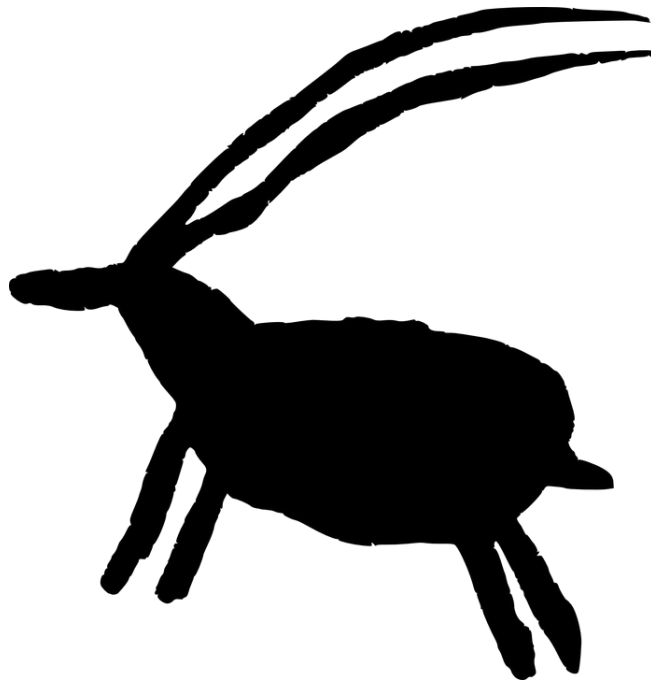


# AncientAdventures



## Hunter-Gatherer Hijinx

A Read-Aloud Decide Your Path Story

By Jay D'Ambrosio



*Read the first section aloud to your students, then allow them to choose which way to go!*

# AncientAdventures: Hunter-Gatherer

## Hijinx

### VOCABULARY

**hunter-gatherer**

people who hunt wild animals and gather wild plants for food

**rite of passage**

a ceremony or event marking an important stage in someone's life

**language**

the words and expressions used and understood by a group of people

**animism**

the belief that trees, rocks, and animals have spirits

**shaman**

someone believed to have a connection to the spirit world

The year is 10,000 B.C. You are Nata, a young boy from the Huna tribe in what will someday be known as western Africa. This morning starts out like any other morning. You awaken early to the smell of smoke drifting in through the opening into your family's grass hut. The morning air is already warm and the sun peaks through your grass walls, shining into your still sleepy eyes. As you poke your head out of the hut, you see your mother along with various aunts and cousins getting ready to gather the day's supply of berries, nuts, and roots. As with most tribes, you are either a hunter or a gatherer. You are nearing your 13th birthday and you know that your time as a gatherer is nearing its end. Soon, you will join your father, brothers, and uncles as a hunter. As you gaze dreamily into the smoky fire, your mother approaches you saying, "We must go." You grab your leather pouch and follow the others along a well worn trail into the wilds of the plain. The women and children scatter throughout the brush, searching for the life-sustaining berries and roots. You dig at the ground with various stone tools, prying at the tough roots. After hours of gathering, the flies are beginning to bite. It is approaching noon. The gatherers head back to camp, to avoid the heat of the sun.

**Do you?**

**A) Follow them back**

**B) See if you can find a cool watering hole**

**A)** You decide that it would be wise to follow the gatherers back to the huts. After all, it is just too hot in the noon-time sun. As you approach the camp, you see that some of the hunters have speared a wild boar. Blood from the boar is being smeared on the cheeks and chest of the victorious hunter. Even though this is an age old tradition, you still don't fully understand it. The men notice you staring and turn to face you. You look away out of respect and fear. Your father approaches you. "The time is now Nata, for you to become a man and a full member of the Huna tribe."

**Do you?**

**C) Run for your life**

**D) Agree**

**B)** You decide to search for a cool watering hole. Off in the distance you hear the roar of hungry lions and the thunder of stampeding wildebeest. Sweat pours down your forehead and stings your eyes. You hear a rustling sound in the bushes next to your feet. A little lost bird perhaps? "Eeeeeek!" Out from the scrub brush charges an angry warthog with his white tusks gleaming. You fall backwards to avoid the onrushing pig. The ground beneath you feels strange and unstable. "Wooooaaaah!" you feel the ground give way and collapse. Thud! For several seconds you try to regain your breath. When you look around, you realize that you have fallen into a

large hole that had been covered over by branches and leaves. "Who covered this hole? Why?" you wonder aloud. "Oooink!" You are not the only one down here and you see the pointed warthog-tusks.

**Do you?**

**E) Attempt to communicate**

**F) Attempt to fight [Flip a coin. If students call the toss correctly, then read WIN; if not then LOSE(1) or LOSE(2)]**

**C)** You take off down a dusty trail into the wastelands, without looking back. "I can't go through the rite of passage to become a full member of the tribe!" you think to yourself. "I've heard too many painful stories." The afternoon sun beats down unmercifully upon your face and shoulders. You are very thirsty.

**GO TO B**

**D)** You tell the men of your tribe that you are ready. All 13 year old males in the Huna tribe must undergo a rite of passage, a ritual designed to make one a complete member of the tribe. "It is simply a part of your culture, or your way of life." you tell yourself, but you don't feel any better. Your older half-brother, son of one of your father's five wives, grabs your arms from behind. You are forced to the ground. An older cousin takes a shard of wood and snaps it against his hand. You don't even want to guess what that is going to be used for. As you are held down, the shard of wood is beaten against the soles of your feet. You want to cry, but you show no emotion. Soon you begin to bleed. Salt and spicy herbs are then rubbed into your open wounds. And you thought that the beatings were bad. You are then placed into a hot grass hut. You are alone for what seems like hours. Night falls. At midnight you begin to hear the beating of drums.

**Do you?**

**G) Try to escape**

**H) Stay put**

**E)** You try to communicate. "This is going to be tricky. You think to yourself. How do you communicate complex ideas, such as peace and friendship to a beast that does not have language? The wild pig doesn't seem to understand your feeble attempts. It charges! You feel the sharp tusks sink down into your stomach and you feel the warm splash of your own blood. You see stars and feel faint. The warthog is still attacking, but somehow you feel numb and you just don't care. The last sight you see is an ugly tusked face glaring into your eyes.

**THE END**

**WIN)** You decide that if it is time to die that you want to go down fighting. You quickly scan the surroundings and find a long sharpened stick that would do nicely as a spear. You hear snuffling and snorting sounds coming from the darkness. You thrust the wooden spear into the shadows, hoping to hit something. The warthog pokes its ugly, tusked head into the light. "Oooinnk!" It charges! A sharp tusk gouges the soft flesh of your left leg. You close your eyes and jab at the pig hoping that the spear will guide itself. The squealing stops. When you open your eyes you see that your wooden spear found its way to the warthog's heart. Even though you are victorious, your body is racked with pain. As you glance up, you see eyes peering at you. The hunters! They help you up. Your father takes a sharpened stone knife and cuts open the pig's chest. He then proceeds to remove the heart. Some of the blood left in the still beating heart is squeezed into your mouth as a sign that you were the killer of this pig. Your tribe like many others believes in animism, the belief that animals, plants, and even rocks have a life and a spirit. The hunters say a quick, chanting prayer to the spirit of the pig, thanking it for the food it will provide. Then the carcass is loaded on to your back to carry back to camp. What a hero you will be.

**THE END**

**LOSE(1)** You would rather die fighting than trying to communicate with a wild boar. You pick up a small log to use as a club. You swing wildly at the snorting, gurgling thing. You feel as if you're only attacking shadows. Suddenly, the club flies out of your hand, hits the dirt wall, bounces back and hits you squarely between the eyes! Dazed, you drop to the ground with a thud. The last sight you ever see is a hideous face, with gleaming tusks, bearing down on you.

**THE END**

**LOSE(2)** You lunge at the wild pig. "I'll defeat it with my bare hands!" you think to yourself. Your heart races as you tackle the beast. The terrified creature spins and turns, its pointed tusks aimed right at you. Suddenly, the attack comes! You feel a sharp, piercing pain in your side. "This is it." you say, "I'm done for." Just then, the squealing stops. You open your eyes to see the warthog lying dead on the floor with a feathered spear in its back. Voices of hunters shouting with excitement fill the air. You've been saved! You see one of your cousins lowering a vine down into the hole for you escape. You are then carried to the camp so that your wounds can be treated. You are brought to the shaman, who slowly begins to chant. He then places a hideous mask over his head. The mask has large curved tusks, much like the wild boar did. The shaman smears some mashed herbs over your wounds. Your pain of your cuts begins to ease. You fall asleep. You awaken as the Headman, the chief of the Huna tribe, enters your tent. You bow low to the ground as he strides toward you. He says, "Nata, it is time for you to undergo the rite of passage to become a hunter."

**Do you?**

**G) Try to escape**

**D) Accept your responsibilities**

**G)** You decide to make a break for it. While no one is watching, you slip out of the tent and dash into the wilderness. You know that if you don't go through the rite of passage, you will be shunned by your entire tribe, even your closest family members. But, right now that doesn't matter. The sun rises beyond the hills.

**GO TO C**

**H)** You decide that the best thing to do is to stay put. The drums get louder, and faster, and then stop. The hunters enter the hut wearing hideous masks, decorated with feathers and beads, the emblems of allegiance to the Huna tribe. Their bodies are painted in various colors. They take you out into the firelight. Everyone just stares at you as your eyes adjust to the glare. You sit down next to the tribal elders and the shaman, a person in the tribe who claims to have contact with the supernatural world. The shaman goes into a trance and tells you strange myths, and other stories of gods, goddesses, and the supernatural. One myth tells of the creation of the world. Another tells how the moon stole some light from the sun, and how now the sun forever chases the moon across the sky. Stories of animal gods and human heroes fill your mind. After telling these myths, you hear about the Tutok tribe, and the evils this tribe has committed against the people of the Huna tribe. The Tutoks are your tribal enemy. After these stories, the elders pray to the animal spirits to enter into the shaman. It is nearly daybreak. The shaman pulls out a long knife and strides toward you.

**Do you?**

**I) Run**

**J) Sit still**

**I)** You panic and begin to run! You take off into the early morning mist. You look around and realize that you are in the wild plains outside of your tribal camp. All of a sudden you feel as if you were being watched. Eyes peer out at you from the underbrush. "The Tutok warriors" you scream! The words barely leave your mouth, as a poison tipped arrow pierces your throat. You feel faint and see stars. The last words you hear from the Tutoks is an argument. An argument over who has the right to eat your heart after you die.

**THE END**

**J)** After hearing stories about the bravery of your ancestors, you feel a little braver. The shaman makes circular cuts starting at the top of your head and working his way down to your forehead. The pain is unbearable, but you choke back the tears and try to be brave. The blood trickles down into your eyes, nose, and mouth. Finally, the cutting is over. After the cuts heal, you will be left with the scars that will identify you as being a full member of the Huna tribe and a hunter. This is your emblem of allegiance to the tribe.

**THE END**

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## Discussion Questions

Directions: After reading the adventure, discuss the questions below with the listeners.

1. Which group in a hunter-gatherer society did the hunting? Who did the gathering? Why do you think this was so?
2. How did hunter-gatherers view animals, plants, rocks, trees, etc.? Why do you think this was so?
3. In a hunter-gather society, what did a boy have to undergo in order to become a man, and a full member of the tribe? Do people today still cling to some tribal customs such as this?
4. How did primitive people explain natural events such as the sun setting, or a volcano erupting? Why do you think this was this so?
5. Who was the spiritual leader of the tribe? Why was this person chosen for the role?



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## ANSWER KEY

### Discussion Questions

Directions: After reading the adventure, discuss the questions below with the listeners.

1. Which group in a hunter-gatherer society did the hunting? Who did the gathering? Why do you think this was so?

The men typically did the hunting, while the women and children did the gathering. Accept a variety of student answers to explain why they think this was so.

2. How did hunter-gatherers view animals, plants, rocks, trees, etc.? Why do you think this was so?

Hunter-gatherers often viewed animals, plants, rocks, trees, and other natural phenomena as having their own spirits and names. Accept a variety of student answers to explain why they think this was so.

3. In a hunter-gather society, what did a boy have to undergo in order to become a man, and a full member of the tribe? Do people today still cling to some tribal customs such as this?

A boy needed to undergo a rite of passage to become a man and a full member of the tribe. Accept a variety of student answers regarding tribal customs today.

4. How did primitive people explain natural events such as the sun setting, or a volcano erupting? Why do you think this was this so?

Primitive people explained natural events through the lens of myth. The sun setting or the eruption of a volcano might be interpreted as being the actions of god, goddess, or spirit. Accept a variety of student answers to explain why they think this was so.

5. Who was the spiritual leader of the tribe? Why was this person chosen for the role?

The tribal shaman was the spiritual leader of the tribe. A shaman claimed to have contact with the supernatural world.