MISOSO: Once Upon a Time Tales from Africa. Retold by Verna Aardema. Illustrated by Reynold Ruffins. Apple Soup/ Knopf. $18. (Ages 5 and up) A dozen traditional stories from the perimeter of Africa south of the Sahara Desert, each with an implicit moral, have been gracefully retold and given handsome, stylized illustrations. With a map, glossaries and a bibliography. The foreword describes these Once upon a time stories as mostly for entertainment. If the stories collected here teach a lesson, or illuminate the culture of a people, that is a plus (iv). In the introduction, Aardema points out that she has retold tales from early sources, e.g., from the 1850's and 1860's. The stories are taken from the perimeter of sub-Saharan Africa, beginning on the West Coast and travelling southward, then moving up the East Coast, and finally moving across the continent from East to West. The book's first tale, Leelee Goro, is an aetiological tale that gives the reason for eight different things, including the leopard's spots. It is unusual in explaining the origin of tears and the remedy for them, which is that people stop crying when they are hugged. The third tale, The Boogey Man's Wife, has a delightful ending. Just when the Boogey Man has had enough of his new wife and commands her to go back to her father, she obeys him! As he says, That was foolish of me. I let her go just when she started to obey me! (22). Alas, the first two fables, The Hen and the Dove (33-34) and The Cocker and the Jackal (47-8), have been ripped out of the book! The third fable, Toad's Trick: A Kanuri Fable (59) has survived the slasher! A toad shows a rat that there is something he can do that the rat cannot: walk through a group of men. The men allow it because the toad eats bugs. When the rat tries to do the same, he is attacked and beaten. The fable ends with the stock closing That is it. Put it on top of the granary (60). That is, add this to your store of stories. The exciting illustrations, strong in warm African colors, are done in pencil and acrylic paints. A good sample is the full page village scene on 26 of Fly carrying a sleeping-mat into a village for his then-friend, Leopard. Another good example on 51 shows a family in a king's palace. Besides the two missing fables, there is a 2½ tear at the bottom of 6. Now, some weeks later, consult the 1996 paperback version from Scholastic to see my comments on the two missing fables.
man gets his come-uppance. These are examples of the stories of justice and revenge, greed and generosity, trickery and kindness in this collection. Start
your review of Misoso: Once Upon a Time Tales from Africa. Write a review. Oct 22, 2018 Abigail rated it liked it. A collection of twelve African tales from
Verna Aardema, celebrated for her many excellent folktale adaptations, Misoso introduces young readers to a diverse range of African traditions, from the
Temne people of Sierra Leone to the Zulu of South Africa. The title itself is taken from the Mbundu people of Angola, and is a word used to indicate stories
which are primarily intended as entertainment.