

Mandi the marvellous mole

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Theme: *Believing in yourself and doing what is right*

Appropriate age group: *All ages*



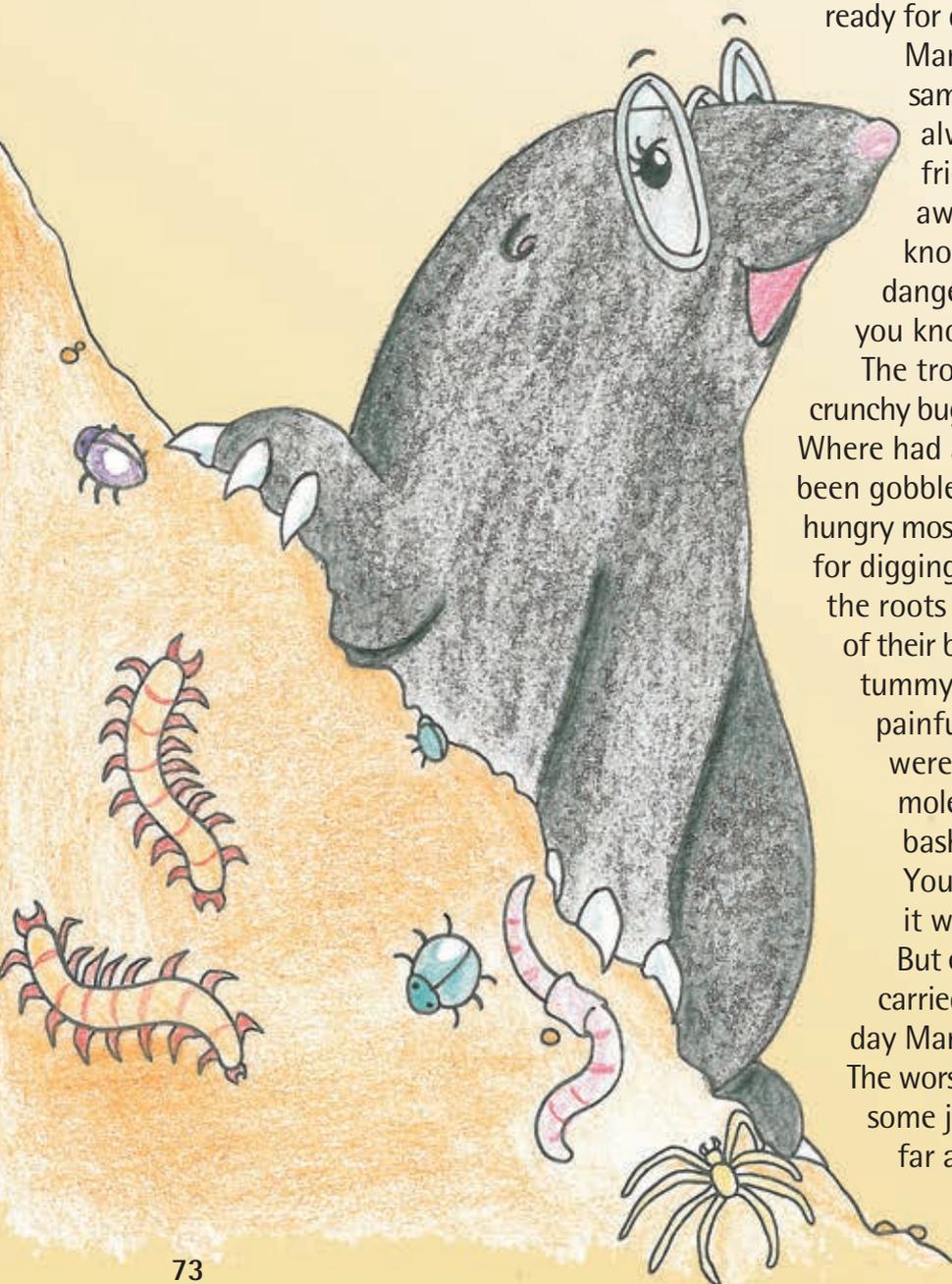
Once upon a time, deep, deep under the ground there lived a young mole called Mandisa. (Her name means 'Sweet' in isiXhosa, one of South Africa's languages but everyone called her Mandi for short.) She lived with her mole family and mole friends in their burrows underground. Like all moles, Mandi spent most of her time digging tunnels. It was hard work and very tiring but she was a good tunnel digger. She also had the best nose for sniffing out delicious things to eat – she could smell bugs and beetles and worms a long way away.

All the moles loved to nibble crunchy bugs and beetles and they enjoyed slurping juicy worms like pieces of spaghetti. When their tummies were full they had a good sleep to be ready for digging more tunnels the next day.

Mandi's family had been living in the same burrow for years. The adults were always warning Mandi and her friends: "Don't go digging too far away from your burrow. You never know what can happen to you – it's dangerous. It's safer to stay in the place you know."

The trouble was that there were no crunchy bugs or juicy worms near their burrow. Where had all the good food gone? It had all been gobbled up. Mandi and the others were hungry most of the time. They lost their energy for digging. They stayed home and chomped the roots of the big old tree in the middle of their burrow. The dry roots gave everyone tummy ache. Some of the moles also had painful headaches because the roots were hard and woody and the hungry moles kept bumping into them: "Crash, bash, smash ... smack, crack, whack!"

You see, moles have bad eyesight and it was getting crowded in the burrow. But every day the hungry grumpy moles carried on chomping the roots and every day Mandi felt more and more frustrated. The worst thing was that Mandi could smell some juicy worms and crunchy bugs not far away. She told the others but they





didn't believe her. They said cross, grumpy things like: "You must be dreaming" and "Stop making up stories" and "You're only a child so keep quiet." One of them even said: "What do you know anyway, you're just a silly girl and what do girls know about bugs and worms?"

This made Mandi feel very bad. In fact, she felt so bad she decided to get away from the other moles for a while to think about things. So Mandi dug a tunnel upwards to have a look at the world above the ground. It was warm and sunny and she smelled some beautiful smells. She wiggled her body out of her hole and sat down under a big shady tree – the same tree whose roots the other moles were busy chomping.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath to relax. When she opened her eyes she saw the sun glinting on broken glass. She picked up a bit of glass, quite a round bit. She closed her one eye and with the other eye she squinted through the glass. WOW, it was awesome – everything looked bright and clear and colourful when she looked through the glass. She could see to the top of the tree and all the way up to the clouds. It was amazing.

Mandi had a plan. She looked for another small round piece among the broken glass. She found a stone and smoothed the rough edges of the glass. With some old wire that she picked up she made herself a neat pair of glasses. It was time to show the other moles. With her new glasses tucked under her arm she made her way down. Everyone tried on the glasses and for the first time they could see the roots clearly. They even noticed the lumps on their foreheads from bumping into the roots.

When all the moles had settled down for the night Mandi put on her glasses and started to dig. The other moles had kept on digging sideways – that's why they kept bashing into the roots of the old tree and that's why they ran out of food. But Mandi could see a different way of doing things. She dug down, deep down, under the roots of the tree. Thanks to the glasses, she could see where she was going.

As Mandi dug deeper, the smell of the crunchy bugs and juicy worms was getting stronger and stronger. A delicious smell! She followed her nose until she spotted a super-size crunchy bug. She munched it and right away her tummy felt better. Now she could find food for the other moles. There was lots to choose from.

Carrying a big fat bug and a long skinny worm in her mouth, Mandi began the long journey back to the other moles. She laid her catch at her grandfather's bedside. His nose began to twitch, his snoring stopped and he opened his eyes. He saw the food and then he saw Mandi as she stood there smiling in her shiny glasses. And then he began to laugh, a big loud belly laugh. He laughed so much the other moles woke up.

Grandfather Mole cleared his throat and said: "Look at the lovely food Mandi has found for us. She's the bravest and wisest of us all. She didn't let fear of the unknown stop her. She has saved us all!" All the moles started cheering Mandi and her glasses, even those who used to be mean to her.

And so it was, that by seeing things differently and trusting in her own abilities and what she believed was right, Mandi made a better future for herself and for all the moles.



Possible discussion point:

What strengths, abilities and skills do you have that you can use to help those around you?