**How the Zebra got its black and white stripes.**

Long ago, in a time before man walked the Earth, the animals of the world all had plain, white coats. No colour existed and every creature looked the same. One hot, sticky day, as the sun rose in the east, a mysterious rumbling sound echoed across the African Plains; without warning, a mysterious cave arose from the ground and caused quite a stir amongst the animals. Large, jagged boulders lay like sleeping guards at the cave entrance and inside was filled with ominous black shadow.

“Have you seen the cave?” asked Cheetah excitedly. “It just appeared this morning.” Tortoise slowly approached, “I’m not sure about this,” he said timidly. “It seems very dangerous; maybe we should just leave it alone.” All of the animals gathered round to see the mysterious rocks that had formed overnight; all except Zebra.

Zebra was two things: very greedy and very lazy. Zebra was sleeping but all of the noise and commotion woke him from his slumber. With a large yawn, he looked up to see the other animals running eagerly around the strange cave. Some talked amongst themselves, while others – who were clearly feeling a little braver – investigated the cave a little closer. “Maybe I should see what’s going on,” Zebra thought. Slowly, he stood up and began to amble towards the other animals. As he walked, the smell of fresh leaves and grass filled his nostrils and the temptation was simply too much; he turned and headed towards the delicious smelling food.

While Zebra was busy filling his ever-expanding belly, the other animals continued to talk about the cave. “It is far too dangerous to go inside,” reiterated Tortoise who was always slow and cautious. Peacock (a much braver animal than many of the others) stepped forward. “It might look dangerous,” she declared boldly. “But if we don’t go inside then we will never know!” With that, the cave was entered by peacock and the other animals gasped.

A short while later, Peacock re-appeared but she looked very different. Her plain, boring coat had vanished and she was covered in a dashing array of colourful feathers. Peacock, who is still just as beautiful today, strutted proudly towards the other creatures. With looks of astonishment etched onto their faces, they all congratulated her on her glorious new appearance. Just then, Lion appeared and everyone bowed their head as the king of the African Plains approached.

“I declare,” began Lion. “That this cave be a safe place for all to visit. Go my friends and find your own coat to wear with pride.” The other animals bolted towards the entrance, clambering and climbing over each other as they went. “Stop!” roared Lion. “If I were you, I would stop this nonsense at once or you will all feel my wrath.” The animals stopped instantly. They knew that Lion was serious so they all came to a sudden halt. Lion explained that he wanted everyone to line up in order so that is what they did. Chameleon was first, Snake was second and the other animals lined up behind. Panther – who found herself towards the back of the line – wasn’t very happy with her position, yet she kept quiet and waited her turn.