.

BRRRRING! The last school bell of the day rang and all the children rushed out of their classrooms to make their way home.

When Temo arrived home, her mother and father were in the kitchen having tea.

“Hello, Mama. Hello, Papa,” she said as she walked into the kitchen.

“Hello, Temo,” answered her parents.

“How was your day at school today?” asked her mother.

“It was good! I learnt something very interesting,” replied Temo excitedly while making her way to her bedroom.

Temo’s parents wondered what their daughter was talking about, but before they could ask her to explain, she had disappeared.

In her bedroom, Temo took off her school uniform and put on her other clothes. But these were not her everyday other clothes. She put on her overalls, gumboots and a hat.

Temo walked back into the kitchen. “Ta-da! Mama and Papa, look!” she said.

Her parents were very surprised. Temo never wanted to do any chores at home, so why was she suddenly dressed in work clothes?

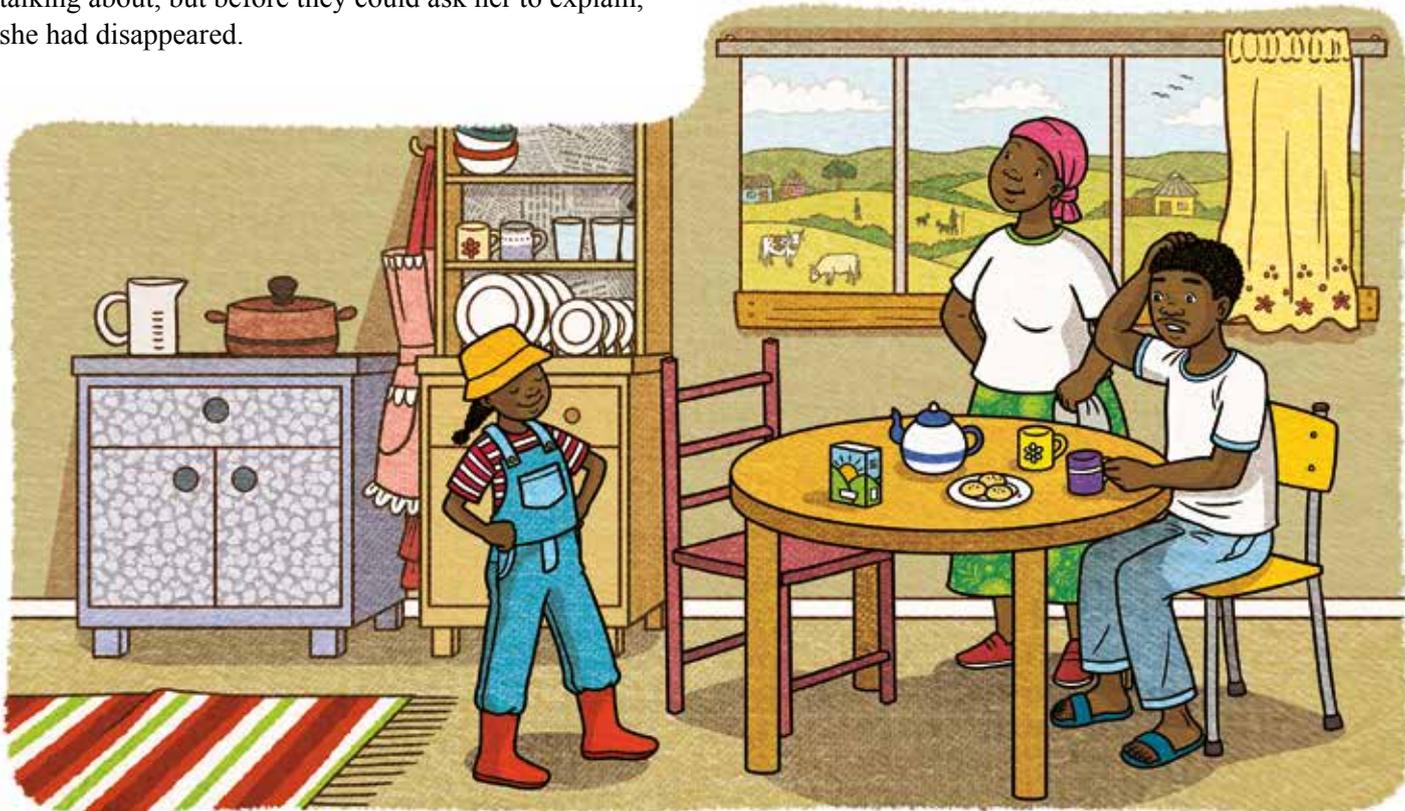
“Why are you dressed like that, Temo?” her father asked.

“Because I want to start growing my own vegetables, Papa,” she said excitedly.

“So, you want to have your own garden here at home?” her mother asked.

“Yes, Mama,” Temo replied.

Temo’s parents looked at each other and wondered how Temo would manage to take care of a garden when she complained about chores as simple as making them tea. But they decided to have faith in her anyway.



So Temo and her father went outside and chose a piece of land in their yard where Temo could start her garden. Then Temo's father went inside to change into his overalls.

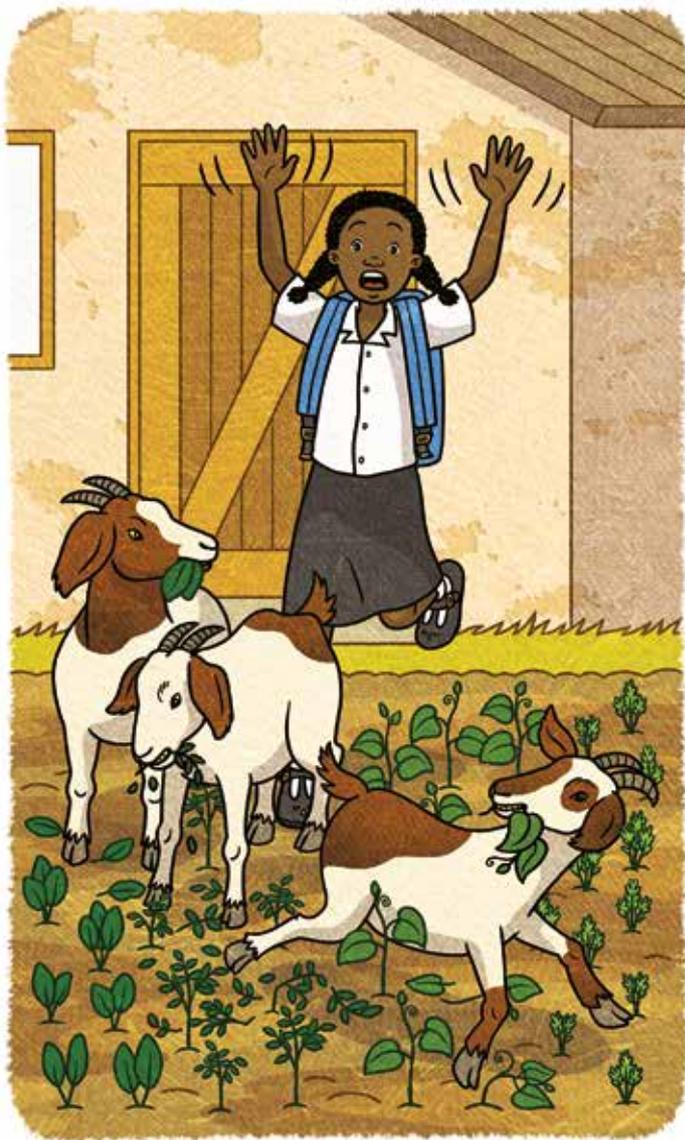
First, Temo and her father used a garden fork to break up the ground they had chosen. This helped make the soil soft for planting seeds. It also helped loosen unwanted weeds and stones under the soil. Next, they raked all the unwanted weeds and stones from the soil. Temo and her father put all the weeds into big black plastic bags and threw them into the dustbin.



The next day when Temo came back from school, she quickly changed out of her school uniform and went into her garden with her father. Her father had bought some seeds for them to plant. So, they planted and planted! They planted spinach, carrot, tomato and bean seeds. Then Temo watered the soil to help the seeds grow. Every day after that Temo was excited to come home from school and water her garden.

But there was a little problem: while no one was looking, the animals were starting to eat Temo's vegetable plants!

One day, when she came home from school, Temo found the goats feeding in her garden. She chased them away and ran into the house.



"Mama! Papa! The goats are eating my vegetable plants. Why didn't you watch out for them?" she said, crying.

"Sorry, Temo," apologised her father. "Mama and I were taking a nap. Let's go outside and see what we can do."

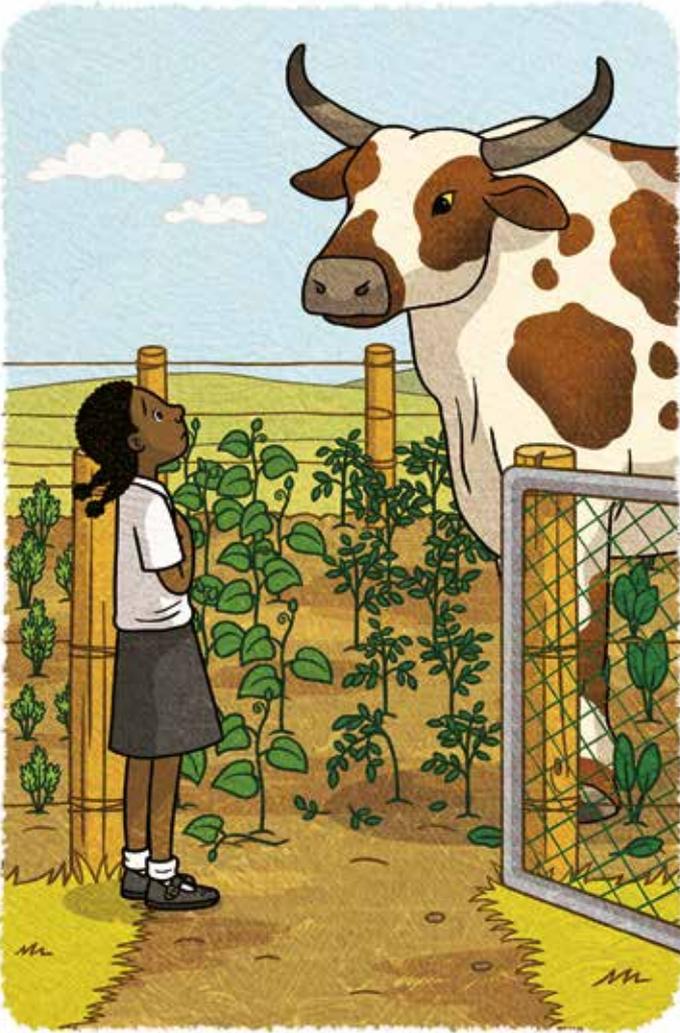
So they went into the garden. What a mess the goats had made! But at least only a small part of the garden had been damaged.

"Let's build a fence around the garden, Papa," Temo suggested.

"That's a good idea!" Papa replied.

So Temo and her father built a fence around the garden so the goats could no longer get in.

The next day when she came home from school, Temo found the cows eating her plants. The cows had been clever enough to open the garden gate with their horns!



Temo tried to chase the cows away, but it only took one cow with large, sharp horns to look at her and she was terrified! The cows looked so big! So she ran into the house.

“Mama! Papa! This time the cows are eating my vegetable plants,” she said.

Temo and her father went outside and found the cows grazing in Temo’s garden. Her father chased them away.

“Papa, why don’t we lock the gate with a padlock?” Temo suggested. “That way the cows won’t be able to open the gate again.”

Her father thought that was a good idea so they went and bought a padlock and they locked the gate.

The next day when Temo came back from school, she found not the goats, not the cows, but the birds eating the plants in her garden! She chased them away and ran to tell her parents.

“Mama! Papa! Now the birds are eating my vegetable plants,” she cried.

Temo’s father went outside with her to see what the problem was.

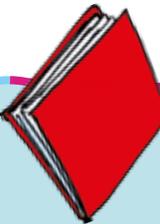
“I don’t know what to do now, Temo,” said her father scratching his head as he thought hard.

“I know what we can do,” said Temo quickly. “We can put a net over the garden, then the birds won’t be able to get to the plants.”

And Temo was right! She never had to worry about any animals eating the plants in her garden again. No goats could get in, no cows could get in and no birds could get in either.

The plants in her garden grew and grew, and soon the vegetables were ready for picking! Temo’s mother cooked a tasty soup of beans, carrots, spinach and tomatoes and they all enjoyed a meal that had come from Temo’s garden.



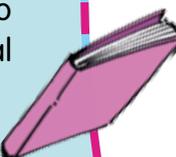


Get story active!

Here are some ideas for using the story on pages 1 to 3 with the children in your class and/or your reading club. Choose the ideas that best suit the ages and interests of the children.

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- ★ Before you read the story, ask the children to share their experiences of growing plants. Encourage them to think about what some of the challenges are when you're trying to grow plants and to suggest how they would deal with these challenges.
 - ★ After reading the story, invite the children to work in groups to act out a court case in which the goats, cows and birds have to explain to a judge why they ate Temo's plants. In each group, the children need to decide who will play Temo, the judge, the goats, the cows and the birds. The judge calls up each group of animals and says, "You are accused of eating Temo's plants! Are you guilty or not guilty? Explain what happened." The animals tell their side of the story and then Temo is invited to tell hers. After everyone has told their side of the story, the judge should

decide how the animals must make up for what they did.

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- ★ Invite the children to make "Wanted" posters showing the goats, cows and birds. Begin by brainstorming with the children what words could be used to describe each animal. (Record these on the board or a large sheet of paper as the children suggest them.) Let the children refer to these as they work in pairs or groups to write a short description of each animal and also draw a picture of each.
 - ★ Spark the children's imaginations by asking them to describe the most unusual plant they can think of growing, and then to explain how it could be used. For example, "I'd love to grow a plant that has books on it instead of leaves, then I could pick a new book to read any time." Or, "I'd love to grow a plant with purple leaves and purple bubblegum on it. Purple is my favourite colour and bubblegum is my favourite sweet, so I'd always have my two favourite things nearby!"

About the Story Powered Schools project

Nal'ibali (isiXhosa for "here's the story") is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading.

Story Powered Schools is a pilot project bringing the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign's proven approach to literacy development to selected schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Endorsed by the Department of Education, it has been made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The schools that are part of the Story Powered Schools project are committed to sparking their learners' potential through storytelling and reading. They use the power of stories to inspire their learners to want to read and write.

