

How the Leopard Got His Spots

Based on Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories



In the beginning of the world, things were different. Leopard lived in a place called the Highveld. It was a sandy-colored place. The rocks were sandy colored. The grass was a sandy yellow. Even Leopard was a sandy yellow color. He perfectly matched the background. He could lie there and no one could see him. He would jump out and scare Zebra and Giraffe out of their wits.

Zebra and Giraffe decided to move. They went to the Bushveld. It was covered in tall trees and shady forests. They hid in the forests, where the light was stripy and blotchy. Back then, Zebra was all white

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and Giraffe was all yellow. They hid in the shadows for so long that their colors changed. Zebra stood in the stripy shadows. He grew stripes. Giraffe stood in the blotchy shadows. She grew large spots. Soon, they were as hard to find in the forest as Leopard was in the Highveld.



Leopard missed his friends Zebra and Giraffe. He asked his friend the Ethiopian if he knew where they went. The Ethiopian was a man. In those days, his skin was a sandy-yellow color, too. The Ethiopian didn't know, but he went with Leopard to look.

One sunny day, they came to the Bushveld. They saw the forest and decided to look inside.

It was dark and shady inside the forest. Leopard and the Ethiopian were sandy yellow. They stood out in the shadowy light.

"I can smell Zebra, but I can't see him," said Leopard.

"I can smell Giraffe, but I can't see him," said the Ethiopian.

"Let's try again at night. Maybe we'll have more luck," said Leopard.

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And they did. Leopard felt Zebra. He smelled Zebra. But the stripy animal he caught didn't look like Zebra. The Ethiopian had the same experience with Giraffe. Zebra and Giraffe explained what happened. They explained how their new colors hid them in the forest. Leopard and the Ethiopian wanted to live in the forest. They knew that they would have to change their colors, too.

The Ethiopian found some black mud. He covered himself in it. This changed the color of his skin. He became all black.

“Wow,” said Leopard. “Can you camouflage me, too? I don't want to be black all over. Maybe some spots like Giraffe, but smaller.”

So the Ethiopian took the mud and put spots on Leopard. He made them with the tips of his fingers. He pressed his fingers close together. Then he pressed them all over Leopard. And Leopard has kept his spots forever after.



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In the beginning of the world, things looked different than they do today. In Africa, Leopard lived in a hot and sandy-colored place called the Highveld. In those days the animals' coats were different than what you see today. Leopard was a sandy yellow color, Zebra was a light grey color, and Giraffe was a light yellow color. When Leopard lay on the ground, the color of his coat perfectly camouflaged him and made it nearly impossible to spot him lying on the ground. He played a game where he would lie around waiting for Zebra and Giraffe, then he would jump out and scare them half out of their wits. This game delighted Leopard, but Zebra and Giraffe were far less thrilled.

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Zebra and Giraffe decided to move to the Bushveld to get away from Leopard. The Bushveld was covered in tall trees and shady forests. They hid in the forest, where the light that shown through the trees cast stripy and blotchy shadows. They hid in the shadows for so long that their coats changed color. Zebra, who stood in the stripy shadows, grew dark stripes all over his body. Giraffe, who stood in the blotchy shadows grew large spots all over his body. Soon, they were as well camouflaged in the forest as Leopard was in the Highveld—you could stand right next to them and not even see them.



Leopard missed his friends Zebra and Giraffe, so he asked his friend the Ethiopian if he knew where they went. The Ethiopian was a man and in those days, he was a sandy yellow color, too. The Ethiopian didn't know where Zebra and Giraffe were, but he decided to go along with Leopard to look for them.

One hot sunny day, they came to the Bushveld. It was dark and shady inside the forest and the sandy yellow Leopard and Ethiopian stood out in the patchy light.

“I can smell Zebra, but I can't see him,” said Leopard.

“I can smell Giraffe, but I can't see him,” said the Ethiopian.

“Let's try looking for them again at night. Maybe we'll have more luck,” said Leopard.

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And they did. Leopard felt Zebra. He smelled Zebra, but the stripy thing he caught didn't look like Zebra. The Ethiopian had the same experience with Giraffe. Zebra and Giraffe explained how their spots and stripes hid them in the forest. Leopard and the Ethiopian knew that if they were going to move into the forest, they would have to look more like Zebra and Giraffe.

The Ethiopian found some black mud. He covered himself in it and it changed the color of his skin.

"Wow," said Leopard. "Can you camouflage me, too? I don't want to be black all over. Maybe some spots like Giraffe, but smaller."

So the Ethiopian took the mud and put spots on Leopard. He made them with the tips of his fingers. He pressed his fingers close together. Then he pressed them all over Leopard. And Leopard has kept his spots forever after.



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In the beginning of the world, things looked very different from how they appear today. In Africa, Leopard resided in a hot and sandy-colored habitat called the Highveld. In those days the hides of animals were different than how they appear today. Leopard was a sandy yellow color, Zebra was a light grey color, and Giraffe was a light yellow color. When Leopard lay on the ground, his sandy yellow hide perfectly camouflaged him, making it nearly impossible to spot him lying on the ground. He played a game where he would lie in wait for Zebra and Giraffe to happen by, then he would jump out and frighten them half to death. This jack-in-the-box game delighted Leopard, but Zebra and Giraffe were far less thrilled.

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Zebra and Giraffe relocated to the Bushveld to get away from Leopard. The Bushveld was covered in towering trees and the sunlight that penetrated the canopy of the forest cast blotchy-stripy shadows on the forest floor. Zebra and Giraffe stayed in the shadows for so long that the shadows changed the colors of their coats. Zebra often stood in the stripy shadows and eventually grew dark stripes all over his body. Giraffe stood frequently in the blotchy shadows and eventually grew large spots all over his body. Soon, they were as well camouflaged in the forest as Leopard was in the Highveld—you could stand right next to them and not even see them.



Leopard missed his friends Zebra and Giraffe, so he asked his friend the Ethiopian if he knew where they went. The Ethiopian, a human man, was a sandy yellow color in those days, too. The Ethiopian didn't know where Zebra and Giraffe were, but he decided to go along with Leopard in search of them.

One blistering sunny day, their search brought them to the Bushveld. Sandy-yellow Leopard and the Ethiopian stood out in the patchy light of the shadowy forest.

“I can smell Zebra, but I don't see him anywhere,” said Leopard.

“I can smell Giraffe, but I don't see him anywhere either,” said the Ethiopian.

“Let's try looking for them again at night and perhaps we'll have more luck,” suggested Leopard.

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That night, they crept into the forest to look for their friends. Leopard smelled Zebra and he felt Zebra, but the stripy thing he caught didn't look anything like his friend Zebra. The Ethiopian had the same experience with Giraffe. Zebra and Giraffe explained how their spots and stripes hid them in the forest like Leopard's color hid him in the Highveld. Leopard and the Ethiopian realized that they would have to modify their hides like Zebra and Giraffe if they wanted to live in the Bushveld.

The Ethiopian found some black mud in the shadows. He covered himself in it and it transformed the color of his skin to a shadowy black, which hasn't changed since.

"Wow," said Leopard. "Can you camouflage me, too? I don't want to be black all over, I prefer some spots like Giraffe."

So the Ethiopian took the mud and painted spots on Leopard using the tips of his fingers. And since that day, Leopard has had splotchy spots all over his hide.

