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# The Gentlemen of the Jungle” by Jomo Kenyatta

Early one morning the man went out and built a bigger hut. No sooner had Mr. Rhinoceros seen it than he came rushing in, only to find that Mr. Elephant was already inside. Mr. Leopard came next, then Mr. Fox, and Mr. Buffalo. Mr. Hyena howled just outside of the hut for peace. On the roof of the hut, Mr. Alligator lay basking in the sun avoiding the whole fight inside of the tent.

1. Who do the animals represent?
2. Who does the man represent?
3. What is the point of Kenyatta’s story?
4. How does this fable demonstrate an imperial country’s justification for war?

One day a heavy thunderstorm broke out. An elephant went to his friend and said, “Will you please let me put my trunk inside your hut to keep it out of the rain?”

“My hut is very small,” the man replied.

“But there is room for your trunk and myself.”

As soon as the elephant put his trunk inside the hut, slowly he pushed his head inside, and finally flung the man out into the rain.

The man complained to the king of the jungle. The lion roared, “How dare anyone disturb the peace of my kingdom? I command my assistants to appoint a commission to look into this matter.”

The man was pleased and waited believing that his hut would be returned to him. The lion

worked out a court case for the man. In court, Mr. Elephant was called to the witness stand. "My friends," he started. "There appears to have been a misunderstanding. My friend invited me to save his hut from being blown away by a hurricane. I considered it a better use by sitting in it myself."

The court then called Mr. Hyena and other elders from the jungle. They all supported Mr. Elephant's statement. The man was called to the stand last of all. After giving an account of the story, the judge cut the man off.

"All we wish you to tell us is whether the undeveloped space in your hut was occupied by anyone else before Mr. Elephant assumed his position?"

"Well, no. But..." the man began to say.

"Thank you then sir," the judge interrupted.

"We consider that Mr. Elephant has fulfilled his sacred duty to protect your hut. Mr. Elephant shall continue his occupation of your hut, but we give you permission to build another hut more suited to your needs."

The man did as they suggested. But no sooner had he built another hut than Mr. Rhinoceros charged in. A court case was again set up looking into the matter. The same decision was made. This repeated until all of the jungle animals had new huts.

# The Gentlemen of the Jungle by Jomo Kenyatta



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In *The Gentlemen of the Jungle* by Jomo Kenyatta we have the theme of greed, corruption, control, innocence, colonialism, trust, self-importance and rebellion. Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator the reader realises after reading the story that Kenyatta may be exploring the theme of greed. Mr Elephant rather than being happy with keeping his trunk dry wants to possess the entirety of his friend's hut. It is as though Mr Elephant is making no contribution to the friendship but rather is taking all that he can. This may be important as each animal mentioned in the story symbolises European colonizers and Kenyatta may be suggesting that just as Mr Elephant is taking things which are not his. So too did the European colonizers when they colonized Africa. It might also be important to mention that just as each animal in the story symbolises the European colonizers. The man in the story symbolises the individual Africans who were affected by the brutality and corruption of the European colonizers. How corrupt the animals are in the story is noticeable by the fact that they all take the side of Mr Elephant. No consideration is given to the man in the story. If anything he has no rights despite the fact that he built the hut for himself.

It may also be a case that Kenyatta is suggesting that many African people were naïve or innocent when it came to the European colonizers. They took the European colonizers at face value and did not imagine that they could in reality be stripping the land of its natural resources. Resources that did not belong to the colonizers but which they profited by. If anything African people were under the control of the colonizers and viewed upon as second class citizens. In reality they had no rights. Something that is clearer to the reader by the way that the man in the story is treated in court. Despite the fact that Mr Elephant is lying about what happens. The man does not regain possession of his hut. The fact that Mr Elephant lies could also be important as Kenyatta may be highlighting the fact that the colonizers could not be trusted. Their primary goal appears to have been to take advantage of those who lived in Africa and to write laws which suited themselves and that were unfair to African people.

The title of the story may also be significant as Kenyatta may be using irony to suggest that though the colonizers might have considered themselves to be civilized or gentlemen. The reality was very much different. None of the animals (or colonizers) in the story would be considered to be gentlemen. They have no honour and are self-serving. With their number one priority being what they themselves can get out of Africa. It is also interesting that some of the animals have titles. This may be significant as it suggests that the animals consider themselves to be something of importance. When the reality is they are not only corrupt and greedy but they are also again self-serving. At no stage in the story do any of the animals make a contribution which may be helpful to the man. He is forced to build hut after hut in order that he can survive. Yet prior to the animal's arrival the man lived a happy life. It is only when the animals imposed their will that things became unnecessarily difficult for the man. Which may be the point that Kenyatta is attempting to make. He may be suggesting that prior to the colonizers arriving in Africa, African people lived a simple life without it being complicated by laws imposed by the colonizers.

The end of the story is also interesting as Kenyatta appears to be introducing the theme of rebellion. Every man has a breaking point and the man in the story is no different. Though he has destroyed his hut he has also insured that the animals have died. No longer is he under the control of the animals and the reader senses that life will be easier for the man. There is also a sense of justice when the man burns his hut as he is retaliating against the animals and everything that they have done to him. Just as many countries in Africa rebelled against colonial rule so too is the man rebelling against the animal's authority. Just as each man may have a breaking point Kenyatta may be suggesting that for many African nations the breaking point was the constant inequality that was felt by African people at the hands of the colonizers. Whose only goal was to strip a country of its assets. Assets that did not belong to them and which they inevitably took by force. Disregarding the opinions or desires of African people in general to satisfy their own selfish desires. The number one priority for the colonizer was profit over people.