

How Leopard Got His Spots

a retelling from the *Just So Stories*
by Rudyard Kipling



- 1 Long ago, Leopard had no spots. He lived in Africa in a place of sand and rocks. There was grass, but even it looked a little sandy.
- 2 Giraffe and Zebra and all the other four-legged animals also lived in this place. They were sand-colored, but Leopard was the most sand-colored of all. That was a very good thing for Leopard. When Leopard lay still, he could not be seen. He would just wait for his

lunch to come by. You can see how bad this was for the other animals.

- 3 Now Man also lived in this place, but he was not sand-colored. Man's skin was a beautiful color between black and brown. Both Man and Leopard were good hunters. Often they hunted together. Leopard would chase the animals toward Man. Then Man would shoot them with his arrows.

4 By and by, the animals got tired of being chased. They decided to find another place to live. Late one night they left and traveled for many days. Finally they reached a great forest. The sun cast striped and blotchy shadows on everything. As they hid there, something wonderful happened. The coats of the animals changed. They became striped or blotchy.

5 After the animals left, Leopard went without lunch for several days. He wondered what had happened. It was a great puzzle. Leopard and Man decided to ask Baboon for help. Baboon, you see, knows many things.

6 "Wise One," said Leopard, "where has all the game gone?"

7 "They have gone," said Baboon, "into other lands. You should go into other lands too."

8 "Hmmm," said Leopard.

9 "Ah . . . hmmm," said Man. "We know they are not here. That means we must go to another land." They left at once and traveled many days. Finally they came to a great forest. By chance, it was the same forest where Giraffe and Zebra and all the rest were hiding.

10 Wary from their journey, they lay down to rest. In the night, Leopard heard a sound. He leaped into the air and landed on Something. The Something smelled like Zebra. It kicked like Zebra, but Leopard could see nothing.

11 "Be still," growled Leopard. "When morning comes, I will see what you are."

12 Just then Man shouted, "What is this? It smells and kicks like Giraffe, but I can see nothing."

13 "Hold it down until morning," said Leopard. "Then we shall sort this out."

14 Morning came and with it some surprises. The Something that smelled

and kicked like Zebra was covered with black stripes. The Something that smelled and kicked like Giraffe was covered with big brown blotches. After some questioning, the Somethings admitted that they were indeed Zebra and Giraffe.

15 "Why do you look different?" asked Man.

16 "We are in another place," said Giraffe.

17 "What difference does that make?" said Leopard grumpily. By now, he was very hungry and quite out of sorts.

18 "Let us up, and we'll show you," said Zebra. As soon as they were up, Zebra ran into some tall, striped grass. Giraffe slipped between some tall trees that cast blotchy shadows.

19 "Where is your lunch now?" Zebra and Giraffe called, laughing. Man and Leopard looked and looked. There was nothing to see but stripes and blotches.

20 "This will not do," said Man to Leopard. "Here, you are easy to see. You cannot lie in wait for your lunch anymore. Would you like some stripes or some spots?"

21 Leopard really didn't want either. He was quite happy as he was. However, there was the matter of lunch to consider. "Oh well," he grumbled. "I'll take spots, but make them small."

22 "Certainly," said Man. "I will bunch the tips of my fingers together, like this." He held up his hand for Leopard to see. Then he dipped his fingertips in some black mud and pressed them all over Leopard. When he was finished, Leopard was much harder to see. In fact Leopard quite liked his new look. That is why he decided to keep the spots to this day.

COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 The author's main purpose for writing this story was probably to
 - a** entertain the reader.
 - b** frighten the reader.
 - c** persuade the reader.
- 2 Giraffe, Zebra, and the other animals were different after they entered the forest because they all
 - a** looked alike.
 - b** changed color.
 - c** chased Leopard.
- 3 The animals decided to go to another place to live because they

- a** were tired of being chased.
 - b** didn't have enough food.
 - c** asked Baboon for advice.
- 4 You can tell from the story that
 - a** Giraffe and Zebra are good hunters.
 - b** Baboon doesn't like Leopard and Man.
 - c** Leopard and Man are friends.
- 5 One reason you know this story couldn't really have happened is because the animals
 - a** were hard to see.
 - b** left for the forest.
 - c** talk.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 having large, dark spots (4)
- 2 something that confuses (5)
- 3 tired (10)
- 4 made a deep rumbling sound (11)
- 5 to keep in mind (21)
- 6 complained; muttered unhappily (21)
- 7 to bring close together (22)

C **too** = also
two = the number after *one*

Words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings are called homophones. *Too* and *two* are homophones.

Look at each word in **bold type**. Note the paragraph number. Look at the paragraph and find the homophone for the word in **bold type**. Which of the homophones fits in the blank in the sentence? Write the word.

- 8 **their** (1)
Leopard and Man could not believe _____ eyes.
- 9 **scene** (2)
Giraffe and Zebra could not be _____ in the forest.
- 10 **wood** (2)
Spots _____ make Leopard less easy to see.

THINK ABOUT IT

D Homographs are two (or more) words that are spelled the same but have

different meanings and origins. A word's meaning will depend on how it is used.



THINK ABOUT IT (continued)

My dad is a football *fan*.
He keeps cool with an electric *fan*.

Read each pair of sentences. If the words in **bold type** mean the same thing in both sentences, write *same*. If the words do not mean the same thing, write *different*.

- 1 The animals **left** for another land.
Man held the bow in his **left** hand.
- 2 Leopard asked where the **game** had gone.
Hunting for food is not a **game**.
- 3 Baboon said to go to another **spot**.
Leopard and Man left the **spot** where they were.
- 4 Baby chicks have **down** until their adult feathers grow in.
Man and Leopard sat **down** to think about the puzzle.
- 5 Baboon did not **lie** to the pair.
Leopard would **lie** quietly and wait.

E sadly = sad + **ly**
sadness = sad + **ness**

The letters *-ly* and *-ness* are called suffixes. A suffix is added to the end of a word. It changes the word's meaning. Adding the suffix *-ly* to a word makes the new word tell *how*. Adding the suffix *-ness* to a word makes the new word tell *what*.

Read each sentence. Which word in parentheses () makes sense?

- 6 In the forest there was less (brightly, brightness) than in the sandy place.
- 7 The animals moved (tiredly, tiredness) into the forest.
- 8 Giraffe and Zebra laughed (loudly, loudness) at Leopard and Man.
- 9 Baboon answered the question with great (calmly, calmness).
- 10 In the sandy place, the animals could not sense the (nearly, nearness) of Leopard.

F Writers try to make stories more interesting by using colorful or funny language that doesn't mean exactly what the words say.

The man was *scared to death*.

This sentence means that the man was very scared. It doesn't mean that the man died.

Read the sentences. What does each sentence really mean? Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 11 "He would just wait for his lunch to come by" is another way of saying
 - a he waited for a prey animal to pass.
 - b he waited for Man to bring him some food.
 - c he waited until lunchtime.
- 12 "By now he was very hungry and quite out of sorts" is another way of saying
 - a he was hungry and feeling sad.
 - b he was hungry and very nervous.
 - c he was hungry and in a bad mood.
- 13 "There was the matter of lunch to consider" is another way of saying
 - a he knew he had to be able to catch food.
 - b he thought Man would not help him get food anymore.
 - c he would have to find different food.
- 14 "Then we shall sort this out" is another way of saying
 - a we shall get some food.
 - b we shall solve the puzzle.
 - c we shall talk some more.
- 15 "Where is your lunch now" is another way of saying
 - a you can't see us.
 - b you can eat anytime.
 - c someone took your lunch.