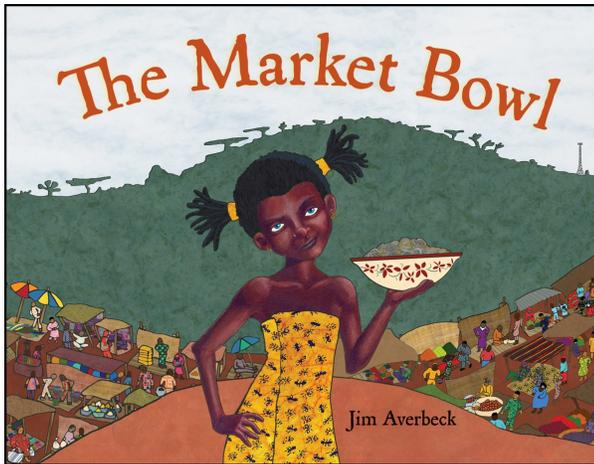


# The Market Bowl

## Activity & Discussion Guide

Developed by Charlesbridge  
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978-1-58089-368-8 HC \$16.95  
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Ages 5–8

Eager to get to market for her first time on the seller's stool, Yoyo ignores Mama Cécile's instructions on the proper way to make bitterleaf stew. So when a customer hints that the stew is less than perfect and haggles over its price, Yoyo refuses the offer—and angers the Great Spirit of the Market, Brother Coin.

Does this mean the ruin of Mama Cécile? Or can clever Yoyo coax Brother Coin to restore his blessing on her market bowl?



*A Junior Library Guild Selection*

Correlated to Common Core State Standards:  
(College and Career Readiness) Reading Literature.  
Grades 1 to 4. Standards 1 to 7, 9, and 10

### Before Reading

Show the children the cover of the book. Ask them the following questions:

- Where do you think this story takes place?
- What do you think the little girl has in the bowl?
- What do you think the people behind the girl are doing?

Go through the book page by page, looking at the illustrations without reading the text. Ask the children to describe what they think is happening. What is the story about?

### After Reading

Ask the children the following questions:

- How was the story different from what you thought the book was about when you just looked at the illustrations? How was it similar?
- What does the word “impatient” mean? Do you think Yoyo was impatient?
- Do you think Yoyo should have tried to sell her stew?
- Was Yoyo brave to visit Brother Coin?
- How did Yoyo get Brother Coin to restore the blessing on the market bowl?
- What did Yoyo learn by the end of the story? What do you think the moral or message is?

# Activities

## Puppet Mini-Play

Divide the children into pairs and have each pair cut out the mini puppets below, of Yoyo and the Stranger, and glue or tape the puppets to a popsicle stick. Have each pair act out the two scenarios below, then turn to page 3 for questions to discuss after this exercise.



### Scenario One

**Yoyo:** Bitterleaf stew!

**Stranger:** Bitterleaf? (*sniffs Yoyo's bowl*) Now, dis one—how much?

**Yoyo:** Fifty-fifty.

**Stranger:** Hmph. I give you ten-ten.

**Yoyo:** Ten-ten! An insult!

*Both characters stomp away angrily.*

### Scenario Two

**Yoyo:** Bitterleaf stew!

**Stranger:** Bitterleaf? (*sniffs Yoyo's bowl*) Now, dis one—how much?

**Yoyo:** Fifty-fifty.

**Stranger:** Hmph. I give you ten-ten.

**Yoyo:** Only ten-ten?

**Stranger:** Your stew is too clumpy and salty and burnt. Ten-ten is a fair price.

**Yoyo:** Yes. You are right. Ten-ten is a fair price.

*Both characters shake hands.*

# Activities

## (continued)

### Puppet Mini-Play: Post-Exercise Questions

- In Scenario One, did Yoyo and the Stranger each get what they wanted?
- How did Yoyo act differently in each scenario?
- Do you think Yoyo was right in the first scenario?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you disagreed with someone, like we see in Scenario One? Were you able to fix the situation and reach an agreement? How did you do that?
- What do you think would have happened in *The Market Bowl* if Yoyo had agreed with the Stranger right away, like she does in Scenario Two?
- Do you think the Stranger would have given Yoyo fifty-fifty *say-fah* if Yoyo had served him the second stew she made—the one she offered to Brother Coin? Why or why not?



### Celebrating cultures

Explore the culture of Cameroon in your classroom . . .

- Play music from Africa. Check out the PBS website for some great clips of music from the Baka, inhabitants of the rainforests of Africa, particularly southeast Cameroon:  
[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/rainforest/rainforest\\_music.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/rainforest/rainforest_music.html)
- Bring in some of the exports of Cameroon (such as bananas, coffee, cocoa, and rubber) and let the children touch and feel them. Have they seen or used these items before? Did they already know they came from Cameroon?
- Read through the list of “Quick Facts” about Cameroon on page 5 of this guide. What other cool facts can your students find out about this country? For example, when was the flag of Cameroon created? Aside from soccer, what other sports do the people of Cameroon play? What is the climate like? What are some common dishes eaten by Cameroonians (other than bitterleaf stew, of course!)?

# What is a folktale?



*The Market Bowl* is an original folktale set in modern-day Cameroon. A folktale is a story that is passed on from generation to generation, usually by oral tradition—or, through spoken word. Below is a list of characteristics of a folktale. Not all of these characteristics may be present for a folktale to be considered a folktale, however.

- Ordinary characters with ordinary lives encounter something extraordinary
- Magic of some kind is involved
- Animals, plants, even machines are able to talk and communicate
- There is a monster or evil character that the main character must defeat
- The main character uses trickery to defeat the evil character
- One or more of the characters learns an important lesson

After discussing the possible characteristics of a folktale, ask your students the following questions:

- Which of these characteristics are present in *The Market Bowl*?
- Which of these characteristics are not present?
- Can you think of any other folktales that you already know?

## Create your own folktale

After discussing what a folktale is with your students, have them create their own. Since folktales are often designed to be told out loud, make this an oral activity. Have the students sit in a circle and ask each child to add something new to the story. Before getting started, help the students focus their story by establishing the following:

- Where will the story take place?
- Who is the main character?
- What characteristics of a folktale will the story include? Will there be magic? Or a monster?
- What important lesson will the folktale try to teach?

Once the folktale is complete, have students illustrate some aspect of it. Maybe one child wants to draw the main character, or a specific scene from the story. It's okay if more than one student wants to illustrate the same thing, however, encourage them to create their own version. How does each student's unique imagination affect the different versions of the illustrations?

# Beyond the Book: Exploring Cameroon



## Quick Facts:

**Official Name:** Republic of Cameroon (English), or République du Cameroun (French)

**Capital:** Yaoundé

**Official Languages:** French and English

**Population Estimate (2012):** 20,650,000

**Total Area:** 183,920 square miles

**Monetary Unit:** CFA Franc

- The most popular sport in Cameroon is football, or what Americans call soccer. The nation's team is called the "Indomitable Lions" and in 1990, they became the first soccer team from Africa to reach the semifinals in the World Cup.
- With an area of 183,920 sq mi, Cameroon is slightly larger in size than the state of California.
- Near the coast of Cameroon lies an active volcano, Mount Cameroon. At the base of Mount Cameroon is a village called Debundscha, where the average annual rainfall can reach over 33 feet!
- Lumber, cocoa, cotton, and coffee are some of several important products that come from Cameroon.

"Cameroon." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013. Web. 13 Feb. 2013 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/90925/Cameroon>>.



## The Flag of Cameroon

The green stripe represents hope and the vegetation in the north of the country; the red stripe represents unity; and the yellow stripe represents the sun and happiness. The star is called the "star of unity."

"The World Factbook: Cameroon." *Central Intelligence Agency.* Central Intelligence Agency, 2013. Web. 13 Feb. 2013 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html>>

# Meet the Author/Illustrator:

## Jim Averbeck



Photograph by Sonya Sones

### **You were a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon. What did this position entail?**

I was assigned to a program called “Community Development” which covered all kinds of projects. My particular job was to work on water and sanitation. Like all volunteers, I worked with Cameroonian counterparts on whatever I did. I helped villages build spring boxes and wells to provide clean, uncontaminated drinking water for their populations. I worked on a project to build a small dam, which kept water from running off to the sea and forced it to recharge the groundwater. This made the wells in the area last longer into the dry season before they dried up.

### **Did you need to learn a different language before you traveled to Cameroon? How did you communicate?**

Cameroon is a bilingual country. They have both English and French as their official languages. But they also have over 200 other languages spoken by the various ethnic groups who live there. Peace Corps volunteers go through three months of training in the country where they are assigned. They learn about the culture, the job they will be doing, and the language they will use. I learned French at that time. Then during the three years that I lived in Cameroon, I learned one of the indigenous languages, *Bulu*. I can still say a few things in *Bulu*, to the delight of a Cameroonian friend I met in California ten years after I got back. For example, you might say “*Ye ô ne mvœe?*” (pronounced a bit like “Yo Num Voy”) when you meet a friend on the street, to ask someone how they are.

### **You realized you wanted to write children’s books while in Cameroon. Why?**

When you go to live in a foreign country, where no one knows you and you know no one (at first), you get to find out a lot about who you are. Your identity is no longer defined by the expectations of friends and family who have known you forever. So I guess I was on the look out for new ways to express who I am. One night, as I listened to the music of the drums and the *mbira* (small finger pianos) being played at a party near my house, I fell into a sort of a trance. I had a dream about a land where everything was black and white. A king and a queen ruled it, each one having control over one of the colors. They argued and each one took all the things made of their color away. In the end, they each had nothing, because one had just a bunch of white and the other just a bunch of black, so neither had anything to provide contrast and give shape and form to their possessions. I woke up and thought it would make a good picture book, so I started expanding the idea to make it into a real story. It was my first book and I hope some day to have it published.

## How is life for Cameroonian children different than it is for children in the United States?

This is a difficult question to answer, because, just like in America, Cameroonian children have a broad range of experiences. Maybe this would be a good place to say that much of what we are shown here in the United States about the experience of African children is a bit uneven. We usually see images of poverty, famine, and misery. And while it is true that these all exist somewhere on the continent of Africa, it is only a small part of the story. Some Cameroonian children are quite wealthy and have all the things that American children might have—Xboxes and bicycles and such. Others have very little but find ways to



play and have fun just the same. I've seen these kids make toy cars out of old water bottles, shoe soles, and bamboo. One thing that Cameroonian kids don't have (or at least they didn't when I was there) is cable TV. They do have television, but there is only one station. So the kids spend a lot of time outdoors playing games they make up. A lot of Cameroonian kids also work, helping the family make money, like Yoyo in *The Market Bowl*.

Families are different in Cameroon too. It is legal there for a man to have more than one wife, so families may be very large. I stayed with one family that had one father, four mothers, and 23 children. That's a lot of brothers and sisters! In America we sometimes say "It takes a village to raise a child" but this expression comes from Africa. In Cameroon, all the adults in your village are considered your relatives. So if you have one father and three mothers, you may have dozens of aunts and uncles. That's a lot of adults for a kid to answer to, isn't it?

## What impressed you most about the country of Cameroon?

That Cameroonians, many of whom have so little, generally seemed much happier than Americans, who have so much.

## Why did it take six years to write *The Market Bowl*?

Did it? It's hard to say exactly. When you are a writer, you have several books you are writing at the same time. When one sells to a publisher, you have to put everything aside to revise the book to get it ready for publication. So work in progress gets put on hold and the years stretch out before it is finished.

In the case of *The Market Bowl*, I spent a lot of time cutting words out! Picture books tend to have shorter amounts of text. For me, the struggle with this story was how to convey the culture of Cameroon, with whom many of my readers would be unfamiliar, in just a few words, so I could spend the rest of the time telling my story. I also spent a long time illustrating the story, because one way to cut out the text is to let the pictures tell the story. I hope readers enjoy Yoyo's adventure as much as I did when I wrote it.

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*Jim Averbeck was a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon from 1990 through 1994. While he was there, he ate many delicious bowls of ndolé (bitterleaf stew), like the kind that Mama Cécile and Yoyo make in The Market Bowl. He also enjoyed other local dishes such as boa constrictor, crocodile, and deep-fried termites. He is the author of In a Blue Room, a 2009 Charlotte Zolotow Honor Book. He is the author and illustrator of Except If and Oh No, Little Dragon! Jim lives in San Francisco, California.*