

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Cristina Kessler.** *Konte Chameleon, Fine, Fine, Fine!: A West African Folktale.* Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 1997. 32 pp. \$15.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56397-181-5.



**Reviewed by** Mei-Mei Sanford (SUNY Purchase)

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*Konte Chameleon Fine, Fine, Fine* is an animal fable about how a chameleon discovers his ability to change color and the powers that it gives him. It is both a story about acceptance of one's unique gifts, and a natural history lesson about chameleons. The writer and illustrator have keen eyes and ears for the natural world of chameleons, pythons, rabbits, and baobab trees. I've tried *Konte Chameleon* out with classes of children from pre-K to grade 4 and they have loved it. The onomatopoeic words are vivid and fun, the repeated refrains are an effective storytelling device that allow children to participate in the story, and even the youngest children to whom I read it understood the chameleon's changeability and its advantages. Some children rightly critiqued

several pictures in which the chameleon did not match its surroundings—a just criticism and an indication that they understood the story. Although the book is subtitled “A West African Story,” its connection to Africa may be lost on many children. If children do make the connection, they will find an image of a wise and compassionate African healer in the rabbit doctor who reassures Chameleon that he is not sick, and helps him find out for himself how he changes color.

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