



Tshepo's sandals

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Theme: *Creating your own path for life and not needing to follow in the footsteps of others*

Appropriate age group: *8 years and older*



Tshepo's sandals

Long ago, Sun said to Mother Earth, "I'm sending you a special name. Keep it with you so that one day you can give this special name to a special child." The special name was Tshepo, which means hope in seSotho, one of the languages spoken in Southern Africa. Sun wrapped the name in a sunbeam and sent it down to Mother Earth who kept it safely, close to her heart.

Who would be given this special name? Mother Earth waited and waited until one day a special baby was born and she called him Tshepo. He was a healthy baby. He drank his mother's milk, he slept well and he learned to smile at the people around him. In time, he started eating solid food, he learned to crawl, to stand on his own two feet, and to walk. He always walked barefoot.

As Tshepo got better at walking he went further and further away from his home. One day he walked out of the village into the veld for the first time. He saw lots of amazing things he'd never seen before. He saw huge trees with rough bark and tender leaves. He saw little insects scurrying on the ground. He saw graceful buck that were curious about him but ready to run away.

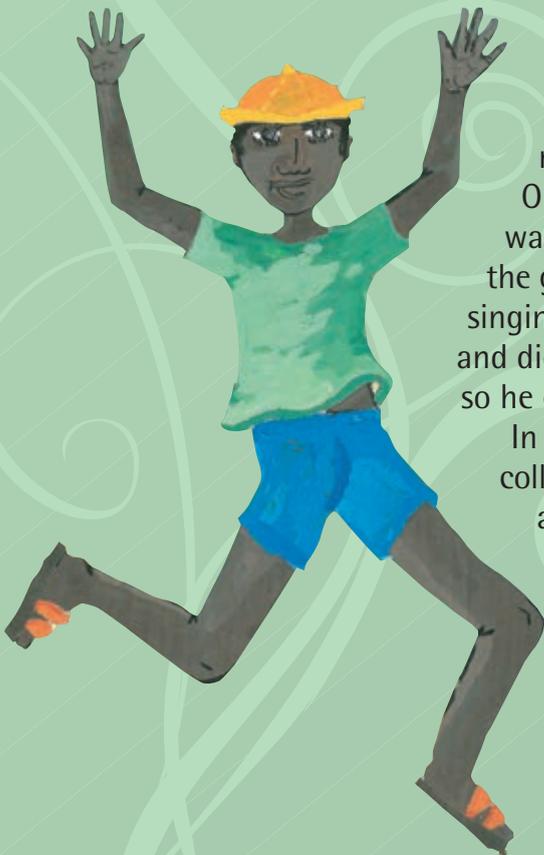
Tshepo had a wonderful time exploring the veld but when he returned home at sunset his feet were sore from walking on thorns and stones. He had seen some people wearing shoes to protect their feet so he started looking around for a pair. He found what he was looking for under a bush – black shoes with silver buckles and thick, thick soles. The shoes were much too big for him and at first he could hardly walk in them but he was determined. He wore the shoes a little longer every day and he got used to them. In the end he even wore the shoes when he went to sleep!

When Tshepo went walking in the veld the shoes protected his feet. That was great but the trouble with the shoes was that they trampled the delicate veld flowers. They squashed insects and butterflies. They flattened mole hills. Once they even chased a rabbit and kicked it. One day Tshepo sat on a rock, thinking about things. He watched the butterflies touching the flowers. He watched the grasshoppers jumping in the grass. He listened to the birds singing. He loved the veld and the flowers and the creatures and didn't want to hurt them but he needed to protect his feet so he could walk freely in the veld. What should he do?

In the end Tshepo decided to make his own sandals. He collected bark, leaves, grass and reeds and spent time weaving and sewing. He fashioned an amazing pair of veld sandals.

They fitted him perfectly and he went walking in the veld with a happy heart. This time he didn't hurt the veld at all. One or two small thorns and a very small stone got into his sandals but it was easy to get rid of them.

Tshepo put the big black heavy-buckled shoes back where he found them. Sun and Mother Earth smiled when they saw him. Sun said to Mother Earth, "The boy is



worthy of his name. He knows those shoes aren't right for him. He's made his own sandals so that he can walk the way that he knows is right for him." That night Tshepo slept peacefully on his sleeping mat – a special boy with his special sandals ready for the morning.



? Possible discussion points:

Sometimes it's as if we put on "shoes" that belong to other people and we try to follow other people's paths and ways of doing things. Have you ever seen that happen? What "shoes" really fit you and what path do you want to walk in life?