



**Publisher and  
Copyright Date:**

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**Summary:**

This is a retelling of a traditional Somali folktale. A sultan poses a riddle that the men of the land must solve. One poor man's daughter advises her father and has astonishing results. This is one of four Somali folktales published as bilingual children's picture books through the Minnesota Humanities Center's Somali Bilingual Book Project. (Visit [www.mnhum.org/somalibooks](http://www.mnhum.org/somalibooks) to learn more.)

**Suggested Ages:**

4-6, 7-10

**Reading Tips:**

Play some Somali music before reading. Ask children to guess the setting of the story that you will read based on the music.

Show children a globe or world map to point out the country of Somalia.

Read the story all the way through in one language at a time for easier comprehension.

If the reader is not bilingual, use the dual-language audio recording ([www.mnhum.org/somalibooks](http://www.mnhum.org/somalibooks)), produced by the Minnesota Humanities Center, to play the story in the additional language.

**Before Reading:**

What do you think life was like in Somalia long ago? What kind of houses did people live in? What kind of clothes did people wear? What foods did people eat? Are any of these things still true in Somalia today?

This story has a riddle in it. What riddles do you know?

What do you think is the answer to this riddle: Which part of a sheep is a symbol for what makes people friends or enemies?

**Introduction:**

"This is a story about a Somali sultan who is looking for a wise man. He asks men to answer the riddle that we just discussed. Whoever can answer it will be named a wise man. Let's listen to how the riddle is solved in this story..."

**After Reading:**

What happened at the end of the story – on the last page?

Why did the girl choose the gullet as the symbol of what can unite people or divide them – make people friends or enemies?

What message do you think this story is telling us?

## Related Activities

**Art:** Write up riddles on small cards. Draw the answer to the riddle on the other side. Use these to share in small groups, taking turns to guess the answers.

Cut out pictures from magazines to make a collage that shows greed. Make another collage that shows generosity. Talk about the differences in the images.

**Culture:** Have students page through the book again to talk about what they learned about Somali culture from the text and/or illustrations.

**Dramatization:** Small groups of students identify the main points in the story and then (setting the book aside) retell the story. Several groups present to the whole class. Discuss the variations that appear in each retelling from a book and from an oral tale.

**Language:** Identify language within the story that indicates that it takes place long ago.

There is a proverb in Somali that summarizes the theme of this story. Have students talk about proverbs in English (or other languages) that refer to greed or generosity.

**Writing:** Find the definition for the nickname, Wiil Waal, in the author's note. Students can compile a chart of nicknames that they all have. Each student can talk about why or how they received their nickname, who gave it to them, and how they feel about their nickname.

Rewrite the story of Wiil Waal but change the setting to a modern, urban setting. Who would pose the riddle? What else would change in the story?

**Other:** For more ideas on using folktales and fables, visit: [edsitement.neh.gov/subject/literature-language-arts](https://edsitement.neh.gov/subject/literature-language-arts), then click *Aesop and Ananse*.

### Suggestions for English

**Language Learners:** Use a story map to assist students in identifying the setting, characters, conflict, plot, and theme of the story. Visit [www.minnesotahumanities.org](http://www.minnesotahumanities.org) for templates.

For Somali ESL students, play the Somali version on the dual language recording.

## Related Books

**The Lion's Share/Qayb Libaax\*** by Said Salah Ahmed, illustrated by Kelly Dupre (2007)

**Dhegdheer, A Scary Somali Folktale\*** by Marian A. Hassan, illustrated by Betsy Bowen (2007)

**The Travels of Igal Shidad\*** by Kelly Dupre, illustrated by Amin Amir (2007)

**The Greedy Bee** by Steve Smallman, illustrated by Jack Tickle (2007)

**Mama Panya's Pancakes** by Mary & Rich Chamberlin, illustrated by Julia Cairns (2005)

\*Also published by the Minnesota Humanities Center.