



# The Booklist Project



Focus: Culturally-Responsive Author Study  
Booklist

Tololwa M. Mollel

Developed by: Kary Urso

Fall, 2010

**AUTHOR STUDY**  
**Tololwa M. Mollel: A Tanzanian Author**  
**Grade Level Focus: 1-5**

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Rhode Island College

## **Author Biography**

Tololwa Mollel, a Massai, was born in Arusha region of Tanzania. He was sent by his parents to live with his grandparents. During his off time from school, he worked on his grandfather's coffee farm. His grandfather's traditional story telling made work seem light and fun.

Mollel attended the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania to pursue a bachelor's degree in literature in theater and graduated in 1972. He decided to move to Canada to pursue a master's degree in 1979. He married a year prior but decided to move back to Tanzania to find a career that would allow him to earn enough money to save for his family and then return to Canada. At this time, Tololwa was a director of children's theater and an actor. He also was a professor at a Tanzanian university. Finally, in 1986 he saved enough to moved back to Canada.

In order to escape the stress of trying to make ends meet, he turned to writing short stories that were publish in magazines. The folklore that he remembered from Tanzanian story telling flowed onto paper while he wrote. In 1991, Tololwa published his first book [The Orphan Boy](#). As his writing career flourished, he veered away from African tribal tales and began to write stories that reflected his childhood experiences in Tanzania.

Mollel has won many awards for his writing over the years. These are just to name a few: African Studies Association Children's Africana Award in 2000; Coretta Scott King Honor Book in 2001; nominated for the Bill Martin, J. Award by Kansas Reading Association Award in 2001; R. Ross Annett Award for Children's Literature in 2001; Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People Award in 2001, and the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Book Award in 2001.

He currently lives in Canada where he has earned a Doctorate in Drama. He lives with his wife and two sons.

**AUTHOR WEBSITE:** <http://tololwamollel.com/>

## BOOKLIST

1. Mollel, T. (1999). *My rows and piles of coins*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

Saruni is a Tanzanian boy who spends most of his time at school and helping his family with chores to prepare for the marketplace. With the money that he earns, Saruni is very tempted to buy everything in the marketplace but works really hard to save every coin he earns for a bicycle. When he thinks he had saved enough, approaches the bike seller. Come to find out his hard earned savings is not enough. He returns home to nothing more than an unforgettable surprise. This is a good book for African ELLs because its setting would be very familiar and easy to relate to. Saving and earning money is also an age appropriate plot that many young children struggle with. Lastly the author incorporates some Swahili and Maasai words within the text.

**Grade level focus: 2-4**

**Format: Hardcover**

**[ISBN 0-395-75186-1]**

**WIDA Level: Expanding/Bridging**

**Lesson Idea:** [http://www.homeschoolshare.com/my\\_rows\\_and\\_piles\\_of\\_coins.php](http://www.homeschoolshare.com/my_rows_and_piles_of_coins.php)

2. Mollel, T. (1998). *Kitoto the mighty*.  
Toronto: Stoddart Kids Publishing.

Kitoto is a mouse that lives fearfully in the African Savannah. He fears that the hawk will soon eat him if he soon does not befriend a force that can protect him. On his journey, he is sent from the river to the sun to the wind, until he is finally sent to the root of the mountain where he encounters a mountain mouse. Finally he learns the secrets of the ground. This book is great for African ELLs because it is an African folktale that teaches self-preservation.

**Grade level focus : 2-4**

**Format: Hardcover**

**[ISBN 0-7737-3019-2]**

**WIDA Level: Expanding/Bridging**

**Lesson Idea:** <http://gailgregory.ca/educationalshows/>

3. Mollel, T. (1998). *Subira subira*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

When Tatu's mother dies, she is left to care for her brother while her father works all day. Maulidi is often very difficult for Tatu to manage, so she seeks help from the spirit woman in the woods. The spirit woman sends Tatu out in the middle of the night to pluck three lion whiskers. Learning to be patient, Tatu gets the whiskers and learns to deal with her brother. This book is great for ELLs because it is an African folk tale that contains a repetitious Tanzanian folk song that many children learn growing up in Tanzania. Therefore, this story can give the student a sense of home. Lastly, the pictures mostly match the words on the page to aid the reader.

**Grade level focus: 2-5**

**Formats: Hardcover/paperback**

**[ISBN 0-395-91809-X]**

**WIDA Level: Expanding/Bridging**

**Lesson Link:** [http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/atw/teacherguides/07\\_tanzania.pdf](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/atw/teacherguides/07_tanzania.pdf)

4. Mollel, T. (1992). *A promise to the sun*.  
Boston: Little Brown and Company.

This African savannah story begins with a drought at the beginning of Earth. A bat is asked by the birds to search for rain. On his journey, he encounters the moon, stars, cloud, wind, and sun. The sun expects a favor in return for the rain. The bat encounters a broken promise and hides away in his new home...the cave. This is a good story for African ELLs because it includes some sentences with dialogue in a simple manner. It is a story good for any elementary age African ELL.

**Format: Hardcover (Library binding)**

**[ISBN 0-316-56813-4]**

**WIDA Level: Expanding/Bridging**

**Lesson Link:** <http://www.codefoundation.org/media/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Ed%20Resources%20-%20Tanzania%202008-2009NB.pdf>

5. Mollel, T. (1995). *Big boy*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

Oli wants nothing more than to be big like his brother so he did not have to take naps anymore and instead he can bird hunt. One day Oli decides to sneak out during his afternoon nap. He encounters a Tunkia-zawadi, a bird known to grant wishes. Oli wishes to be big. When his wish comes true, being big is not a great as he thought. This book is great for African ELLs at this level because it represents a typical Tanzanian childhood while a mythical element is fused into the plot.

**Grade level focus: 1-3**

**Formats: Hardcover/paperback/Google Books**

**[ISBN 0-395-67403-4]**

**WIDA Level: Expanding**

**Lesson Link:** <http://www.yorku.ca/aconline/literature/children.html>

6. Mollel, T. (1998). *Shadow dance*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

In the beginning, Salome, a young Tanzanian girl is doing what she enjoys doing frequently, dancing with her shadow and singing. She hears a cry for help along the riverbank. A crocodile is stuck and needs her help. Without hesitation, Salome gets a strong tree vine to pull him out. He lures her to the river where he pulls her in. She is unable to give the crocodile a good enough reason not to eat her until a chat with a pigeon. In the end they trick the crocodile back to square one. This story is good for African ELLs because the sentences are fairly short and only includes minimal dialogue. Good for any age and includes a repetitious Tanzanian song that will give an ELL a close feeling of home. **Grade level focus: 3-5**

**Format: Hardcover/ Google Books**

**[ISBN 0-395-82909-7]**

**WIDA Level: High Developing**

**Lesson Link:** [www.schools.utah.gov/curr/fineart/archive/sense.../DanceK-6Core.doc](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/fineart/archive/sense.../DanceK-6Core.doc)

7. Mollel, T. (1990). *The orphan boy*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

This African tale explains why the Masai view Venus as Kileken. An old Masai man spends every evening enduring the stars. One night a young orphan boy, Kileken, appears and the old man welcomes him to stay on his plains. As times passes, Kileken impresses the old man with his mysterious company and work. The old man realizes that this young boy posses magical powers through a difficult drought. The old man breaks their trustful bond when he sneaks around to uncover this young boy magical secret. This story is great for African ELL because farming and cattle raising lifestyle will be very familiar to many Tanzanian and other African children. The authentic paintings bring many African cultures alive.

**Grade level focus: 3-5**

**Formats: Hardcover /paperback**

**[ISBN 0-89919-985-2]**

**WIDA Level: Bridging /Reaching**

**Lesson Link:** <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/africa/legends/4455.html>

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-africa/meland/index.html>

8. Mollel, T. (1997). *Kele's secret*.  
New York: Lodestar Books.

Yoanes helps his grandmother, Koko, with chores around their Tanzanian coffee farm. Kele, the chicken likes to lay her eggs in very secretive spots around the farm and only Yoanes can find them. Once the egg basket is full, they take a trip to the marketplace where Koko finally earns some money. Yoanes receives a small amount and is proud that he was able to make a difference. This story is good for African ELLs because it takes place at a grandparent's farm where many Tanzanian children brought up. Its pictures match the text well.

**Grade level focus: 1-3**

**Format: Hardcover**

**[ISBN 0-52567500-0]**

**WIDA Level: Developing/Expanding**

**Lesson Link:** [http://www.childrenslit.com/childrenslit/th\\_af\\_tales.html](http://www.childrenslit.com/childrenslit/th_af_tales.html)

9. Mollel, T. (1991). *Rhinos for lunch and elephants for supper*.  
New York: Clarion Books.

This humorous and fun Maasai tale has great repetition and action for an ELL. There is a monster in the hare's cave who seems extremely frightening. It takes a number of forest animal friends to try and get the monster out, but only the frog has what it takes to get the monster out. This is a humorous African folktale meant for any age. It is great for African ELLs because of its circular text and repetition. The author also does a nice job matching the text to the pictures.

**Grade level focus: 2-4**

**Formats: Hardcover /paperback**

**[ISBN 0-395-60734-5]**

**WIDA Level: Developing**

**Lesson Idea:** <http://gailgregory.ca/educationalshows/>

10. Mollel, T. (2000). *To dinner for dinner*.  
New York: Holiday House.

This story is a humorous Tanzanian tale. Juhudi the claver rabbit, is able to out-wits the jungle leopard not once but twice. However, Juhudi becomes too plump and cannot save herself a third time without the help from her jungle friends. This story is good for African ELLs because it is a retold universal folktale. Sentences are more complex but the pictures make the story easy to understand and identify some words within the text.

**Grade level focus: 1-3**

**Format: Hardcover**

**[ISBN 0-82341527-9]**

**WIDA Level: Bridging / Expanding**

**Author Study:**

<http://www.canadianauthorstudies.ecsd.net/tololwa%20mollel.htm>

**Cultural Links**

[www.mamalisa.com/world/tanzania.html](http://www.mamalisa.com/world/tanzania.html)

<http://www.aaronshep.com/stories/024.html>

<http://www.deeperafrica.com/adventures/tanzania-with-kids>

<http://www.kidsaidtanzania.org.uk/>

<http://www.bukobakids.org/>

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# The Booklist Project

A Project of the  
M.Ed. In TESL Program,



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