Baboon by Kate Banks

Baboon opened his sleepy eyes. Ahead was the great forest.
"Look," said his mother. "That is the world."
Baboon slid from his mother's back. "So, the world is green," he said. "Some of it," said his mother. And she led Baboon among the tall trees.

A turtle sat in the middle of the road. Its eyes were closed and it barely moved. Baboon watched and waited for the turtle to pass. He waited a long time. "The world is slow," he said. "It can be," said his mother.

When the turtle had passed, Baboon followed his mother. At the edge of the great forest, a fire burned in the bush. Baboon moved close to the fire. Soon he could feel its heat. Baboon leaped backward. "The world is hot!" he said. "Not always," said his mother.


Soon the elephants came, four by four. They thundered loud and shook the ground. A gazelle passed. He was not slow like the turtle, but quick and fast.

A rhinoceros darted out of the bushes. He grunted at Baboon. Baboon was afraid. "He will not hurt you," said his mother.

Baboon took his mother's hand, and they started across a field. Baboon hid in the tall grass. His mother hid, too. When they found each other, they lay down, side by side. "The world is soft," said Baboon. And he was happy.

Baboon stretched and rolled over. A bird flew by. A cloud passed overhead. And Baboon fell asleep. When he awoke, the sun was going down. Baboon watched it disappear behind the trees. "Come along," said his mother. And they walked on.

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Baboon followed his mother up a tree. Across from him sat a monkey. He was like Baboon. “Is he the world, too?” asked Baboon. “He is,” said his mother. “Just as you are.” Baboon watched *quietly*. Then he followed his mother down the tree.

Now the elephants were huddled together. The gazelles were resting. There was no more *fire* and the light was gone from the sky. Baboon climbed onto his mother’s back. “The world is dark,” he said. “Sometimes,” whispered his mother, carrying him home.

Baboon looked around. He blinked. Everything was black as far as he could see. He laid his head *against* his mother’s soft neck. “The world is big,” he said. “Yes,” said his mother softly. “The world is big.”

### Phonics Skill

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**Genre: Informational Fiction**

Some fiction stories give information about things in the real world. Look for parts of the story that are made-up and information about different African animals.

### Think About It

1. How did Baboon’s mother help him learn about the world?
2. Tell about a time when you learned something new about a place you visited.
3. What clues let you know that the story happens all in one day?
4. What did you learn from reading this story?
5. What would you show Baboon if he came to visit your neighborhood?