

# Sarita and the Elephant Bird



Read  
Aloud

Written by Linda Rae Liss  
Illustrations by George Carrara



**Sarita**



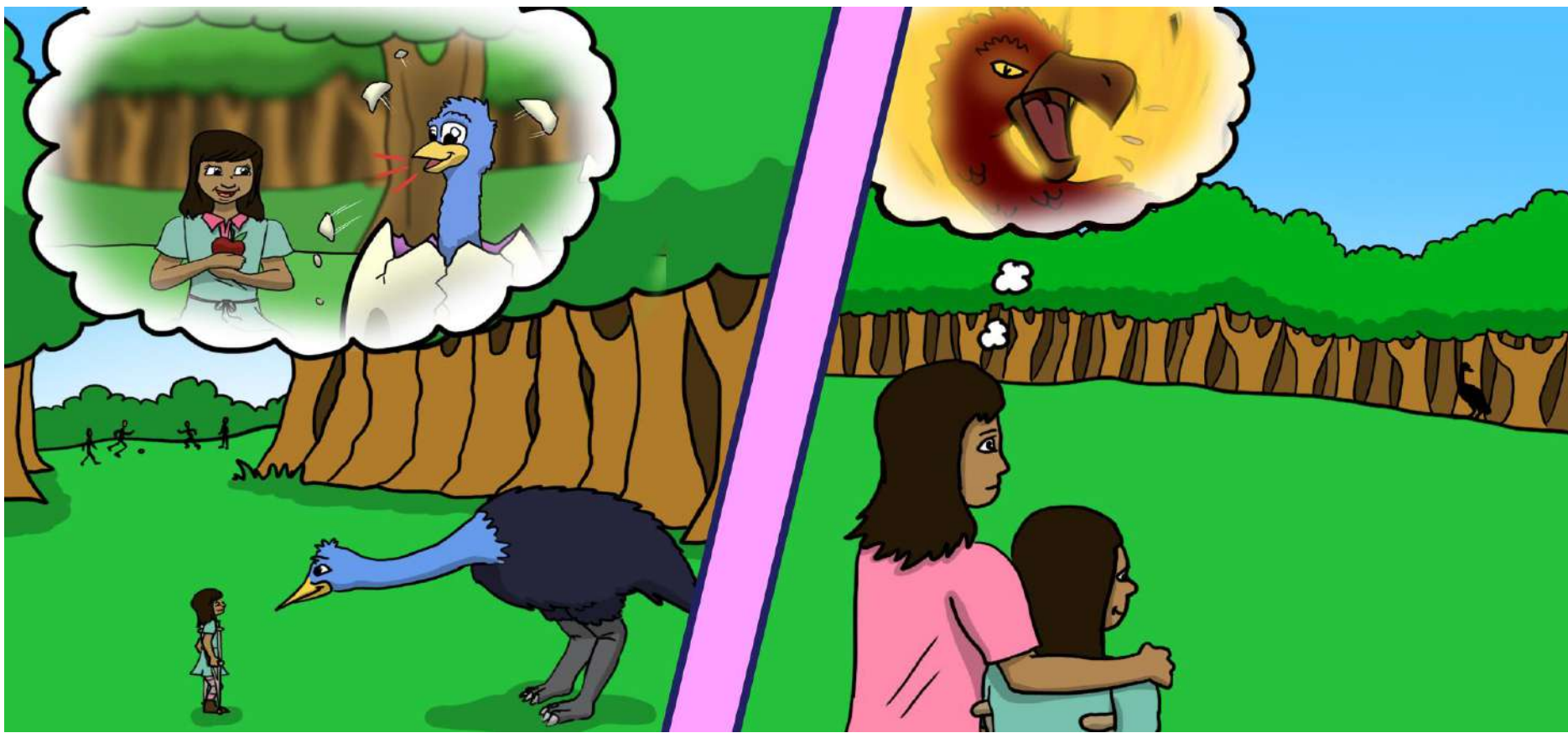
**Anvi**  
Elephant Bird

Characters



Sarita lived in a small village with her family near the edge of a great forest. Sarita was clever, cheerful, and friendly, and she loved to play. She could not play games with the other children, because she had only one leg. She could not run with the other children. She could only watch them play and she wished that someday she would be able to join in their games.

Sarita would often get bored of watching the other children play. No one ever noticed when she would go for long walks into the forest.



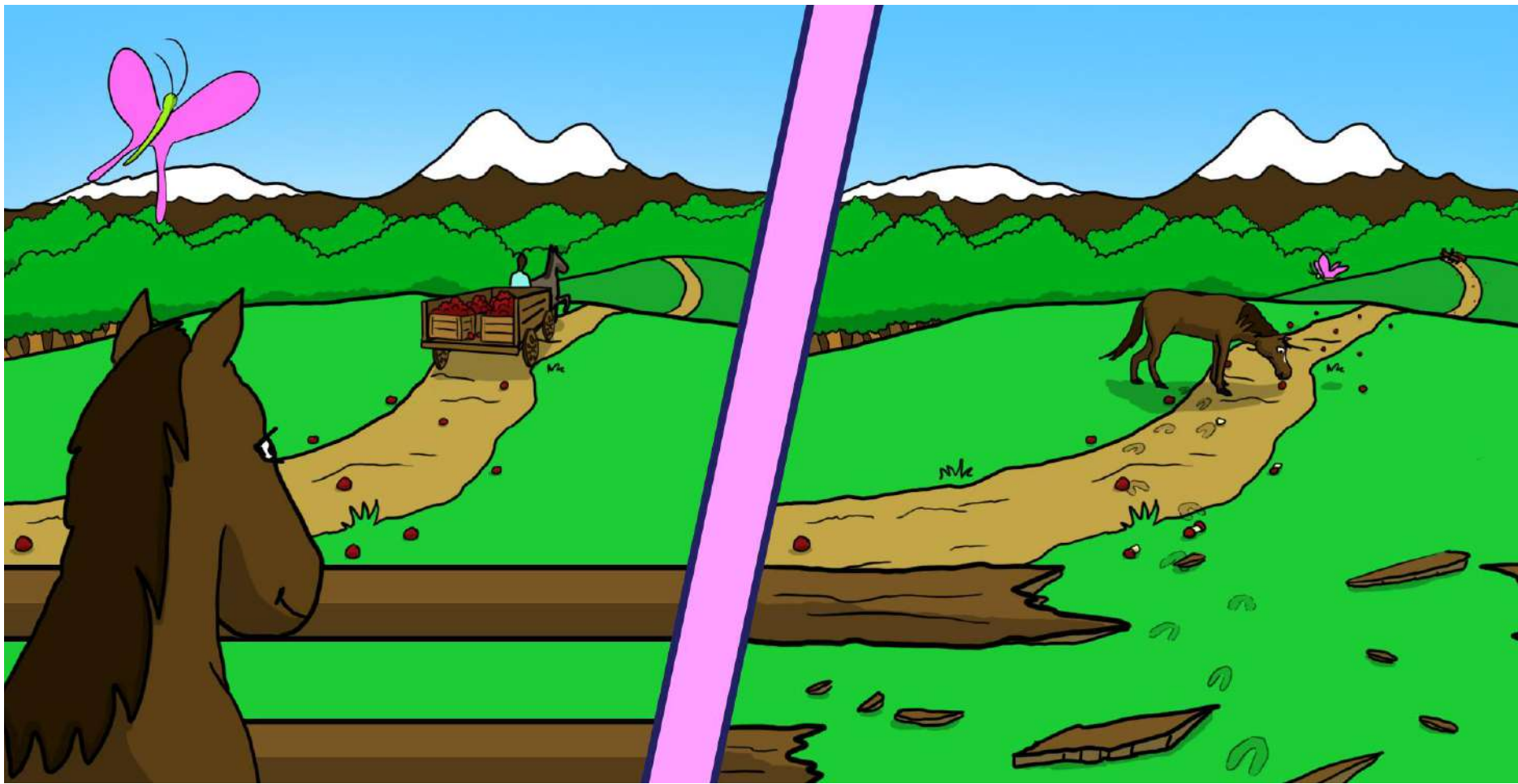
In the forest, Sarita had a secret best friend. She was a gigantic elephant bird named Anvi. Sarita felt she had something in common with Anvi. They were both different. Sarita could not run, and Anvi could not fly.

Anvi was gentle and friendly, but the people of Sarita's village were afraid of her because she was so bizarre. Sarita's own mother was terrified of the strange giant bird that lived in the forest. She always warned Sarita, "Don't go into the forest. A big, dangerous bird lives there!" So, Sarita kept their friendship a secret.



Anvi had a pointed beak and big feet with 3 sharp claws, but she only ate fruit. Since Anvi couldn't fly, she had to eat apples that fell to the ground. Sarita observed that the fruits on the trees were too high for her or Anvi to reach alone, but she had a clever idea. If Sarita turned her crutch into an apple picker and rode on Anvi's back, she would be able to reach the fruit for her friend.

Sarita and Anvi would spend their days exploring deep into the forest. Sarita loved to ride on Anvi's back and see the trees woosh by as Anvi ran through the forest faster than any person could run. Every day when the sun set, Anvi would bring Sarita to the edge of the forest and the two would go back to their own homes.



One day, an apple farmer who lived in the neighboring orchard passed through Sarita's village. The farmer was on his way home from selling his apples at the market, and didn't realize that apples were falling out of his wagon onto the road. The only horse in Sarita's village saw the delicious apples falling out of the cart. He broke through his fence and began to munch on the apples. As the horse went from apple to apple he roamed further and further away from the village.



Who should come along moments later, but Anvi on her way back to the forest. The elephant bird was excited to see so many apples lying on the ground. As Anvi ate the apples she left her big elephant bird footprints near the broken fence. After Anvi filled her stomach with apples she returned to the forest to sleep.



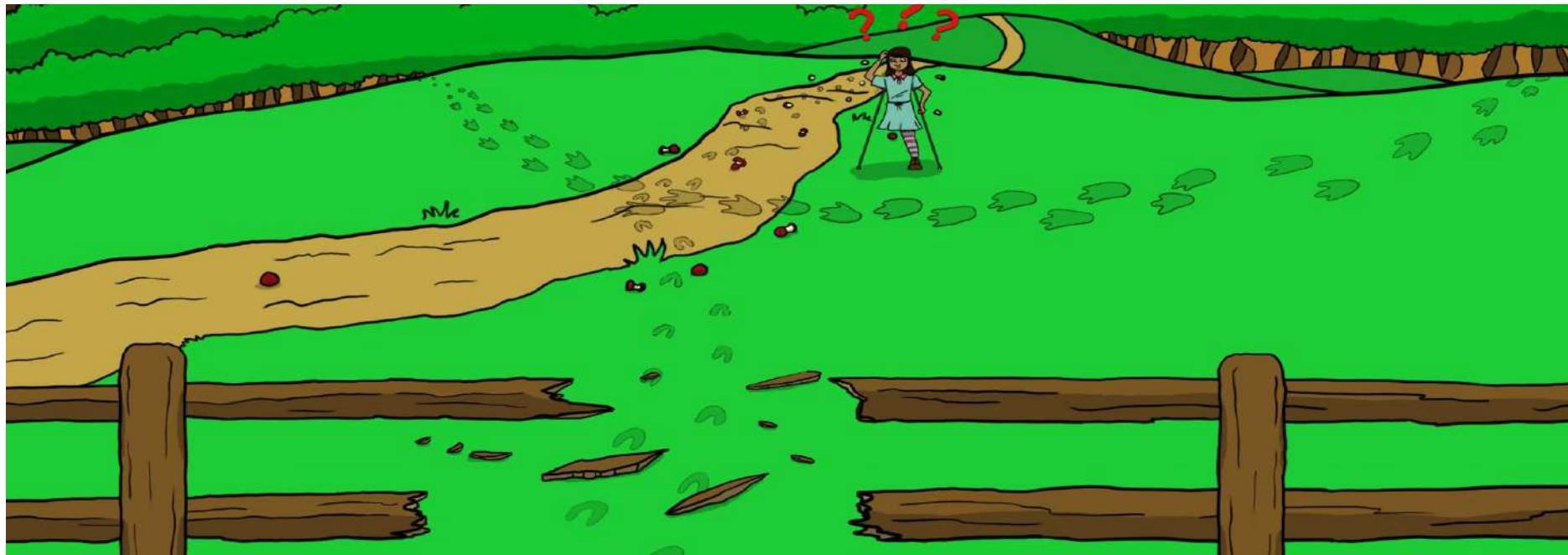
Later that day there was a big commotion in the center of the village. Sarita and her mother walked over to the crowd to see what was going on. "A monster has eaten our horse! I saw giant footprints with 3 sharp claws near the horse's broken fence!" exclaimed the village elder.

"It must have been the elephant bird that lives in the forest!" shouted Sarita's mother.

Sarita was scared to speak up, but she was even more afraid something bad would happen to her friend, Anvi. Sarita stepped forward into the circle of adults and pleaded, "It couldn't have been the elephant bird, she is gentle and friendly and only eats fruits and plants."

The village elder was appalled that a child would dare to contradict an adult. "This is no place for a child, go home!" he scolded.





Sarita knew she had to figure out what happened to the horse, or else her friend Anvi would be blamed by the people in her village. She decided to make a plan to prove that Anvi was innocent and didn't harm the horse. She would go to the horse's pen and look for clues to what really happened.

First, Sarita looked closely at the fence. She observed that the fence was broken from the inside, not the outside. "Aha," she thought, "maybe the horse broke the fence."

Next, she observed that the horse's footprints went down the road away from town. The elephant bird's footprints went directly into the forest. "So the horse went in a different direction than Anvi!" Sarita exclaimed.



Sarita went back to the village to tell everyone what she had discovered. She pushed her way into the circle of people who had gathered in the village hopeful that her new discovery would change peoples' minds. Sarita said to the villagers, "I made a discovery! The elephant bird could not have eaten the horse! The horse broke out of its pen and walked down the road."

Sarita's mother interrupted her. She grabbed Sarita by the arm and scolded her in front of everyone, "How dare you interrupt the adults! We have a very serious problem, and we don't have time for your childish games. Go home!" Sarita walked away with tears in her eyes.



The people in the village were afraid. They thought the elephant bird ate their only horse. They wanted to stop the monster bird before it could eat any of their other animals. That night a group of people from Sarita's village went into the woods with lanterns and nets to try to find the monstrous elephant bird.

Meanwhile, Sarita came up with a new plan to save her friend Anvi. First, she would go to the elephant bird's nest before the people in her village could find it. Next, she would ride Anvi to track the horse by following its footprints. Sarita thought, "If I can find the horse alive and well, no one can blame Anvi."

That night in the dark, Sarita quietly climbed out the window of her house and snuck into the forest.



Sarita arrived at the elephant bird's nest, just as the villagers were approaching. "We need to get out of here, Anvi!" Sarita said as she climbed onto Anvi's back.

A man from the village shouted, "I see the monster. Let's catch it!"

Sarita held onto Anvi's feathers as the elephant bird sprinted away from the crowd as fast as she could.



The villagers followed Anvi, but she was too fast. Sarita rode Anvi back to the horse's pen with the people of her village hot on their trail. She held up her lantern and pointed to the road where the horse's hoofprints began. "Quickly Anvi, that way!" shouted Sarita, "We need to follow the hoofprints to find the horse!"



Sarita and Anvi ran down the road, following the horse's hoofprints until they came to an apple orchard. They went into the orchard and who should they find, but the horse happily munching away on apples.

“There you are!” Sarita exclaimed with delight. She climbed down from Anvi to grab the horse.



All of a sudden Anvi began to screech and flap her wings as the villagers rushed into the orchard. Anvi was making such a commotion that the villagers didn't see Sarita and the horse behind her. "We found the elephant bird! Get it!" yelled the people from the village.

Sarita ran out in front of the elephant bird and shouted, "Stop! Stop! The elephant bird did not harm the horse, we found the horse here in the orchard eating apples."



The villagers were surprised to see Sarita so far away from her home and even more shocked to see the horse alive.

“How did you know the horse was in the orchard?” asked the village elder.

Sarita explained, “The elephant bird’s name is Anvi and she is my friend. She only eats fruit so I knew that Anvi couldn’t have harmed the horse. I looked for clues around the horse’s pen to find out what really happened. First, I observed that the fence had been broken from the inside. Next I observed that there were hoofprints leading down the road. Then, I followed the hoofprints. Finally, I found the horse eating apples in the orchard.”

The village elder smiled and said to Sarita, “That was very clever Sarita, I’m sorry we didn’t listen to you.”



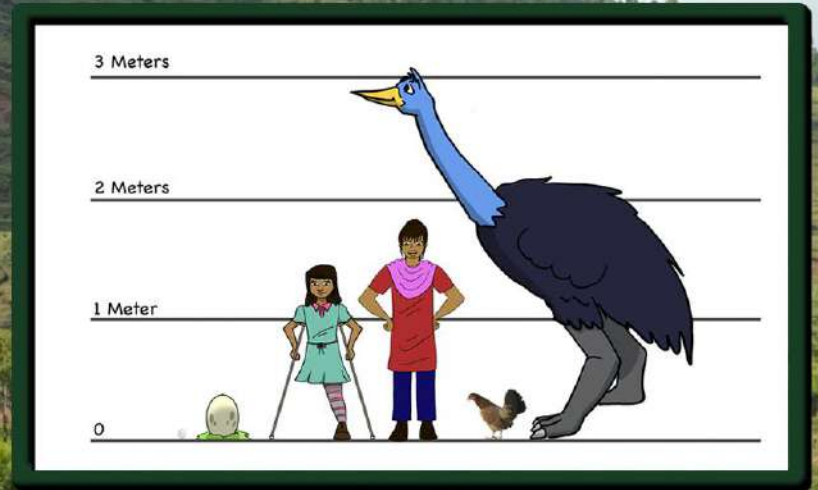


From that day on, Sarita's and Anvi's lives changed. No one was afraid of the elephant bird anymore, and Anvi was welcome in the village. Even Sarita's mother became good friends with Anvi and fed her fruit from the tree next to their home.

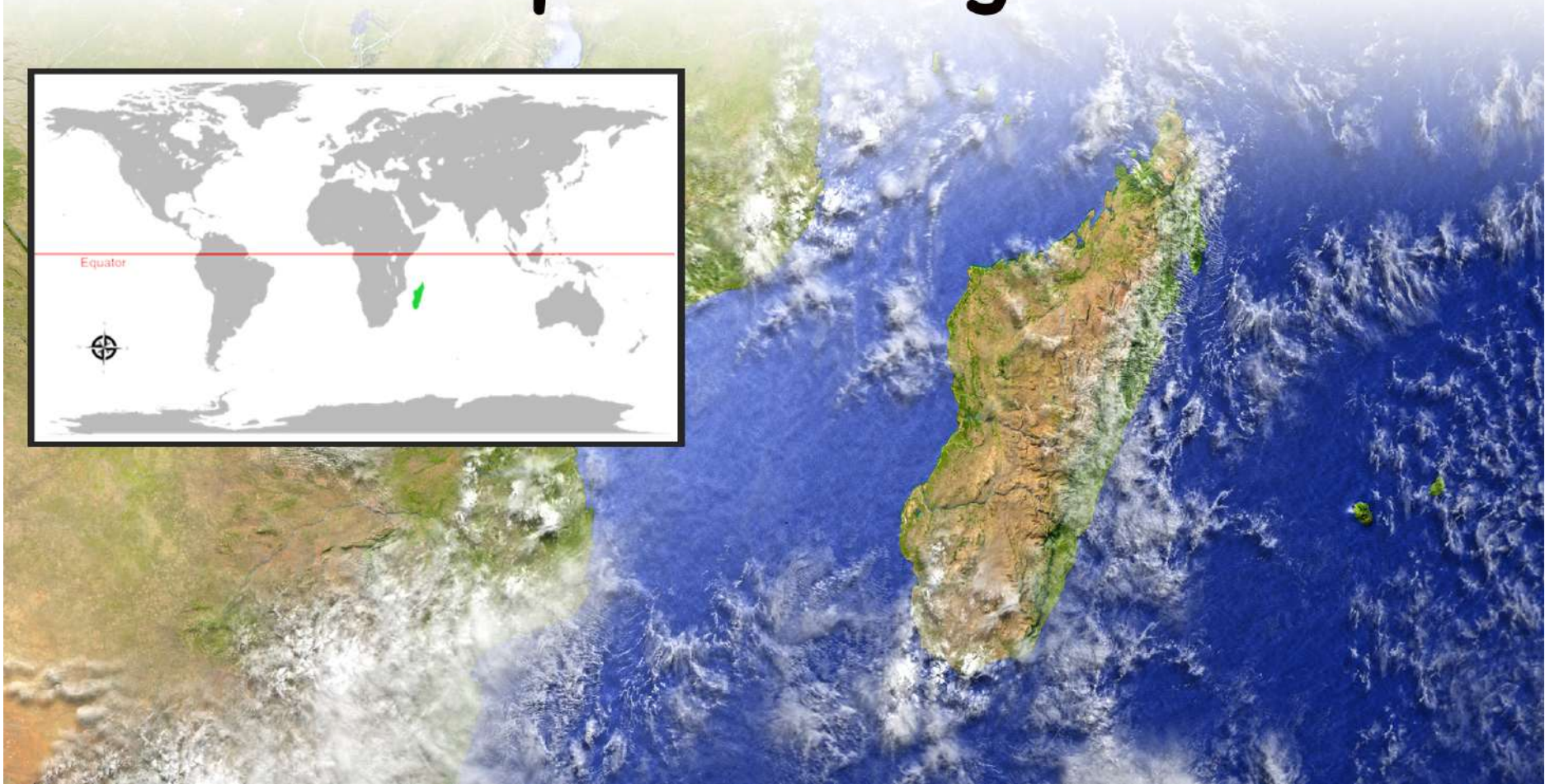
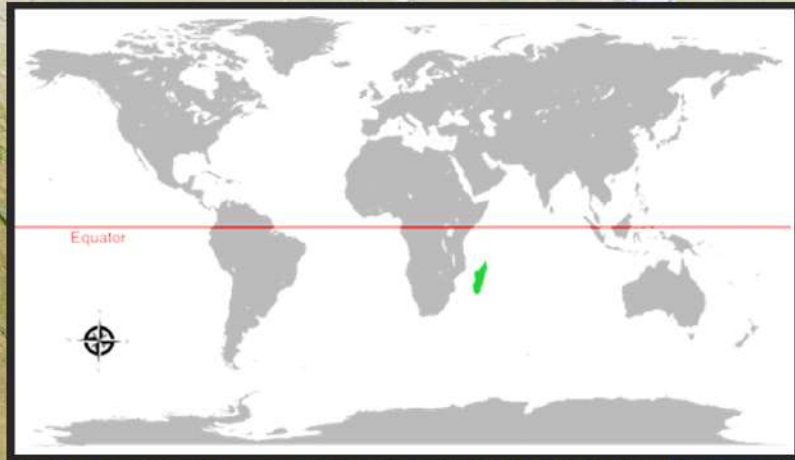
Everyone in the village valued Sarita for her cleverness and bravery. The other children always wanted Sarita to play with them, and she used her wits to help her friends win games.

## 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

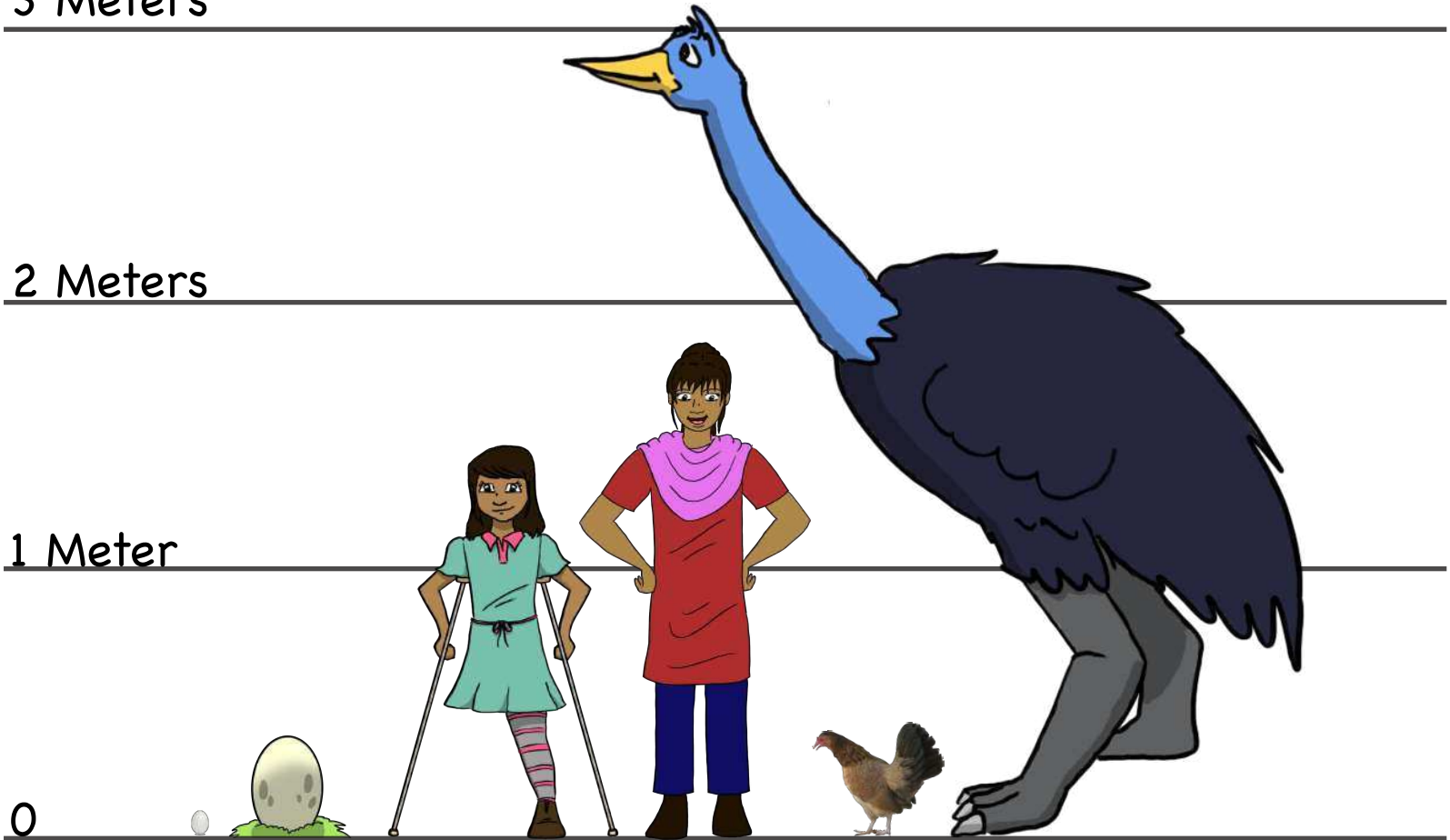


3 Meters

2 Meters

1 Meter

0



# DEDICATED TO GEORGE RAWITSCHER

Inspired by the story: **The Elephant Bird**

Written by Arefa Tehsin & published by Pratham Books

For more books and lesson guides visit us at  
[www.WordScientists.org](http://www.WordScientists.org) ➔



Written by

Linda Rae Liss

Illustrated by

George Carrara

Copyright 2017, National Education Support Trust USA Inc. Distributed under Creative Commons Noncommercial 4.0 License. You may not use the material contained herein for commercial purposes. Greater detail may be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode> or a successor site from Creative Commons.

