Korobá: The Case of the Missing Kolo
Resources



CASE NOTES

Korobá is the name of a determined young girl who lives in the fishing community of Makoko in Nigeria. Together with her friends, she decides to solve the case when Saidat's special festival money-box, her kolo, goes missing. Who could have taken it and why?

The author and illustrator, Àlàbá Ònájìn, was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Gloucestershire. He has always had a passion for telling stories through his drawings, and his work has been published in the USA and by UNESCO.

In this guide you'll find activities and discussion points based around different themes together with some reading recommendations too.

Geography – *Investigating our world…*

Makoko is a fishing community in Lagos, Nigeria.

Locate Africa and the United Kingdom on a map of the world or a globe and then locate Nigeria in Africa, and Lagos in Nigeria, and the area where you live in the UK. Can you find out more about the climate, religion, currency and flag of Nigeria?

Compare types of housing, jobs, transport and landscape in both locations.

What is the climate like? How do these compare to each other? What wildlife lives in the area?

Looking at *Korobá: The Case of the Missing Kolo*, what materials are the houses built from? How does this compare to materials and designs used for houses in the UK?

Create a similarities and Differences table, children can work individually, in small groups or as a class discussion to write up their findings and to create pictures to go alongside these.

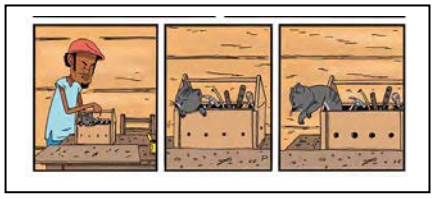
Feature	Nigeria	United Kingdom
Climate		
Landscape		
Housing		
Transport		
Jobs		

English – *seeing things differently*…

Korobá: The Case of the Missing Kolo is told as a graphic novel, also known as a comic book. Graphic novels tell stories using both words and pictures. This is sometimes known as visual literacy. There are special techniques which graphic novels use to help tell stories. Children in key stage two are encouraged to develop their understanding and enjoyment of a wide range of stories. The terms below are useful for children to look out for as their understanding and appreciation for visual literacy and graphic novels grows.

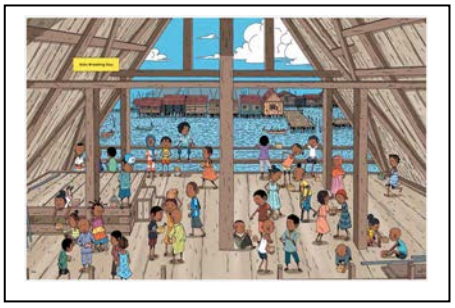
Panels

Panels describe the small boxes where action happens in a graphic novel, they are often framed and provide a view of a scene and characters in the story.



Sequence

A sequence is several panels grouped together showing a period in time, a shared location or a particular action. The artist Will Eisner liked to call graphic novels or comics, sequential art because graphic novel art works together as a sequence to make a comment or tell a story. (p71)



Splash

A splash is where a picture is shown across a whole page. Splashes often use *bleeds*, which means that the artwork goes right to the edges of the page and there is no border or frame. Splashes create impact and give visual stories a different pace. Some splashes go across the full two pages which make up a spread, these are known as double-page spreads or double-page splashes. p106-107



Captions

Captions are the small square text boxes which sometimes occur in frames. In *Korobá* they are yellow. Captions are often used to help the reader know when and where action takes place. They can be particularly useful when shifts happen in where or when things happen. p33



Speech bubbles

Speech bubbles contain direct speech. The points that hang off speech bubbles come from the mouths of particular characters and help the reader to know who is speaking. p21



Text effects

Text effects are often used to help give the impression of sounds effects like wailing. Look out for when Korobá's pet dog Popi appears in the book, the growls and sounds Popi makes are shown as text effects which help readers imagine how these noises sound. P51



Facial expressions

Facial expressions and how characters stand or sit, known as their poise, can help readers to know how different characters are feeling. Looking at the book's cover how might Korobá, Saidat and Joba - not forgetting Popi - be feeling? Did you know that sometimes artists use little drops of sweat or tears coming off characters to help show frustration, anxiety or agitation? There is a special name for these, they are called *plewds*! p47

Colour palette

Colour palette describes the different colours that are used in a graphic novel. Together they create a sense of atmosphere and mood. Sometimes graphic novels change colour palettes for different sequences. What colours are used in *Korobá*? What mood does this create? Are there examples you can find when the colour palette changes in the book? Look at scenes that are memories or that happened in the past? How do the colours used help show this?



Perspective

Perspective is the viewpoint we have as readers looking at the action or setting. It can help us feel close to the action, can help build our relationship with characters, or can give a sense of scale of the place. Look at the picture of the marketplace with the umbrellas. What effect does this have on you as a reader? p40

Talking Points:

These questions are helpful for starting book chat and starting discussions

How many other graphic novels can you think of, are there any others that you have read? Would you be interested to read more after reading *Korobá* and what's the reason for your answer.

- Why is cousin Risi so unhappy? What's the furthest you've been away from home? How did that make you feel? If Risi was staying with you, how might you try to make her feel more at home?

- Why do the children suspect Benson might have stolen the Kolo and what causes them to change their mind?

- Saidat is one of Korobá's best friends. Think about how she treats other characters in the story? Do you think she would make a good friend?

- What do you think the best parts and the worst parts of living in Makoko would be and why? Do you think it would make a good place to live?

What next?

If you've enjoyed reading *Korobá* why not try:

Chante Timothy *Super Nova*
Perfect for fans of Joba and his inventions!

Farhana Islam *The Misadventures of Mina Mahmood: School trip*
Fun and friendship come together in this slightly spooky story of a school trip.

Sneha Pradhan *Yelp! Yet! Chaos in Kathmandu*
Dev, together with his cat Tuna, is determined to prove to his family that the yeti exists.

Rose Robbins *Cat School: Odd Cat Out!*
If you are a fan of Popi and love animal stories why not try *Cat School*, a fun graphic novel trilogy about school and friendships.

Design and Technology – *solving problems*

Joba is an inventor. Can you pair the inventors below with their inventions?

(a) Thomas Edison (b) Alexander Graham Bell (c) Louis Pasteur (d) John Logie Baird (e) Charles Babbage

(1) Television (2) pasteurisation (3) computer (4) light bulb (5) telephone

What was the problem that these inventions helped to solve? How do the inventions solve this? Can you find out when the inventions were created.

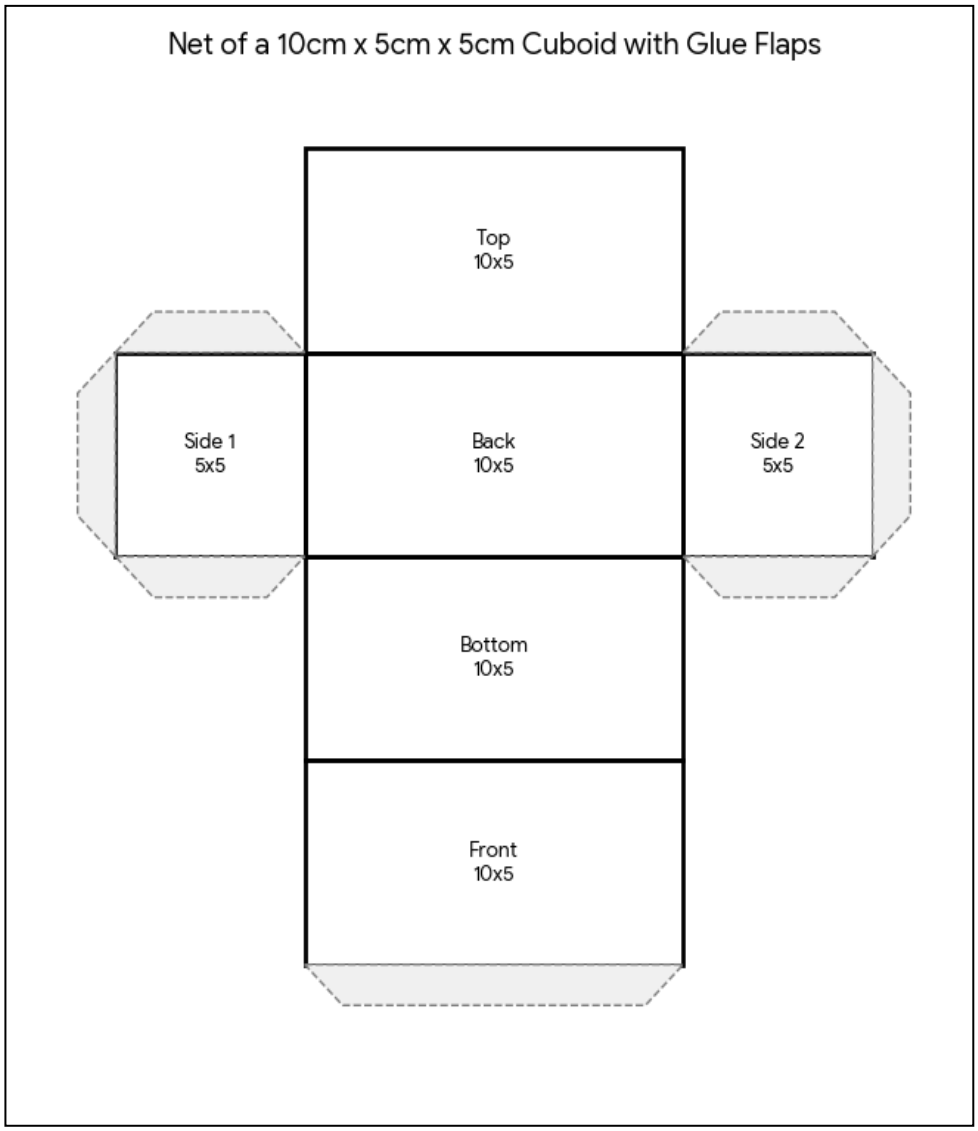
Spend some time talking about people's lives in Makoko? Can you think of an invention that might help make their life easier? What would it be and how would it work?

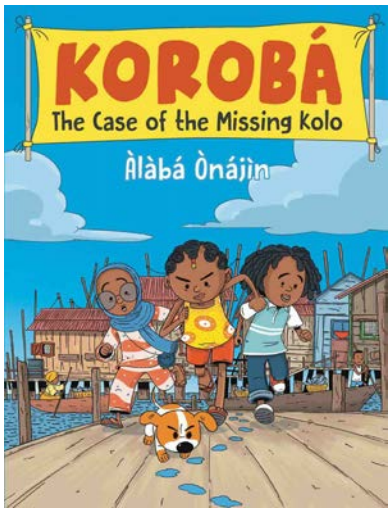
(Answers: a4; b5; c2; d1; e3)

Religious Studies and **Art and Design**

Breaking Day Festival is happening in Makoko. What are some of the festivals that your friends, classmates or family celebrate? When do these happen? What is celebrated and are there any special ways people celebrate? See if you can find out more about the following festivals, who celebrates them and how and when they are marked: Holi, Eid, Lunar New Year and Harvest Festival.

People in Makoko celebrate the Breaking Day Festival by designing their own Kolo. Copy the net for a cuboid below onto card using the right measurements given in centimetres. Cut out the net and glue the flaps to create a Kolo. Children can use art materials to design their own box. In the story they get some red ankara fabric. You could explore different types of Ankara designs and patterns for inspiration for the Kolo designs. Act like a detective and spot where it appears in the book – look out for people wearing Ankara in crowd scenes!





Publication 7th May 2026
Age 7-11
Price £8.99
Format PB, full colour
Size 216 x 165mm
Extent 144pp
ISBN 978-1-83630-064-9

https://www.scallywagpress.com/books-koroba-kolo.html

Watch out for the next Korobá mystery in 2027!

Notes by Jake Hope © 2026

Jake Hope is a reading development and children's book consultant. Alongside delivering training and public speaking on books and reading, Jake is an active reviewer and a passionate advocate for libraries.
Scallywag Press is proud to publish Jake's picture book TAKING THE LONG WAY HOME.

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