

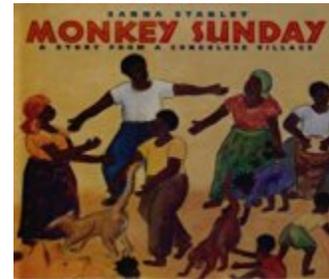
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Sanna Stanley. *Monkey Sunday. A Story from a Congolese Village*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998. 32 pp. \$16.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-374-35018-5.

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MONKEY SUNDAY

Young Luzolo, a Congolese child of about eight years, is a restless girl who is constantly being admonished by the adults around her to sit still. On this day, her father, the pastor of their village is preaching at a Matondo (Thanksgiving celebration). All must go well because, she is told, Tata Nkondi, an elderly and influential preacher who taught her father will be visiting. Luzolo takes the words to heart, and refuses to join in when various animals disrupt the sermon and steal food from her and others.

Aimed at young readers, this is a story that children might like to have read to them, or try to read by themselves. It employs an appropriately limited English vocabulary in large print, and uses several Kikongo words and phrases. For readers who can handle the phonology (there is no phonetic rendering of the words) these phrases represent a minimal introduction to the language. The illustrations show a rural village in the midst of a service of thanksgiving. Strikingly beautiful, they capture the spirit of rural villages, and post-missionary African Christianity.

Sanna Stanley grew up as a missionary child in a Kikongo speaking village in the Democratic Republic of Congo and this book is a product of her youthful experiences there. In her author's note at the end of the text, she explains the meaning of Matondo and relates that the story was based on an actual event and includes Tata Nkondi, a real person.

The book effectively humanizes Central Africans without exoticizing them. Western children might find the invasion of animals into a church service remarkable, but the author handles this aspect of the story very effectively, by making this event simply a strong challenge to an otherwise restless child. Upon reading the book, I regretted that I did not have it to read to my children (and not yet ready for grandchildren), for I would surely have enjoyed reading it as much as I am sure they would have loved to have it read.

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