



Help your children to live the legacy of Nelson Mandela. Pass on some of the values he stood for through this short series of stories focussing on honesty, compassion and forgiveness.

# Topo's tree house

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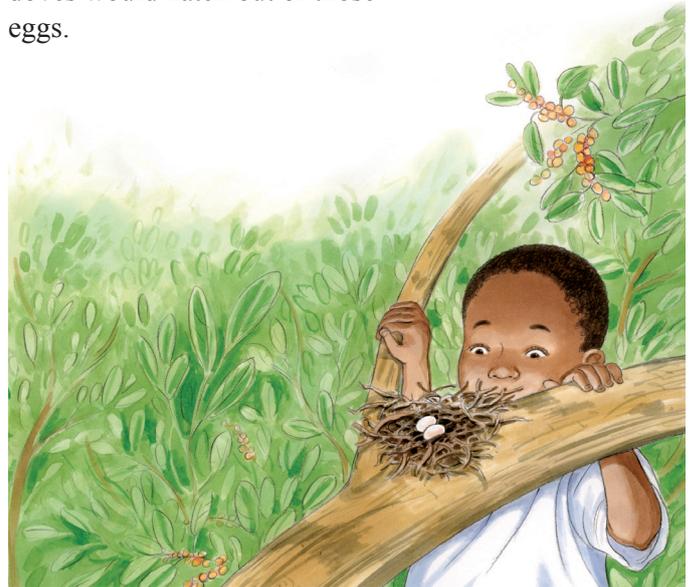
Illustrator: Sally MacLarty

Topo always looked forward to going home after school because then he could play in his tree house. Life was always interesting in the tree house. Topo's father had built it high up in the yard's biggest tree. Topo could see many things from the tree house. He could see roofs with different shapes and colours, tall buildings far away, and closer, he could see other trees and lots of small animals and birds.

Sometimes Topo would take his books into the tree house and read. It was good to read there because it was quiet, with just the birds singing. Other times he just sat and watched. He wondered how far the birds flew and what stories they were telling other birds about the distant places they had been to.

One day, Topo noticed a small pile of twigs on one of the branches that grew very near to his tree house. A dove flew into the tree and fluttered about. But it had seen Topo and was afraid. It flew away again. So Topo crept to a branch on the other side of the tree house and sat very still. The dove came back, saw that it was safe, and piled on more twigs. When the pile was big enough, the dove settled on it. She looked very comfortable.

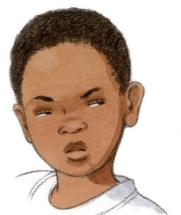
The next day after school Topo crept up into the tree house and looked into the nest. He saw two eggs there. The eggs were beautiful; they made Topo happy. He knew that young doves would hatch out of those eggs.



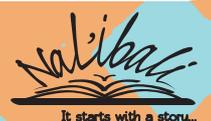
But just as he tried to see better, the mother bird flew into the tree again. "Go away," she seemed to say. "Go away."

"This is my tree house," thought Topo. "Why should I go away?"

But Topo knew that he couldn't share his tree house with the dove. "It's the eggs or me," he thought. Topo felt sad. He felt angry. He felt selfish. The tree house was his place and he did not want to move out.



Be the legacy: compassion



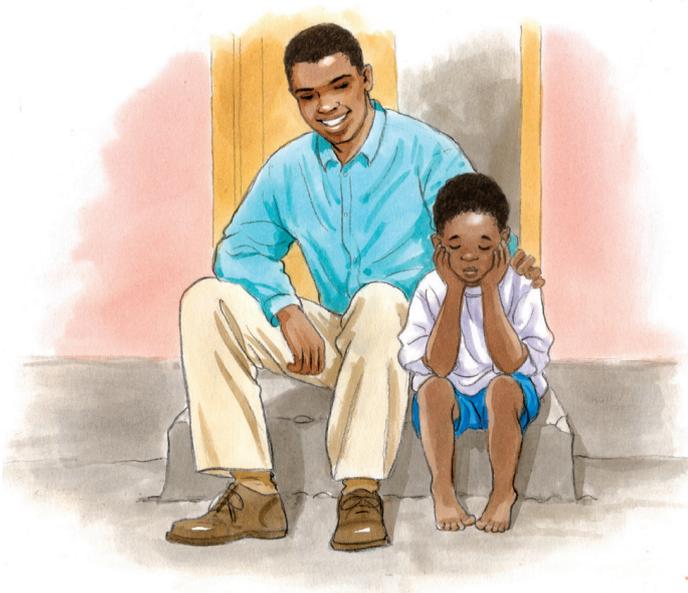
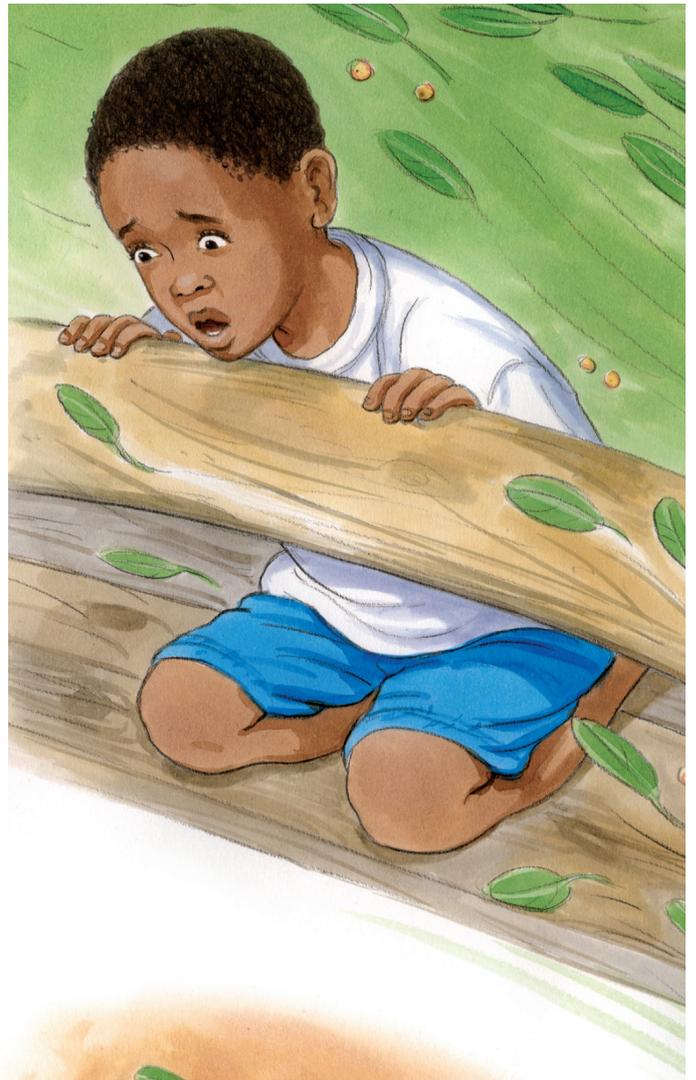
Topo sat still and thoughtful on the back step. Father came to sit next to him. Father knew about the nest and the eggs, and he seemed to know about Topo's angry and sad feelings. "Sometimes, Topo," said his father, "we need to give things up for others who are not as strong as us. Sometimes, we have to let the caring feeling be stronger than our anger. And stronger than our sadness for ourselves."

Father hugged Topo and went inside. Topo sat still and thought about what he had said.

Topo loved the beautiful eggs. But he knew that if he was in the tree house, the eggs would not hatch. So he made a decision ... the dove could have his tree house for as long as she needed it, and he would sit on a branch nearby to watch her. So Topo found a branch on the other side of the tree house, and sat and watched. He noticed that the dove never left the eggs for long. She spent most of the time sitting on them to protect them.

But one day, while the dove was away, it became very windy, and the branches waved up and down and from side to side. The dove was not at her nest. Topo was worried that the nest would be blown away. He waited and waited for the dove to come back.

Suddenly a gust of wind blew one of the eggs out of the nest, whooshed it along the planks and toppled it over the edge. Topo looked down. There, on the ground below, was a little white egg smashed to bits. Topo felt horrible. Just then the dove flew back and settled onto the egg that was left in the nest.



Topo sat for a long time on the back step that afternoon. Once again, Father came and sat beside him. "Oh, Topo," he said, "life often seems unfair. We cannot always understand why things happen the way they do. But it is good that you care. I know that one day you will grow up to be a good father who will love and protect his children."

Together they sat and thought about the broken egg and the little dove who sat bravely protecting the egg that was still in the nest.

After school each day Topo sat and watched the nest. The mother dove spent most of her time with her little dove. It grew bigger and bigger. It spent a lot of time flapping, flapping, flapping its wings.

One morning, as Topo was walking out of the kitchen, he stopped suddenly. There was the little dove in front of him on the grass, trying, trying, trying to fly. Topo was very excited, but he stood very still and watched. The little dove flapped its wings very hard and flew up into the air for a short distance, then came down again. Topo followed the little dove across the yard and over the fence. The little dove tried over and over and over again.

Just as Topo was getting tired, the little dove flapped its wings harder than ever and flew up higher and higher. This time, it did not come down. Topo stopped running, and watched. He watched as the little bird flew further and further and higher and higher. He was so happy he shouted out loud. It felt like he had just learnt to fly too!



Each day when Topo came back from school he checked the nest to make sure that the egg was there. One day, as he peeked into the nest, he saw an ugly creature with a big mouth. It was very small and had no feathers. Topo slid down the tree and ran to tell his father.



# Get story active!

Here are some ideas for using the stories in this supplement. Choose the ones that best suit your children's ages and interests.

## *Topo's tree house*

This story is best suited to children at primary school. If you are using this story with very young children, you may want to read the story on your own first, and then retell it in your own words while showing them the pictures.

In *Topo's tree house*, Topo shows compassion and caring towards the dove even though she builds her nest in his tree house. Topo's father shows caring and compassion towards Topo when he needs help with understanding his feelings.

- ★ Have your children ever seen a bird's nest? Explain that nesting birds

are sensitive and do not like to be disturbed. If they are, they may leave the nest and the eggs will not hatch.

- ★ With your children, talk about:

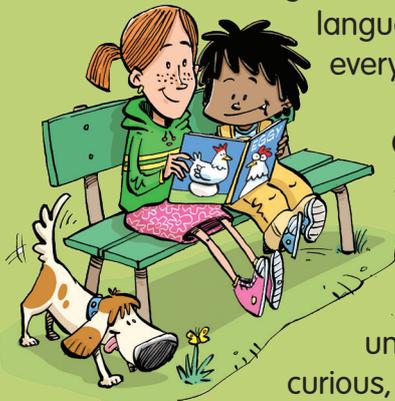
- ~ how Topo chose to leave his tree house for a while so that the dove could nest there. Ask your children whether they think this was a good choice and what they would have done.

- ~ Topo's relationship with his father. Ask them how we can tell that Topo's father loves him and cares about his feelings.

- ★ Encourage your children to draw a picture for a part of the story that does not have an illustration and to write the story's words under their pictures.

## About Nal'ibali

Nal'ibali (isiXhosa for "here's the story") is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign. It seeks to spark and embed a culture of reading across South Africa, so that reading, writing and sharing stories – in all South African languages – is part of everyday life.



Children who are surrounded by print and immersed in great stories in languages they understand, are more curious, confident and

motivated to learn. They are more likely to become readers, and to do well at school in all subjects. Stories develop vocabulary, strengthen memory and nurture children's imaginations.

Since 2012, Nal'ibali has worked with various state, civil society and business partners to make sure every South African child has opportunities to fall in love with books and stories. Our founding partners include: the DG Murry Trust, PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) and Tiso Blackstar (formerly, Times Media). Through advocacy, training and high-quality reading materials, Nal'ibali is helping to nurture a nation of readers.

Nal'ibali is here to motivate and support you. **Contact us** by calling our call centre on **02 11 80 40 80**, or in any of these ways: