

# Reading for Meaning

**Welcome, story supporter!**

**We hope that you and your child  
have fun with this story.**

**Nurturing and supporting  
your child is important for  
their physical, emotional and  
academic development.**

**ZERO  
DROP/OUT**

**Part of the Zero Dropout campaign working towards  
halving the rate of school dropout by 2030.**

Reading  
for Meaning

# Ostrich and mantis



Long ago, people did not cook their food. They ate their food raw. The food did not taste so good, but back in those days, people had no way of cooking their food. They did not have fire.

But people did have one very good friend. They had Mantis. Mantis was a good friend to have. He was clever. He knew how to get things done.

Back then, so long ago, even Mantis did not cook his food. Like the people, Mantis ate his food raw. He too did not have fire.

In those days, the only one who could cook his food was Ostrich. He could eat cooked food because he had a hot log, a log that carried fire. But Ostrich kept that hot log for himself, under his wing. He did not share it with anyone.

One day Mantis saw him cooking his food behind a bush.

The food smelled so nice! “Mm-mm” said Mantis.

“I’d also like to eat cooked food. It smells so good.”

But Mantis had no way of cooking the food. “I don’t have a hot log, like Ostrich. I will just have to get that hot log from Ostrich.”

How could Mantis get the hot log? Ostrich kept it under his wing. Mantis knew that Ostrich would not give him the log. But Mantis was clever, so he sat and thought about how he could get that log from Ostrich.

At last Mantis thought of a plan to get the hot log. He knew about a plum tree full of fruit. That tree was covered in ripe plums.

So first Mantis ate all the plums on the lower branches. Now there were only plums at the top of the tree.

Then Mantis went to Ostrich. “Do you like plums?” he asked. “You know, those big red fruits, so soft and juicy and sweet-sweet-

sweet.” Ostrich looked at Mantis, and his eyes got bigger. Then Mantis said “If you come with me, I’ll show you some plums. They’re growing on a tree.”

So Ostrich followed Mantis to the plum tree.

When Ostrich got to the plum tree, he saw that the plums were on the top branch.

“How can I get the plums?” he said to Mantis.

Mantis said, “You will just have to climb the tree.”

Ostrich had to climb to the top of the tree to get the plums. It was not easy because he had long bony legs.

On his way up the tree, he started to lose his balance. The tree started to sway. Oh no! He felt as if he was going to fall. So he lifted his wings to balance himself and - just like that, the hot log fell out from under his wing.

Mantis was standing under the tree; this was just what he was waiting for. He caught the hot log and ran off with it. Ostrich was too far up the tree to get down and chase Mantis.

So Mantis got away with the hot log. He used it to cook his food. It made the food taste so nice. Oh yes, this cooked food was so good to eat!

Then Mantis gave part of the burning log to us, the San people, to cook our food. He showed us how to make a fire. So now when we cook our food, it tastes so much better. Like Mantis, we say, “Oh yes, this cooked food is so good to eat!”

So we, the San people, say to Mantis: “Thank you, Mantis, for helping us. You are very kind.”

*Adapted from 'Ostrich and Mantis'  
(Stories from our land and from around the world:  
A Reader for the Phenduka Reading Programme)*

## EXTEND THE STORY...

# Words with “oo”



WRITING  
ACTIVITIES

### WHAT TO USE

*Pen / pencil, piece of paper*

### WHAT TO DO

- In the story, there are at least 4 words with the letters “oo”. Ask your child to find these words and write them down. (Example: cook)
- When they finish writing these words, ask them to add 5 words with “oo” that are not in the story.

- Ask them to use their new words to create either a poem, song or a short story.
- Ask them to act out the story.

**ZERO  
DROP/OUT**

Reading  
for Meaning

Part of the Zero Dropout campaign working towards halving the rate of school dropout by 2030.