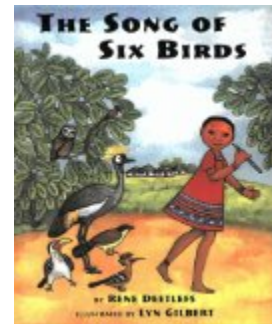


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Rene Deetlefs. *The Song of Six Birds*. Illustrator, Lyn Gilbert. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1999. 32 pp. Ages 4-8. \$12.79 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-525-46314-6.

Reviewed by Barbara B. Brown (African Studies Center, Boston University)
Published on H-AfrTeach (July, 2001)



<cite>The Song of Six Birds</cite>

The Song of Six Birds

The Song of Six Birds is the story of a young girl named Lindiwe who loves music and wakes one morning to find her mother has given her a simple flute. Not able to play, she walks through her village capturing the songs of six birds for her flute. At the end of the day, people gather around to hear the flute play and to feast and dance together.

The book is suited for young children. The text is minimal—a sentence or two per page—and the illustrations are bold, with simple colors of green grass, red dress, blue sky. The six birds are charmingly presented and illustrated. The people are drawn wearing typical South African clothes but with no attempt at individuality. The overall sense of village life—of people and goats and chickens, river and trees—is what matters.

The Song of Six Birds is a generic story of happy village life. Only in reading the cover notes on the author and illustrator can an American reader learn that it is South Africa depicted here. The story offers a sweet fantasy of rural life with its minimal story line and drawings. Readers seeking a story that captures a more detailed depiction of South African village life today will need to look further into stories with more nuanced illustrations or a richer story arc. Some such picture books on South Africa available in the United States are *Ntombi's Song, Over the Green Hills*, and *At the Crossroads*.

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