

IMANI'S MOON

JaNay Brown-Wood • Illustrated by Hazel Mitchell

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E-book editions also available

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Full-color illustrations

Little Imani is the smallest one in her village. The other children make fun of her and tell her she's too tiny and that she'll never amount to anything. Imani begins to believe them.

At bedtime, Imani's mama tells her stories of the Maasai mythologies: about Olapa, the moon goddess and about Anansi the spider. They accomplished what would seem impossible. Imani's mama tells her that she is the one who needs to believe if she wants to achieve great things. So, Imani sets out to touch the moon.

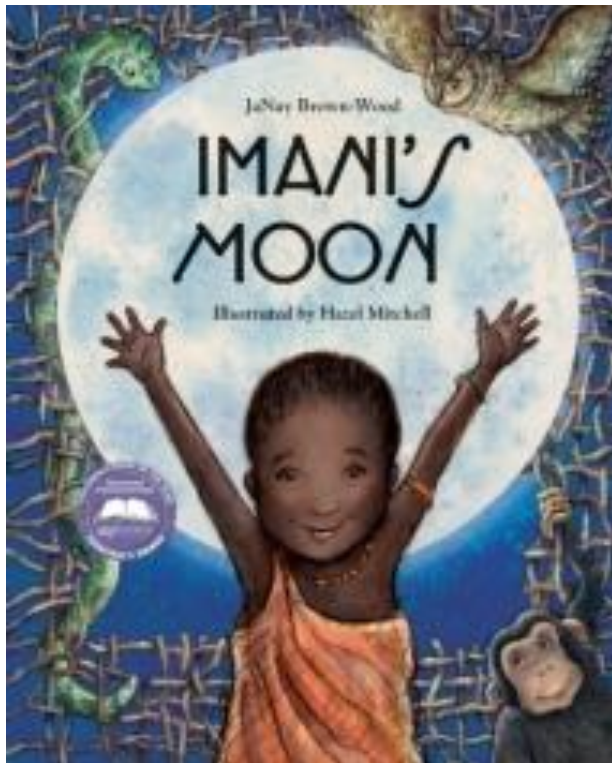
This beautiful story of a little girl who believed will inspire young readers to reach for their own moons.

Teacher's Guide Developed by Marcie Colleen

Imani's Moon

a teacher's guide

Created by marcie colleen



Based on the book published by Mackinac Island Press

JaNay Brown-Wood, Author

Imani's Moon

Like Imani, JaNay Brown-Wood dreams big. Ever since she was a little girl, she's wanted to become a published author. Her determination has paid off. This is her first book for children. JaNay is also a professor of early childhood education. She lives in California with her husband, Catrayel, and her two turtles, Theodora and Theodocius.

You can visit her at www.janaybrownwood.com.

Hazel Mitchell, Illustrator

Imani's Moon

Hazel Mitchell was over the moon when she was illustrating this book. Bringing characters and stories to life through art is her dream come true. Hazel has illustrated several books for children, including *One Word Pearl*; *1,2,3...by the Sea*; and *Double Crossed at Cactus Flats*. Originally from the United Kingdom, she now lives in Maine.

You can visit her at www.hazelmitchell.com.

Marcie Colleen, Curriculum Writer

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children's books, Marcie can often be found writing picture books of her own at home in Brooklyn, NYC.

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How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Imani's Moon* is designed for students in kindergarten through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Imani's Moon* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

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English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

Before reading *Imani's Moon*,

Help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.

The Front Cover ~

- Describe what you see. Who are the characters? What are the characters doing?
- Stand up and pretend to be the little girl in the illustration. How does this pose make you feel?
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues you can find in the cover illustration?

The Title Page ~

- Describe what you see in this illustration.
- Where do you think this story takes place? What clues can you find in the illustration to help predict the setting?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- Why do the other children in Imani's village tease her? What kinds of things do they say to her? How does the teasing make Imani feel?
- What does Imani's mama do to make her feel better? Why do you think this helps?
- Describe a few of Imani's inspiring dreams.
- What does Imani set out to do? What are some ways she tries to accomplish her mission?
- Who tells her she cannot succeed? What does Mama say that keeps Imani inspired?
- How does the dance of the *adumu* inspire Imani?
- What does Olapa give Imani as a gift?
- When Imani tells her mama the story of *The Tale of the Girl Who Touched the Moon* she asks her where she heard the story. What does Imani tell her?
- What lesson do you think Imani learned in *Imani's Moon*?

Let's talk about the people who made *Imani's Moon*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?
- Read the Author's Note at the end of the book. What inspired JaNay Brown-Wood to write Imani's story?
- Gather and name three facts about the Maasai people from the Author's Note. How are these facts incorporated into the text and illustrations of *Imani's Moon*?

Take a close look at the illustrations throughout the book.

- On the second spread Hazel Mitchell does a wonderful job of portraying the village children teasing Imani. Stand up and re-create these children with your own bodies. How does it make you feel?
- Then pose like Imani while she is being teased. How does it make you feel?
- Besides her mama, who is another companion of Imani's that Mitchell includes in many of the illustrations? Look closely.
- Throughout *Imani's Moon*, Mitchell uses many colors for the sky. What are some of the colors she uses? Have you ever seen these colors in the sky before? With a piece of paper and some watercolors, make your own version of the sky. Display the pieces of sky around the classroom.

Create a Folktales & Mythology Library and Passport

Using the library and the Internet, gather folktales from around the world to share in a classroom read aloud.

Suggested titles:

Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale - by Verna Aardema.

Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti – by Harcourt School Publishers

Tikki Tikki Tembo – by Arlene Mosel

Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China - by Ed Young

Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale – by Gerald McDermott

World of Tales – www.worldoftales.com

Each student can create a passport to record the countries or continents they have "visited" through story.

- Cut 4 pieces of 8.5x11 paper in half and then fold together to create a small booklet.
- Each student should decorate the cover of their passport.
- The first page should include the student's identifying information and a photograph.
- Each subsequent spread of blank pages provides space for students to record information about the stories they read, including:
 - the title of the story/tale,
 - the story's continent of origin,
 - the story's country of origin,
 - a list of main characters in the story,
 - a summary of the story,
 - a world locator map with a star to indicate the location of the story,
 - any other appropriate information.

As students fill out the passport pages, stamp the page with the date the student "visited" each country.

Invite students to copy the information in their passports onto 3- by 5-inch cards. Arrange the cards around a world map on a classroom bulletin board. Use yarn to connect each card to the story's country of origin.

Writing Activities

Tales that Inspire

"Every night Imani's mama lifted her spirits with stories."

As a class, discuss the stories Imani's mama tells her. How might these stories make Imani feel better? How do these stories help Imani believe in herself? How do these stories help Imani tell *The Tale of the Girl Who Touched the Moon*?

Students will then write an essay explaining their thoughts using textual references as evidence where possible.

Possible outline:

Paragraph 1: Introduction to Imani and why her mother needs to lift her spirits.

Paragraph 2: Describe the tale of Olapa and Imani's reaction. What does she do next?

Paragraph 3: Describe the tale of Anansi and Imani's reaction. What does she do next?

Paragraph 4: In conclusion, describe *The Tale of the Girl Who Touched the Moon* and give your own explanation of how Imani's mama's stories inspired Imani.

The Tale of the Girl/Boy Who _____

Have the students write a story about achieving something that might seem impossible, like touching the moon. The more impossible the better.

Each story should include a beginning (explaining what they want to achieve), a middle (3 different ways to try and accomplish it) and an ending (the final accomplishment). *Imani's Moon* can be used as a mentor text.

Optional: Create the story together as a class.

Someone Else's Shoes ~ Point of View

Either as a class or individually, explore *Imani's Moon* from the point of view of some of the minor characters.

- Imani's mama
- The village children
- Nyoka the snake
- Sokwe the chimpanzee

How would each of these characters tell *Imani's Moon* in their own words? Do these point of view change the way you feel about Imani?

Advanced classes will be able to actually create *Imani's Moon* from another's point of view. However, if the class is less-advanced, create the story together.

Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *Imani's Moon* to life in your classroom and also have fun with speaking and listening skills!

Choral Reading

The teacher takes the role of the narrator while the students take the role of Imani. Read the book aloud together. Emphasize memorization of the students' parts as well as good vocal expression.

Mime

While the teacher reads the book aloud, the students can act out the events in the book. Half the students can be Imani and half the students can be the villagers.

Emphasize body motion and facial expressions, as well as listening skills. Switch roles and read the book again.

Drama

Have the students act out "something they wish they could do" in front of the class. They can either tell the class what they're acting or ask the class to guess what they are acting out.

Or

Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *Imani's Moon*.

Vocal Style

In small groups, act out *Imani's Moon* as an opera, a western, a "breaking news" story, a thriller, etc. The rest of the class should guess what the "style" is.

Language Activities

Imani's Moon is a story of trying, persisting and doing, as Imani is constantly trying new approaches to touch the moon. For this reason, *Imani's Moon* is a wonderful book to teach action verbs.

- Look closely at each illustration in the book and ask students what Imani is actively doing. Have them answer using only ONE word (jumping, running, even listening!).
- Explain that these action or "doing" words are called verbs.

Simon Says Verbs

The Simon Says Verbs game is a fun activity that helps students identify verbs from other parts of speech. The students will get some healthy exercise while playing this game.

- Stand in front of the class and say, "Simon says..." followed by a verb. The children do what Simon says. For example: "Simon Says dance." The children should dance.
- Mix in some words that are not verbs. For example: "Simon says table." At this time, students should not move because table is a noun, not a verb. Ask students to determine what type of word that is, if it is not a verb, such as "Is a table a verb? No, it is a noun, which is a person, place, or thing."

- Additional activity: Individual students can take turns playing Simon Says Verbs with each other.

Action Bingo

In this version of Bingo, the students compete to be the first to perform all the actions on the list. Items can be arranged in a normal bingo grid or simply as a list.

Some possible items for the list are:

- Tell a joke.
- Pretend to take a bath or shower.
- Select someone to sing a song with you.
- Behave like a duck for 10 seconds.
- Say something nice about three different people in the room.
- Shake hands with three other people in the room.
- Walk from one end of the room to the other with an object between your knees.
- Act like an egg being cracked and fried.
- Draw a picture of yourself and give it to someone in the room.
- Find something in your pocket or purse to give to the person on your left.
- Retell the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

How to Play:

- Each student or team of students must perform all the actions in front of someone, and then switch to another person to perform the next action. Those who participated or observed the action must check off that item on the list.
- Whoever gets all the items signed first, wins!
- Extra Challenge: List a single word verb for each action performed.

Additional writing activity: Using *Imani's Moon* as inspiration, write your own story about traveling to the moon. However, choose a different verb to get there! Imani JUMPED to the moon. How will you get there?

Math

Word Problems *For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems.*

- 1) Imani's mama promises her 5 stories at bedtime. After 1 story, how many stories does Imani's mama have left to tell?

$$5 - 1 = ?$$

- 2) Imani climbs up 4 branches of the tallest tree. She still can't reach the moon. So she climbs up 3 more branches. How many branches does Imani climb?

$$4 + 3 = ?$$

- 3) Imani gathers 6 large leaves to make her wings. She fastens 1 leaf to a twig with the juice of a sticky berry. How many leaves does Imani have left?

$$6 - 1 = ?$$

- 4) Imani practices jumping like the warriors in the *adumu*. She jumps 2 times very high. She then jumps 1 more time. How many times does Imani jump?

$$2 + 1 = ?$$

- 5) Imani gathers 9 moon rocks, but decides to leave 7 on the moon. How many moon rocks does Imani keep?

$$9 - 7 = ?$$

Imani's Hopscotch

This hopscotch activity will help students improve motor skills, balance, and self-regulation behaviors. Additionally, this game will encourage them to learn about math concepts such as number recognition and counting, as well as elements of art including shape and line.

This game can be created for indoor spaces through simply taping out the boxes on the floor and/or traditionally by drawing them on the pavement outdoors.

Materials:

- Masking tape (for indoor version)
- Sidewalk chalk, markers, or dark crayons
- Beanbag or a "moon" rock
- One die

Set Up:

Create the hopscotch boxes.

Students can help draw numbers in the squares. If they are not ready to write numbers alone, try lightly drawing the numbers first and then encourage them to trace over them.

How to Play:

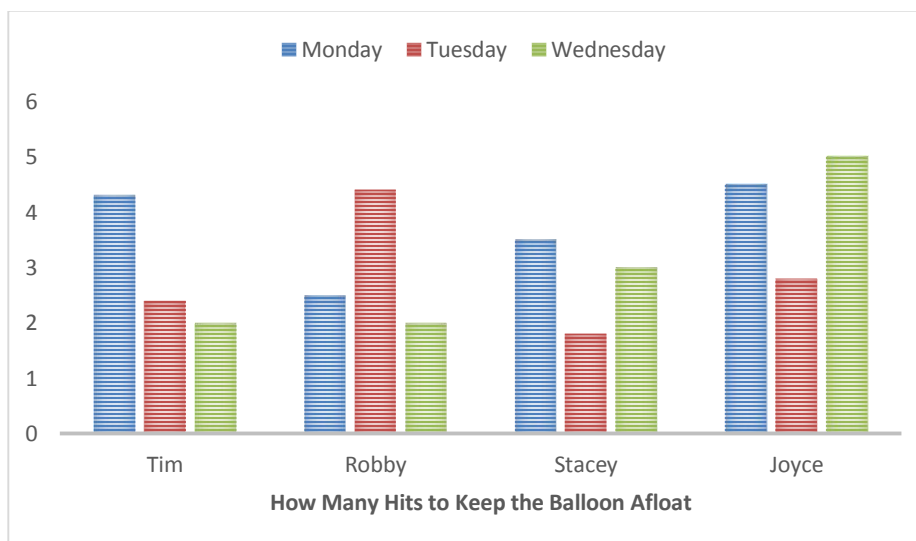
1. Place the beanbag or rock in one of the squares.
2. The first student rolls the dice twice and adds the two numbers together to know how many boxes they must hop to. (ie. $2 + 4 = 6$, hop six spaces).
3. The students hop their way through, counting as they go.
4. If they land on the box with the beanbag/rock, they have reached the moon! If they overshoot or fall short they must start all over again.
5. Play continues until the moon is reached by everyone.

For an extra challenge, change the location of the moon each turn.

Graphing Persistence

Like Imani, most kids love a challenge, especially if the game allows them the opportunity to improve over time.

- Play a game to see how high each student can build a tower out of blocks or how many times they can hit a balloon without letting it touch the floor. These activities build motor skill and concentration.
- Create a graph and chart results over several days. Students should work independently and try for their personal best. Goals can be set at the end of each session—what to try and what to accomplish the next day.



Science

Imani's Landscape

Hazel Mitchell's illustrations for *Imani's Moon* capture the landscape of Imani's Africa perfectly.

- Take a journey through the illustrations in *Imani's Moon*, making notes to describe the landscape, vegetation and animals depicted.
- As stated in the Author's Note, *Imani's Moon* is set in the plains of Tanzania and Kenya. Take a look at a physical map of Kenya and Tanzania. Ask them to identify oceans, gulfs, rivers, mountains, deserts, and other physical attributes. Are any of these attributes shown in the illustrations for *Imani's Moon*?
- On a piece of paper have the students make 2 columns. One column will read: What we know about Imani's land, and the other column will read: What we learned about Imani's land.
- Provide the following facts to the class:
 - Africa is the second largest continent
 - The equator runs through the middle of Africa
 - Africa is surrounded by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans
 - Africa has deserts, rain forest, and grassy savannas
 - It has the largest desert and the longest river in the world
 - There are over fifty countries on this continent
- Students then have 20 minutes in the library (using books and the Internet) to write down as many *other* facts they can find on Kenya and Africa's physical attributes. Facts can include information about the land, the vegetation and the animals.
- When time is up, students can share the additional facts they learned.

To the Moon and Back ~ research and art project

Throughout time the moon has been a source of mystery which has been featured prominently in the mythology of many cultures, including the story of Olapa as mentioned in *Imani's Moon*.

However, now that people have studied extensively and walked on the moon, we know so much more about it. Although, its mystery and beauty still make it a much studied topic.

- Cut several slips of paper. On half of the slips write "myth." On the other half write "fact." Each student must then pick a slip of paper.
- Students who draw a slip that says "myth" must research a myth about the moon that they will present to the class.
- Students who draw a slip that says "fact" must research a fact about the moon and present it to the class.
- To avoid repeats in myths and facts, students must share their research with the teacher. If someone has already provided the myth or fact that the student brings to the teacher, they must research further. To avoid frustration, students should look for at least 3 myths or facts to present.

Using a mixture of paint and shaving cream (to give it texture) students can then paint a picture of the moon. To make the moon actually glow, use either glow-in-the-dark paint, glitter or, for older children, laundry detergent (which will glow in a black light).

Each student should write their moon myth or fact on their painting and display them around the classroom.

Social Studies

The Maasai People

As explained in the Author's Note, Imani is from the Maasai tribe.

As a class, research the Maasai together on the Internet.

Information of interest can include:

- History
- Culture
- Social organization
- Music and dance
- Diet
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Hair

Look at photographs of the Maasai people and their way of life.

Celebrate the Maasai

Once you have researched the Maasai people, hold a celebration of their culture complete with Maasai dress, music and food.

Dress

The Maasai often wear a traditional garment called a shúkà or kanga. It is a long piece of colorful cloth wrapped around the body.

Students can create their own shúkà out of a rectangle piece of cloth wrapped around the body, under both arms and around the waist or under one arm that ties over the opposite shoulder. With fabric markers, have students design their own colorful patterns.

Music

Traditional African music consists of beats of drums, strings, wind and shaker instruments all played at different rhythms. Hand clapping, feet stomping, and voices are also used, all great for jumping high with the warriors at the adumu.

Many people utilize recycled materials as well as natural objects to create their own musical instruments.

- Ask students whether they and their families recycle. What kind of items do they recycle?
- Ask students to bring items from home that they find interesting and unique and do not want anymore.
- They can ask their parents to help them look in the garage, attic, or drawers. The recycling bin is also a great place to look!
- Working in groups, students must re-purpose the objects into a musical instrument of their own.

Extra bonus points if more than one recycled object is combined to make one instrument.

Food

Explain to the students that Kenyans eat the same kinds of foods as we do only prepared differently. Some of these foods are: bread, sweet fried bread, water, milk, coffee, tea, rice, chicken, fish, goat, bananas, rice cakes, hick corn cereals, meat kabobs, and eggs.

Finding pictures or bringing some of these foods to the classroom would help the students to see what is eaten.

Make Ndizi Kaanga (Fried Bananas)

Ingredients:

electric frying pan

spatula

small bowl

1 firm banana per 4 students

butter

lemon juice

sugar

nutmeg

- You will need to cut and quarter the bananas.
- Let the students dip one piece into the lemon juice.
- You will place it into a buttered pan and brown.
- Take out the bananas and drain them on a paper towel.
- Let each student sprinkle on sugar and nutmeg. (Thirty-eight minutes total)

Lifting Spirits

Have a class discussion about how compliments help make others feel better, as well as how put-downs make others feel unhappy.

Imani wants to give up when the village children tease her and tell her "you can't do that." But Imani's mother lifts her spirits with compliments and helps Imani to believe in herself.

- Identify and define compliments and put-downs.
- How do compliments and put-downs make people feel?
- How does giving compliments help others when they feel sad or angry?

The Compliment Relay

- Ask students to sit in a circle in chairs or on the floor.
- The objective of the game is to pass compliments around the circle.
- One player will give a compliment to the player sitting to his or her right, who will say, "Thank you," and pass a compliment to the next player, and so on.

Tip: Explain what a compliment is and give a couple of examples like, "I like the way you always hold the door open," "Thank you for _____," or "You're really good at _____." Many players will try to compliment physical characteristics, but try to steer them away from that and have players focus on complimenting actions.

The game ends when the relay has gone around the circle once. To do a

second round, students should change seats. Challenge them by telling them to use a new compliment.

Dealing with bullying

Have a class discussion about bullying.

- What is bullying? What are some other words used in *Imani's Moon* that mean "bullying?"
- Is Imani bullied in *Imani's Moon*? By who?
- How does Imani respond to the bullying?
- What are some other ways Imani could respond to the bullying?
- Have you ever been bullied? What happened?
- How did you respond to the bullying?
- What could you have done differently?
- Have you ever seen a friend or someone else be bullied? What could you do that in that situation to help?

The Swarm

This activity allows children to explore ways to diffuse a bully situation.

- Ask a few children to volunteer to be the village children from *Imani's Moon*. Look at the text in the story for examples of ways the children bully Imani.
- Another child is asked to play Imani, or the "victim", who is being bullied by the village children. (NOTE: no physical contact should be allowed during this activity).
- The rest of the class are the "bystanders" or witnesses to the bullying.

Act out a situation in which Imani (the "victim") is being bullied.

Once the bullying begins, ask the bystanders if they want to swarm over and rescue the Imani. Ask, "Swarm?"

Gather the group together like they are a swarm of bees coming from a hive. Walk towards the "victim" and take their hand or lock arms and pull them into the swarm. Pull the victim away from the ugly situation by moving to another part of the room.

This surprise element will defuse the situation.

Then if they want, the group can do a Second Swarm. Ask, "Second Swarm?"

If they agree, go back to the village children and catch them up in the swarm! And say, "No more of that stuff, get it?" to let them know that mean behavior is not acceptable.

It is best to continue this practice until everyone has had the opportunity to be the village children and be the "victim."

This action makes a statement that people are to be treated with respect.

It's the group energy of the swarm that scatters the bullying behavior. People who try to intimidate others by mean words or actions fall apart when they face a force bigger than their own. Band together to make the school a safer place to be!