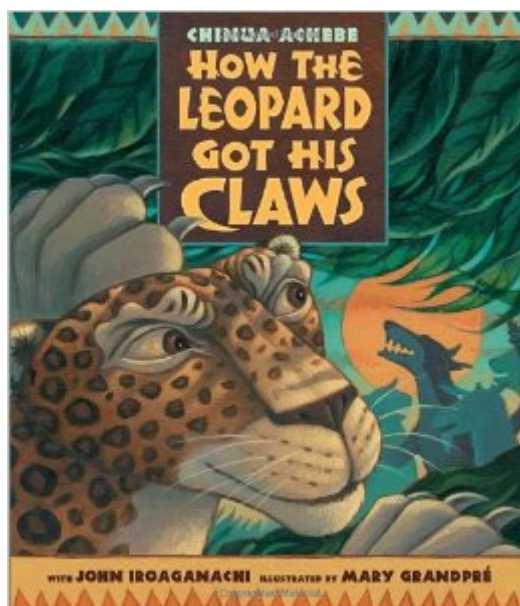


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# How The Leopard Got His Claws



## Synopsis

From Chinua Achebe, father of modern African literature, comes a vivid fable about power and freedom. In the beginning, all the animals lived as friends. Their king, the leopard, was strong but gentle and wise. Only Dog had sharp teeth, and only he scoffed at the other animals' plan to build a common shelter for resting out of the rain. But when Dog is flooded out of his own cave, he attacks the leopard and takes over as king. And it is then, after visiting the blacksmith's forge and knocking on Thunder's door, that the angry leopard returns to regain his throne by the menace of his own threatening new claws. In a riveting fable for young readers about the potency and dangers of power taken by force, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, author of *THINGS FALL APART*, evokes themes of liberation and justice that echo his seminal novels about post-colonial Africa. Glowing with vibrant color, Mary GrandPré's expressive and action filled paintings bring this unforgettable tale to dramatic life.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Candlewick (September 27, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763648051

ISBN-13: 978-0763648053

Product Dimensions: 10.2 x 0.4 x 11.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #363,324 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in [Books > Children's Books >](#)

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

This book *How the Leopard Got His Claws* by Achebe and John Iroaganachi, was originally published in 1972. According to Raisa Simola in the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 2(1): 87-99 (1993), this story is an allegory of Nigeria's Civil War. After learning that tidbit, I felt like I understood how to apply to story more effectively in the classroom (I am a teacher) through talk of

character, plot, and theme. The character in the book that troubled me the most was the King Leopard. The change he undergoes in the course of the book is not a positive one. He does grow, but in the wrong way. It begins with him being the King of a very good group of animals, minus the dog. The King Leopard has no need for claws at this point, as he is a nice king and is likewise treated quite nicely. The story ends with King Leopard using his claws and power to control his people. I was struck by the reality of war changing people, usually in a negative way. I am reminded of a friend whose husband served in Vietnam. He was/is not the same man she married, being less fun-loving and more serious. This dramatic character change teaches a valuable lesson about how conflict, if handled poorly, can have a negative effect on our character. The seemingly harmless plot of this story erodes into a display of cruel power and cowardice. If I were teaching this book, I would ask about the small events in the plot that eventually spiral out of control and cause the animals to lose character. I would then ask them to look at small events in their own lives that have done the same. I would ask them about small things in class that quickly got out of hand, and how they can contribute to keep things in check. I think this plot plays over and over again in civil wars, schools, and some homes in America.

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