

# Why Tigers Have Stripes

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*this is dedicated to my fav teacher: Miss Reeves!<br />  
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she had us write a griot...so here's mine!*

## 1. -paka

Long, long ago, before tigers had their elegant stripes, there lived an Amazonian tigress. Like her father before her she took responsibility as the alpha leader of her vast clan. Every cat in the clan respected her and would give their life to save her. Her name was Paka. Her name meant "Kitten" in Swahili. Her father was the one who named her due to the fact that her mother died while giving birth to Paka. He was hoping that she would be a strong leader but also as gentle as a kitten. Her father died two years ago and to Paka it felt like yesterday when she saw the traitor from her own clan throw him off a cliff sending him to his crushing fatality. Paka had a stunning, soft ginger pelt with creamy white covering her soft underbelly, paws and her muzzle. She had been disheartened ever since the betrayer murdered her father.

One day she was walking in the jungle when she stopped at the watering hole to lap up a few mouthfuls of water. She crouched down on her haunches and froze before the calm pool of water. She just gawked blankly at her reflection. "Is this who I'm really supposed to be?" she muttered to herself. She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "I don't even know who I am anymore..." her voice trailed off. "Oh father what am I suppose to do?" she muttered more to herself than anyone else. Like as if on cue, instantly the forest turned dark, so dark it seemed unreal. Suddenly a pair of unblinking eyes was staring straight back at her. They were yellow, just like her father's. Paka wasn't the least bit fearful of the petrifying eyes.

She knew those eyes and they were indeed her father's golden eyes. A lonely leaf drifted from the forest canopy and landed in the watering hole, making the water ripple. Paka leaned forward to get a closer look to see her father's broad face smiling at her. "Paka, you know who you are just as well as I do. You are my daughter and the leader of the largest cat clan in the African rainforest." He purred to her. "But daddy, I don't feel this is the way I should be. I mean look at me! I just don't feel that I look right. What should I do?" she inquired. "Try camouflage." He responded. "But how?" Paka purred. Her father's reflection ascended from the pool and formed his powerfully muscled body. He hovered over the pool like a dragonfly over a still pond.

First he glared down, and then shifted his glance upward. Paka followed his glance and she saw a deep black sap dripping from a ripped up tree. Her eyebrows shot up at the great inspiration. She swung her head back to where her father was but he vanished...and now that she thought about it the darkness also had subsided. Paka shrugged it off and went beneath the dripping tree the sap felt warm and gooey on her soft coat. Her paw steps were cautious and slow to make the sap run evenly over her back. Clouds gathered above and the rain poured on her pelt. The sap ran down her sides and the sap that didn't stain her fur speckled the forest floor below. She brushed her face against the now soaked tree.

When the rain stopped she shook her fur and wondered to the pool once more. She saw the beautiful stripes the sap had painted on her hefty body. Very satisfied with the way the sap had acted as ink and flowed with her body form she gave a deep sigh of pride in her new markings. "There now I look beautiful." She purred to herself. Paka returned to her clan and showed her new features. When Paka had her first litter, her stripes bled through to her cub's coats.

as well. And the same thing happened when her cubs had cubs. Over the many generations of tigers, the plain orange tigers were wiped out and the striped tigers thrived, all thanks to Paka, the Amazonian tigress and that is why tigers have stripes.