

THE MOBILE LIBRARY

This is my classroom; I'm in class 3. We are studying mathematics right now. Oh, this is me! I like math because our teacher makes it a fun subject to learn. She gives us exercises to do from our textbooks too. We all have our own textbooks that we carry to school everyday. This makes it easy for us to study on our own both in class and at home. We also have a library in our school; it's really big and has lots and lots of books. Come on and I'll show you. I have to return this book anyway. We are allowed to borrow books as often as we like.

See, what did I tell you; we have many books in our library. Books of all kinds; I like storybooks, because they help stir my imagination. Famous five is my favourite novel. I don't have to buy the books; I just come over to the library and get the books I want, whenever I want. But it's not the same for all children;

For example we are headed for Mariam and Zainab's school which is in one of the rural areas. They are in class 3 like me. This is Miriam... and this is Zainab. This is their classroom – in fact they are having their math class too. See they don't even have desks and chairs, how can they have their own books? They don't have a library like we do, so instead the library comes to them.

The library comes in the form of something unique – camels! We call it the mobile library. See those boxes up there? They have books inside. The mobile library is provided by our country's National Library service and they visit different schools in the area every 2 weeks. Many schools are too far from the library base, so the library organizes for a caravan of camels to transport books to the school. One camel carries books, while the other carries the tents in which the books will be set up. 3 guides lead the camels on the 1-hour walk to the school, but they also work as librarians after setting up the tents and books. Do you know why they use

camels? It's because they can handle the dry, hot weather for a long time without getting tired or thirsty, they don't stop on the way and they can carry heavy loads at a time.

Zainab and Mariam love reading because they believe that reading will not only help them do well during exams, but it will in the long run help them build a bright future for themselves. So you can imagine their happiness when the camel carrying books shows up in their school. Like seeing the ice-cream man bringing delicious flavours of ice-cream, these girls can't wait to discover what new books the library has brought; what new books shall they borrow and read? They are the only 2 pupils in their class who like reading and they as much as possible encourage their classmates to read too. Membership to the library is free; it only takes interest, and that they have. They borrow at most 2 books to be returned or re-borrowed after 2 weeks when the mobile library comes again. Zainab loves storybooks while Mariam enjoys reading textbooks that help her do her homework. Can you believe that they are the top pupils in their class? Number 1 and 2 all the time! And why not, they love to read... and so do I!