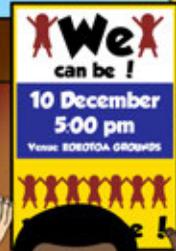


★ We Can Be ★



Age
Umri
7+



It has been a busy first day in Mrs. Molota's classroom. "You really remember your math!" she tells her students. "That's a great start to a new school year."



$$4 + 2 \times (2 + 5)$$

$$4 + 2 \times 7 \div 7$$

$$4 + 2 \times 1 =$$

$$4 + 2 - 6$$

$$6 - 6 =$$

But only a few students - Koba, Kibena and Amani - are in class.





The lesson for the day is finished. "I'll see you bright and early tomorrow, my math whizzes," Mrs. Molota says.

$$4+2 \times (2+5)$$

$$4+2 \times 7 \div 7$$

$$4+2 \times 1 =$$

$$4+2-6$$

$$6-6 =$$

Koba, Kibena, and Amani pack up their bags to go home.



As the kids head home, they chat about the school day. “Where was everyone today?” asks Koba. “They are going to get way behind if they don’t come to class.”



Amani looks off into the distance. “Isn’t that Bahati?” she asks. “Let’s go ask him why he wasn’t in school today.”



Bahati is working in the cornfield, digging up weeds.
“Hey, guys!” he says as the others walk towards him.
”Are you here to help me with these weeds?”



They all pull together at a particularly stubborn weed that won't come out of the ground.



When it finally comes out, they all fall on the ground, laughing together.



When Kibena asks Bahati why he was not in school, he points to all of the weeds that are threatening the corn crop.



“I’ve got to help my dad out,”
Bahati says. “He can’t do it alone.
I’ll come back to school once
the weeds are gone.”



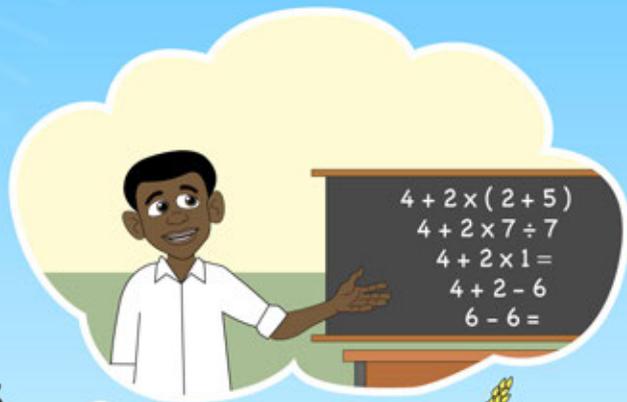
Koba, Kibena, and Amani tell Bahati what he missed: fractions, decimals and so on.



$\frac{1}{2} = \text{half}$



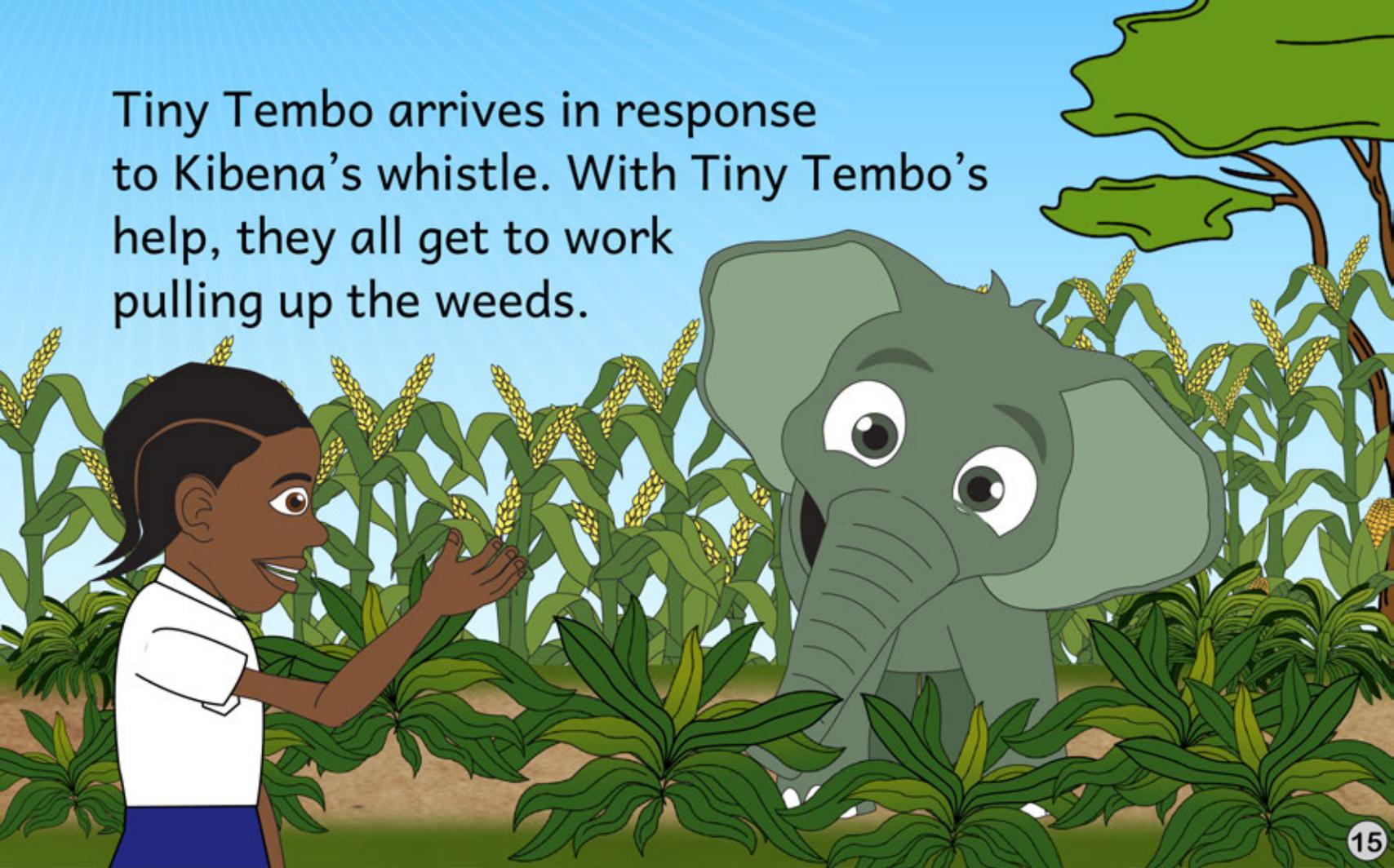
“How am I ever going to become a teacher if I don’t get to school to learn the things I want to teach?” Bahati sighs.



“We can help you for now,” says Amani with a smile. Kibena puts her fingers in her mouth and whistles.



Tiny Tembo arrives in response to Kibena's whistle. With Tiny Tembo's help, they all get to work pulling up the weeds.



An hour later, they are all exhausted and covered in dirt. “Well, that’s one row finished,” says Kibena. Bahati heads off towards his house to study.



“Let’s go find the others,” Kibena says. “We’ll meet back later when we find out why they were missing. We need to come up with a way to get them all back to school!”



Koba looks through the window of a house and sees Utashi taking care of three rowdy toddlers.



Amani finds Malaika sitting next to her sick mother who is lying on the bed.



Kibena knocks on the door of Kiduchu's house.
Kiduchu's dad answers the door and looks shocked
when Kibena asks where Kiduchu is.
“I thought she was at school with you!” he says.



Koba and Amani meet back in the forest to share their news. “Utashi is taking care of his little siblings, and Titu has malaria,” Koba reports.



Amani has learned that Malaika's mother is sick, and Chacha is watching his family's shop.



Kibena and Tiny Tembo arrive with Kiduchu,
who slumps on a log.

“Where were you today?” Koba asks her.



Kiduchu tells them that she went to find her brother, who could teach her how to ride a motorbike.



The others gasp. “Why are you surprised?” asks Kiduchu. “I’m going to be an astronaut someday, and I have to start somewhere!”



There aren't any spaceships in Kokatoa,
so why not start with a motorbike?"





Kiduchu explains that an astronaut travels in space, maybe to the moon, or even other planets! She imagines herself in a spacesuit on a distant planet.



Meanwhile, Mama Ndege has arrived and sits on Tiny Tembo's head. "You need to know a lot of mathematics and physics to travel in space," she tells them, looking straight at Kiduchu.



Kiduchu complains that her brother wouldn't teach her, and told her she would never be an astronaut.



“Stand up!” Mama Ndege tells them. “Stand up, and say, ‘I can be ANYTHING!’” She tells them to surround themselves with people who support their dreams.





Suddenly, Ngedere appears from above, hanging upside-down. He reminds Kiduchu how the kids helped him start his fruit stand.



“No one believed a monkey could run a business, but you guys believed in me!” he remembers.



“Every day, I tell my chicks that, with hard work, they can do anything!”
Mama Ndege says. “They are going to be the first birds to go to university!”



They all begin to share their dreams: Kiduchu dreams of being an astronaut, Koba dreams of being a filmmaker...



...Kibena dreams of being a veterinarian while Amani dreams of being a musician.



They know achieving their dreams won't be easy,
but they all see a brighter tomorrow.



Koba heads off to borrow a camera from the photography studio where he used to help out. “Not a chance,” his former boss tells him. “You’re just kids. You can’t make a movie. Stop dreaming.”



Koba looks dejected. What about their dreams?



Back at the forest meeting place, Koba gives the others the bad news. “My old boss won't loan me a movie camera. He says that kids can't make a movie,” he tells them.



There's a rustling from the bushes and Baraka appears! "I've been busy growing my brain!" he tells them.



Just then, Amani comes back with some microphones and speakers.

“I’ve got our sound gear,” she announces.

Amani thinks a live play is a great idea.

She will get to perform live in front of an audience!



The next day in the school yard, the kids begin preparing for their play. Some of them make costumes, while others build a stage.



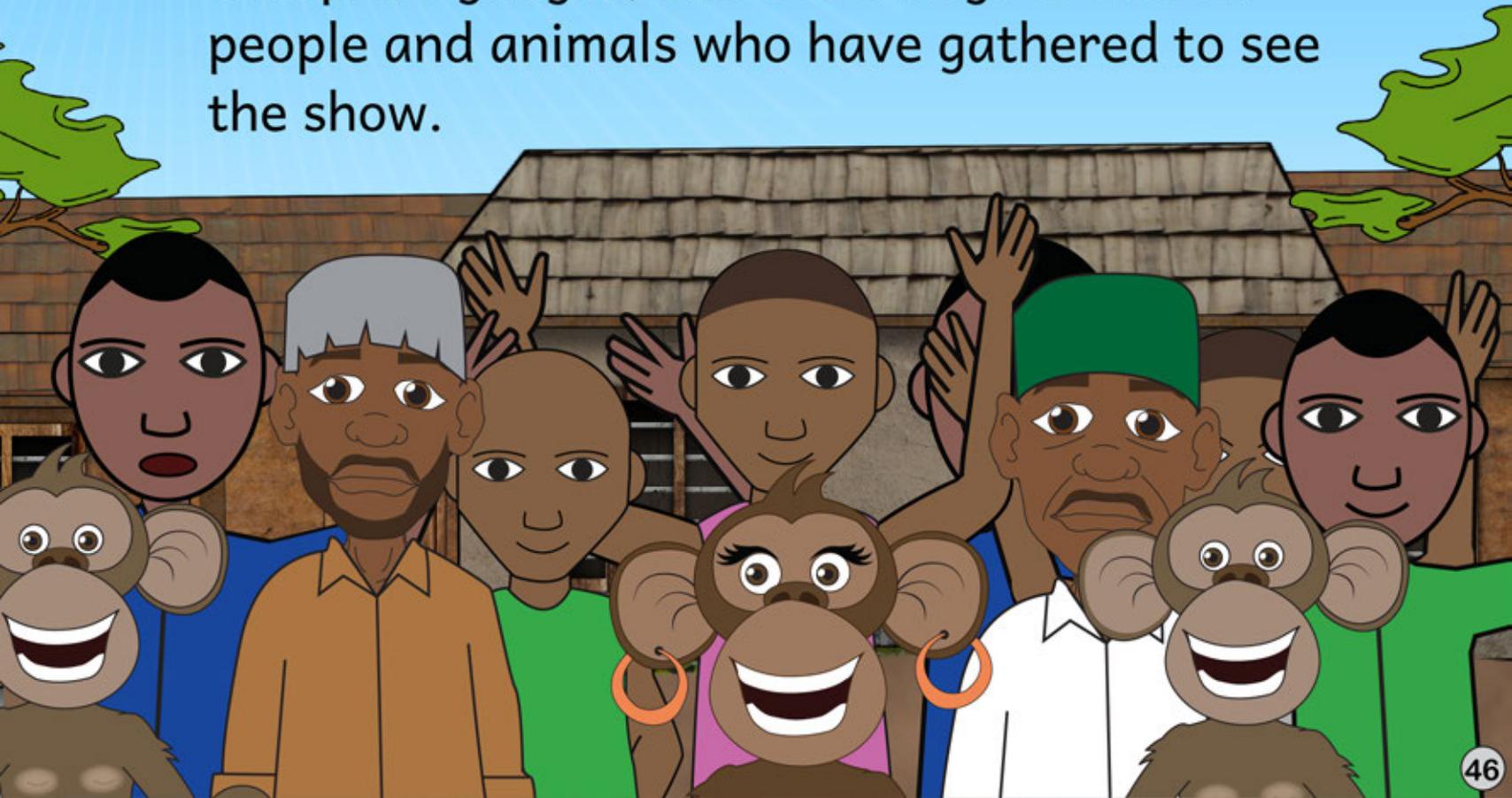
Mama Ndege and her chicks hang a sign over the stage. It says: WE CAN BE.



Baraka and Tiny Tembo hand out the flyers to people at the bus stop and the market.



On opening night, there is a huge crowd of people and animals who have gathered to see the show.



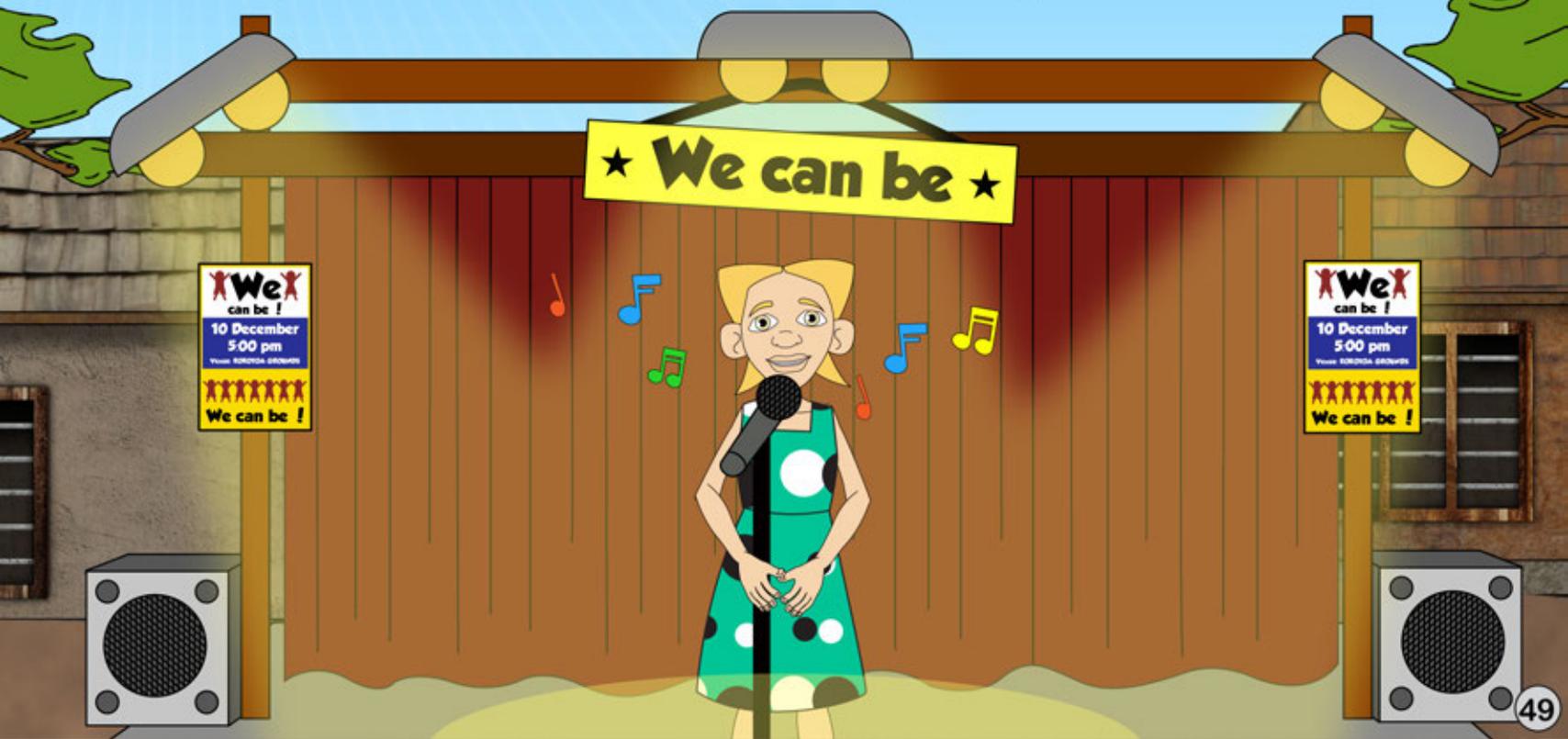
Baraka steps up to the microphone.
“Hello, fellow citizens of Kokotoa Village,”
he says in his loudest voice.



He tells them his dreams: first, to be a basketball star, then to be president. The crowd laughs. They start to leave when they realize there is no movie.



But they stay when Amani starts to sing. “We can be anything,” she sings. “Please help us pave the way.”



On the stage, the other kids act out their dreams.
Bahati teaches a class to Da Chura and the baby birds.



Kibena, dressed as a veterinarian, puts a bandage on Tiny Tembo. The crowd smiles.



Malaika, as a fashion designer, creates a beautiful dress for Sister Monkey. The crowd cheers.



Kiduchu appears, dressed in a home-made space suit. The crowd erupts, jumping and shouting and waving.



★ We can be ★

Baraka, looking like a president, stands behind a podium. “If we have our rights as children, we can be ANYTHING!” he tells the cheering crowd.



★ We can be ★

“If we are given the right to go to school...to play and have fun...to healthy food and safe water...to safety and protection...”



...to speak our minds...and to follow our dreams,
then we will do incredible things, and we will build
a brighter future for all!”

As they bow on stage, the crowd goes wild!



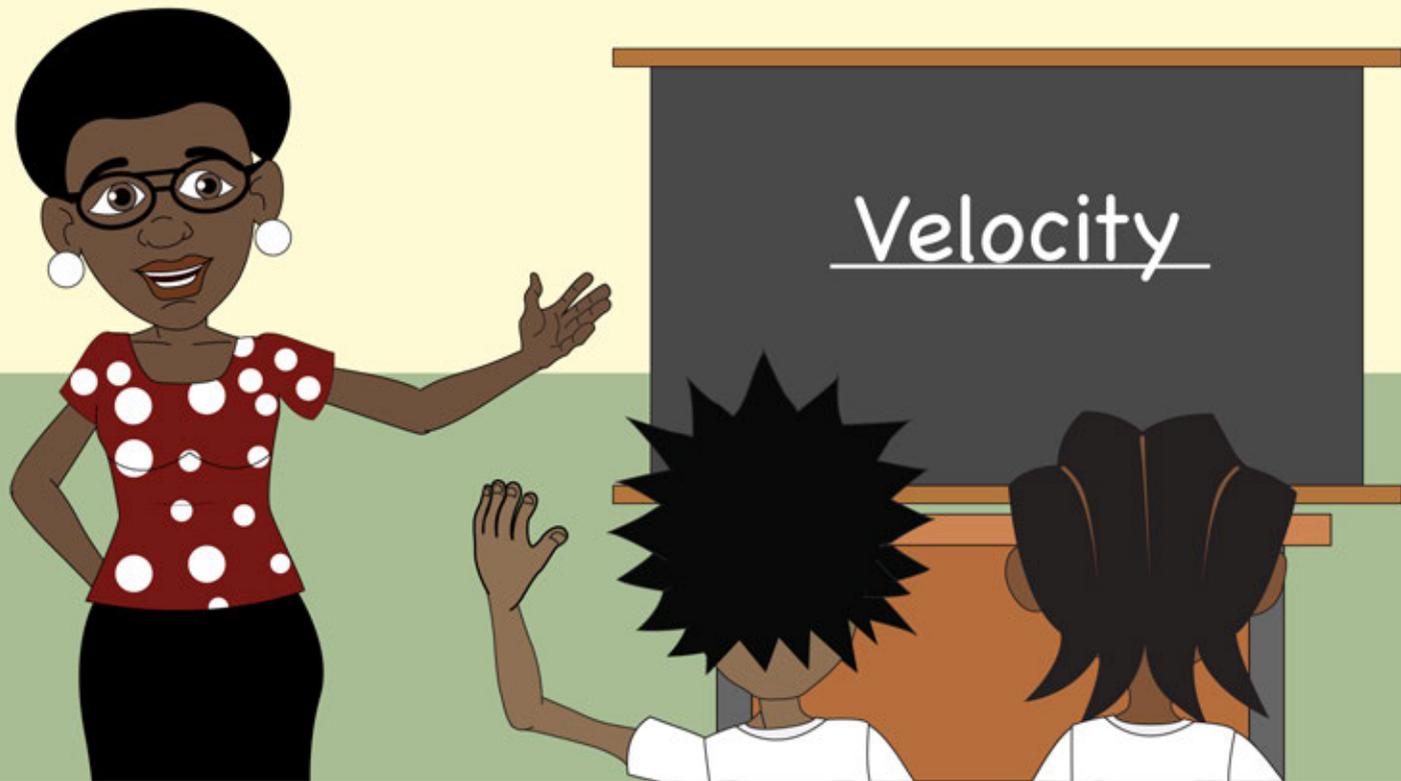
A week later, Mrs. Molota has just finished the physics lesson on velocity.

“That’s everything you’ll need to know for the exam,” she tells her students.

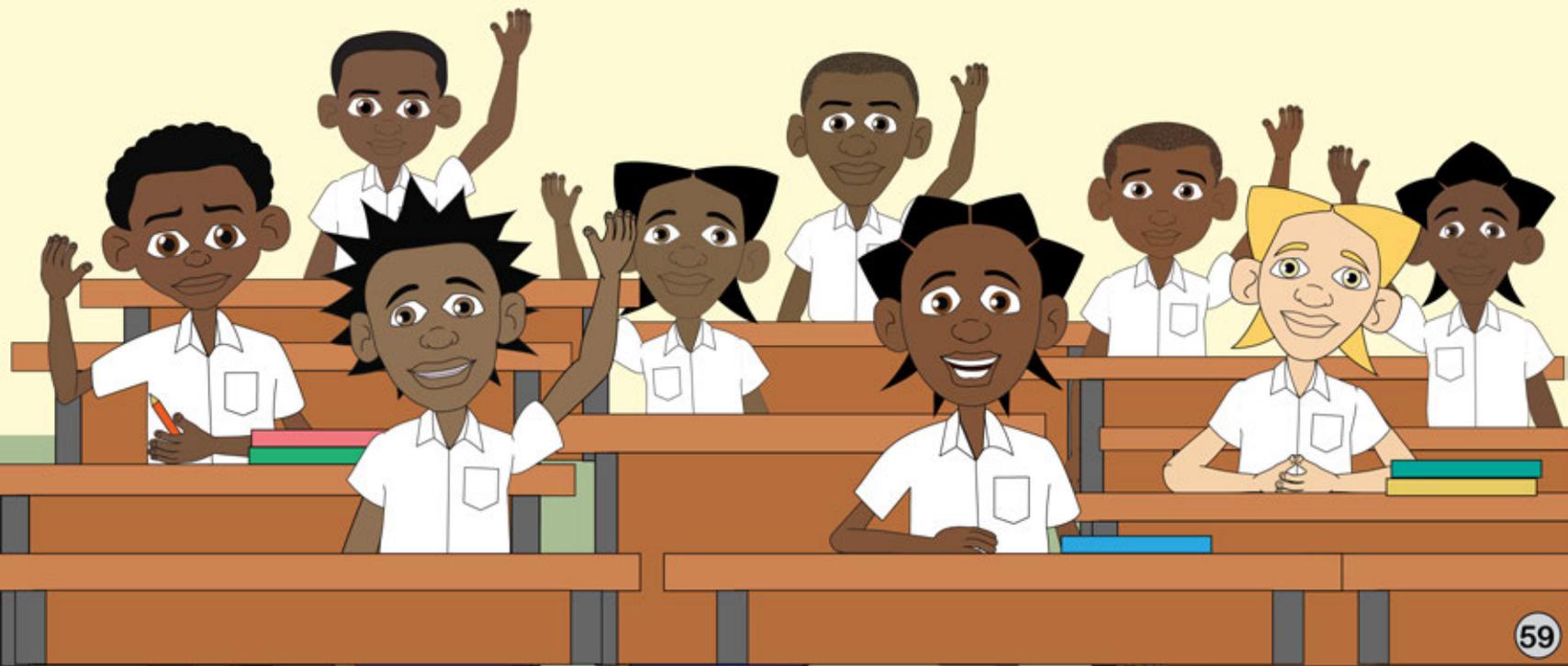


Velocity

But Kiduchu wants to learn about acceleration.
“That’s not on the exam,” Mrs. Molota says.



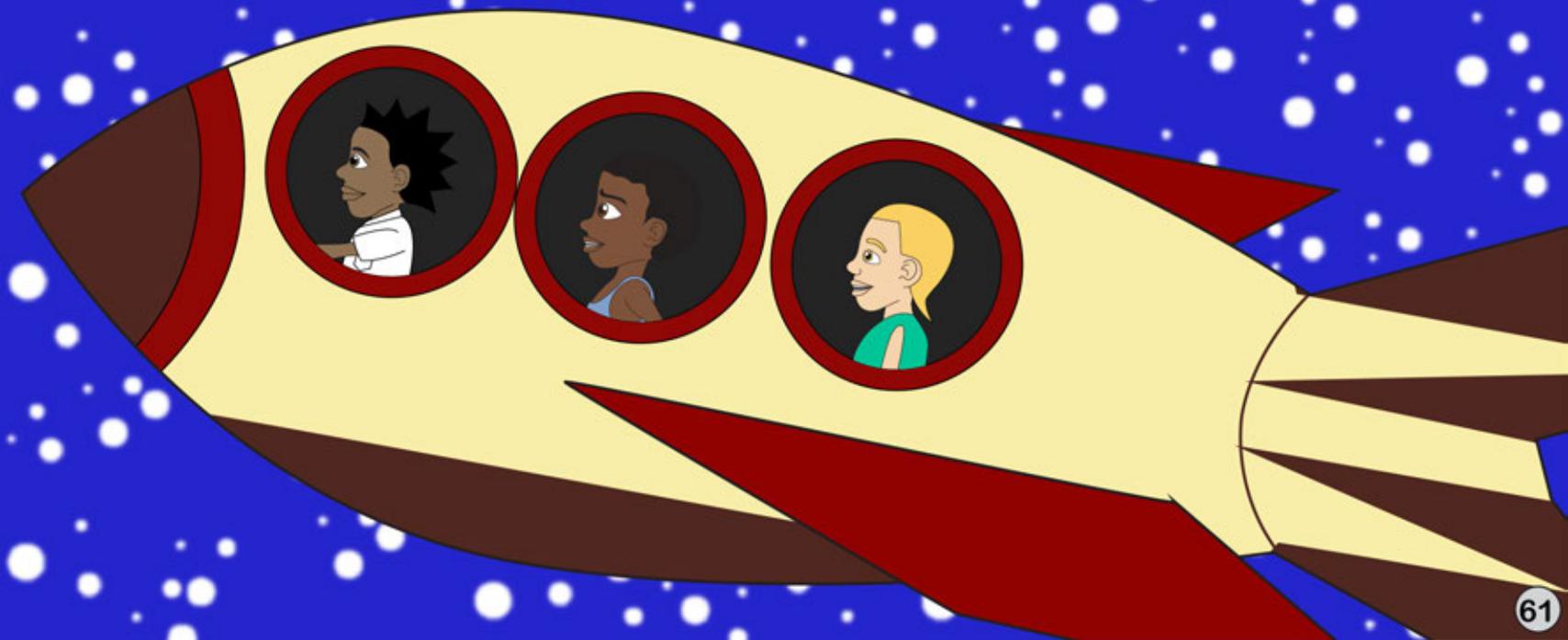
But all the students agree with Kiduchu.
The classroom is full, and they all want to learn more.



Kiduchu
closes her eyes
and dreams.



She is driving a spaceship, with her classmates as her crew. As the spaceship accelerates, it leaves the earth and heads toward the stars.





The End

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