



Photo for FIA Lesson #5: The *Wema* Center for Children

The setting for Story #5, The Purpose Story: “History Lessons from a Storyteller,” is The *Wema* Center for Children. I had asked African Quest Safaris to include an opportunity to meet children as a part of my visit. Tasneem Adamji, who organized my tour, planned my visit to the *Wema* Center for Children, where I met a group of children who touched my heart with their stories of having been rescued from their lives on the streets and brought to the *Wema* Center where they were housed, fed, and educated. An important part of their education included Counseling to help them adjust to their new lives. Meeting the children and the Counselors of The *Wema* Center for Children was a memorable part of my trip to Kenya. Recently, when I searched online for the *Wema* Center, I was pleased to discover that the Center is still there, although saddened to learn that the social conditions that make the Center necessary still exist. I remember saying a prayer while in Kenya, one that I continue to pray, for the protection and well being of our young people in Kenya and throughout the world. One of the ways that the Center raises funds for its work is through performances by the children. I heard them sing, and they were wonderful! Below is a current snapshot from the Website of the *Wema* Centre.



<https://wemacentre.org/download/a-snapshot-of-what-we-do/>



**Lesson #5 – Reading The Purpose Story
“History Lessons from a Storyteller”**

pp. 65-82, *Fia and the Butterfly: 7 Stories for Character Education* by Lonneta M. Gaines

A Saying to Remember for The Purpose Story

I value learning. I get a good education so I can take care of myself and give something back to my family, my community, and to my Creator.

AUTHOR’S NOTES

Repeat the Saying to Remember, write it down and share it with others. The Saying to Remember for the Purpose Story reminds you of the importance of getting a good education in order to be of service to others.

The *setting* for The Purpose Story is The *Wema* Center for Children – an incredible place that cares for and educates children who had been living in extreme poverty on the streets of Kenya. The *Wema* Center is still there (wemacentre.org) and, unfortunately, so is the need. Tasneem Adamji of African Quest Safaris fulfilled my goal of finding a place to tell stories to children. As so often happens, my goal was more than fulfilled. Yes, I told stories to the children, but more importantly, the children told me their stories – of how they had been living on the streets, feeling like they had been thrown away; and then they were saved by the teachers and counselors at the *Wema* Center.

Something I still remember about that visit was how the Counselor who introduced me wanted the children to see an African American person in real life: “Our ancestors were stolen and taken to a strange land,” I remember him saying. “This woman is our Sister; she has come home. Listen to her. Listen to her stories.”

FIA Lessons by Lonneta M. Gaines written for the AACRC/African American Cultural Resource Center
Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Library Website: BettyJJohnsonFriends.org
Ask for *Fia and the Butterfly: 7 Stories for Character Education* at your library or purchase the book at:
https://www.amazon.com/s?k=ISBN+9780979541407&ref=nb_sb_noss

When I wrote “History Lessons from a Storyteller,” I decided to tell two stories. The first story, “Mr. Joe’s Story,” is taken from a true account by a formerly enslaved African. When he was enslaved, Mr. Joe got caught learning how to read and write – this was against the law for enslaved Africans, and so, for his boldness, he was severely beaten, and then blinded. Mr. Joe’s story ends with his saying, “Get your education, chile. I couldn’t, but you can. I couldn’t, but you can.” What a heart-rending reminder of our history as African Americans, and of the importance of education.

The second story, “The Lion and the Mouse,” is my retelling of one of Aesop’s classic fables. In my retelling, I make tiny Mouse a teacher who has just taught a Black History Lesson to her students. When she is captured by hungry Lion, Mouse uses a quote from Booker T. Washington – “When your head is in the lion’s mouth, you’d best use your hands to stroke his mane” – to help her to figure out how to save herself from hungry Lion. The Counselor uses this story to advise an angry young student of the wisdom of learning to control her anger and to treat others with respect. “You turn your right into a wrong when you behave disrespectfully,” the Counselor advised. Just as Mouse in the story figured out how to save herself from hungry Lion, even though she was very afraid, the Counselor advised the student to strive to act calmly and respectfully, even when she had angry feelings. I was pleased to be a part of the Counselor’s lesson.

Review “History Lessons from a Storyteller” by completing the Numbered Story in FIA Activity #5. Enjoy!!!

Extra Credit (smile). Answer the twelve questions at the end of the story (pp 79 & 80). Complete the Character Development Activities (pp 81 and 82).



Name: _____ **Date:** _____

FIA Activity #5 – “The Purpose Story”

Number the Sentences Game

Directions: Number the sentences below in the correct order to create a short story.

___ She had decided to tell stories about her African past.

___ She wanted them to learn about the painful parts, too, including how African people came to be in America.

___ All right! Her first audience was here! The Storyteller took a deep breath and began to tell her story.

___ On her first day, she put on traditional African clothes. Wearing these clothes meant that she would begin teaching even before she spoke.

___ She believed that learning the truth about history would help the children – and their parents and teachers, too – to live better lives in the present.

___ The Storyteller was living her dream. She had a new job at a wonderful library, telling stories to children.

___ She wanted the children to learn about the glories of Mother Africa.



Name: _____ Date: _____

KEY: FIA Activity #5 – “The Purpose Story”

Number the Sentences Game

Directions: Number the sentences below in the correct order to create a short story.

Note: *The order in the Key below is my order. If you created an order that makes sense to you, then that’s correct, too!*

1. The Storyteller was living her dream. She had a new job at a wonderful library, telling stories to children.
2. On her first day, she put on traditional African clothes. Wearing these clothes meant that she would begin teaching even before she spoke.
3. She had decided to tell stories about her African past.
4. She wanted the children to learn about the glories of Mother Africa.
5. She wanted them to learn about the painful parts, too, including how African people came to be in America.
6. She believed that learning the truth about history would help the children – and their parents and teachers, too – to live better lives in the present.
7. All right! Her first audience was here! The Storyteller took a deep breath and began to tell her story.