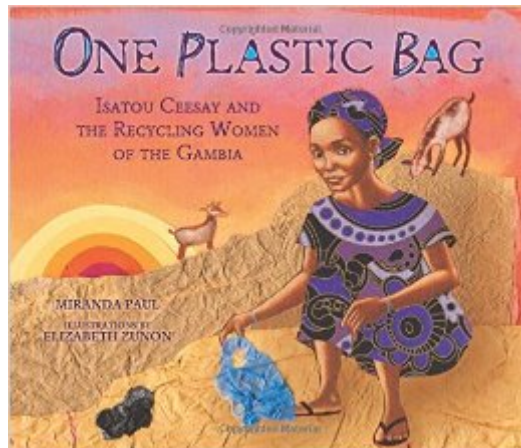


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# One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay And The Recycling Women Of The Gambia (Millbrook Picture Books)



## Synopsis

Plastic bags are cheap and easy to use. But what happens when a bag breaks or is no longer needed? In Njau, Gambia, people simply dropped the bags and went on their way. One plastic bag became two. Then ten. Then a hundred. The bags accumulated in ugly heaps alongside roads. Water pooled in them, bringing mosquitoes and disease. Some bags were burned, leaving behind a terrible smell. Some were buried, but they strangled gardens. They killed livestock that tried to eat them. Something had to change. Isatou Ceesay was that change. She found a way to recycle the bags and transform her community. This inspirational true story shows how one person's actions really can make a difference in our world.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD480L (What's this?)

Series: Millbrook Picture Books

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Product Dimensions: 10.8 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (31 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #18,653 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#12 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Money & Saving](#) [#23 in Books > Business & Money > Economics > Environmental Economics](#) [#35 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature > Environment](#)

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Isatou held her head up high and soon would close in on Nijau, her village. Raindrops fell all around her, but soon her palm-leaf basket would tumble to the ground to mix with the rain and dirt.

Isatou's fruit was scattered about the ground, but there was no way to carry it. There was some strange fabric dancing in the wind, a fabric that would hold her fruit. Her palm-leaf basket would be left behind to crumble and mix back in with the dirt. Grandmother Mbombbeh

frowned at the sight of Isatou's strange fabric bag. "Plastic," she exclaimed, "There's more in the city." The plastic bag didn't last and soon Isatou left it behind. The bags seemed to multiply with blue ones, red ones, clear ones, and even purple. There were more and more because one plastic bag becomes two ... then ten ... then a hundred. The years passed by and Isatou found herself to be a woman, hardly noticing the ugliness around her. The goats had begun eating those very bags, the ugliness she had passed by, and were dying. The goats were foraging in the garbage, eating the bags. Isatou began collecting the bags, but what would she do with them? This is the amazing story of Isatou, a young woman who empowered others by looking for solutions. Isatou Cheesay watched as garbage began to overtake and destroy Njau, Gambia. Rather than ignore it, she began to gather up the ugliness and turned it into a thing of beauty, recycled plastic purses. Other women began to crochet and Isatou's solution began to reclaim her village. Young students will enjoy learning about her journey in an expanded author's note. There is a photograph of Isatou and some other women of Njau. In the back of the book is an index, a Wolof Glossary and Pronunciation Guide, a Timeline (1970s to 2014), and additional recommended book resources to explore. This book courtesy of the publisher.

**WHY I LIKE THIS BOOK:** One Plastic Bag has so many hooks. First, Miranda incorporates Gambian culture and language into the text, immersing the reader into Isatou's world. Second, the book has great read aloud-ability. Miranda uses a repeating refrain: "first one, then two, then ten," which makes kids want to chant along. Finally, who can resist a story about one person seeing an insurmountable problem and taking a small step that leads to a giant change?

**RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES:** One Plastic Bag's Web site is packed with activities and information, including a PowerPoint about The Gambia and instructions for turning plastic bags into purses.

This gorgeously illustrated true story shows how Isatou Ceesay and other women in her small village in the Gambia solved a big problem: discarded plastic bags, which were killing livestock and providing breeding places for disease-carrying mosquitos. She and her friends cleaned the bags, cut them into long continuous strips (you can find directions on how to do this online--many places call it "plarn" for "plastic yarn"), and crocheted them into change purses, which now they sell, both locally and abroad. Author Miranda Paul has spent many years teaching in the Gambia and is a founder of the We Need Diverse Books movement, and illustrator Elizabeth Zunon has also illustrated The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, the story of William Kamkwamba, who taught himself

to build a windmill to provide his village with electricity. It's a great read--highly, highly recommended.

This is a beautifully illustrated book about how one woman in Gambia, West Africa decided to reduce the amount of plastic bags littering the area and killing animals when they ate them by crocheting items out of the plastic and selling them. I think that the book shows the problems from the plastic bag pollution and how one woman helped to change the situation. This book would be great in elementary school and middle school libraries to use when teaching about pollution and recycling. I have crocheted items from plastic bags and the plastic is not as gentle and comfortable to knit with as yarn or fabric. I received this book free to review from Netgalley and I highly recommend it.

Miranda Paul chronicles the inspirational journey taken by Isatou Ceesay. Isatou takes it upon herself to collect discarded plastic bags and recycle them. These bags pooled water bringing mosquitoes and disease. Livestock died from eating the bags and gardens choked on them. Isatou brings change by gathering her friends to clean the bags and weave them into beautiful purses. Selling the purses earns money to replace dead livestock and build a healthy community. Elizabeth Zunon's vibrant illustrations depict the amazing transformation made by one woman's mission to save her village.

Third grade students loved this story of Isatou Ceesay and her creative recycling campaign. They were able to make lots of connections to their own lives, and got truly interested in how life in The Gambia is both different and the same. A great story about recycling and community change!

A wonderful book. I served with the Peace Corps volunteer mentioned in the book. I love the illustrations and the simple and powerful explanation of the project. The story of Isatou identifying the problem of plastic bag litter and then her creating an effective solution was inspiring. I even started a similar project in my village after being trained by Peggy! I highly recommend this timely and engaging book.

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