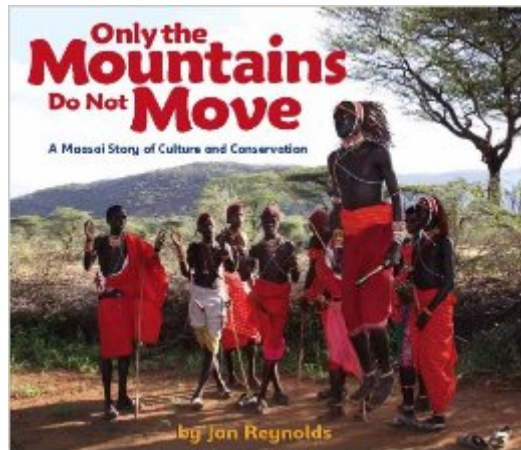


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# Only The Mountains Do Not Move: A Maasai Story Of Culture And Conservation



## Synopsis

Nobody can say he is settled anywhere forever; it is only the mountains which do not move from their places. So goes a Maasai proverb, and so goes the lives of the Maasai in Africa. For hundreds of years they have moved with their herds of cattle and goats across thousands of miles in Kenya and Tanzania. Today the Maasai face new challenges. Their traditional way of life is threatened, lands are overgrazed, and wildlife is in danger. Maasai tribes are meeting these obstacles head-on adapting their lives and agricultural practices while keeping their vibrant, close-knit culture alive. Award-winning author-photographer Jan Reynolds presents a striking glimpse of these dynamic people. Only the Mountains Do Not Move shows one Maasai tribe's remarkable ability to forge a delicate balance between the richness of the past and the needs of the future.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 11 years

Grade Level: 1 - 6

## Customer Reviews

I was surprised to see this book and I didn't hesitate to pick it up. The Maasai are so private, and they insist on continuing their culture despite everything and everyone. I love that about them! When I studied Linguistics at the University of Oregon, SIL brought a Maasai over for us to learn aspects of their language. I focused on their numbering system, which is based on the livestock. I will never forget hearing the pounding in our ceiling and running up to the guy's hall to see what was going on

and finding our Maasai friend showing his roommates how to do the Maasai leap. I read this book with a specific picture of their culture in my head from our friend's stories. Many of the things in the book resonated true with me. A family took the author in and showed her a lot of their life. Some of the book is obviously "nice" keeping it kid-friendly. There is mention of cow dung used in the mud for the huts, but it is discreet compared to what I had heard, which is good. :-)

She was similarly discreet regarding their food. She mentions drinking blood, but only in the Author's Note at the back. The danger of the wild African landscape is also downplayed. The women travel in groups and the men are skilled with their spears, but there are only hints at running into lions often. So, kids have a great introduction into this unique culture while adults are given more. What I enjoyed the most is the details in the day to day life. The author captured things my friend didn't share, like how big their homes are, how big the community, just how free their livestock is to forage. The pictures show them creating bracelets and playing games and how the men stay together in a group. The author captured the every-day life. She also highlighted how their environment has shrunk and their way of life is threatened and what they are doing to adapt. The stories that are their education have passed on a strong culture generation after generation. They continue to be fiercely their own. I think there is a lot more that isn't shared, but this book is still a great peak into the Maasai way of life.

I've always been fascinated by the Maasai, so I was pleased to see this book about their culture written for children, and this book didn't disappoint. Straightforward text is combined with Maasai proverbs and beautiful photography to give us a detailed glimpse at modern-day Maasai life. This is a balanced representation: Reynolds isn't afraid to show the less pleasant (biting bugs!) or shocking (drinking cow blood!) aspects of Maasai life, but she also reveals the peace and togetherness it brings. Especially relevant to her young readers is how she focuses on what the Maasai boys and girls do at different ages. One pleasant surprise was how Reynolds shares with readers not only the historical Maasai culture, but also how the Maasai way of life is changing due to outside pressures and how they are adapting to this new world, giving the story context in the broader world. I'd be remiss, however, if I didn't mention that there were a few minor drawbacks for me. First, it bothered me not to have pronunciation guides for the Maa words embedded in the text (but there is one at the end). Second, although the Maasai proverbs were lovely, I wanted more of them and to have them appear more regularly throughout the text. As it is, with 10-14 pages between proverbs, they sort of surprised me each time and felt more like interruptions than the embellishments they should have been. Finally, I would have liked to get a little closer to the main family throughout the whole book. Sometimes the text seems to move way out to the Maasai in general for a long time, then it zooms

in briefly to the main characters, then goes right back out again. I would've liked more connections to have been made between the general way of life and the specific family. On the plus side, the back matter includes an author's note, a glossary and pronunciation guide, a web site for more information, and source notes and acknowledgements. There's also a very interesting interview and book talk with the author available here, which should make it ever more appealing for teachers hoping to use it in the classroom. This is a wonderful book for introducing a unique and fascinating African culture to upper elementary students. (Disclaimer: I received this copy for free directly from the publisher for review.)

A fascinating and encouraging title we discovered this week about a group deeply rooted in natural rhythms and centuries-old livestock practices tied to the land, and whose very survival is severely threatened by enormous forces like politics and climate change. Yet, the Masai are adapting their way of life to not only meet these challenges (without sacrificing their cultural integrity and unity) but to actually offset some of the ecological destruction that has put their own people, and many wild animals who also inhabit Africa's great rift valley, on the verge of extinction. I was utterly stunned and bolstered by the promise implicit in this (true) book; cooperation, innovation and consciousness can, in fact, overcome what often feel like insurmountable, large-scale threats to a sustainable world. My boys sat, transfixed, through the entire thing, too. We read so many books that start out detailing some amazing element of life on Earth (coral reefs, whales, rainforests, indigenous cultures) but then -- realistically, and depressingly -- inform on the ways in which the element in question is being (or has been) destroyed by human greed, violence, pollution, etc. This title doesn't skirt the challenging realities faced by the Masai (and all of us, really) but essentially communicates that the story really isn't over yet. I felt better all week, Trump and Brexit and gun sales (UP, per usual) and all. Highly recommend.

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