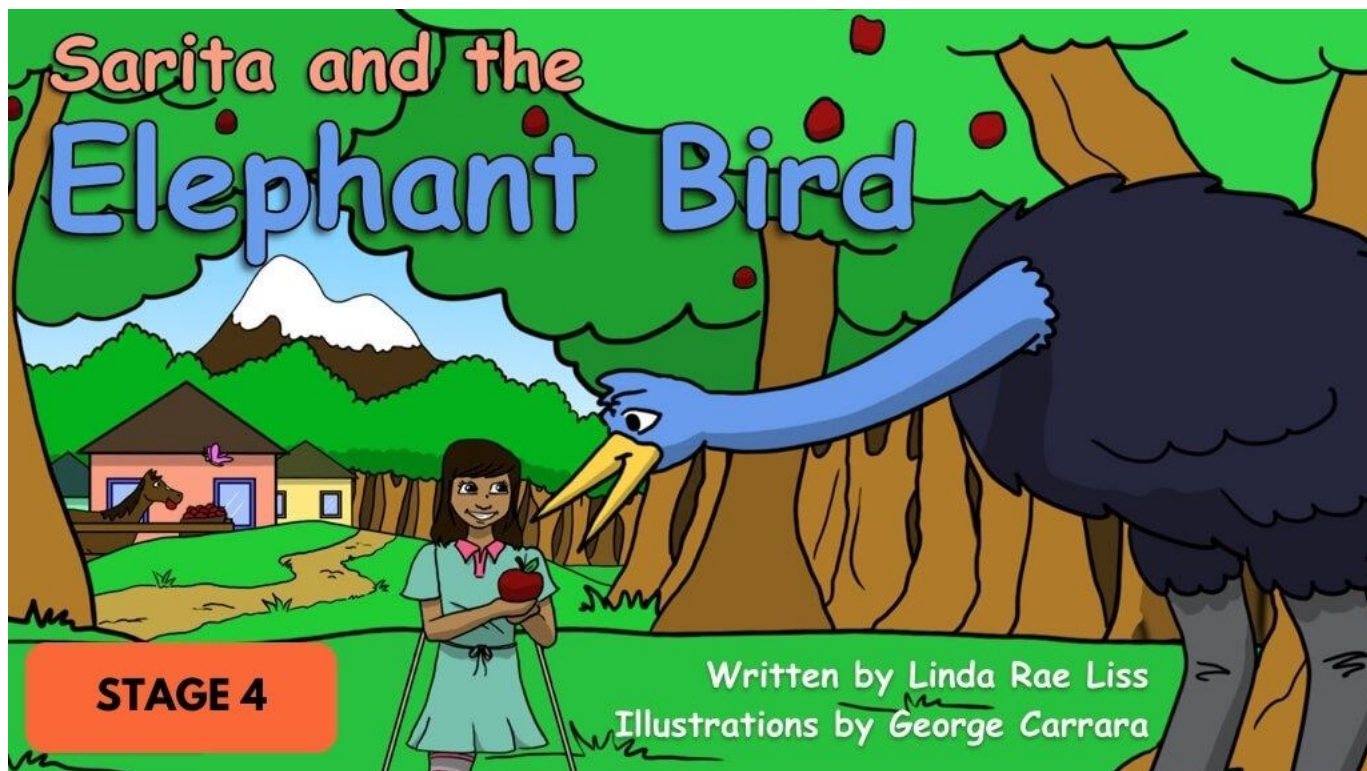




Sarita and the Elephant Bird



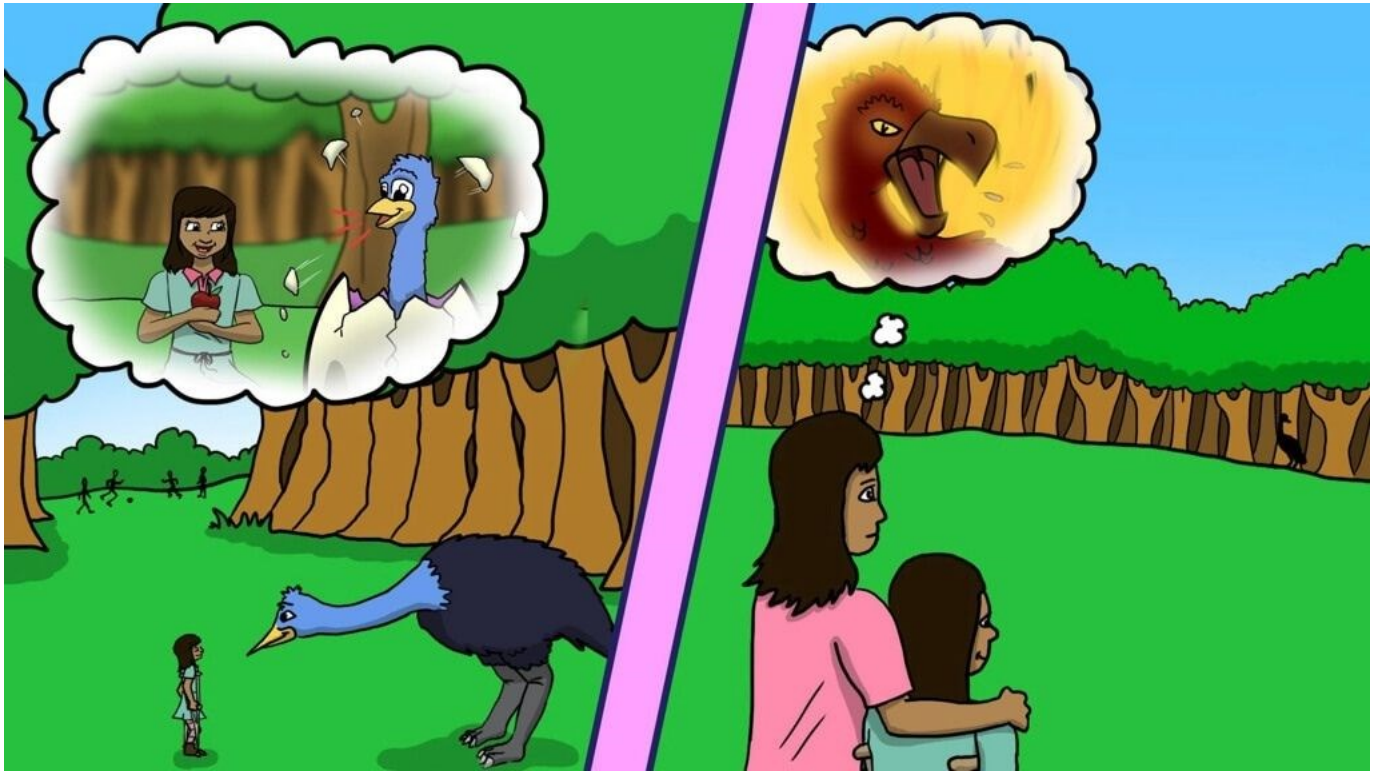
Sarita



Anvi
Elephant Bird



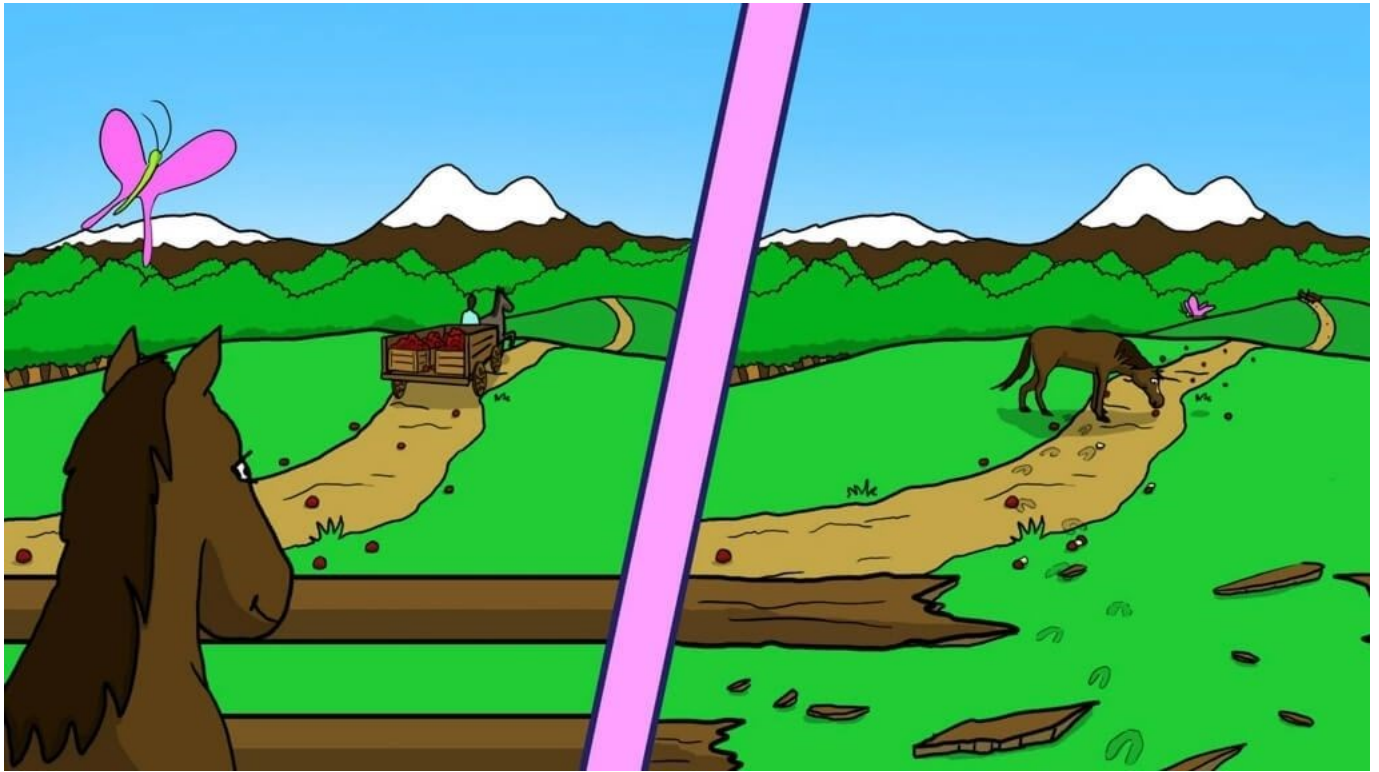
Sarita lives in a village near the forest. She watches other kids play games. Sarita uses crutches to walk, so she is slower than the other kids. She wishes the other kids would invite her to play, even though she is slower.



Sarita made a secret friend in the forest. Her friend is Anvi, a giant bird. She is so huge that she cannot fly. People are afraid of Anvi because she is different from other birds. They call her the Elephant Bird, because she is so huge. Sarita's mom tells Sarita to stay away from the Elephant Bird.



But Sarita knows Anvi is tame and sweet. She rides on Anvi's back to reach apples high up in the tall trees.



One day, an apple farmer finishes selling apples in the town. As he leaves the town, apples fall from his cart onto the road. Banjarra, the horse, runs to eat the apples. He eats the apples and spits out the cores. He follows the cart down the road out of town.



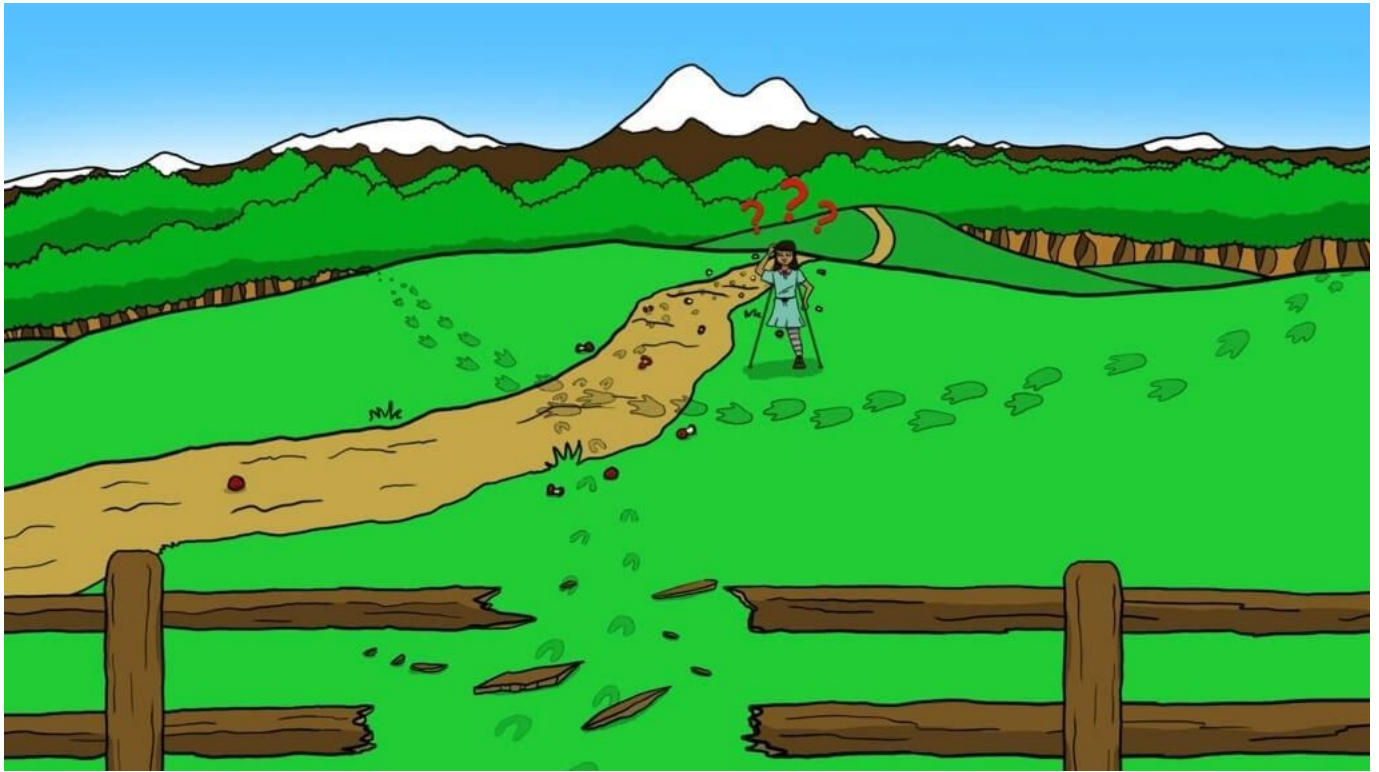
Anvi sees the apple cores on her way home to the forest. She takes a bite. Then she walks down the road eating the cores until she reaches the fence. She makes big footprints on the road. After that, she goes back to the forest to sleep.



When Sarita comes back to town, people are meeting about the missing horse. “A monster ate our horse!” screams one man. “A monster? It was that Elephant Bird!” yells Sarita’s mom. Sarita stands in front of the crowd. She tells them, “It wasn’t the Elephant Bird! She only eats plants.” But an old man tells her, “Shh! Children should be quiet.”



Sarita's mother scolds her, "You know kids should not talk in front of adults. Now go home."



Sarita is so upset because she thinks people will hurt Anvi. So, she makes a plan to find out what happened. First, she goes to Banjarra's fence. Next, she sees the horse's footprints go down the road. But the bird footprints go into the forest. The horse and bird did not walk the same way.



The people in the village think the elephant bird will eat their animals. So, at night, they go to the forest to find Anvi. While the people hunt for Anvi, Sarita races to save her. She will ride Anvi and follow the trail that leads to Banjarra.



Finally, Sarita comes to Anvi's nest. "Come with me!" she pleads with Anvi. She climbs up on Anvi's back. They hear the other people coming, so they run to hide deeper in the forest.



After some time, they run to the road. Sarita uses her lantern to light their way. They follow the horse's footprints away from the forest.



The road leads to an apple orchard. They shine a light on Banjarra! The horse is still eating apples.



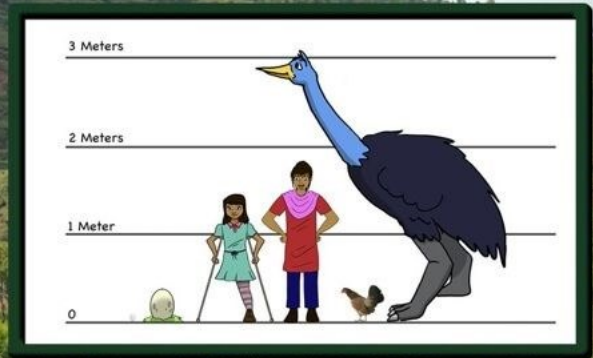
The people arrive and they are surprised! "How did you know Banjarra was here?" asks an old man. Sarita says, "I saw his footprints on the road. The Elephant Bird and I followed them here." "That is so smart," says the old man. "We should all think before we act. And we should not be scared of things that are different."



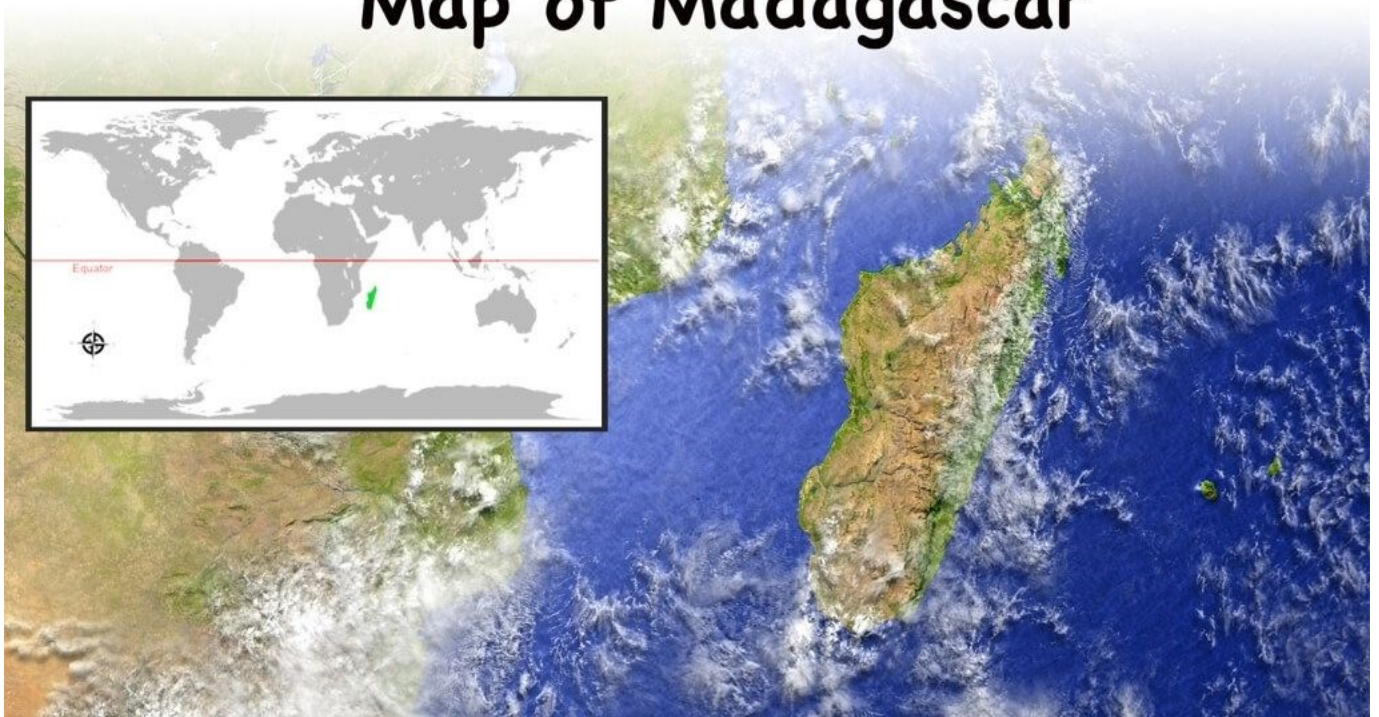
After that, everyone includes Anvi and Sarita when they play. They do not care if they are different. The other kids want to play with them. Sarita is clever, and she helps the other kids win games. Sarita and Anvi are so thrilled to be part of the group.

Elephant Bird Facts

- Lived in Madagascar off the coast of East Africa
- Became extinct in the 1600's
- Closest living relative is the Kiwi bird of New Zealand
- Weighed 500 KG (1,100 lbs)
- 3 Meters Tall (9.8 Feet)
- Their eggs were bigger than a human head



Map of Madagascar

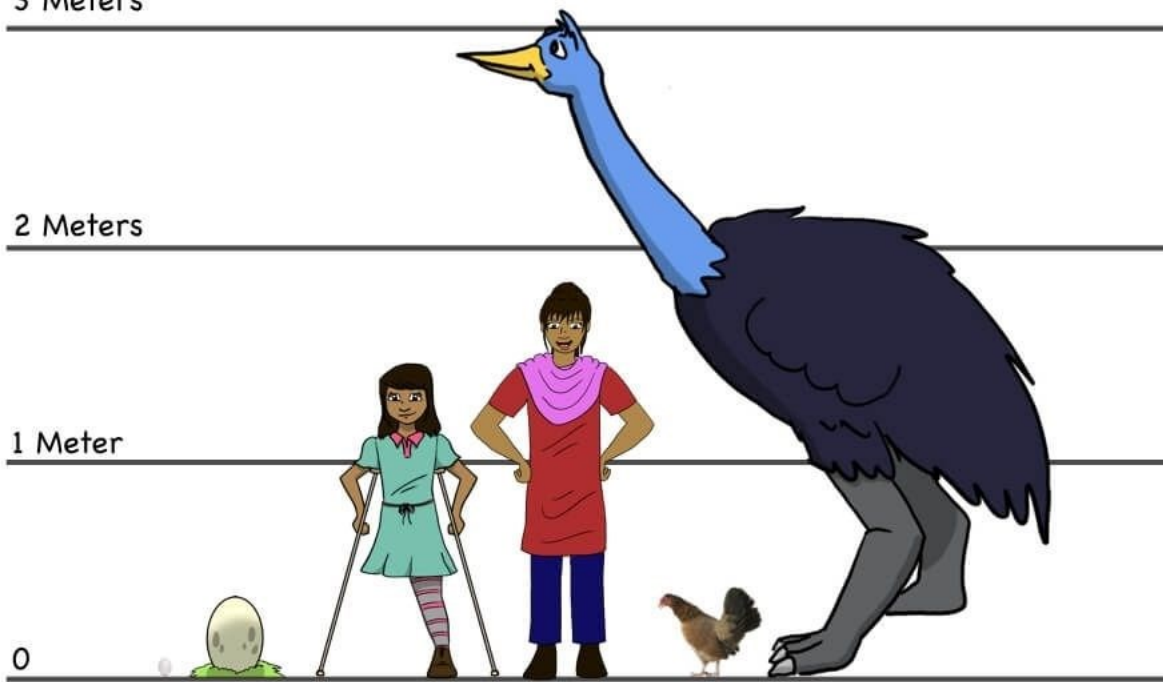


3 Meters

2 Meters

1 Meter

0





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