

How the Leopard Got His Spots

Based on Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories

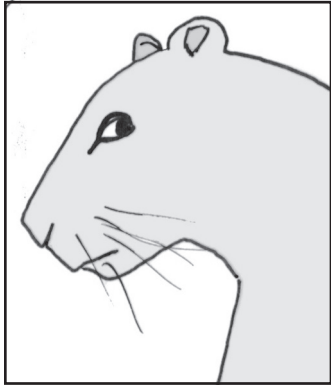


In the beginning of the world, things were different. Leopard lived in a place called the Highveld. It was a sandy-colored place. The rocks were sandy colored. The grass was a sandy yellow. Even Leopard was a sandy yellow color. He perfectly matched the background. He could lie there and no one could see him. He would jump out and scare Zebra and Giraffe out of their wits.

Zebra and Giraffe decided to move. They went to the Bushveld. It was covered in tall trees and shady forests. They hid in the forests, where the light was stripy and blotchy. Back then, Zebra was all white

How the Leopard Got His Spots

and Giraffe was all yellow. They hid in the shadows for so long that their colors changed. Zebra stood in the stripy shadows. He grew stripes. Giraffe stood in the blotchy shadows. She grew large spots. Soon, they were as hard to find in the forest as Leopard was in the Highveld.



Leopard missed his friends Zebra and Giraffe. He asked his friend the Ethiopian if he knew where they went. The Ethiopian was a man. In those days, his skin was a sandy-yellow color, too. The Ethiopian didn't know, but he went with Leopard to look.

One sunny day, they came to the Bushveld. They saw the forest and decided to look inside.

It was dark and shady inside the forest. Leopard and the Ethiopian were sandy yellow. They stood out in the shadowy light.

"I can smell Zebra, but I can't see him," said Leopard.

"I can smell Giraffe, but I can't see him," said the Ethiopian.

"Let's try again at night. Maybe we'll have more luck," said Leopard.

How the Leopard Got His Spots

And they did. Leopard felt Zebra. He smelled Zebra. But the stripy animal he caught didn't look like Zebra. The Ethiopian had the same experience with Giraffe. Zebra and Giraffe explained what happened. They explained how their new colors hid them in the forest. Leopard and the Ethiopian wanted to live in the forest. They knew that they would have to change their colors, too.

The Ethiopian found some black mud. He covered himself in it. This changed the color of his skin. He became all black.

"Wow," said Leopard. "Can you camouflage me, too? I don't want to be black all over. Maybe some spots like Giraffe, but smaller."

So the Ethiopian took the mud and put spots on Leopard. He made them with the tips of his fingers. He pressed his fingers close together. Then he pressed them all over Leopard. And Leopard has kept his spots forever after.

